

URBAN LIFE, FORM AND IDENTITY IN THE MEDIEVAL LOW COUNTRIES BETWEEN SOCIAL PRACTICE AND ICONOGRAPHIC IDENTITY

Dries Tys



- Urban fabric? How was space organised? (shift?)
- Trade?
- Who lived there and controlled them?
- Importance of ideological and social reproduction? (power)
- Cultural biography towards succes?

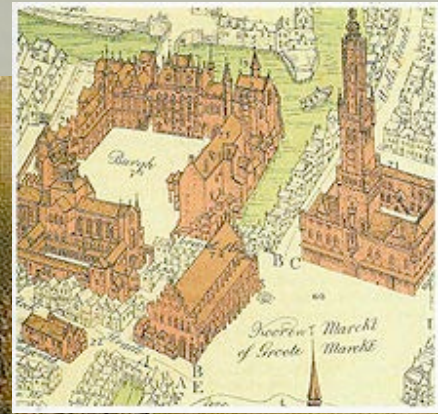
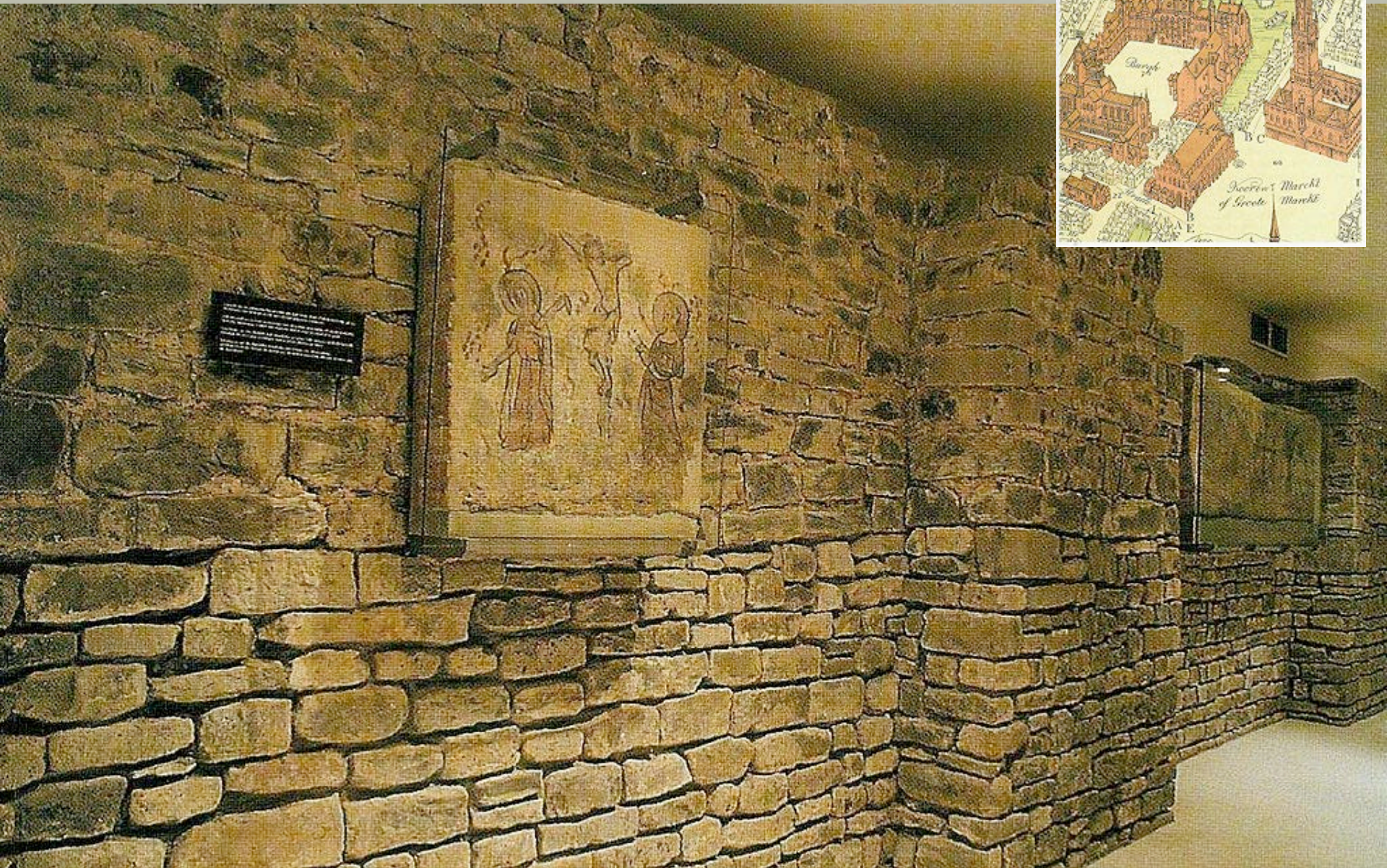
Emblematic Character:
Towns as reflection of their memories and/or biographies?



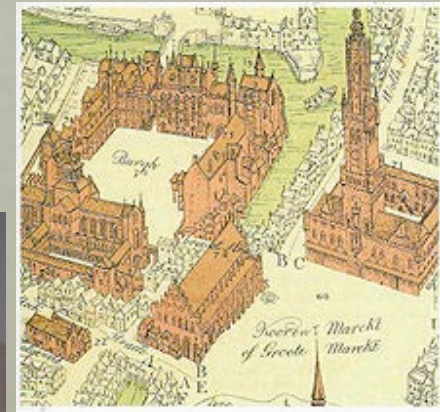
Accumulation?



