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Keynote address

In praise of slow urban growth design patterns: The timeless way of planning

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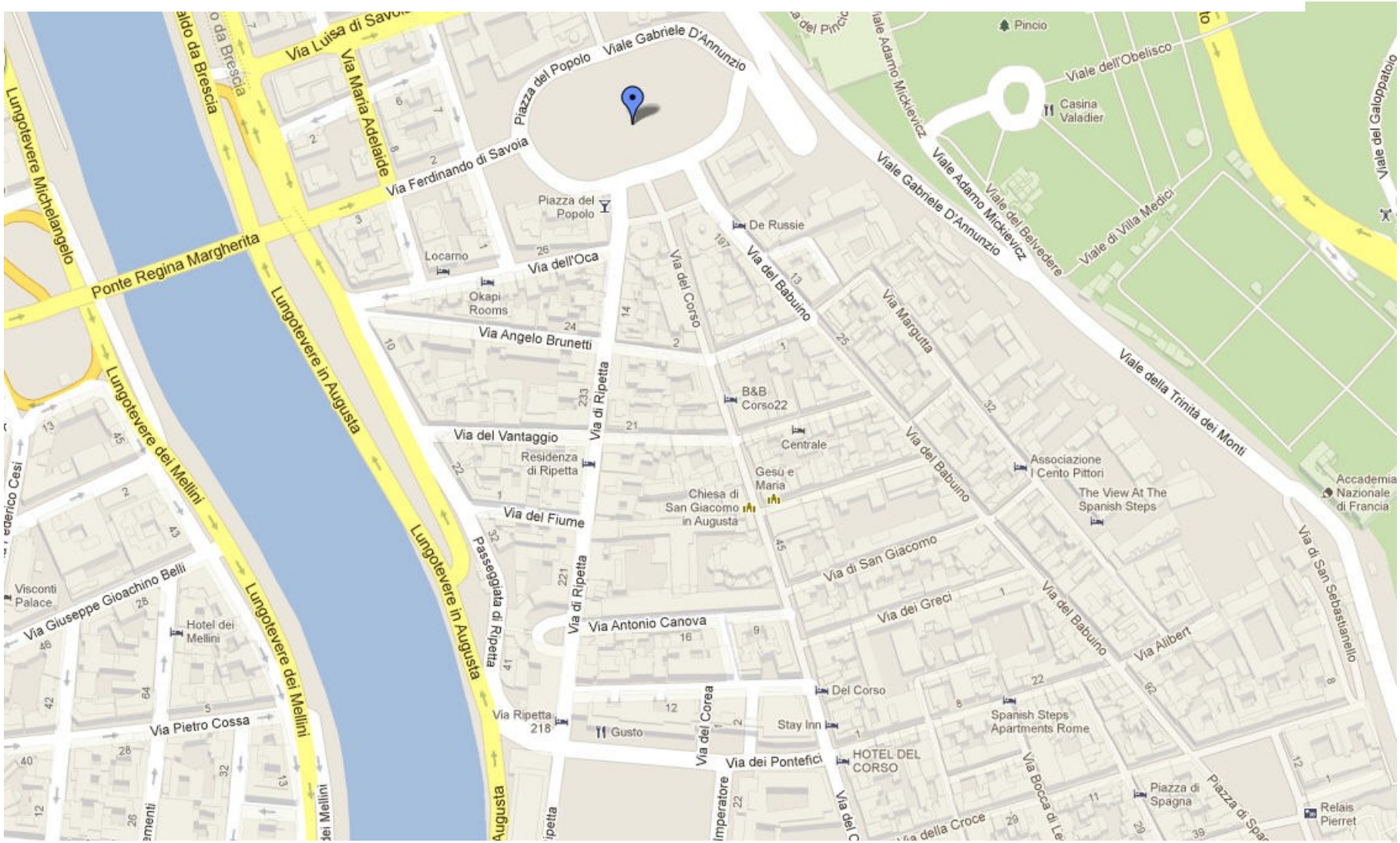
At a time of growing concern for resource depletion and energy price increase a flexible piece-and-frame approach to urban extensions makes sense.

The lessons of timeless ways of town planning could perhaps be of some interest just as Christopher Alexander's "timeless ways of building".

The grid has been the dominant urban form, from the oldest recorded urban plan (near Konya) built some 9.000 years ago, till today, either as squares or linear - made of a main spine and parallel ways. The grid has often been combined with radial urban development.

Hereafter a few variations.

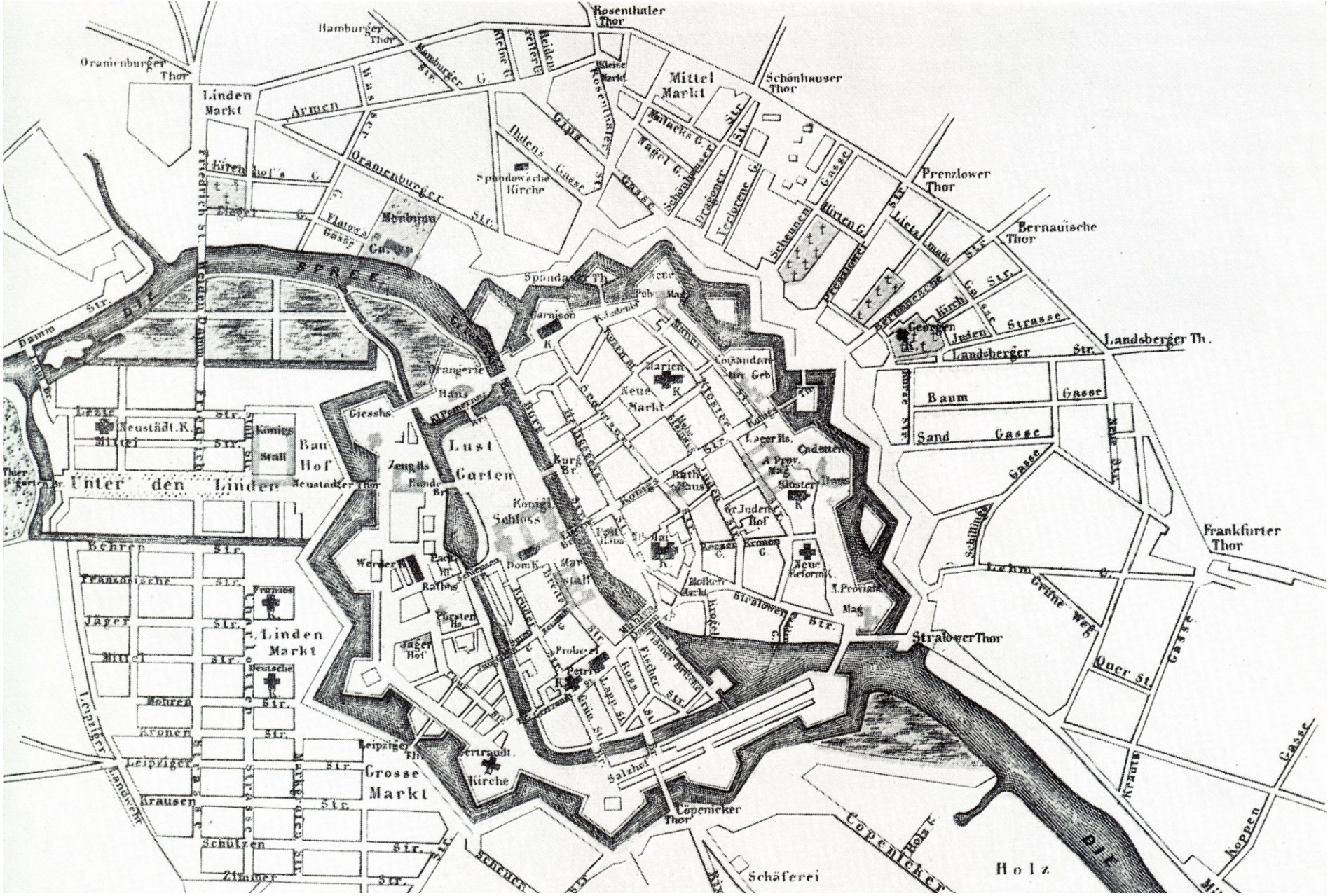
1. The case of Rome Sixtus V Plan: a piece and frame approach



The plan expressed a long term vision by a strong framework combining a radial linear urban extension and a grid and radial. The starting point was the present Piazza del Popolo. The urban expansion followed the Via del Corso, via Ripetta and via del Babuino. The filling of the framework was flexible, allowing any change in style and function.

