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FR

UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

SOCIO-POLITICAL CITY WALK FRIBOURG

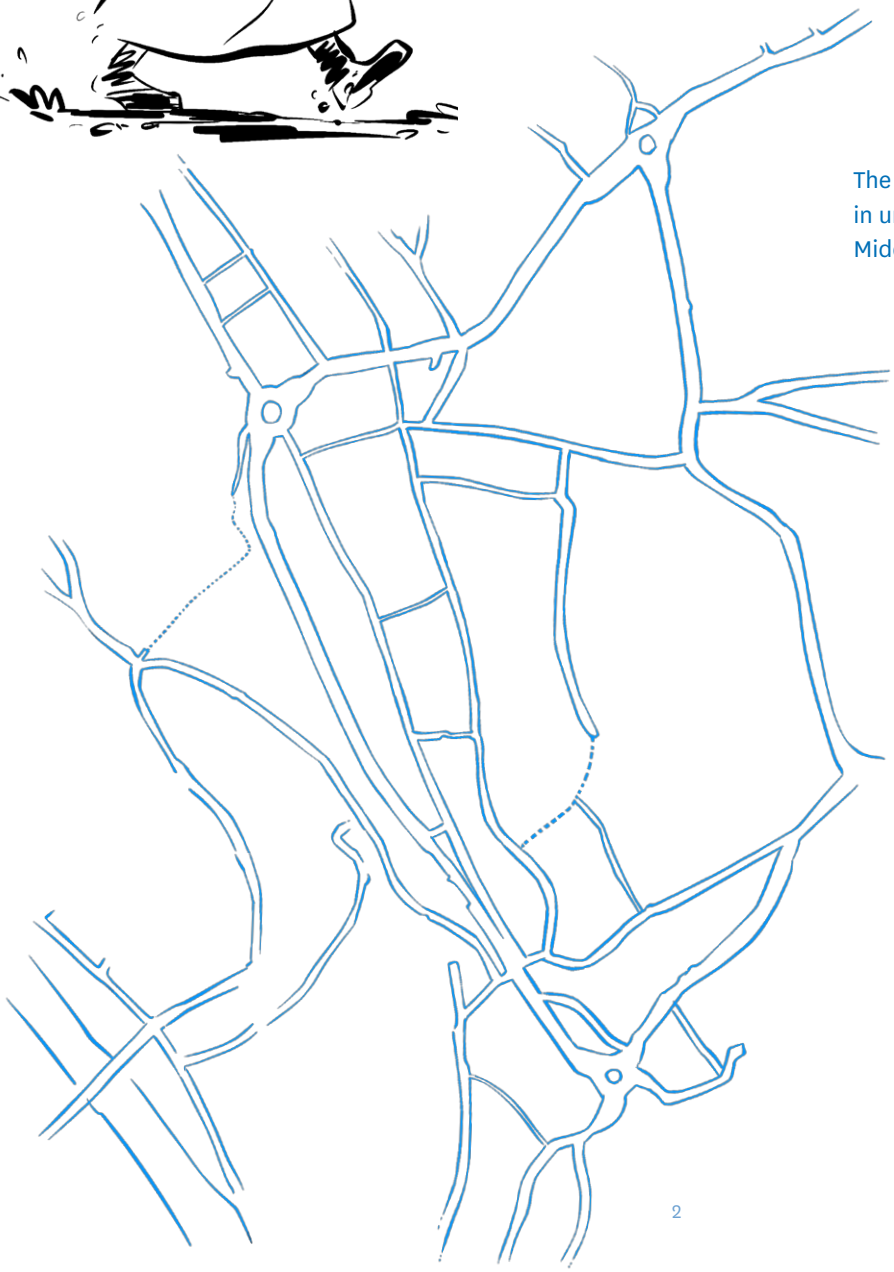
EIGHT PLACES IN FRIBOURG.

Each of these places tells a story.

About how the people of the city have helped and supported each other over the centuries.

