

Historical and morphological aspects concerning the urban form of Woldegk in Mecklenburg

by Martin Ebert

Woldegk is a very small town on the eastern edge of the former grand-duchy of Mecklenburg. The population is about 4400 (2018). The town is founded at the high of the medieval settlement in the middle of the 13th century. Woldegk is today most known for their windmills, since a number of Dutch-type windmills is situated in the area. Around 1900 the city developed a modest industrial boom after being connected to two railway lines. As many other towns in Mecklenburg Woldegk was frequently destroyed in the religious wars of the 17th century, raging fires and the final days of WWII.

For the reconstruction of the urban processes in Woldegk mainly documents in the MUB are used. (Verein für Mecklenburgische Geschichte und Altertumskunde 1863). The MUB states in its first volume that the city of Woldegk was in the possession of about original 30 documents in 1863; the oldest dating from 1307 and the youngest from 1643 – which at the time were in good condition.

- MUB 1232 dated July 9th 1271 mentions Woldegk for the first time as “dominus Arnoldus plebanus Woldege” is witness to a contract between the Margraves of Brandenburg and the abbey of Broda.
- MUB 2509 from June 12th 1298 mentions the city for the first time. Here the Margrave of Brandenburg is appropriating the village (villa) Niendorp to the city “ciuitatis” Woldegk.
- MUB 3177 dated August 5th 1307 where the council of the city (“consules ciuitatis Woldecke”) defines the taxes and rights of the parcels belonging to the newly appropriated village Niendorp. The gemarkung is parcelled out and the citizens pay a Schilling for each plot to the cities council.
- MUB 3942 and 3943 dated November 24th 1317 where king Waldemar of Denmark strikes peace with duke Henry of Mecklenburg. Here Woldegk appears among others in a summa of cities and castles to be divided. This has to be seen as the first mentioning of the castle in Woldegk.
- MUB 5825 dated November 27th 1337 where the knight Willeke sells the council 24 Brandenburgish Schilling worth of taxes. The purchase is confirmed by duke Albrecht of Mecklenburg in MUB 5942 of March 2nd 1339.
- MUB 5942 of March 2nd 1339 – see MUB 5825
- MUB 6340 dated September 24th of 1343 where the Dominican prior of Pasewalk asks the council of Woldegk to extend the privileges of the old priory to the new one. The city exempts the Dominican priory from the “exactio”, meaning they don't pay

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A selection of relevant historic documents.