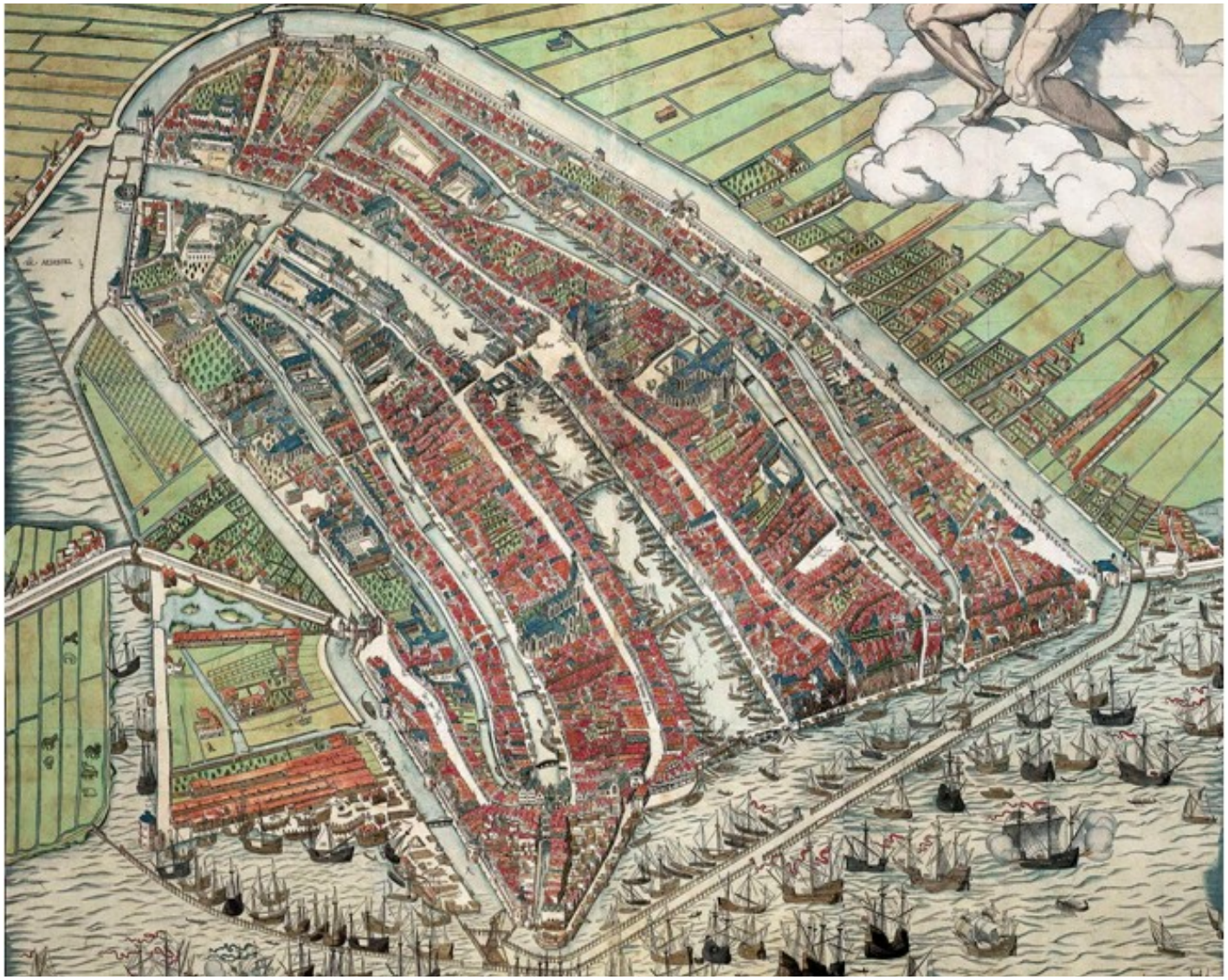
2. The case of Friedrichstadt Berlin, a variation of the Sixtus Plan

The urban frame starts from the present Mehringenplatz (Hallessches Thor) and progresses northwards along the Friedrichstrasse towards the Oranienburger Thor.



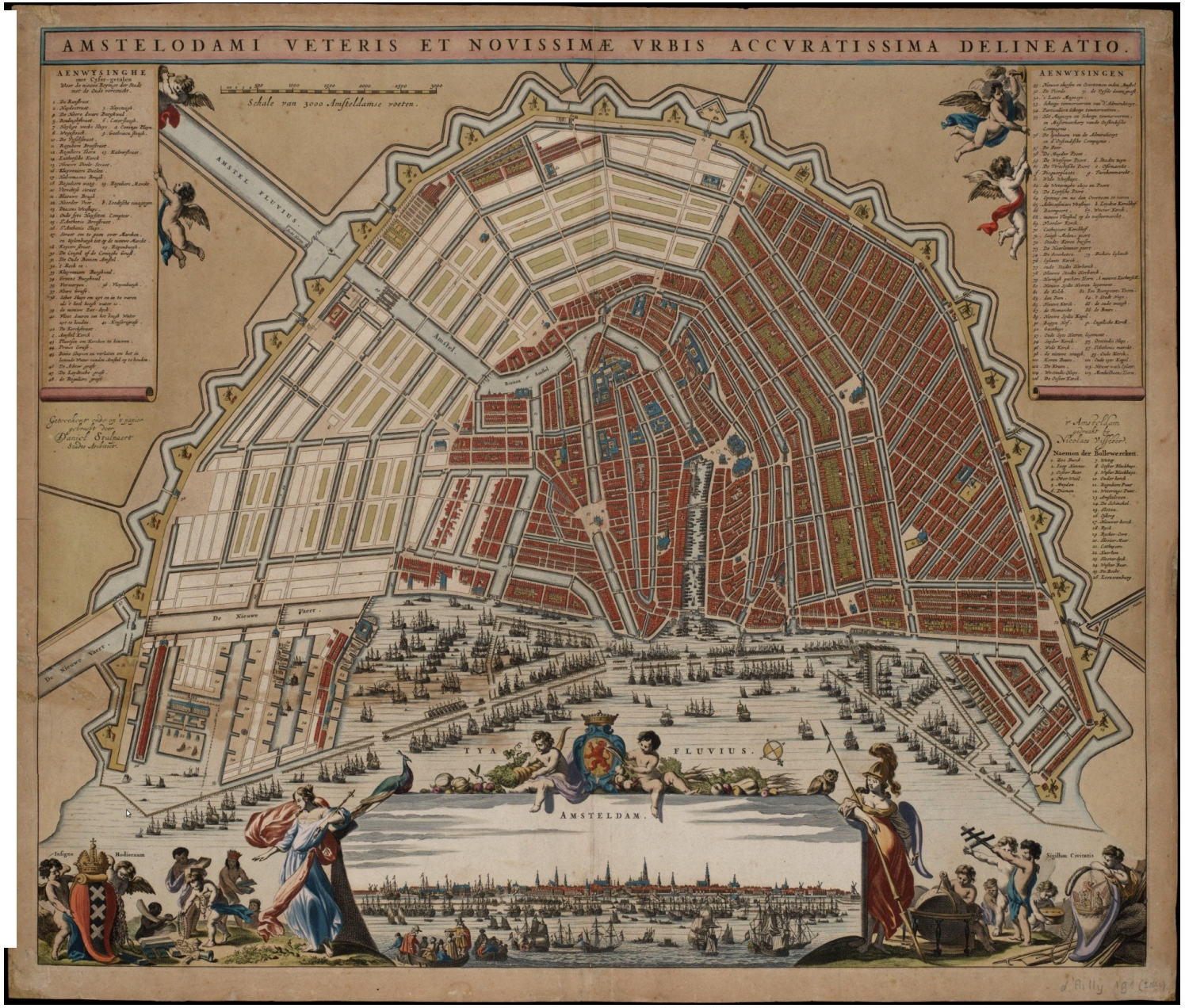
East of the Friedrichstadt the iconic Royal Schloss (to be rebuilt) was erected between this new town and Alt-Berlin ("Berlin-Babylon", About the XX1st World Congress of Architecture, Berlin, 22-26 July 2002. (*A+ Architecture, Urban Planning, Design, Art*), 17/9/2002).