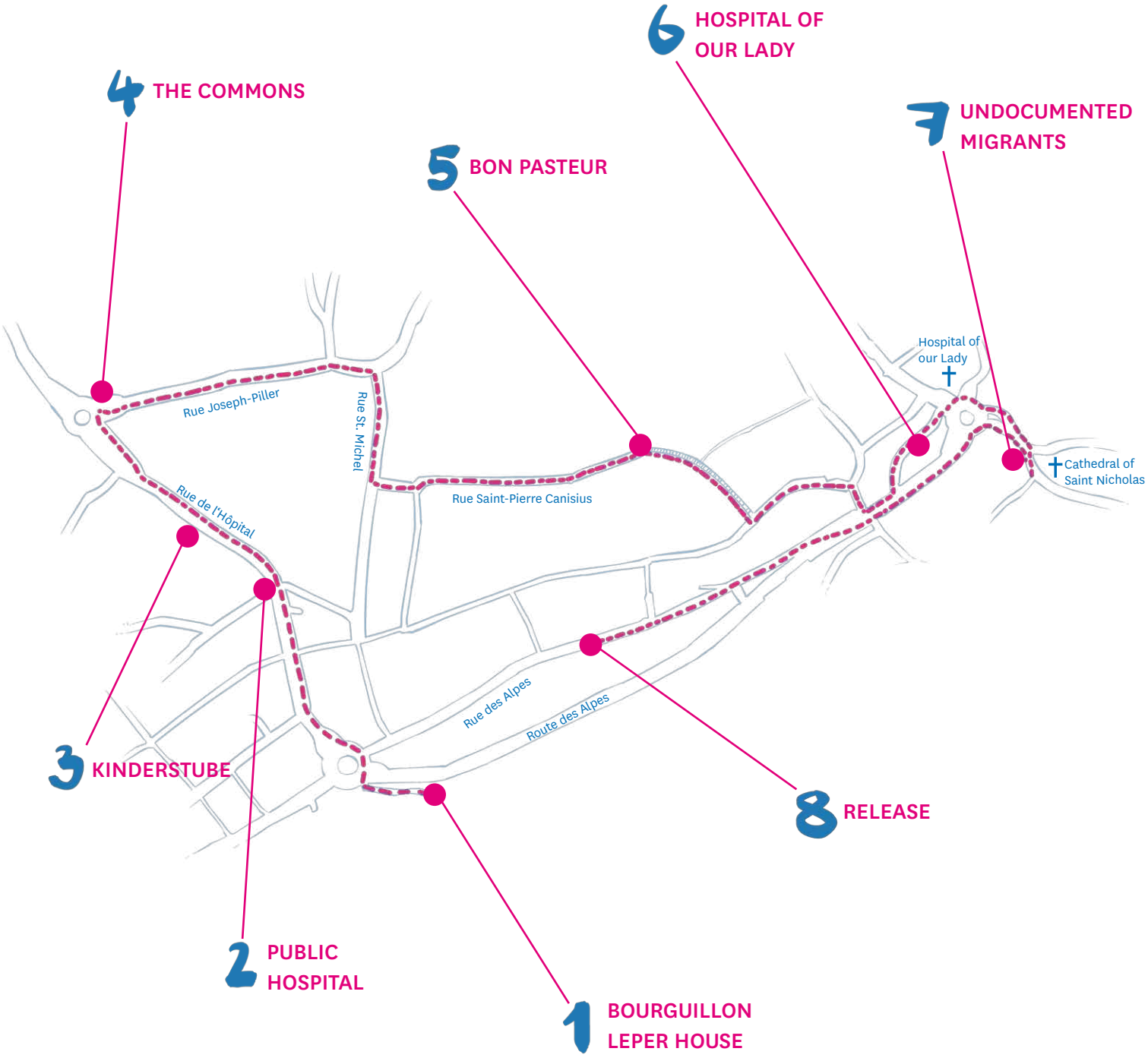
About the Bürgergemeinde, whose assistance is becoming increasingly specialised and selective.

The developments and changes in urban social policy – from the Middle Ages to the present.



The eight places lead through the city of Fribourg and form the …

… SOCIO-POLITICAL CITY WALK FRIBOURG.



HOW TO FIND THE PLACES IN TODAY'S CITYSCAPE

1

BOURGUILLON LEPER HOUSE

Can be seen from the viewing platform next to the Funiculaire, in the grove above the rock face.