Archaeological remains of 10th c. collegiate church Palace of Bruges



Town as accumulation of memories = myth
=> selection



*Selection: meanings and functions can change in different contexts,
and, as time goes on, they age (...): choices about preservation,
innovation, destruction, fossilization
Accounts of things' life-histories are biographies of things*



Negative: out of date, unfit, inconvenient
Positive: innovative, future, heritage ...
Heritage: choices of memories



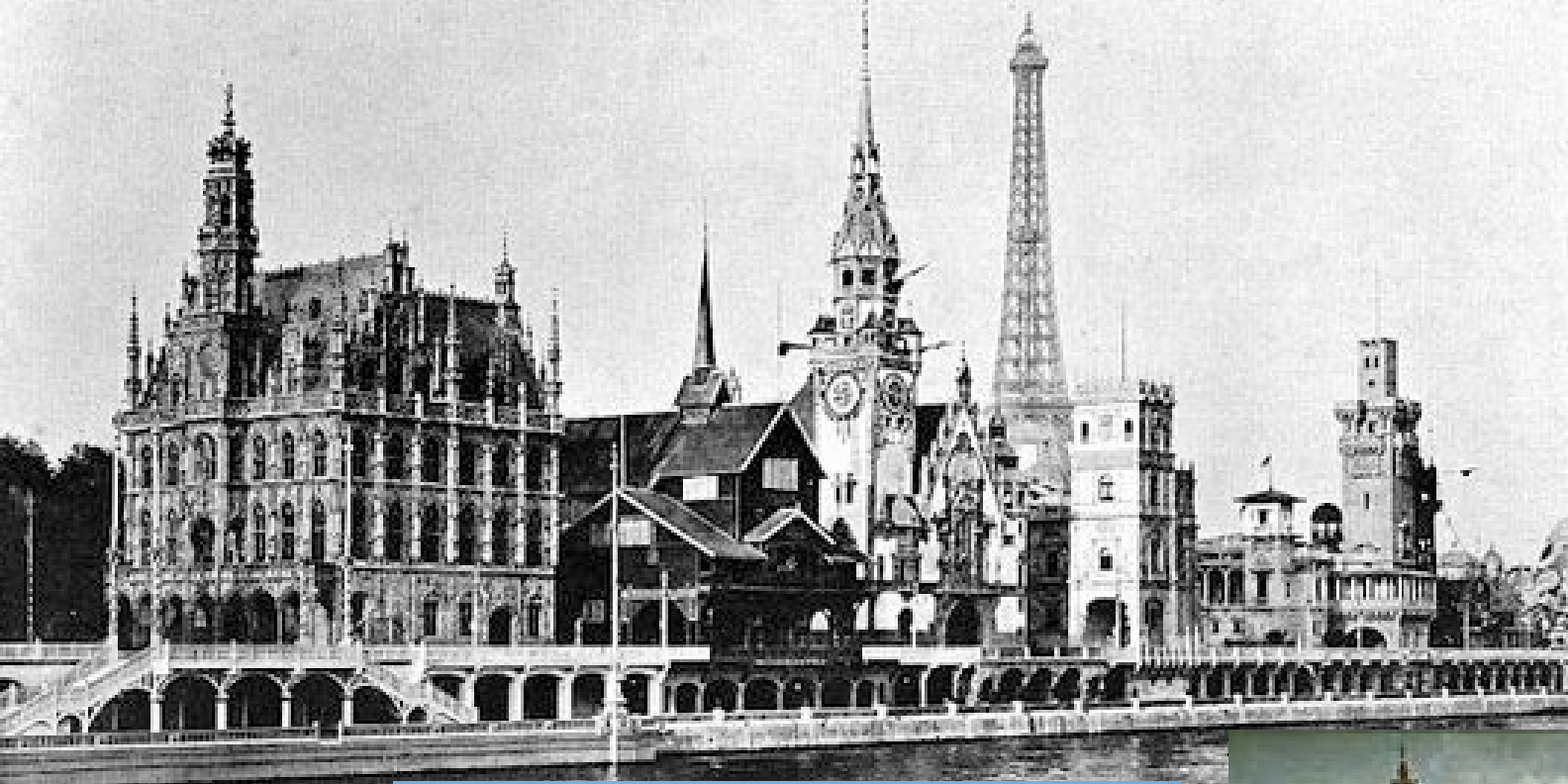
late 19th century and early 20th century city branding: creating and (re-)inforcing the the iconic character of towns through images and architecture (World-Exhibitions)