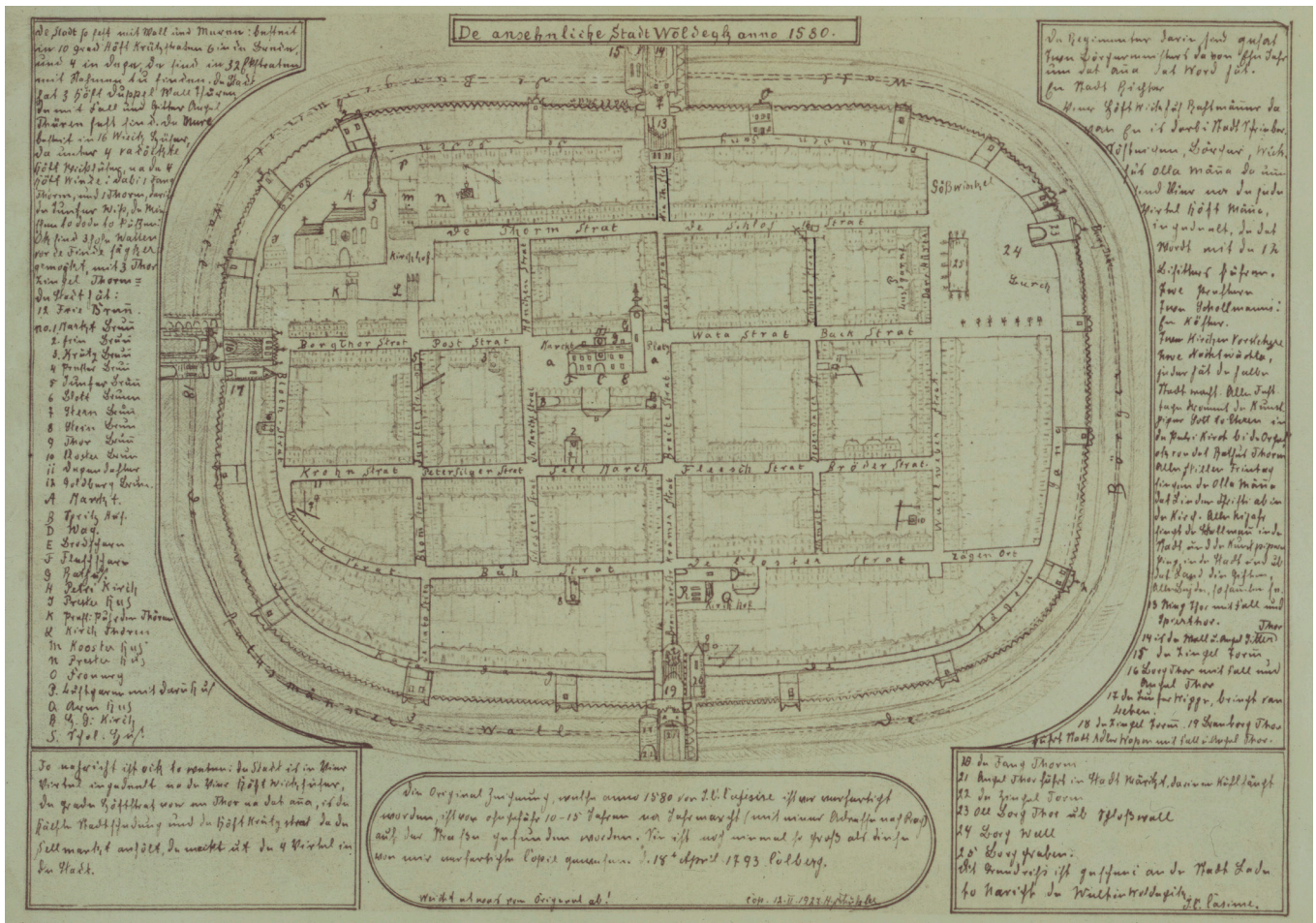
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taxes from their hospice/house inside the city (Verein für Mecklenburgische Geschichte und Altertumskunde).

- MUB 7249 dated May 6th 1305 where Duke Henry (Hinricus) of Mecklenburg recognises the city's ownership of the village Nien-dorp and allows it to be added to the gemarkung of the city with 18 houses. The City had bought the village from Henry's vassal knight Engelke in 1298 (MUB 2509).
- MUB 8503 and 8504 dated July 23rd 1358 where John, the vicar of Woldegk donates 30 Schilling to the abbey of Wanzka. In the document a St. Spirit chapel ("capelle sancta Spiritus") is mentioned in Woldegk.
- MUB 8756 dated June 12th 1360 where Markward Schütte abstains from feud to Duke John of Mecklenburg and his cities Woldegk, Neu Brandenburg and Friedland.
- MUB 11115 from June 17th 1378 a Martin Vucizcer dedicates a sum of money to the guild of the holy corpus.
- The supposed copy of an old plan of the city dated 1580 was published in 1873 by Lisch. The plan shows plots and places all public buildings and public wells. (Lisch 1873)

Copy of the plan supposedly drawn in 1580 showing the medieval centre of the town. Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin; Reg. Nr. 12.12-2

The founding privileges of the city are lost. According to Keiser the city is founded between 1236 and 1250 by the Margrave of Brandenburg, which at that time was Johann I of Brandenburg (1213 –1266).