2

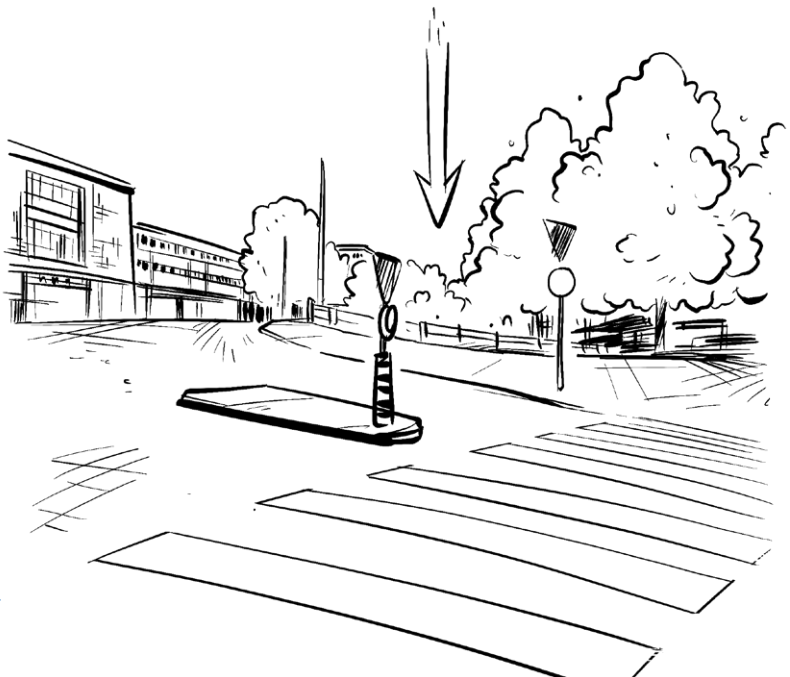
PUBLIC HOSPITAL

Forecourt of the Hôpital des Bourgeois, next to the fountain

3

KINDERSTUBE

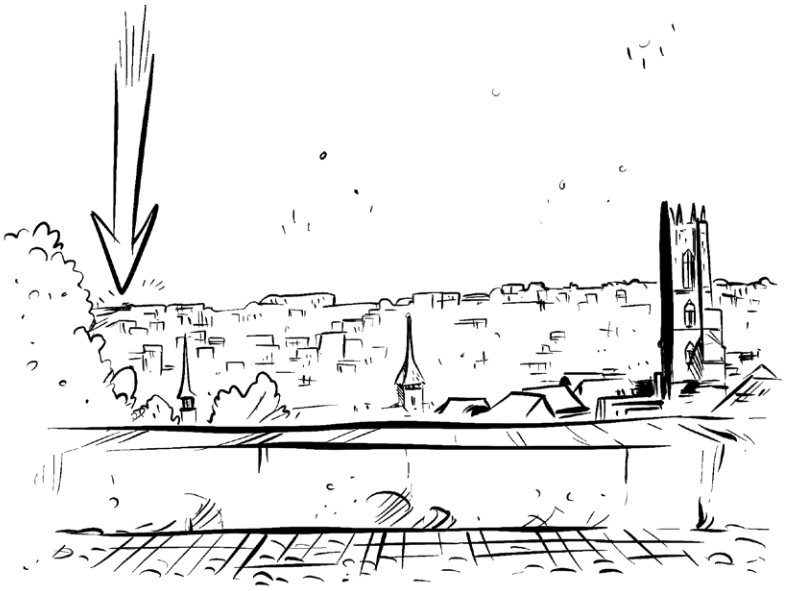
Rue de l'Hôpital 4



4

THE COMMONS

Square vis à vis of the Mondial, next to the roundabout and the railway tracks



5 BON PASTEUR

Can be seen from the viewing platform at the end of Rue Saint-Pierre Canisius to the left before the stairs Escaliers du Collège