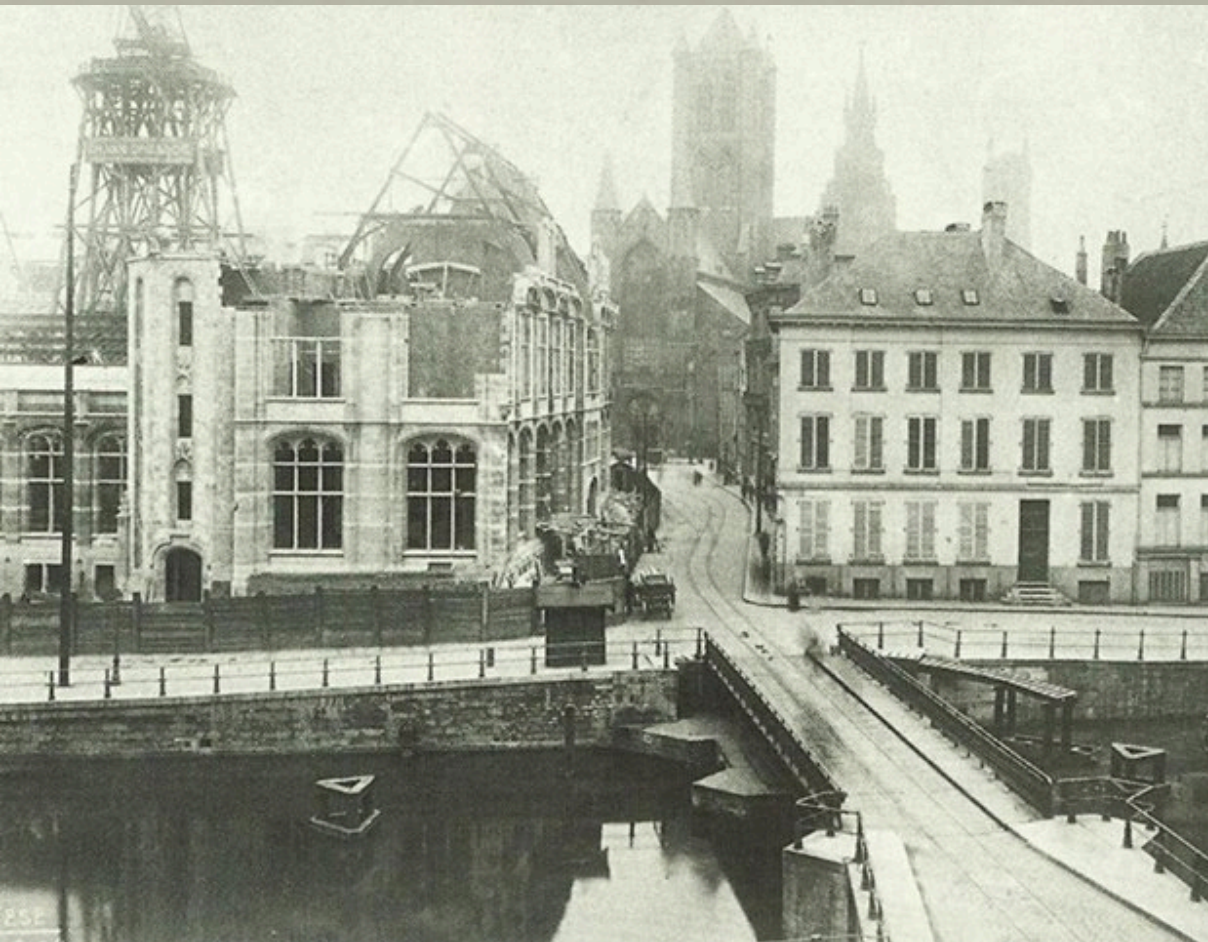
Worldexhibition 1930: “old Belgium”



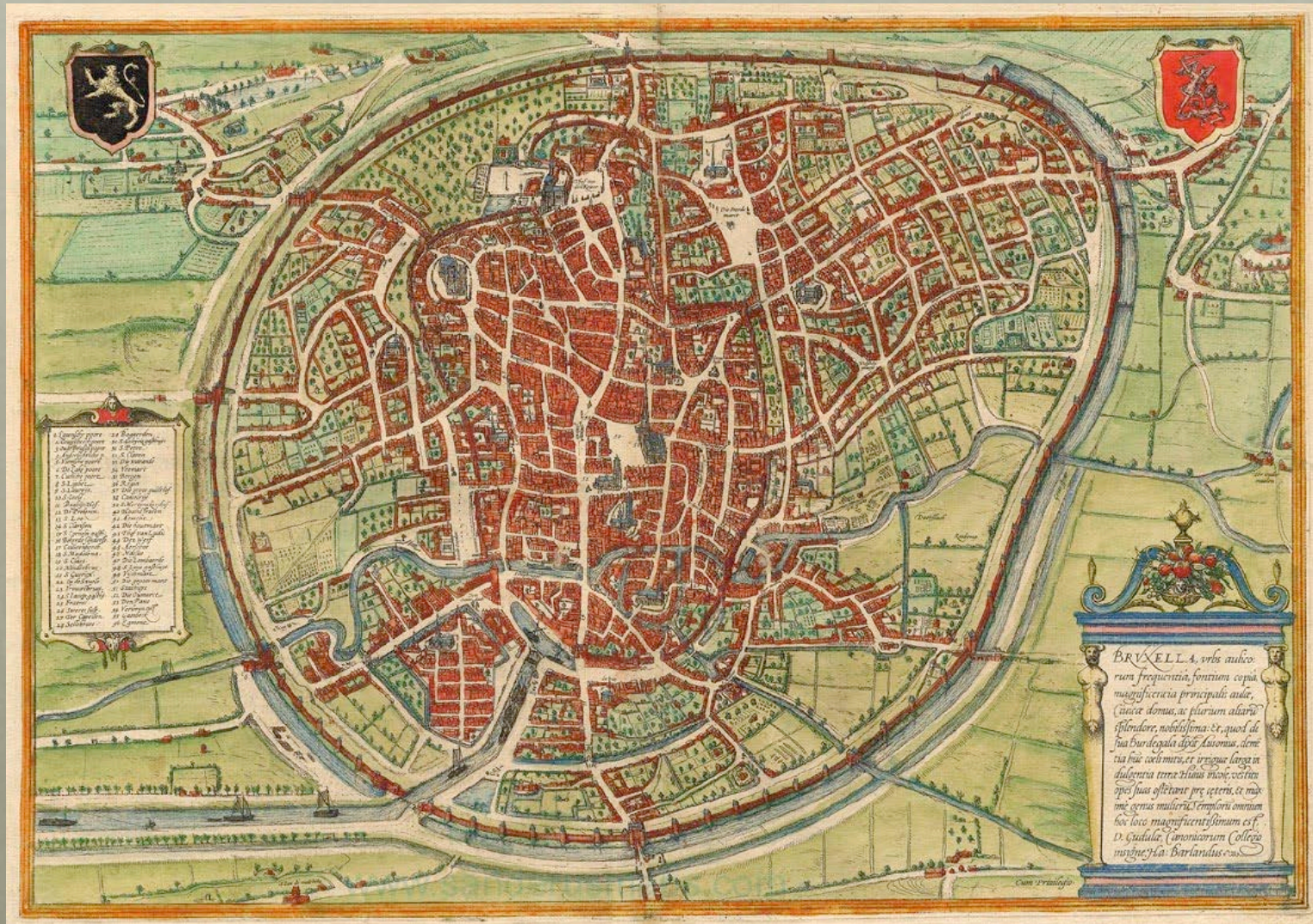




Reconfiguration: intertextual references
genetic code and sense of belonging <-> obliterations



References in genetic code, build stories: the late-medieval period;
Town-portraits with an eternal value (Town "Maps".)