3. The case of Amsterdam's curvilinear extension (Singel)

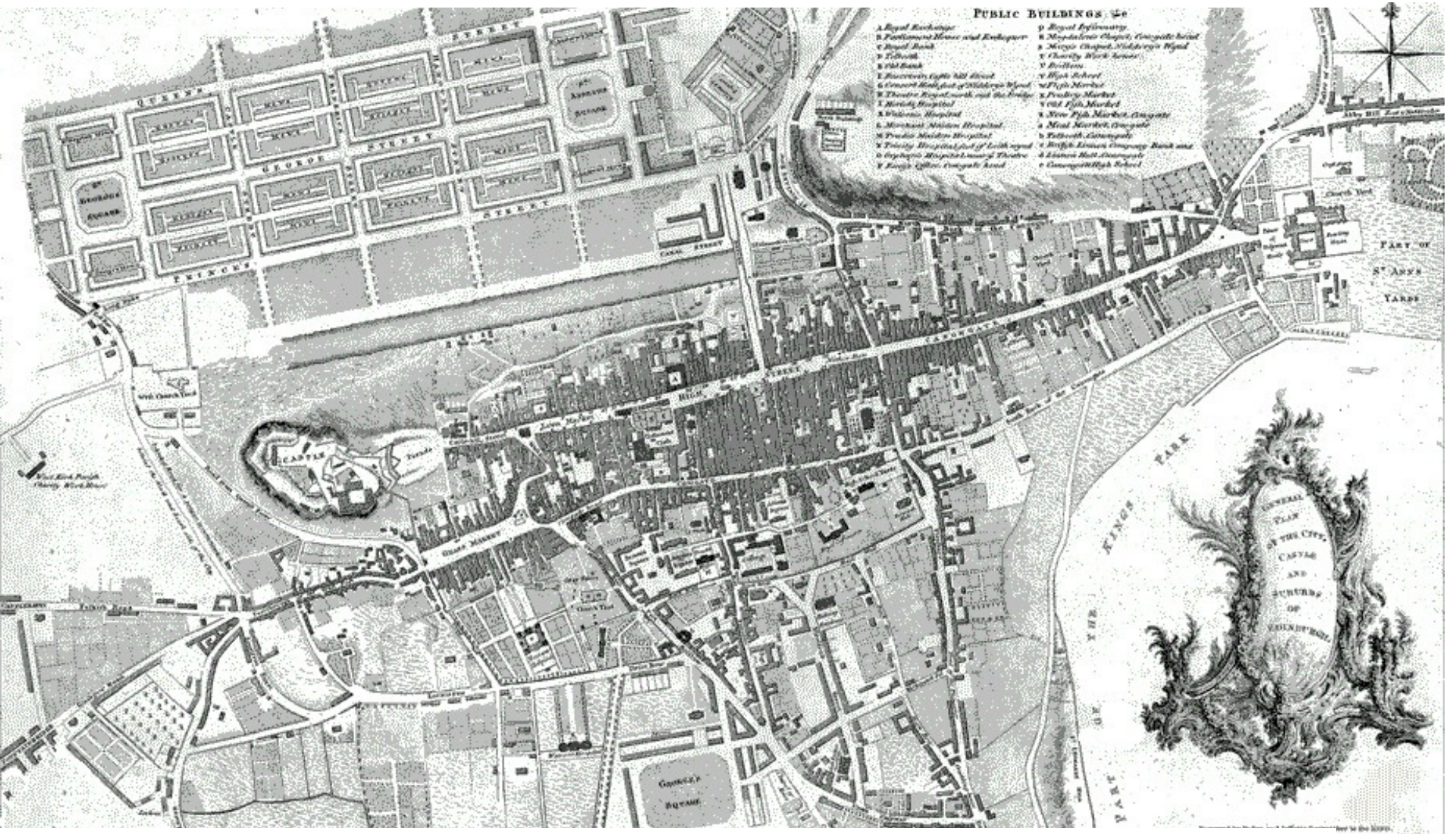


The Middle-age town developed southwards from the port along a main waterway and parallel canals but was confronted in the early 17th Century by the need to accommodate a major population growth.

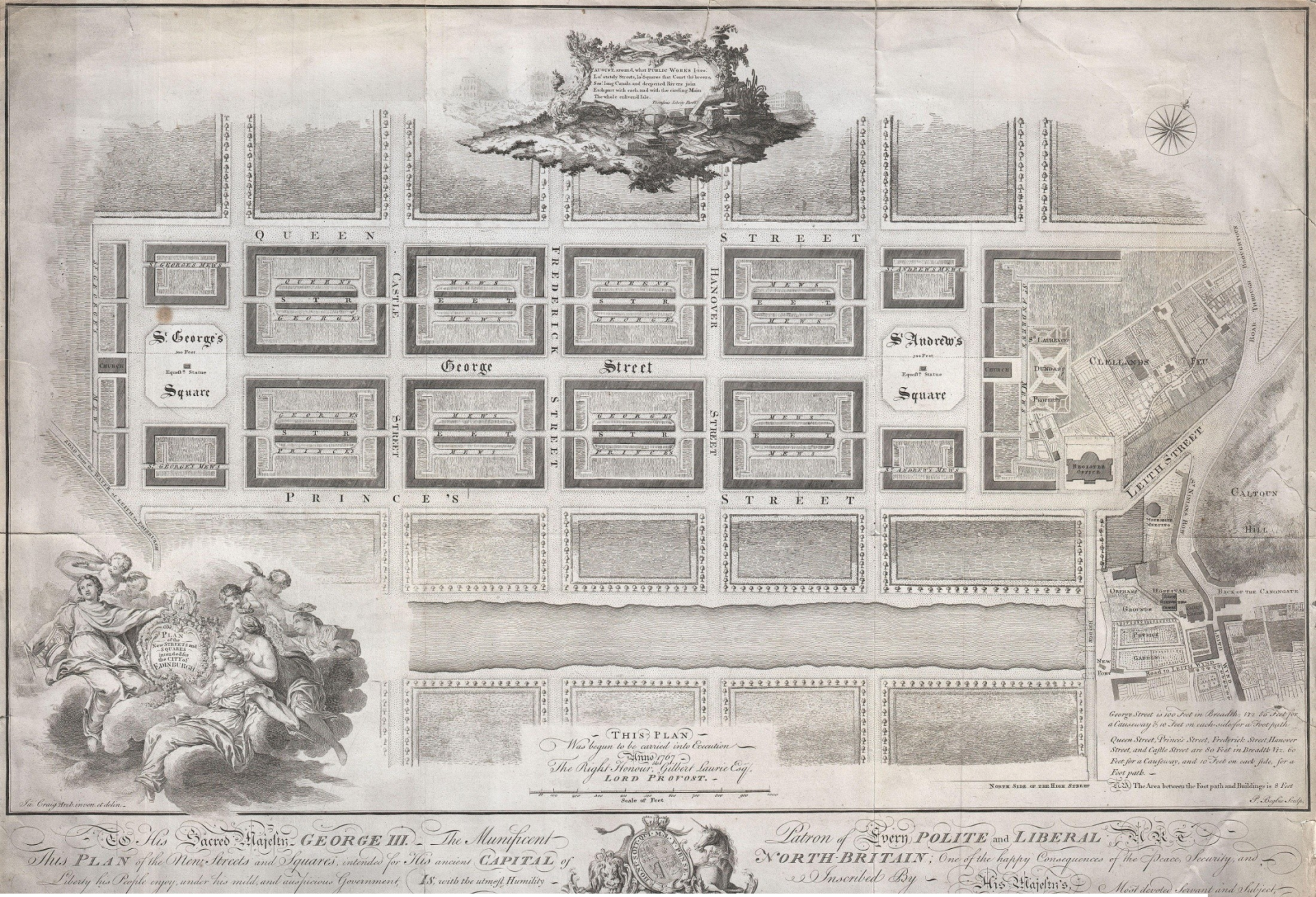
The City adopted a curvilinear development framework, surrounding the old town by a triple circle of canals and a grid of streets.
This plan was implemented over some 400 years and has become a World Heritage site (http://www.ffue.org/?s=singel)