6 HOSPITAL OF OUR LADY

Parking Place des Ormeaux

7 UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

Near the Cathedral of St Nicholas, beginning of Rue des Épouses

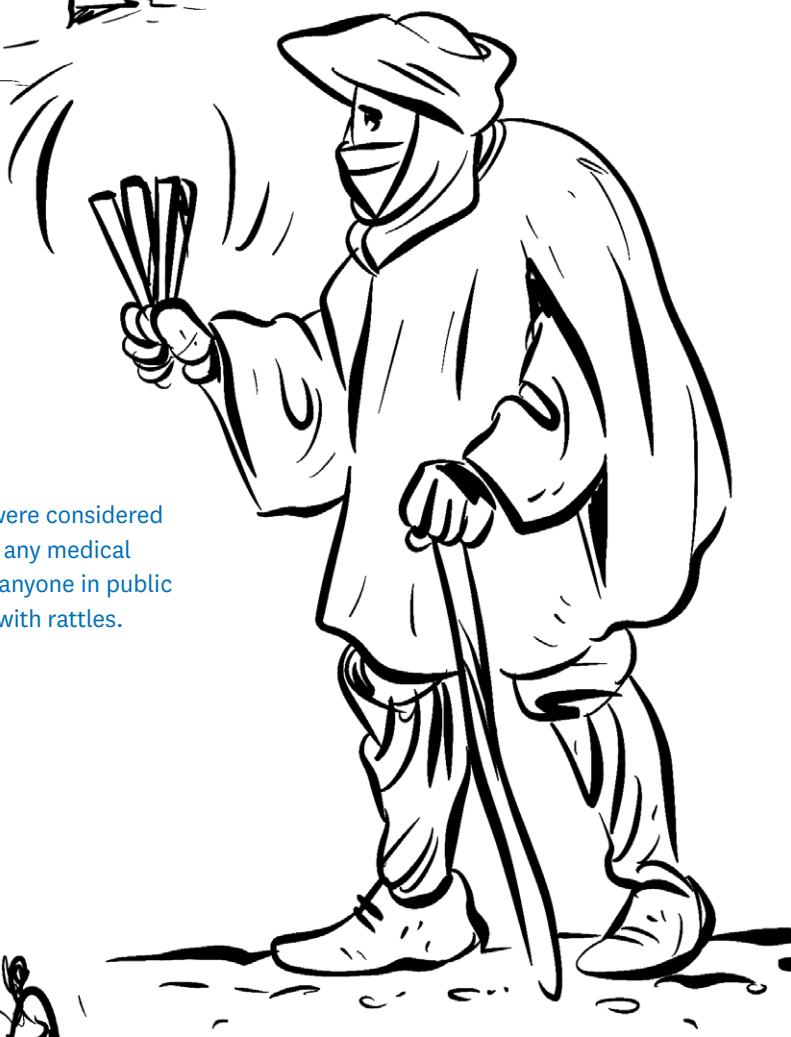
8 RELEASE

Rue des Alpes 30

1

THE LEPER HOUSE BOURGUILLON STOOD JUST OUTSIDE FREIBURG BETWEEN 1252 AND THE END OF THE 17TH CENTURY.

If leprosy was diagnosed during this period, the citizen had to isolate him- or herself immediately in this leper house. The sex, age and social background did not play a role.



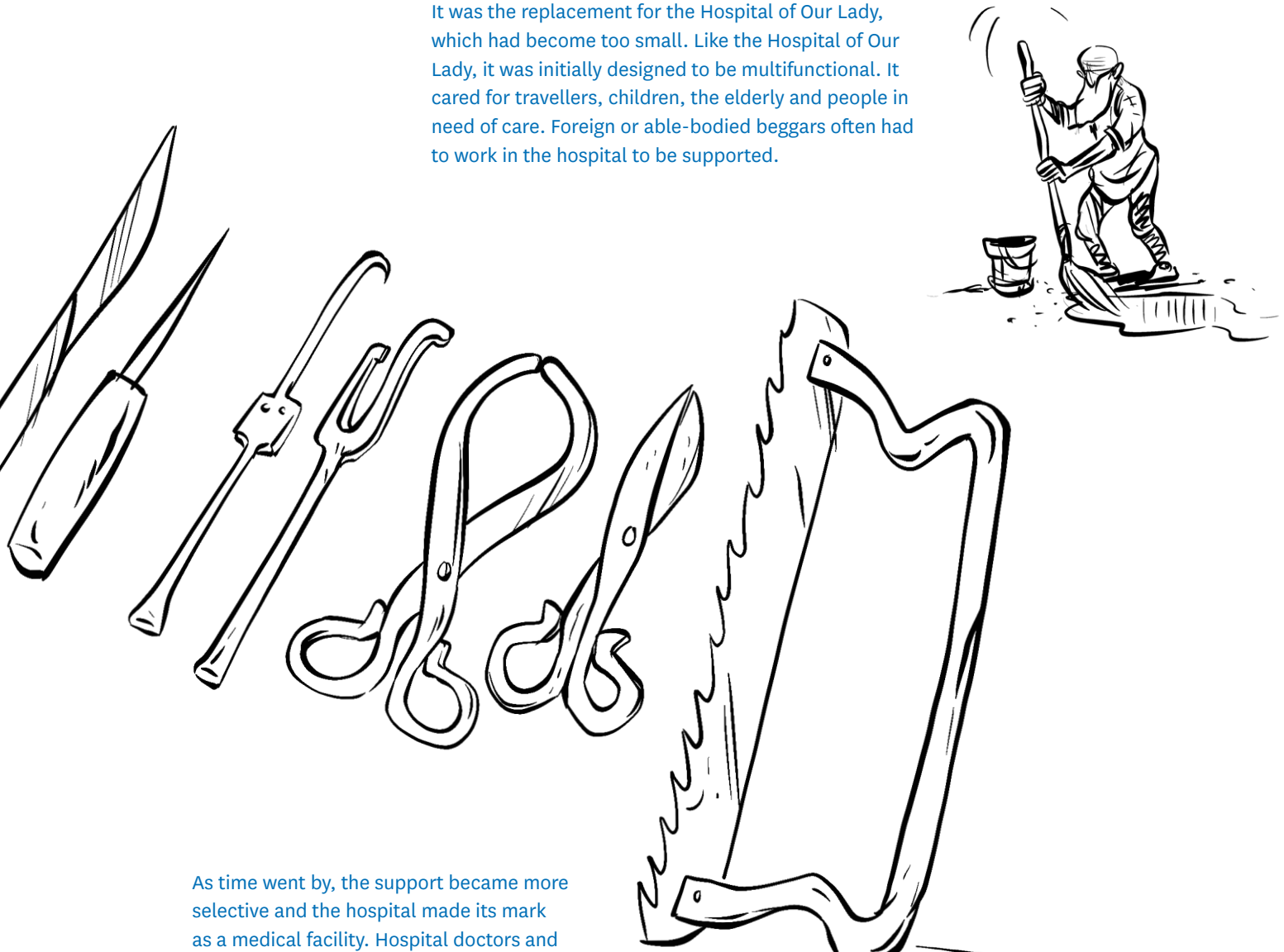
The leprosy patients, also called lepers, were considered incurably ill and therefore did not receive any medical care. They were not allowed to approach anyone in public and had to draw attention to themselves with rattles.