Founding of Woldegk and the planting process.

As the rest of the lands of Stargard the city became a part of the principality of Mecklenburg first time in 1299.

Little is known about the planting process. It is plausible to think that the planting of the city was part of a plan to reinforce the areas won by the Margrave of Brandenburg in the 1230s from the Pomeranian dukes.

By the middle of the 13th century the entire area of the northern Uckermark, the land Stargard and the areas east of Woldegk were heavily disputed between the Margrave of Brandenburg, the dukes of Mecklenburg and the dukes of Pomerania (Ruchhöft 2008). In the treaties of Kremmen (1236) and Landin (1250) the Ascanian Margraves and Barnim, duke of Pomerania, also called the city-founder carved up the area amongst them. The planting of Woldegk has therefore to be seen in closer relationship to neighbouring cities with Brandenburgish rights, such as Friedland (1244), Neu Brandenburg (1248) and Stargard (1255). They served as reinforcement for the territorial claims of the Brandenburgish Margraves.

In a later development the entire lands of Stargard were laid under the dukes of Mecklenburg as part of a marriage-agreement. It is therefore to be believed that Woldegk was founded between the treaties of Kremmen and Landin (Keyser 1939).

The city started out as a planted city with a castle placed on a ridge about 10 meters above the city. The town contained an area of about 120 000 m² containing 3 E-W- and 3 S-N-roads.

Outside the northern wall a small settlement Nientorp (New Place) developed simultaneously to the settlement inside the walls. In 1298 the Margrave of Brandenburg allowed the settlement and its 18 houses to be added to the city. The building of the new city wall started about 1300 and included already the houses of Nientorp. The footprint of the now extended city was about 146 000 m² – and still is. Westphal documents a continuous settlement inside the city latest since about 1240 based on dendrochronological evidence. He describes the period between 1255 and the early 1280s as a time of great settlement-intensity. The building activities flattened out in the 1280s to rise again in the first years of the 1300s (Westphal 2002). Westphal's findings confirm therefore the periodization by historians like Krüger (Krüger 1925) and Keyser (Keyser 1939).

Early development of the urban structure

The political power in the city was represented and executed by the council (“consules”) which elected a major as documented first time in 1580. The consules are mentioned for the first time in 1298.

The legal power in the city was executed by the Schultheiß (sheriff), or Vogt who resided in the ducal castle. The right to hold court and the legal fees that went with it were subject to lending and negotiations between the council and the Vogt.

Civic governance and courts

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Later development of the urban structure

Bebyggelsesstruktur Woldegk



Function in the territory

The castle outside the city walls vanished in the 15th century from unknown reasons. The town developed inside the walls while the burgers also owned gardens and agricultural land outside the walls (Ackerbürger).

The city burned in 1442 and in 1719 and was devastated in 1637 when only 14 burgers survived. Modest economical growth after being connected to the railway in 1892.