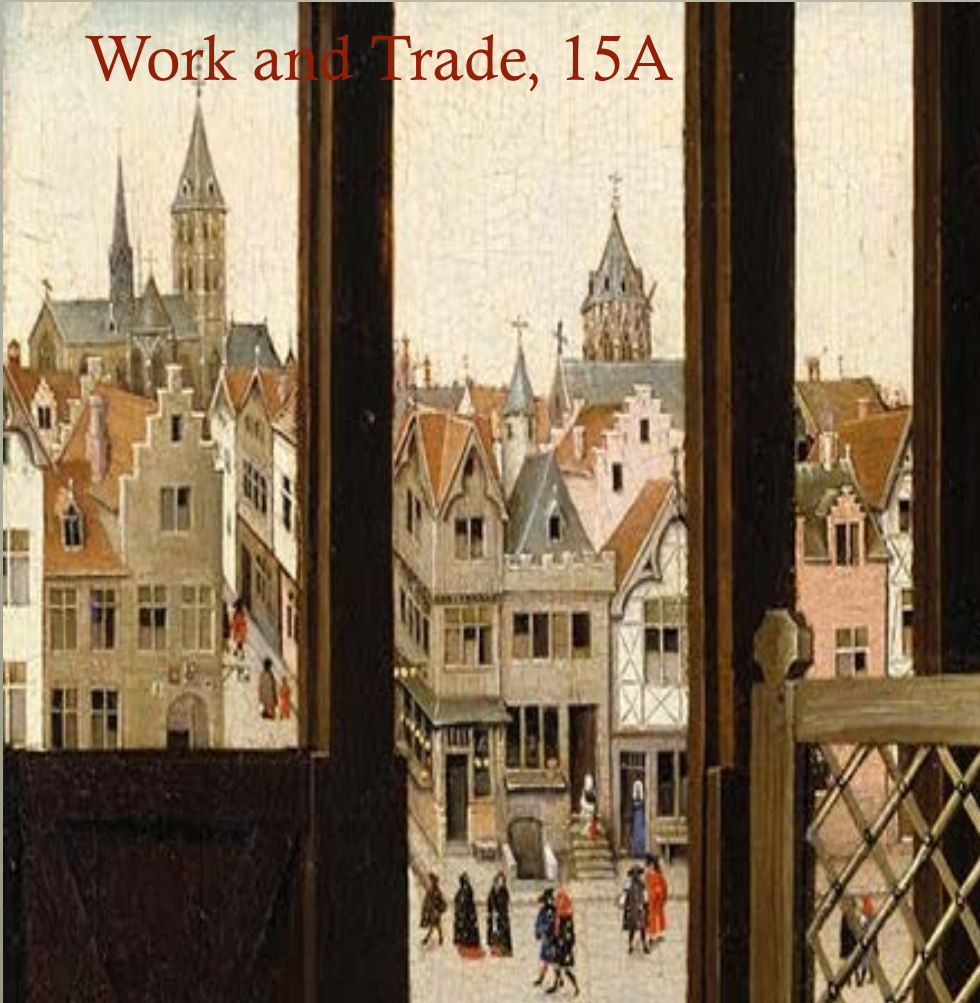




Meester van Flémalle, *Mérode-altaarstuk* (1425-1430) , New York

These representations had a subtle changing character, depending on the perception of urban life by different social groups. This shows how references change in relation to changing urban life and organization. Question: impact on spatial developments and architecture?

Work and Trade, 15A



Ideal and Heavenly, 15B





Van der Weyden, *Saint-Luke & Madonna*
Ca. 1435 (Boston)



Meester van het zicht van Sint-Goedele,
Madonna, Ca. 1475 (Liège)



merchants



guilds



patricians



reconfiguration in the urban fabric

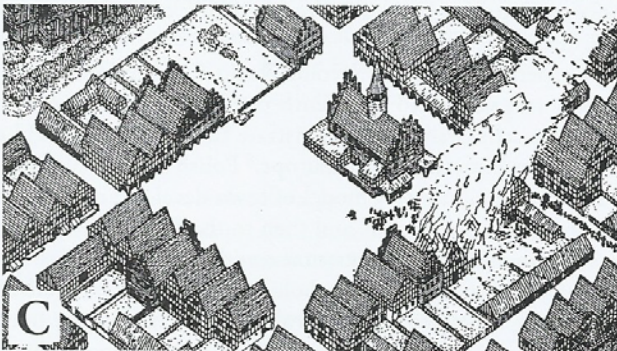
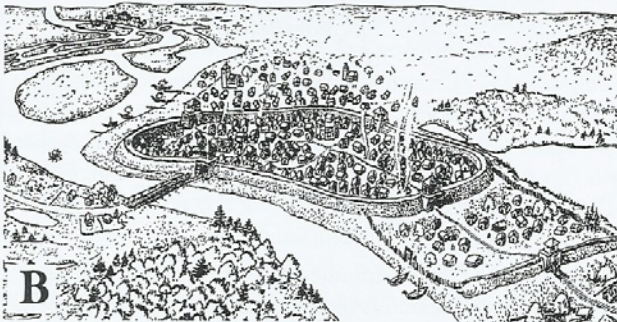
The Market Place



- Regulations
- Market Halls
- Public space
- Assembly
- Focus political and social activities
- Icon of the town, prestige
- Towers and symbols
- “Eternal”

Market Places:
theatres of the late-medieval urban identity, often related to the origin of the towns.