4. The case of Edinburgh: from a linear development to a grid framework



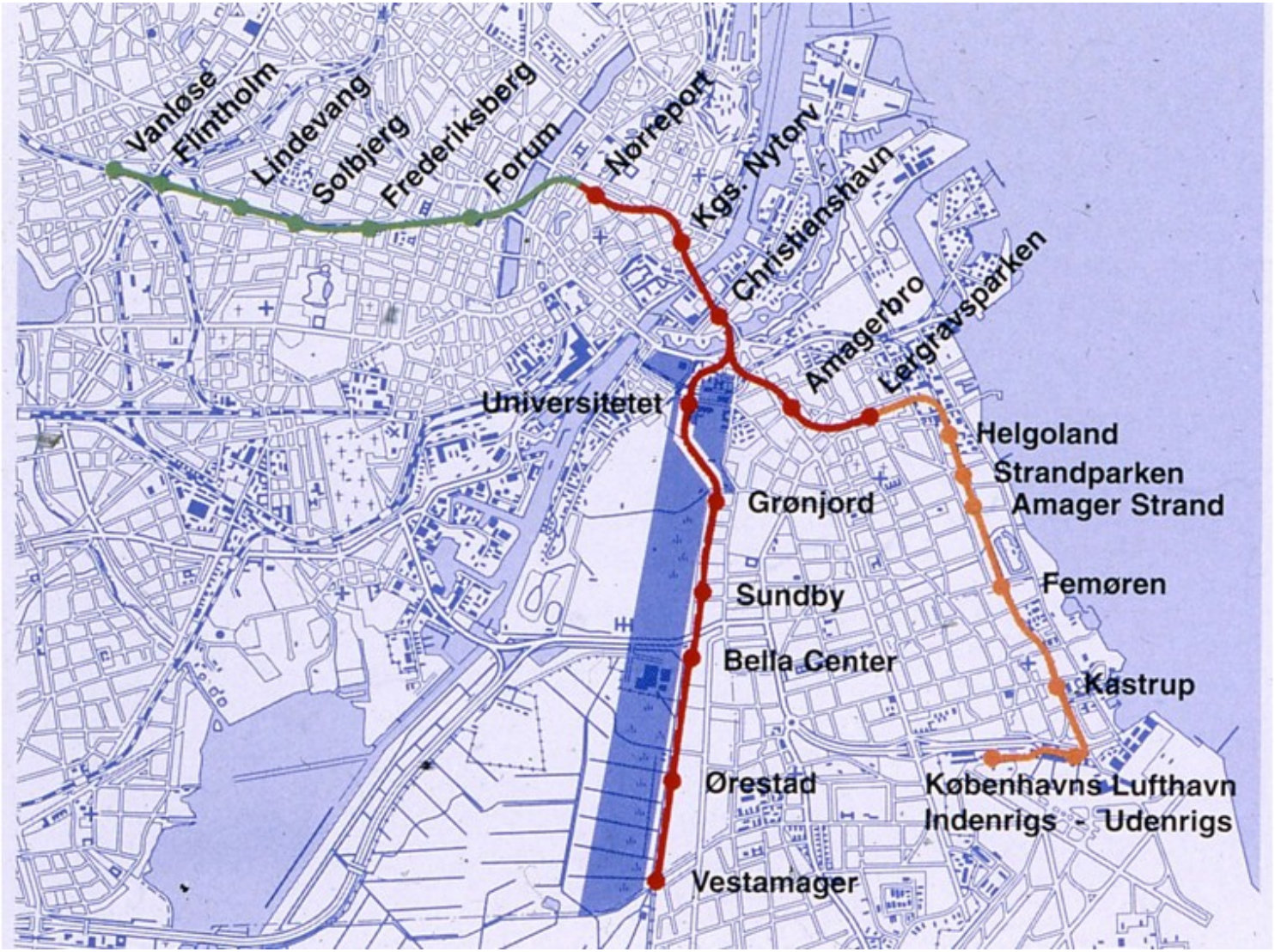
The Long Mile started from the Castle and framed the urban development . In the 18tn Century the City took the historical decision to create a “New Town” on the Northern side of the valley instead of framing the urban development Southwards, towards the port.



The new linear grid framework was gradually implemented by filling the space between the two “anchors” (St George and St Andrews Squares).

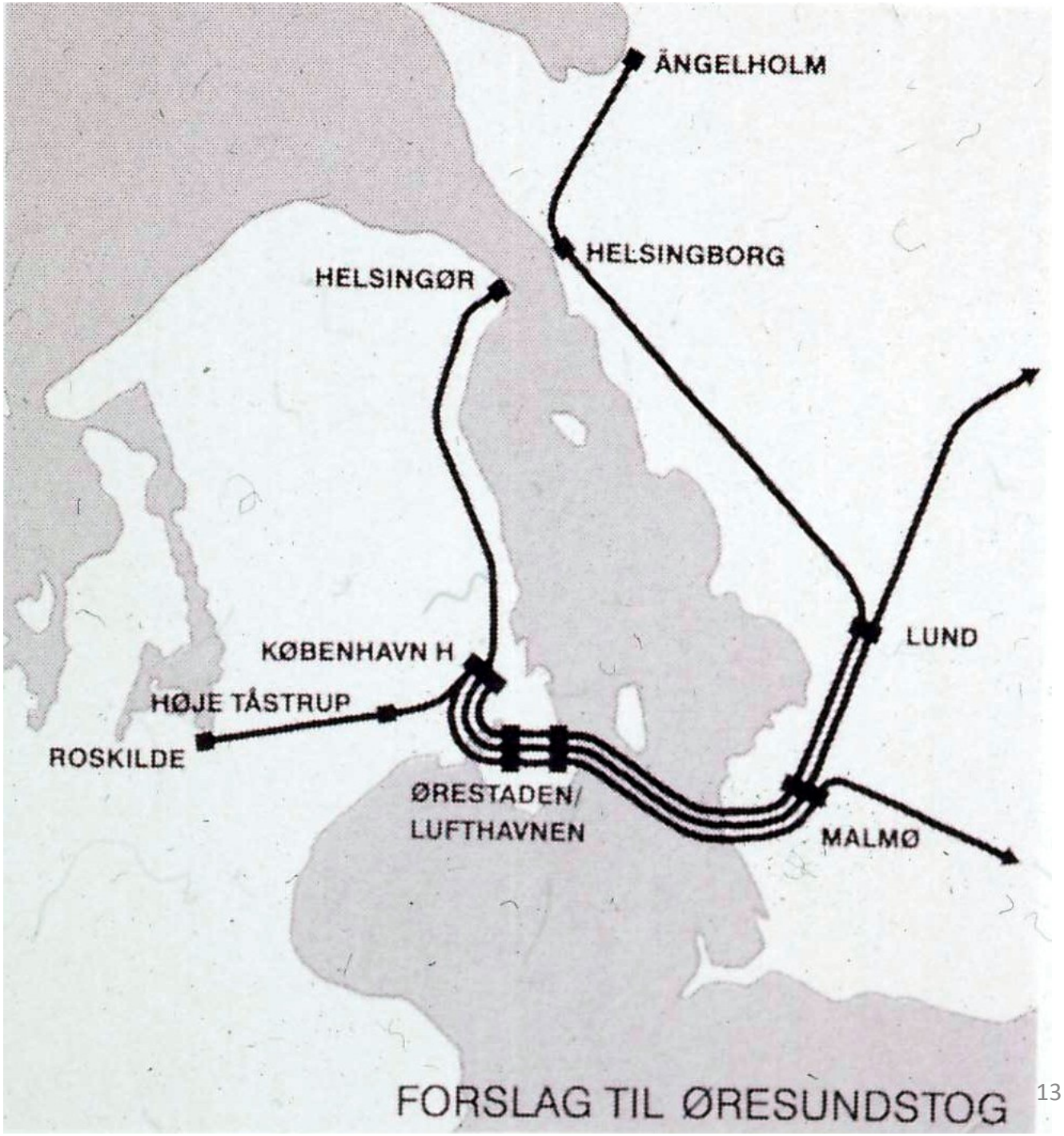
5. The case of Copenhagen: the “Finger plan” as framework for development

The Middle Age Old town was preserved and complemented by the grid of the Royal area in the 18th Century.