Donations and legacies were administered by the „lepers' bailiff" of the citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde). Thus the inhabitants of the leper house received money, food, wine and firewood. Once a week a man rode through the town on a donkey cart and collected donations by ringing a bell. With increasing hygiene and health standards, leprosy slowly disappeared from Europe and the leper house became less important.

2

FROM 1699 TO 1972, THIS BUILDING HOUSED THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL.

It was the replacement for the Hospital of Our Lady, which had become too small. Like the Hospital of Our Lady, it was initially designed to be multifunctional. It cared for travellers, children, the elderly and people in need of care. Foreign or able-bodied beggars often had to work in the hospital to be supported.



As time went by, the support became more selective and the hospital made its mark as a medical facility. Hospital doctors and surgeons now took over the work of barbers and general practitioners.

Hospital nurses were entrusted with the care and some tasks were given to specialised institutions – e.g., the psychiatric clinic in Marsens.

3

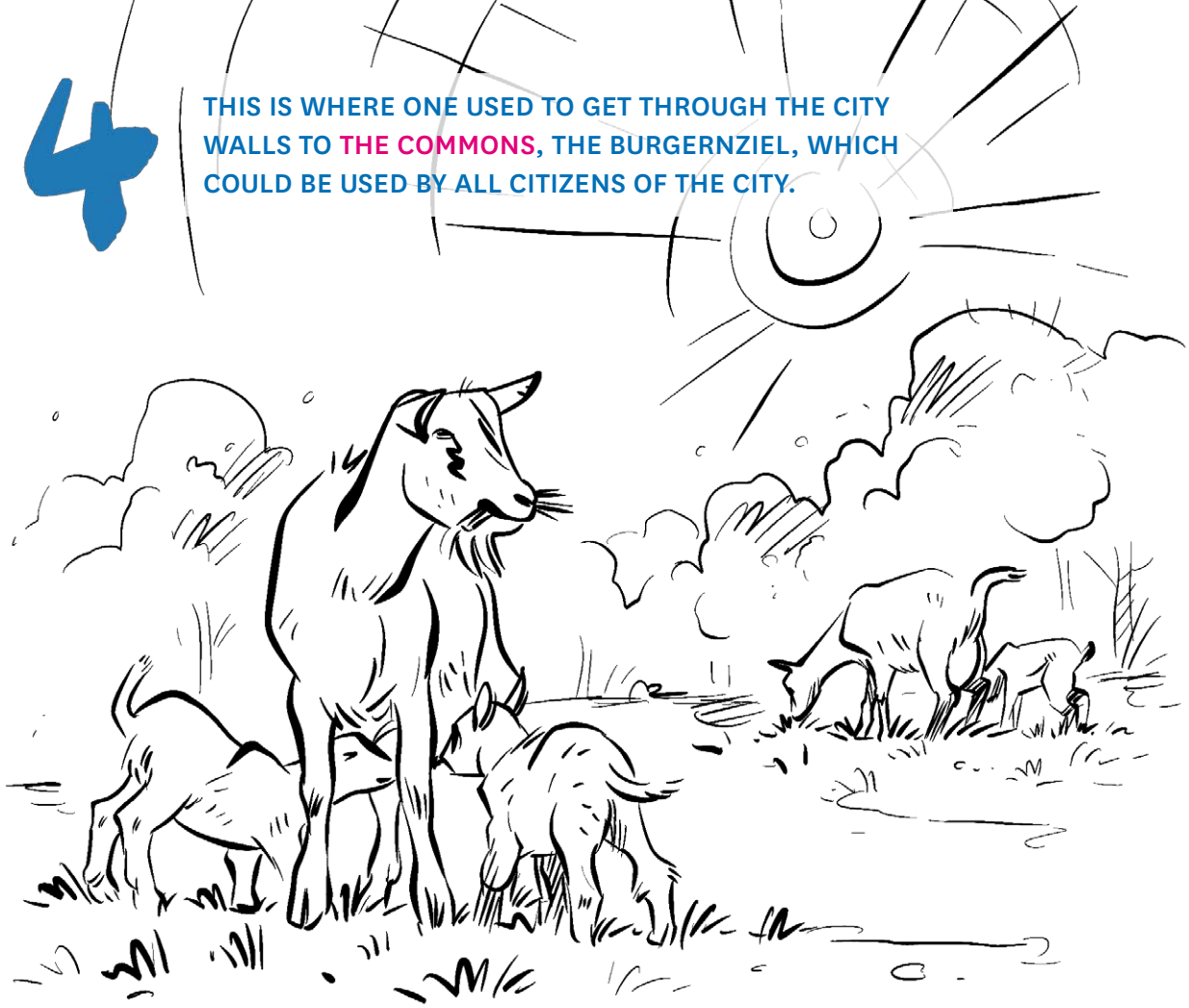
THIS HOUSE WITHIN THE COMPLEX OF THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL WAS THE KINDERSTUBE (ORPHANAGE) UNTIL 1869. HERE THE HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATED FOUNDLINGS, ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND ORPHANS.