However: shift of spatial setting for exchange to squares (and triangular 'markets') shift only rather late: late 12th-early 14th c



These squares are called 'forum', referring to the Roman 'villa fori'. It is an intriguing question why and how the mental concept of the "forum" was re-invented at the dawn of the late medieval period, but is clear that we are dealing with a deliberate transformation of the fabric and spatial structure of the late medieval towns in the same period. We lack however data on the chronology of this transformation, on the gradual shift of the mental sense of place of 'having a market' towards the spatial development of the well known market places in the centres of the towns.

Lier



AN OLD BELGIAN TOWN

Published & Illustrated, London

Lier, situated about twelve miles to the south-east of Antwerp, manufactures silk, lace, shoes, and beet sugar. It also contains breweries and salt works. For some time it formed the headquarters from which King Albert directed military operations. The town hall, shown in the picture, dates from 1365, and housed the King and his staff while they remained in the town. The soldiers in the courtyard are the famous cavalry troops, who have gained the name of 'Black Devils.' In a very short time after the War had begun their reckless daring and abandon cost them two-thirds of their number.



LIER.

8th-10th c. central place: 'Old Lier'

11th-12th c. *oppidum* and church



- * 13th c. : cloth production
- * 1275: privilege on sale of cloth
- * Ca. 1300: markethalls of duke
- * Early 14th c: transfer of halls to town
- * 1338: privilege to hold textile market
- * 1367: prestigious cloth hall and belfry on scenic Market Place
- * 1410: Raadhuis





Figuur 1.95: De ruïne van het zuidwillems op 2000 m van de middeleeuwse Van Cuwvooberghesraam.



Figuur 2.6: Het geleegde zwarte pakkes in profiel 7 (SP11, 2000 m).

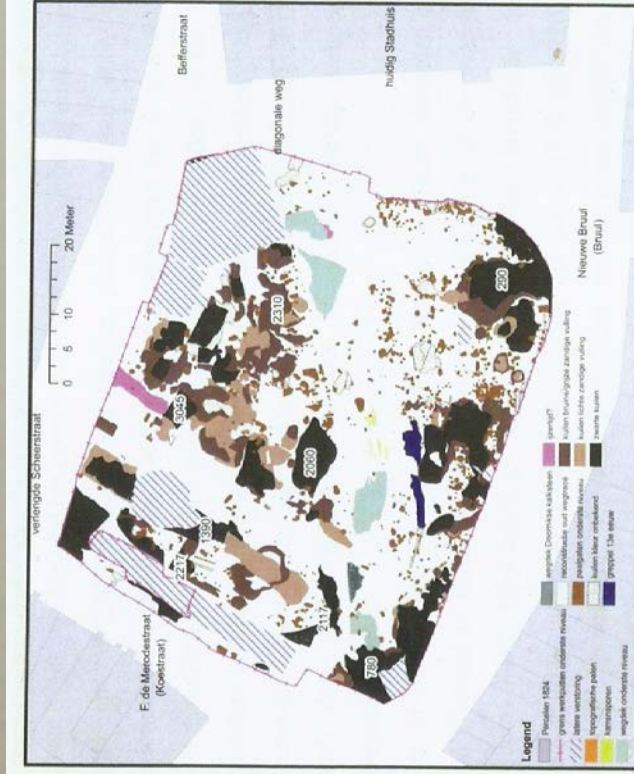
Mircomorphology Barbora Wouters et al
 11th c. rural meadow & wasteland
 12th c: open space for communal activities:
 organic deposits
 13th c: muddy and dirty open area outside
 town (?): filled pits, leveling
 Early 14th c: designated and delimited
 forum with intensive use (organic deposits)
 Ca. 14b: white sand cover (cleaning and
 closing)



Mechelen



NITIDISSIMÆ
CIVITATIS
MECHLINEEN-
SIS, IN MEDITVL-
LIO BRABANTI-
Æ SITÆ, EXAC-
TISSIMA DELI-
NEATIO.

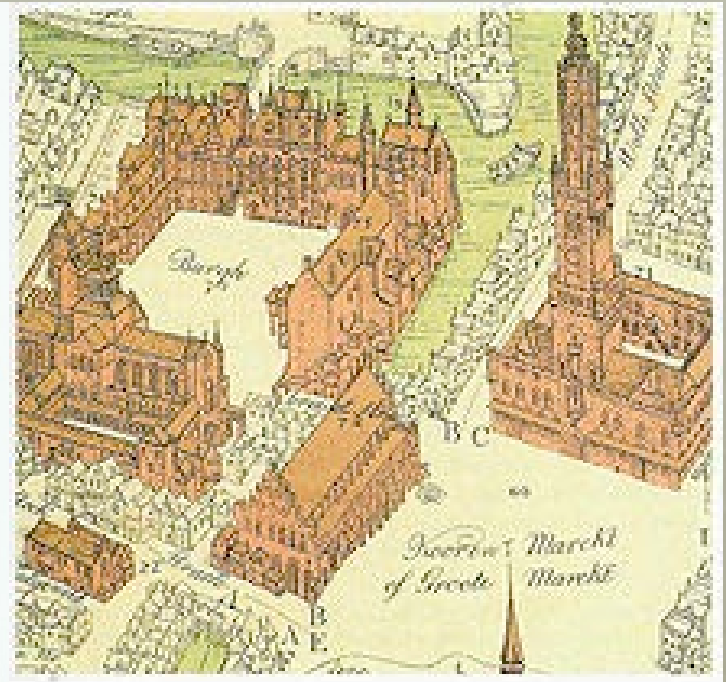


Mechelen

- A: 8th c. monastery and Karolingian wic: location outside present town
- B: 10th-12th c. burcht and wharf (D-shape)
- C: 13th c: roads in the low meadows and wastelands + rich organic waste deposits (pottery) on later market + hall
- Similar: muddy, open space in former wetlands
- D.: 1310- 1350: design and construction new urban fabric (non-feudal) and construction Forum and new infrastructure on square