The later urban extension followed a “Finger plan” along public transport (“transit oriented development”). The land acquisitions and infrastructure expenses preceded the actual urban development so the land value increase was captured by the authorities who initiated it instead of speculators. The coloured lines show the driverless metro, and its stations.

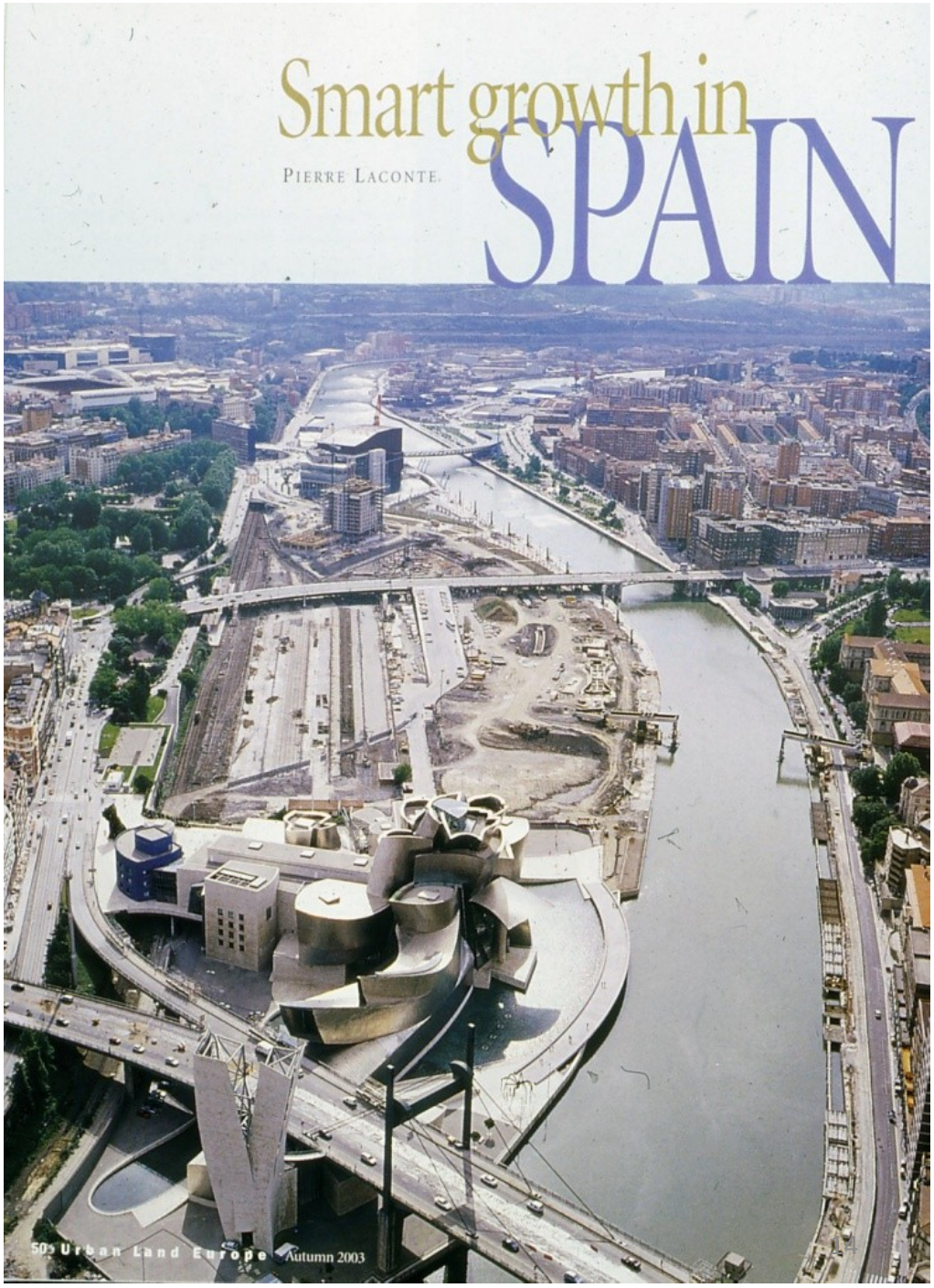
The urban extension went beyond the city borders and extended towards Malmoe, setting the frame for a bi-national city served by the same infrastructure.



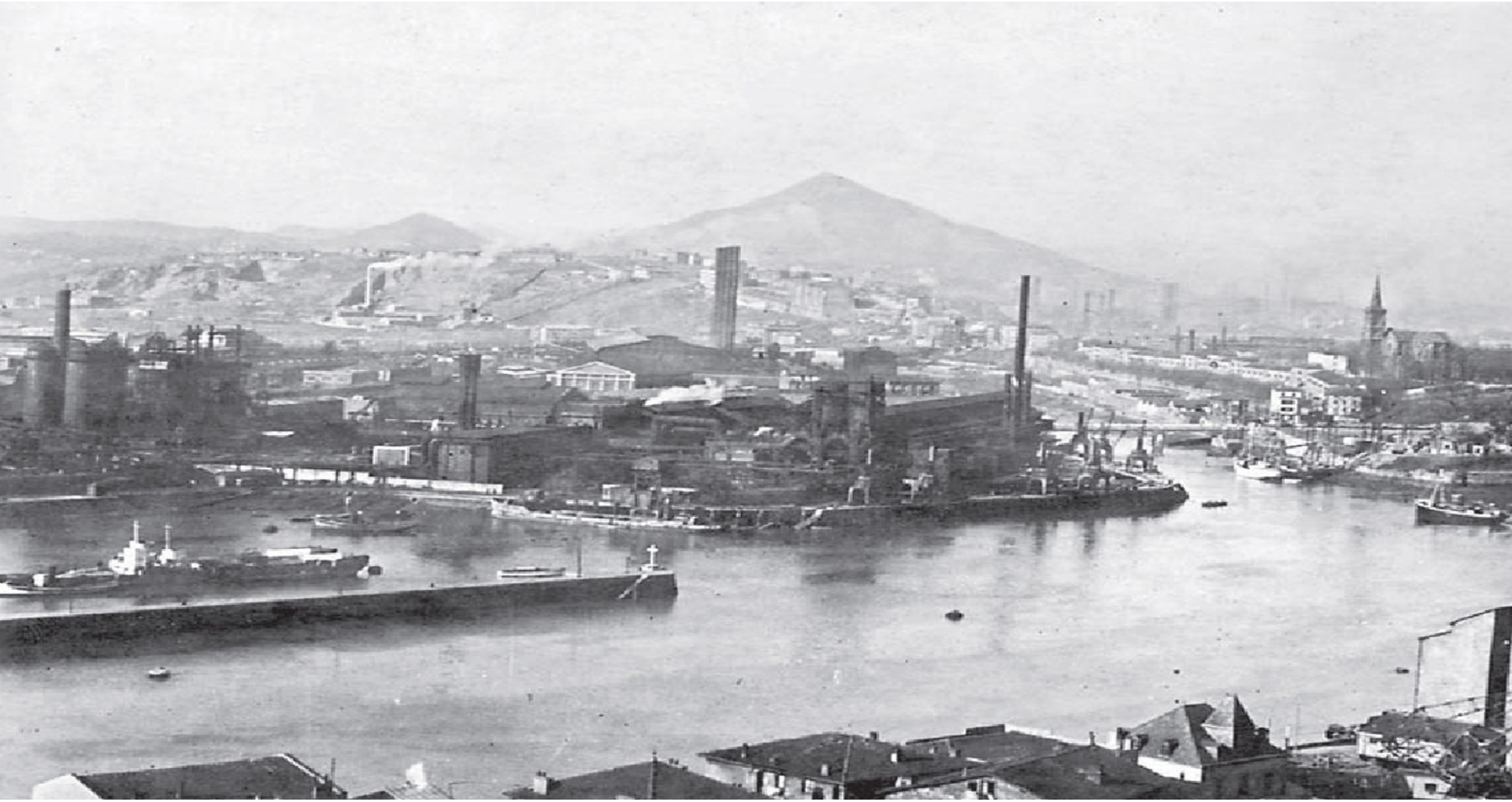
6. The case of Bilbao: a new urban development along a linear grid