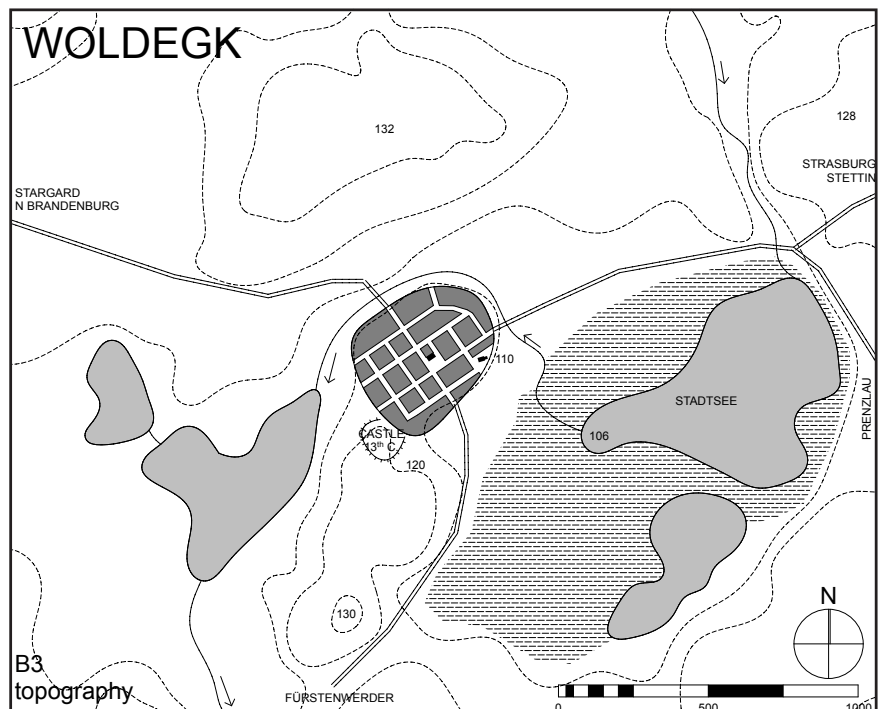
The local industry had closed already in the years following the end of WWI in 1918. The larger part of the historical city-centre was destroyed in the last days of WWII by arson perpetrated by Soviet troops. In the 1950s urban reconstruction began in the Krumme Straße. After 1955 the destruction of the remaining historical buildings from the 18th and 19th century continued to be replaced by industrially produced large scale blocks.

After the end of communism in 1990 the city has been his hard by the decay of industry and small-scale craftsmen. Even though the city has been merged with several neighbouring villages the population has stagnated since 1990.

Topography

Woldegk was mainly a border town to secure the eastern border of the lands of Stargard. When the last Ascanian duke Waldemar tried to re-take the area in the winter of 1314/15 the city was besieged for seven weeks but withstood the siege. As a result of his failed campaign Waldemar had to drop his claims to the lands of Stargard in the treaty of Templin (Ruchhöft 2008).

The city is placed on the northern end of a peninsular ridge that is surrounded by lakes and wetlands. The top of the ridge is placed 25



meters over the wetlands, but lays outside the city walls. The city itself is placed at 112 m above sea level, ca 7 meter over the surrounding wetlands. The highest points are at the marked at 113 m, the church at 115 m and the western wall of the castle by the old castle gate at 120 m above sea level.

The city floor itself is sloping slightly from the church to the west. Along the south-western part of the city wall the terrain has been raised about 3 meter to level the foot of the city wall to the ridge that continues to climb further south-west outside the walls.

The towns original shape is oval following the direction of the ridge the city is placed on. The castle is placed inside the walls on the SW-short-side of the oval. The extension of 1298 is added to the northern edge of the oval – turning it to a more roundish shape. The shape measures 460 m in EW and 480 m in NS-direction. The area of the city is about 154 800 m², while the first geometry before the 1298-extension is 121 900 m². The wall that is largely still in place measures 1442 m. The shape fills quite naturally the northern end of the ridge while overseeing the crossing of the Dieckgraben that surrounds the city on 3 sides and laying afoot the vanished castle or “Vogtei”.

Woldegk has an orthogonal street system revealing its planted origin. There are few irregularities, with the curved geometry of the Krumme Straße which follows the trace of the towns periphery up to 1298. The market is placed in the central position of the cities grid. The market fills the position of half a block left out. The baroque town hall, disappeared in the last days of WWII, stood prominently on the north side of the marked, withdrawn from the two streets framing it left E and W (Thälmann- and Marktstraße).

The plan of 1580 reveals that the street system has most probable undergone some changes. The eastern end of the Wasserstraße was removed by a block growing towards the empty space left by the castle. The street behind the town hall Sellmarkt has disappeared between 1580 and 1900 and the northern prolongation of the Marktstraße that earlier ended in the Krumme Straße has been removed.