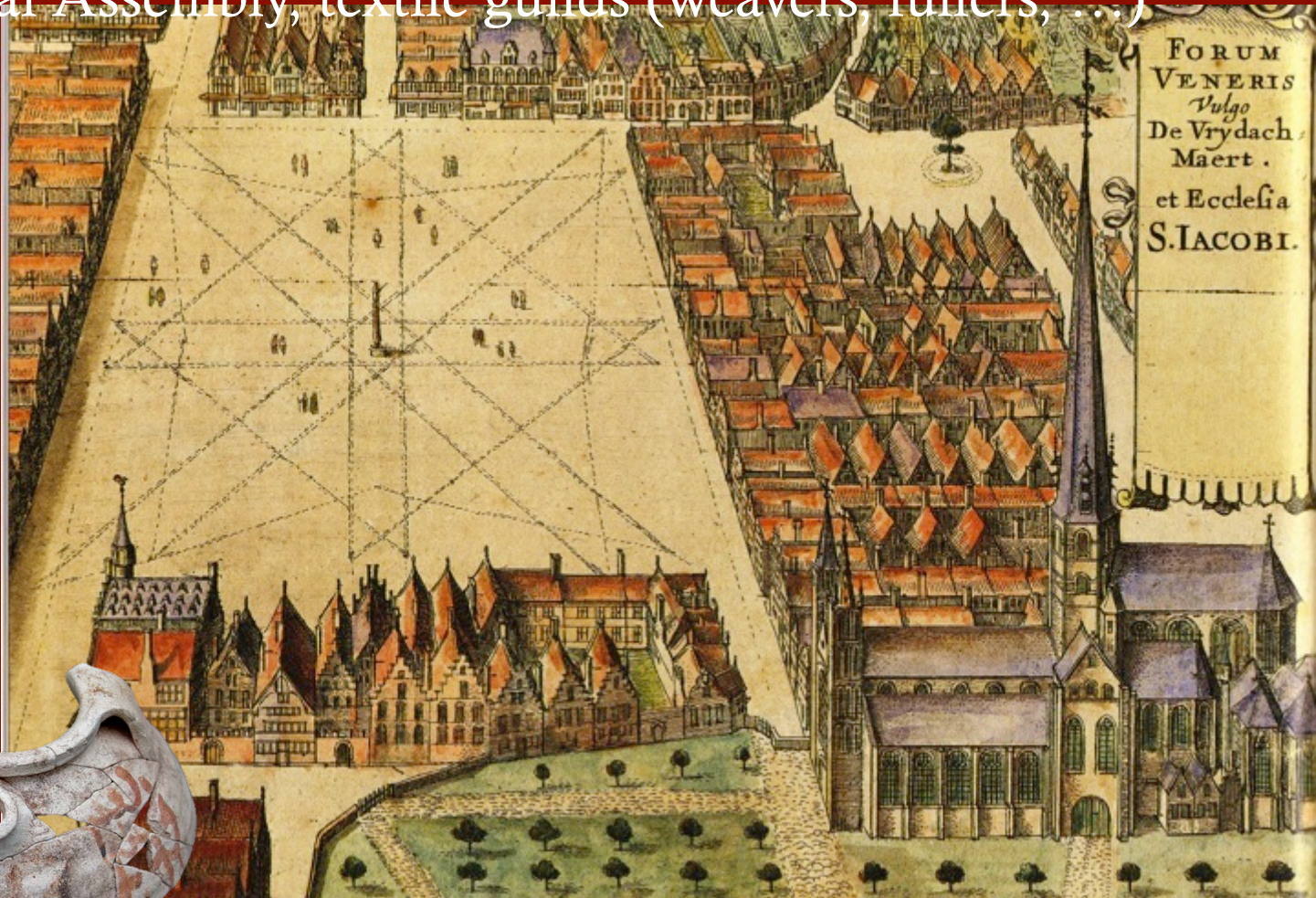
Bruges



1127: “forum” is partly
“palus” (or mudd pool) and
“cloacarium”

1240: transformation into
ornamental Market Place

Ghent: Vrijdagmarkt (*Forum Veneris*): early 13th c
On top of 10th-12th c deposits and buildings (Redpainted
wares)
Social Assembly, textile guilds (weavers, fullers, ...)