This derelict area of around 40 ha owned by several public bodies was developed along a unified linear grid frame with two development anchors: the new Museum (Guggenheim Bilbao) on the South and the Culture complex on the North. The actual urban development was entrusted to an autonomous publicly owned private company: RIA 2000.

http://www.ffue.org/?p=1301



- The industrial land was re-used for new activities, based on services and culture, while preserving architecture heritage.



The valuable land situated between the two anchors and very close to the Central business district was developed by Rià 2000 with obligation to invest all the surplus in new public infrastructure along the same canal.

The implementation of the plan took some 20 years. Its focal point is an office tower (C. Pelli 2011)

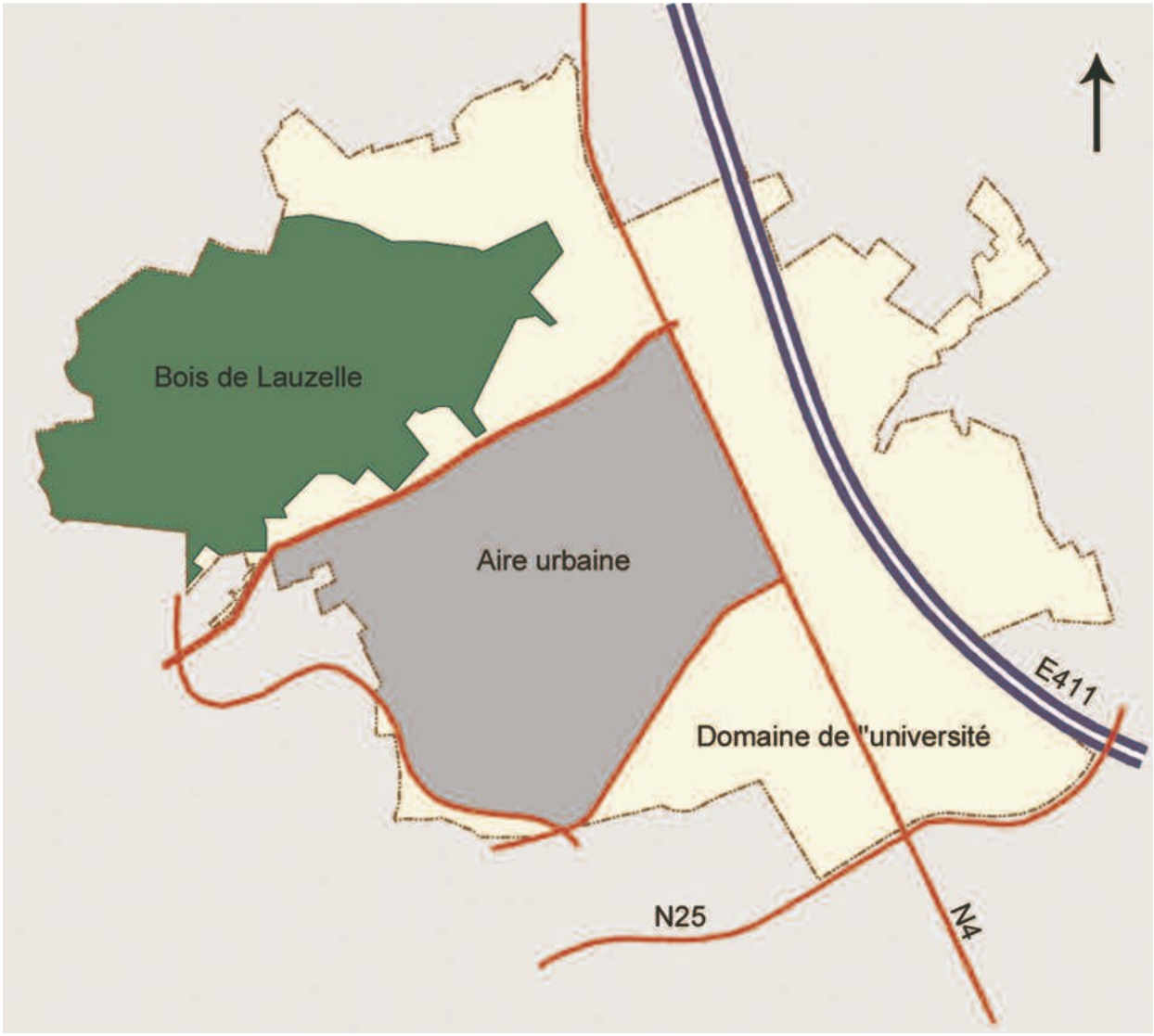
- A new tram line serves the canal shore in the urban centre, saving traffic and parking space and adding to the citizens' quality of life.

Image 02. Tram stop

The surplus generated by the Rià 2000 development was also used to rehabilitate Bilbao La Vieja further along the same canal.
http://www.ffue.org/?p=1301

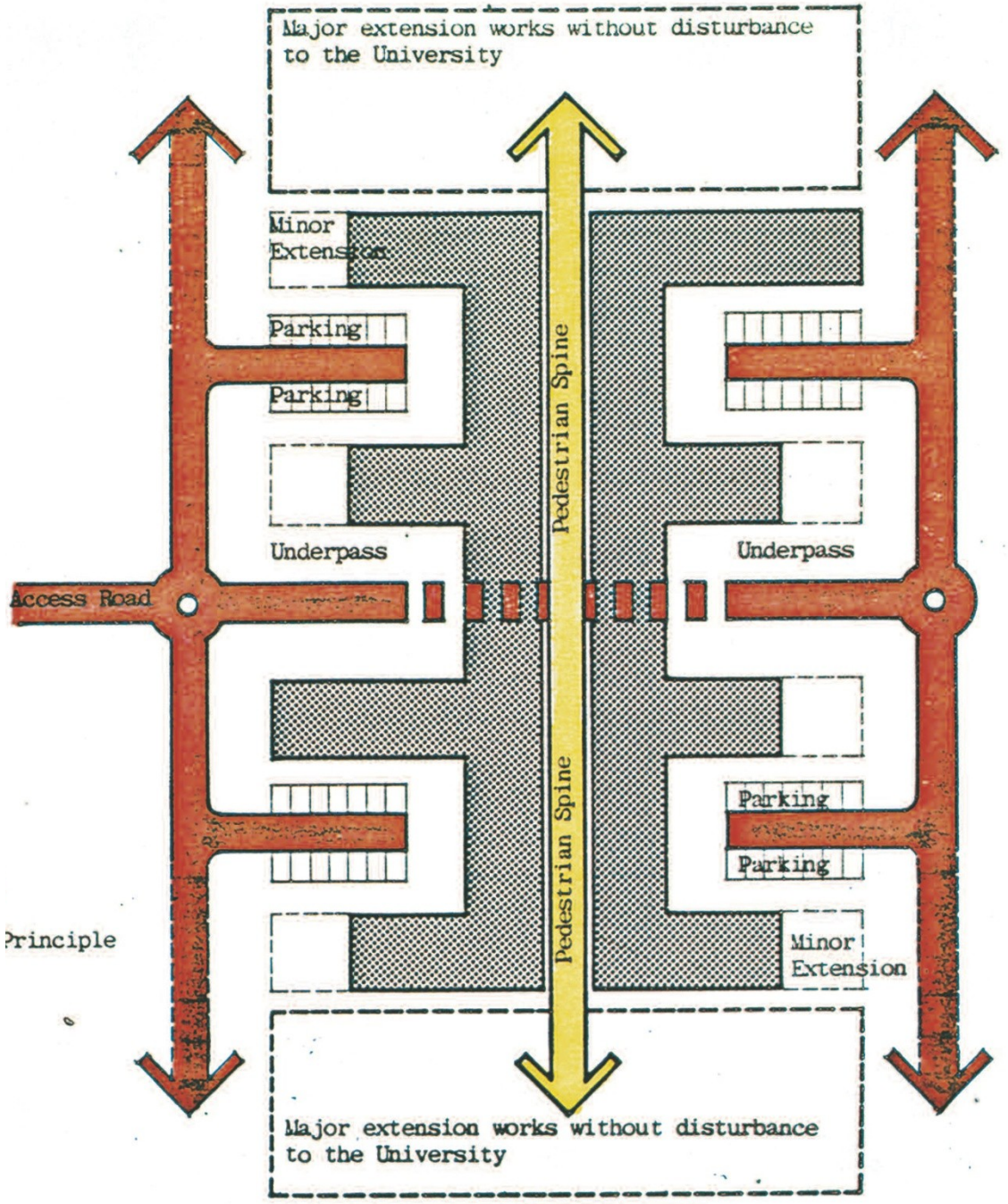
7. The case of Louvain-la-Neuve new university town (near Brussels)