The orthogonal street-system of Woldegk presents obvious problems for the drainage of rain- and waste-water from the city. While the street north and west of the marked only slope very slightly (between 0.1 and 1.5 %, the streets around the church and the southern wall are sloping more dramatically (1.8 – 4.4%). Some streets are water-locked so that secondary drainage through pipes or on the surface has to be suspected.

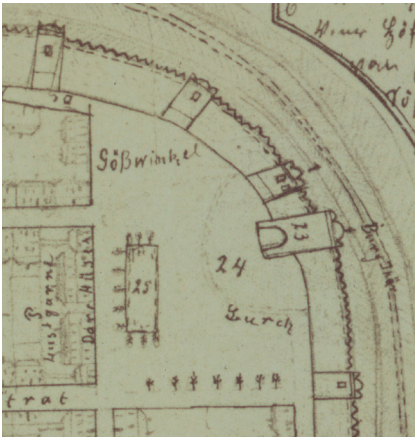
The city walls dating to the beginning of the 14th century are in large well preserved. The wall measures heights between 1 and 3 meters. In several positions, such as Breitscheidstraße and Gar-

Morphology

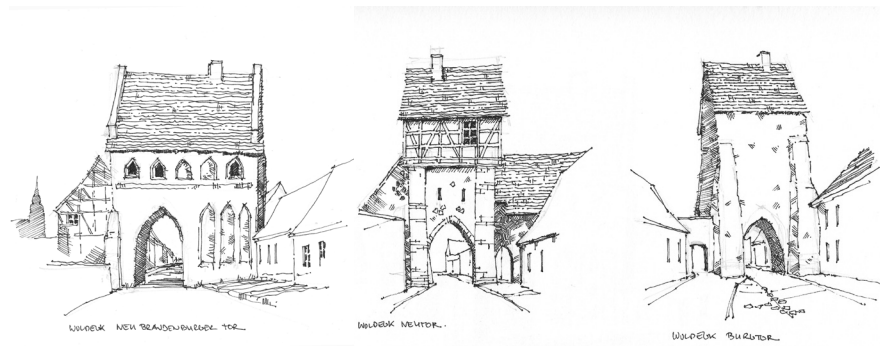
Street system

Fortifications

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Reconstruction of parts of the three gates: Neubrandenburger Tor, Neutor and Burgtor.
Drawing: Ebert, 2021 based on contemporary photos.



Town hall



Woldegks town hall in Baroque style, built in 1763 and destroyed in 1945, in a postcard from 1939.

tenweg and in the south-western part of the city the wall has been removed in modern times.

The town had four gates, one of them is well visible towards the suspected castle. Three of the gates were double gates which were removed in the 19th century. The city wall were equipped with about 16 Wieckhouses – buildings for watchmen – semi-included in the wall leaving rectangular marks in the plan.

The outside of the walls was fortified with ramparts and ditches, following the Ziegleiweg, Fliedergang and Wässering. These fortifications were formidable and can be seen in its dimensions in the area east of the church.

The 1580-plan shows some features leading to the assumption, that at least parts of the castle was placed inside the walls. A stippled line “Burch” and a ditch called “Borggraben” gives reason to speculate about alternative geometries in the south-western corner that perished with the castle.

The last town hall on the marked was built after the 7-years war in 1763 in the Baroque style. Pre 1945-photographs show a symmetric building with 7-window-axis and a mansard-roof typical for its time. The building is equipped with a wooden bell-tower in the central axis. The building was placed central on the rectangular marked with a building block attached to its north side.

According to the medieval plan the block around behind the town hall housed the Weigh house, the bread and the meat “Scharn” – an old name for a market stall.

The town hall was destroyed in April 1945 and the remains removed. Today a outline of threes marks the spot of the perished building. Medieval vaults under the place of the old building are to be suspected.