Market places:

- Start as marginal and dirty
- designated by feudal power at edge of feudal *oppida* (rural wetlands)
- Urban social groups negotiate and redesign public space (gradual)
- First early 13th c, last mid 14th c
- Assembly, symbolic architecture, regulations, clean
- => icon of the new social groups (merchants, guilds)
- Shift from feudal town to forum-town = gradual and complex
- Obliteration of early medieval and marginalisation of feudal fabric and references

Portus towns (7th-10th c) and Feudal Towns (10th-12th c)

- Medemblik, Dorestad, Walichrum (Domburg), Ghent and later also Antwerp 9th c. trade town in North Sea Network
- Between 920 and 980: Lords dominate Ghent, Antwerp and other places and redesign urban fabric
- “Recuperation”
- Vocabulary of power: collegiate churches and fortresses
- Presence of Lords, stimulating and facilitating trade of wool and rural products from estates => Control of Merchant Agency that was present long before

Légende

||||| Rivières et canaux disparus/enfouis

Voies d'eau actuelles

Cadastre actuel

Gd 5 Localisation des découvertes archéologiques

Gravesteen

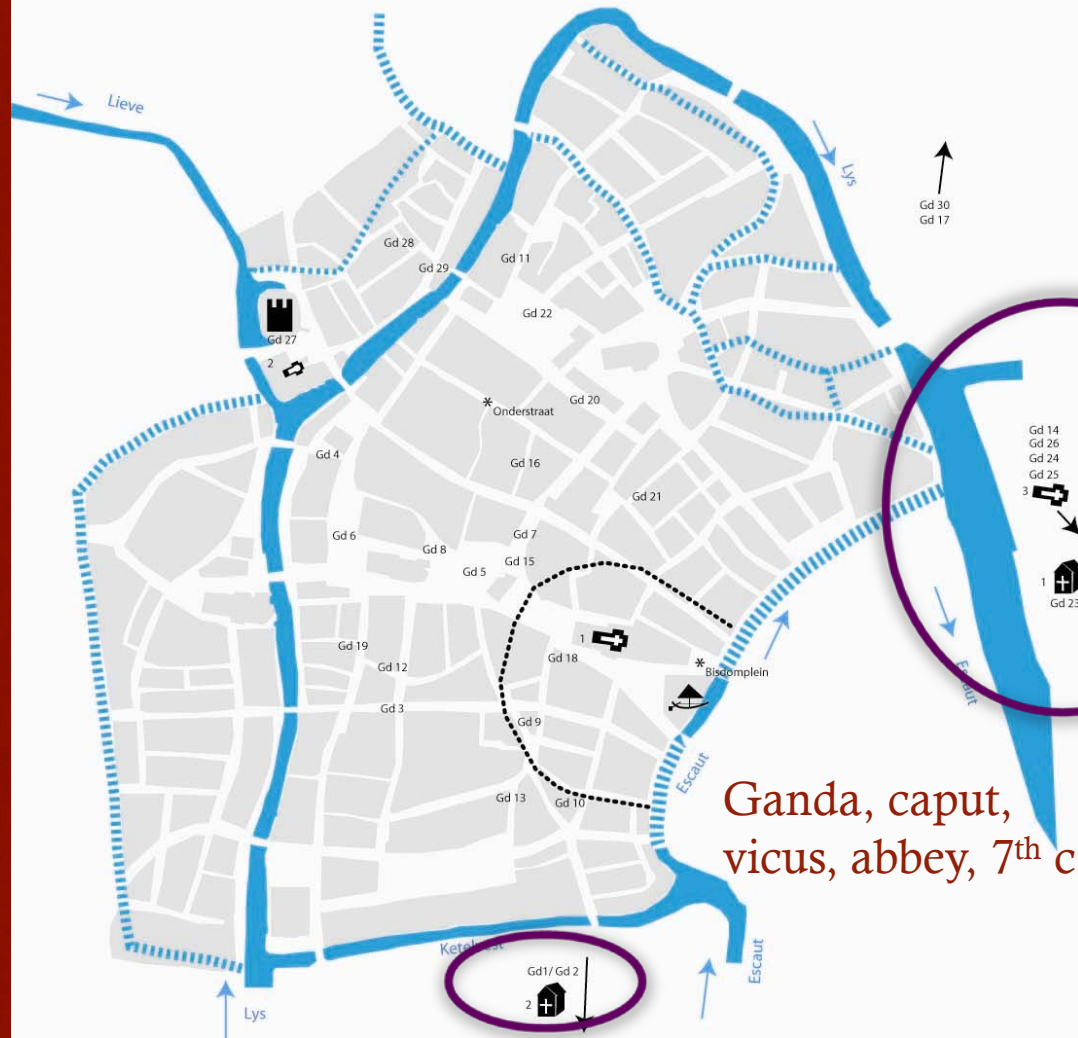
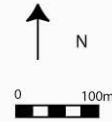
Fossé du 9e siècle

Abbeyes
1: Saint-Bavon 2: Saint-Pierre

Edifices religieux
1: Saint-Jean (auj. cathédrale Saint-Bavon) 2: Sainte-Pharailde 3: Eglise paroissiale de Saint-Bavon

Emplacement présumé du portus

Gent: 6th-9th c



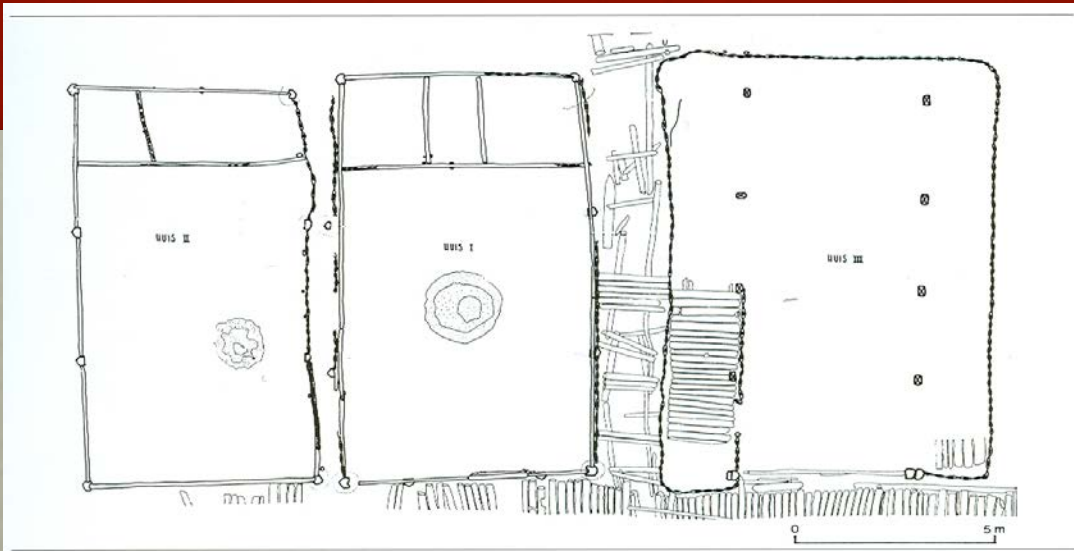
Ganda, caput,
vicus, abbey, 7th c

GENT: Novum Castellum 10th c (bourg castral): external control of *mercatores* in former hostile town? (D-shape)