The French-speaking Catholic university of Louvain, forced to leave the City of Louvain, bought some 1000 ha of agricultural and forest land in a rural area close to Brussels Namur trunk road (N4). The central part was set aside for urban development anchored on the existing N4 road. Forest land in the North was strictly preserved. The overall master plan and architectural coordination was entrusted to the Groupe Urbanisme-architecture (R. Lemaire, J-P. Blondel and P. Laconte), using the existing city Louvain as a model.



Planning for uncertainty about future resources

A linear pedestrian central spine starting from the existing road allows a step by step mixed urban development, automobile access to buildings and parking being placed outside of the spine, with occasional underpasses, inspired by the University of Lancaster linear development.

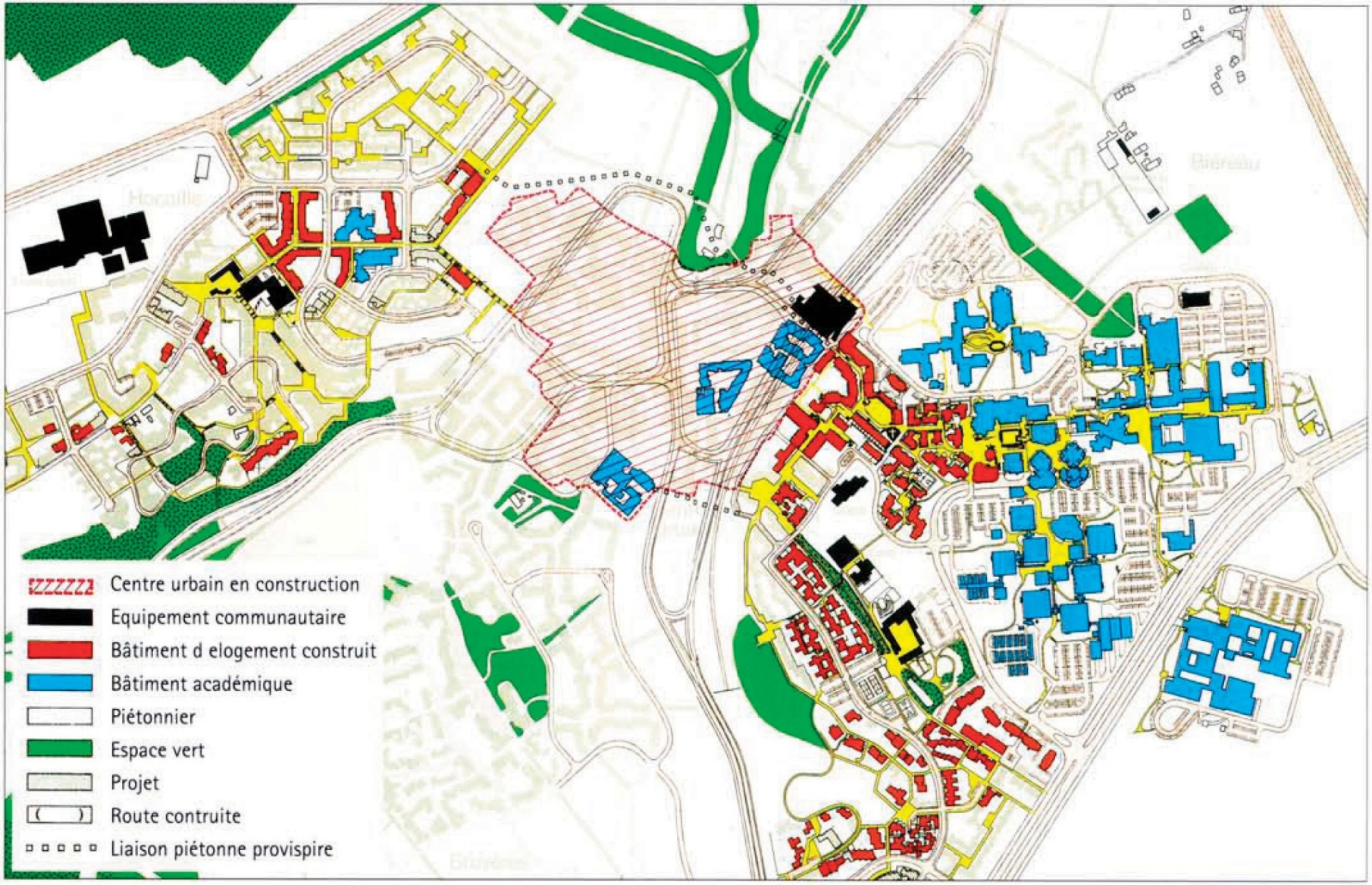


The application of this principle on the ground is shown in the main pedestrian street of the first phase, starting from the existing N4 road, East of the site, in 1972 (lower part of the picture), later extended to the railway station opened in 1976 (upper part), the centre of the city and the extension towards the Western part of the site.

The city grows quarter by quarter, with its roads, technical services and the public transport line growing similarly. The total organism is always in balance, is always complete, whether it grows or stops growing or not.