In the early 15th century, hospital children were still being sent into the city to beg. This was soon forbidden as attempts were made to raise them through work to become “useful” members of society.

Male hospitalised children were sent to school or were able to learn a trade in the hospital or in the city. Female hospital children were sent to school much later, and it was rare for girls to learn a trade. They were occupied in hospital until they married.

4

THIS IS WHERE ONE USED TO GET THROUGH THE CITY WALLS TO THE COMMONS, THE BURGERNZIEL, WHICH COULD BE USED BY ALL CITIZENS OF THE CITY.



In this green belt around Fribourg citizens could allow their cows and goats to graze.

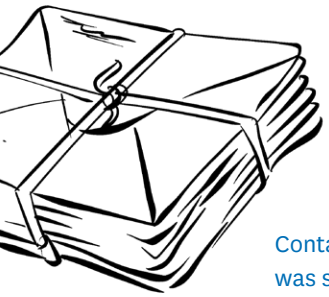
All citizens were entitled to a share of the assets of the citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde), e.g., in kind through firewood from the Burgernziel or through financial support.

Boundary stones marked the end of the Burgernziel. Those who were banned from the city lost the right to use the commons and had to take an oath at the stone. Increasingly, the community became more reserved in their acceptance of strangers. Until 1977, however, the citizen's community was responsible for impoverished citizens. It still supports various social institutions today.

5

FROM HERE YOU CAN SEE THE HILL ON WHICH THE INSTITUT BON PASTEUR WAS. BETWEEN 1926 AND 1965, GIRLS CONSIDERED AS IMMORAL WERE COMMITTED THERE.

„Administrative detention" was part of the enforced welfare measures ordered by municipal authorities without court decision. The young women, aged between 15 and 20, were to be trained to become „productive members of society" through forced labour and disciplinary measures.

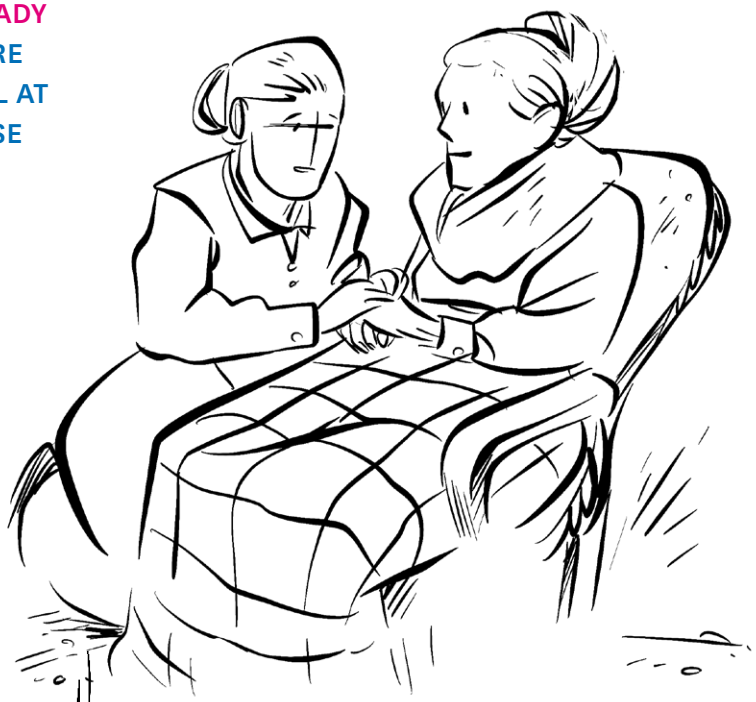


Contact with the outside world was strictly controlled and limited. For examples, letters to the girls' families were confiscated.

If a girl did escape, the overseer informed the police and a search was launched.

Enforced welfare measures were not banned until 1981. The review process still continues until today.

AROUND 1250, THE HOSPITAL OF OUR LADY WAS OPENED HERE, WHOSE TASKS WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL AT THE END OF THE 17TH CENTURY BECAUSE OF SPACE PROBLEMS.



In the beginning, not only the physically and mentally ill were cared for, but also orphans, the elderly, beggars and travellers. Many of the people cared for, as well as other citizens, included the hospital in their wills.