The church is dedicated to St. Peter and is placed somewhat unusual in the south-western corner of the town at the highest spot of the plan. The church is carrying visible traces after the destruction of 1945 which made the vaults collapse. Brick-hall with 3 shops and 4 bays with an older choir built in granite-rocks, 13th century. Tower, attached to the western end of the hall is older – just like the choir (Ebert 2021).

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Holy-Spirit-Chapel was placed in the corner Klosterstraße-Thälmannstraße. Shown in the old plan with 3 bays and a tower. Damaged during the 30-years-war and removed in 1796. The position of the Holy-Spirit-Hospice is very typical at the corner of the last block towards one of the main gates (Ebert 2022). A graveyard has to be expected in the areas alongside the wall.

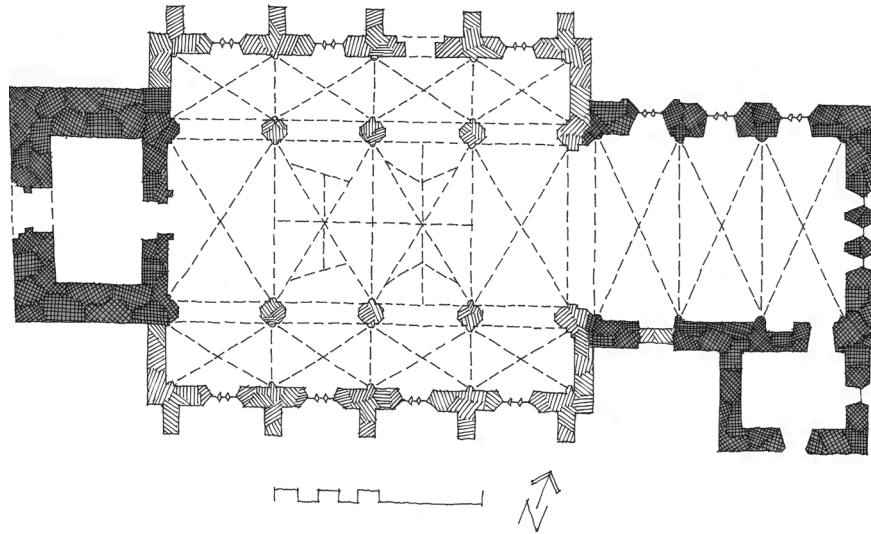
The Dominicans in Prenzlau owned a house in Woldegk – probably in the Klosterstraße or Brüderstraße.

Woldegk had a Latin School already before the reformation. The building was placed alongside the parsons and sacristans house by the church.



Reconstruction of the Holy Spirit Hospice in Ribnitz, showing the typical layout of the hospice by the town's gate.

Drawing: Ebert, 2022



Woldegk St. Peter, plan with the vaults destroyed in 1945. Older tower and choir frame the newer hall that replaced an earlier building that was damaged by fire in 1442.

Drawing: Ebert, 2021

Only a small number of civic buildings survived the fire storm in 1945. The historic structure of Woldegk can be observed in some remaining pockets, mainly alongside the Burgtorstraße, Krumme Straße and Wollweberstraße. The pre-war buildings were mainly erected after the fire in 1719 in wood-frame constructions with frames filled with straw and clay. In historic pictures a great number of buildings have covered the wooden frames with plaster.

Civic buildings



Typical 19th century 2-floor wood-frame house with a later plaster-”upgrade” towards the front. Drawing from Gnoien, Scharfrichterstraße 3.