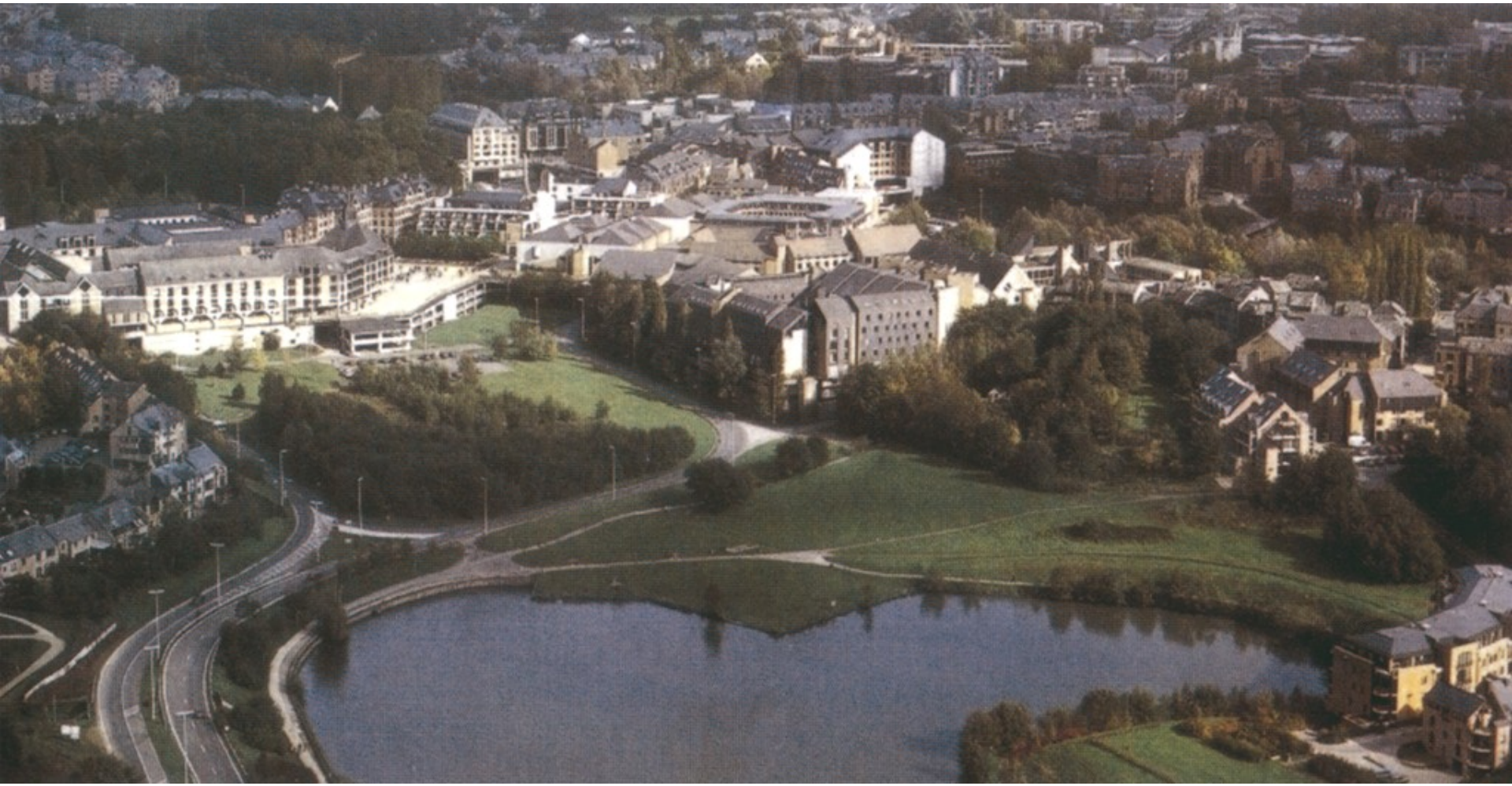
The new station (1976). It is entirely underground, in view of being covered at a later stage.

THE ENTIRE CENTRE OF THE NEW TOWN IS PEDESTRIAN. THE VIEW SHOWS THE ENTRANCE OF THE RAILWAY STATION. TRAINS AND CARS ARE UNDERNEATH.



The opening of the station and ensuing development of housing and commerce made possible a density increase ("high density – low rise") and the development of a central slab linked to the underground railway station. All land acquired by the University is remaining its property and developed through long term leases.

MANY SMALL PIAZZAS ENCOURAGE SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

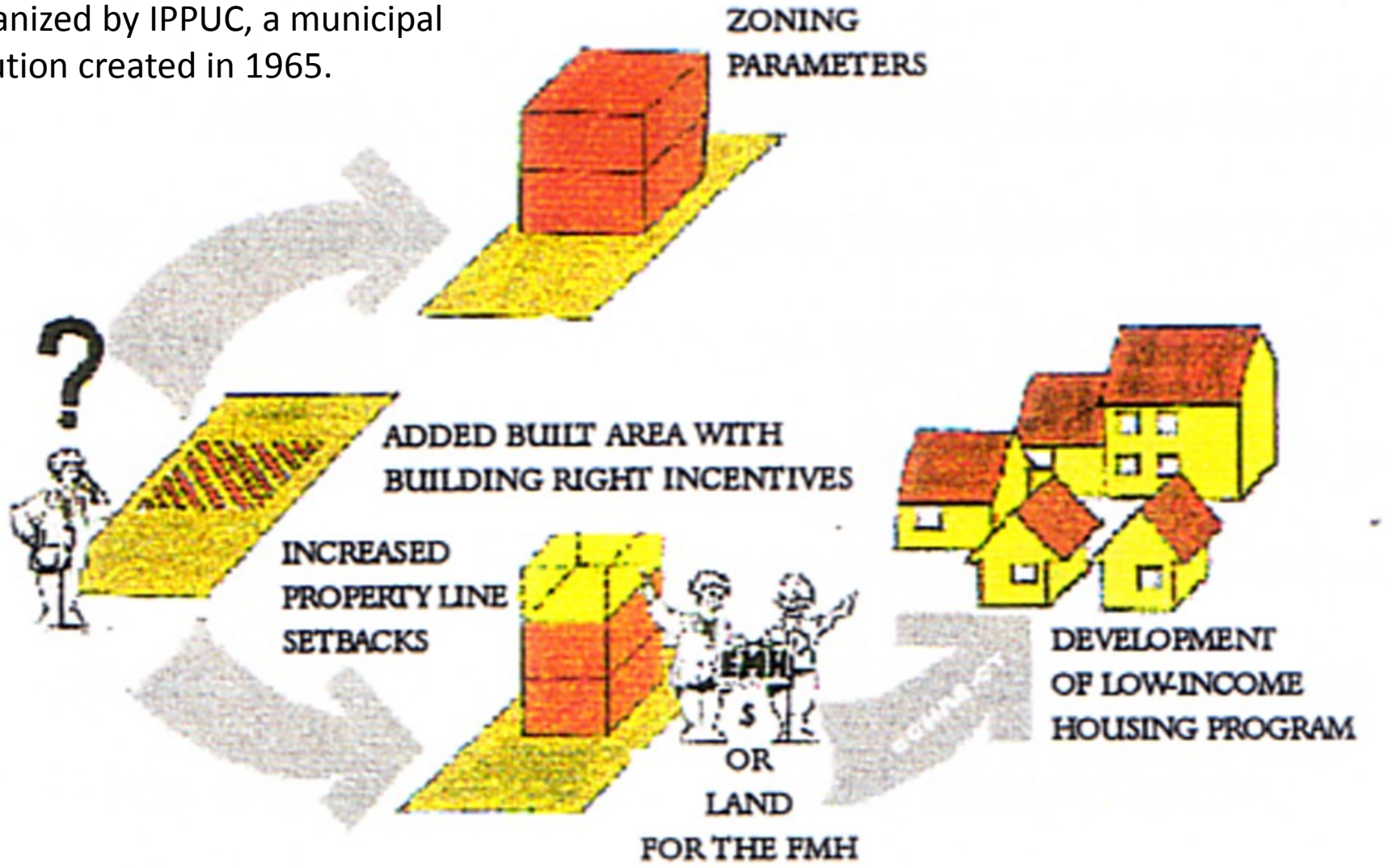


An aerial view of the city taken in 2003 shows the overall high-density low-rise development and the potential for further extensions close to the lake, which collects all rain water and is both a reservoir and an urban amenity.

8. The case of Curitiba: self financing linear development plan

The urban development of Curitiba is centered on five central boulevards where high rise buildings are allowed. However the developments right have to be bought from owners of low-lying flood-prone land or from protected landmarks.

The transfer of development rights is organized by IPPUC, a municipal institution created in 1965.



Scheme of incentives for transfer of building rights - FMH

(Municipal Housing Fund)

Source : http://www.ippuc.org.br

The boulevards were made accessible by high capacity buses with right of way and outside ticketing. At stops ingress and egress take place through very large doors allowing very short stop time and a commercial speed of more than 30 km/h comparable to a metro but at a fraction of the cost. The system started in 1976 and still expands (“Linha Verde”).

AFTER 40 YEARS THE SYSTEM IS STILL EXPANDING (LINHA VERDE).

3 posters by Hundertwasser illustrate the planning spirit of a sustainable city: high-density compactness, transport corridors served by public transport and amenities making the city enjoyable.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