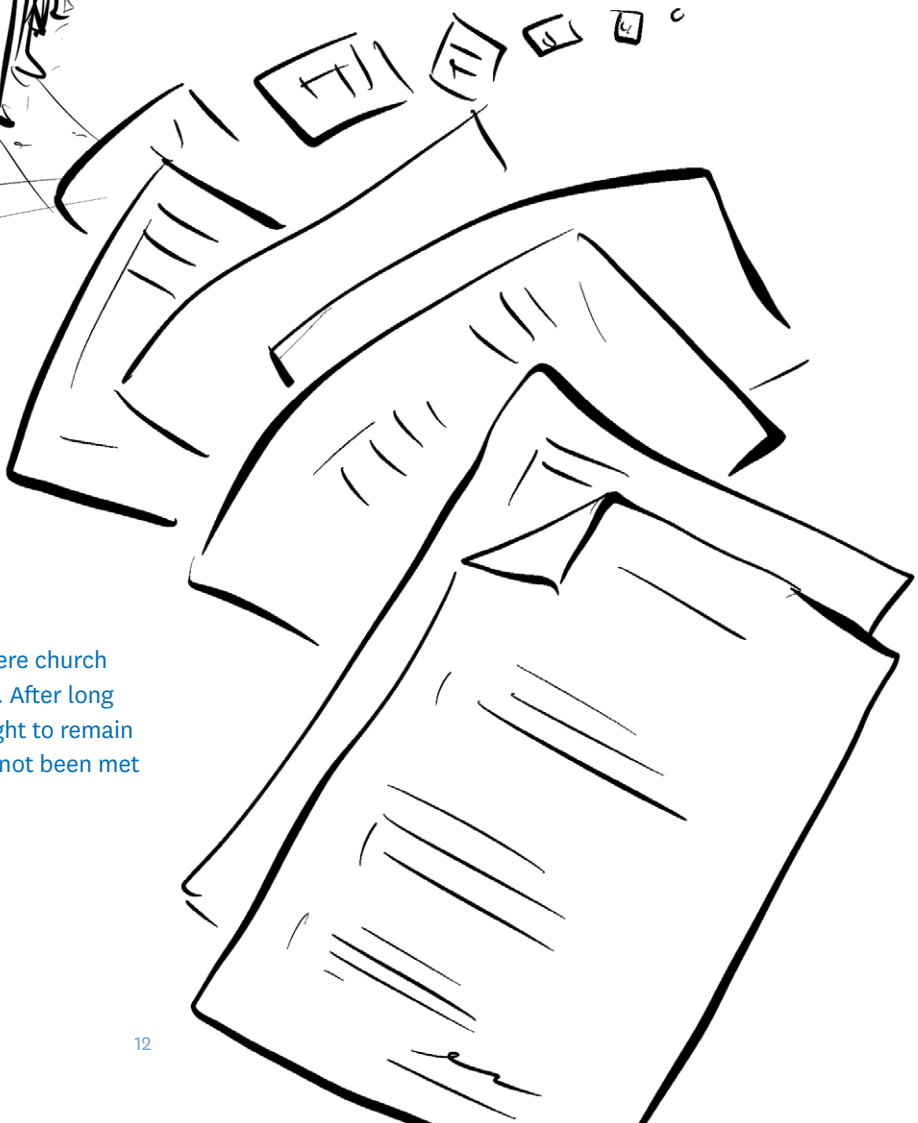
The hospital became very wealthy and at times the richest taxpayer in Freiburg. In times of crisis, it was even able to grant the city loans.

Another important taxpayer was the Holy Spirit Brotherhood, which supported the poor with donations of money or goods.
The authorities tried to limit this support because it was thought to encourage the poor's unwillingness to work. Thus, at times, only the locals received gifts and were given a metal token as a sign of recognition. This did not diminish the generosity of the citizens: the people of Fribourg were more concerned about their own salvation.

SO-CALLED UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS ARE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN SWITZERLAND WITHOUT A RESIDENCE PERMIT.

In the church of St. Paul in Fribourg, a group of 80 undocumented migrants were given sanctuary in 2001 and fought for the right to remain.

Many people got involved for and with the undocumented migrants, e.g., with a demonstration here in the city centre. This delayed the police eviction of the undocumented migrants from the church.



In the following months, there were church occupations all over Switzerland. After long discussions, the demand for a right to remain for undocumented migrants has not been met until today.

8 HERE WAS THE COUNSELLING CENTRE OF RELEASE.

In 1972 some students at Freiburg University set up a counselling centre. It was supposed to be a safe place for young people with problems with soft drugs and alcohol.

Release followed an alternative approach to social work. Social workers approached young people and offered them support without coercion and condemnation. The self-esteem, integration and realisation of each individual was to be strengthened - a work WITH the person instead of FOR the person.

All were welcome in the rooms of Release. The aim was to offer the young people a social network so that they would not slip into the hard core of the drug scene. Release was not supported by the state in the early years. In 2006, Release has been merged into the organisation Reper.