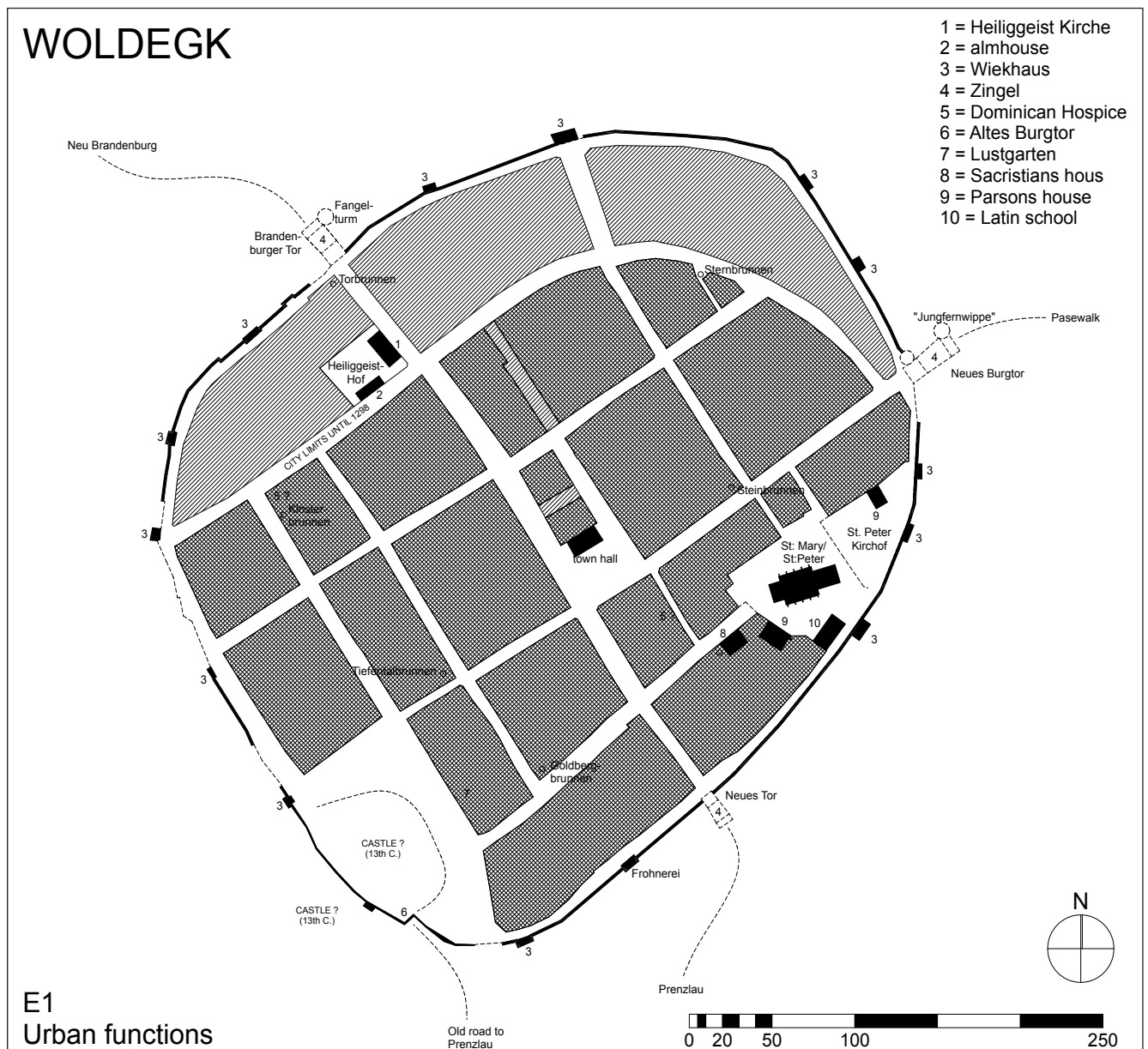
Illustration: Martin Ebert

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One and two story buildings with 3 window-axis were prevalent in Woldegks pre-1945 architecture. The roofs were pitched in angles larger than 45 degrees. A great number of buildings contained workshops or shops such as bakeries, wheel-makers, shoemakers and others. With the small-scale structure also the small crafts disappeared from the medieval town centre.

Under: Woldegk. Reconstruction of the city-plan pre 1945 with the institutions of the medieval town placed in the plan.

Source: Ebert, 2021.



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