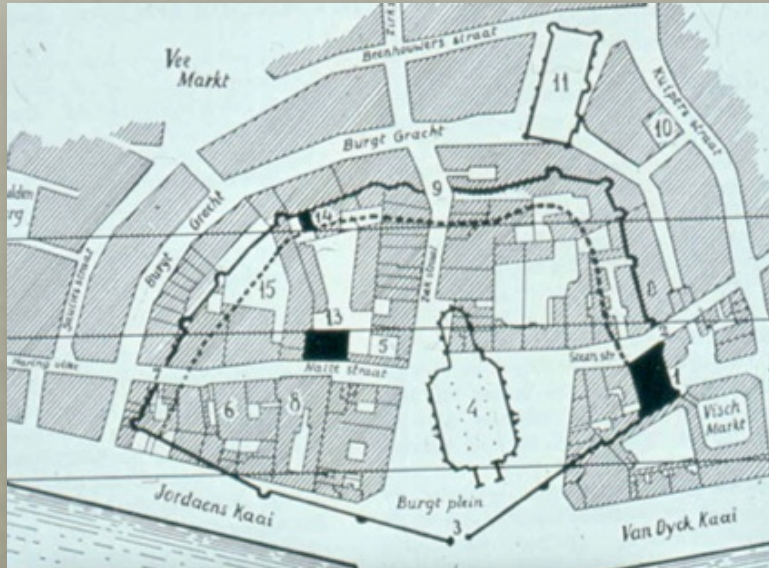




Antwerp Longphuir / portus 2nd half 9th -10th c.



Antwerp: transformation to Ottonian fortress and
“German” type trade centre, mid 10th c



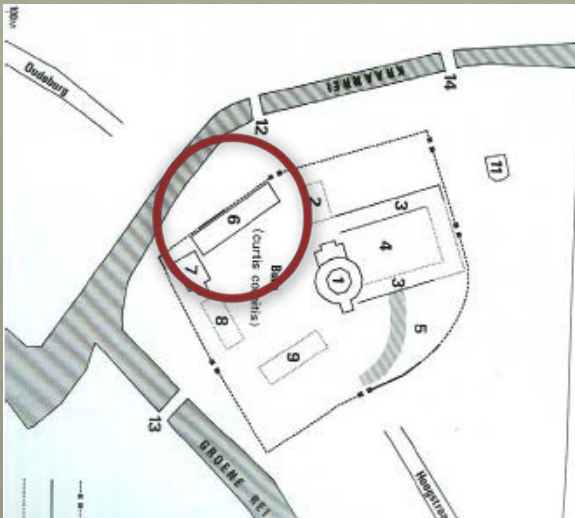
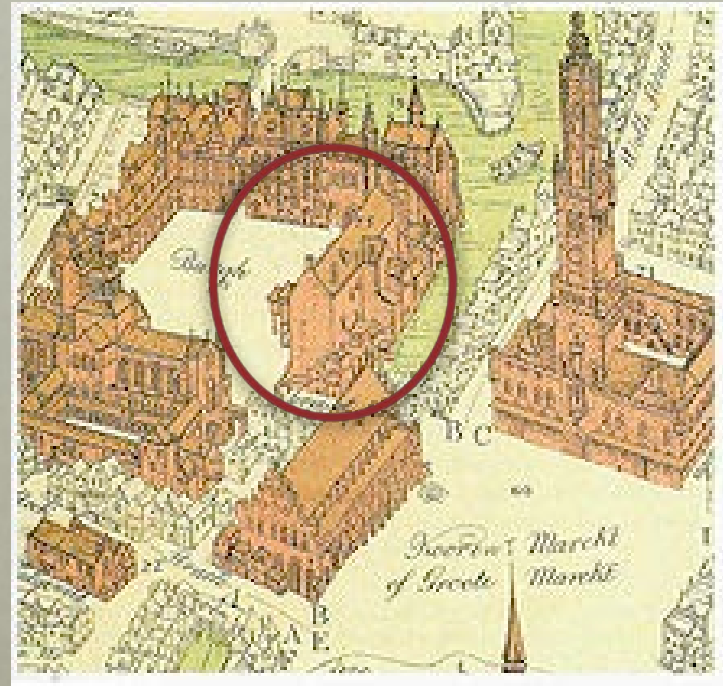


ANTWERP
TRADE, 10th-13th c

M M

uitwisseling tot 10de eeuw

25-1-2016



1127:
lapidea domus comitis
Regalis aula
Suprema camera castri
Turris
Lobium comitis major
(gallery)



SEPTEN

ADMIRATIONES CIVITATIS

BRV

GENSIS

Conclusions

Biography = selection of memories and references

Changing meanings and fabric, changing discourse

Urban biographies = permanent
Reconfiguration and changes of intertextual references.

genetic code and sense of belonging =
dynamic

Archaeological consequences

Urban heritage is but latest phase in this
proces