FURTHER INFORMATION

1

LEPER HOUSE

A very early form of socio-political activity dates back to when the city was founded in the mid-13th century. It is a form that very clearly combined support with exclusion. In 1252, outside the walls that encircled the city and behind these trees in a place called Bourguillon, a leper house was founded. Someone suspected of having leprosy would be subjected to extensive investigations by the bishop's legal assistant and later by a surgeon. However, it was not always possible to identify the disease straight away. If leprosy was diagnosed, the infected person – whether poor or rich, male or female, young or old – had to move into the leper house immediately and cease all direct contact with their family, their working environment and other people in general. Having children was to be avoided, because it was thought that leprosy could be inherited.

In some cases, people with other incurable diseases were also housed in the leper house. The building usually accommodated about 20 patients, each of whom had their own room. The lepers were not simply isolated but were also provided for. Money for their care came from donations and legacies. The money was managed by the "lepers' bailiff", who lived in the city. The patients were given money at the start of the month and regularly issued with bread and wine. In the autumn they received a defined quantity of wood to use in the stove in their rooms. In addition there were donations of food, money or confectionary that were collected in the city each week by a man with a bell, using a donkey cart. The patients in Freiburg were relatively well provided for in terms of food. Because leprosy was considered a curse of God, those who contracted it received no medical attention or other care. At the start of the 16th century a bath chamber was built for them so that they could take hot baths. Only a few were regarded as cured and released.

The house burnt down at the end of the 15th century and was rebuilt. As leprosy became rare at the end of the 17th century, the leper house was turned into an asylum for poor elderly people, other bedridden patients and those with incurable diseases, in order to relieve pressure on the public hospital. No new pensioners were taken in after 1807. In 1838 the former leper house was demolished and replaced by the Trois Tours hotel and restaurant, which is of roughly the same dimensions. Proposals for turning the building into an orphanage, old people's home or school were considered and rejected. The chapel that belonged to the leper house is still standing.

2

PUBLIC HOSPITAL

From 1636 it became increasingly clear that a new building was needed to alleviate the space problems in the Hospital of Our Lady. While the necessary funds were being raised, various possible sites were debated. In 1677 the present site was agreed; it lay on the edge of the city but was sunny and had a good water supply. On the purchased plot there were eight houses, including the small Hôpital des Tissots. The foundation stone for the new building was laid in 1681. Materials from the Hospital of Our Lady were reused in the construction. The building was modelled on the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan, which was a very important hospital in the late Middle Ages. The new building, which was opened in 1699, is dominated by the church with its striking cupola. Donations and legacies enabled an edifice to be constructed that remained unique in Switzerland for many years. It was later handed over to the citizens of Freiburg and hence named the Bürgerspital in German.

In the years that elapsed while suitable sites were being discussed, welfare was becoming more restrictive: from 1625, beggars from outside the area and those capable of working had to work in the hospital of Our Lady in order to receive support. At the same time, the hospital of Our Lady was increasingly becoming a medical institution. Instead of calling on doctors and barbers from the city for investigations and operations, these tasks were handed over in the mid-17th century to a hospital doctor and two surgeons. Nursing duties were performed by hospital sisters. The hospital continued to fulfil a variety of functions and housed travellers, children, the sick and elderly and others in need of care. Some impoverished elderly people, bedridden patients and people with incurable diseases were housed in the leper house in Bourguillon. Other tasks were handed over in their entirety to specialised institutions. Construction of an asylum for the mentally ill in Marsens, near the Lake of Gruyère, commenced in 1872. People whose behaviour did not comply with the norms of the time were also committed to the asylum. Dubious experiments with drugs were being performed in Marsens until the 1950s.

On 10 October 1937 an escaped inmate of Marsens set fire to the public hospital. In the aftermath of this the hospital was modernised and provided with a modern operating theatre, a radiology unit and a well-equipped laboratory. However, this was not enough to halt the decline in the public hospital's importance. In the last quarter of the 19th century it had already had to relinquish land for the

construction of the railway, and the Miséricorde university complex was later built on the site of the former cemetery. Moreover, it was not the public hospital that later became the cantonal hospital – after lengthy discussions, this role was assigned to the hospital in Gambach that was opened in 1907. The public hospital remained in existence until the new cantonal hospital was opened in 1972. The public hospital building belongs to the citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde), and now houses local government offices, the city library and the German library.

KINDERSTUBE

We do not know whether children were housed in the Hospital of Our Lady from its earliest days. The first recorded mention of children in the Hospital of Our Lady is in 1383, when a pious citizen made provision in her will for the inmates of the hospital – explicitly including children – to be given wine on the anniversary of her death. Foundlings, illegitimate children, orphans and sometimes "intractable children" were housed in a separate building within the hospital complex, consisting of one or two rooms and a kitchen. Unlike in other hospitals, children in Freiburg were separated from physically and mentally ill patients and elderly people in need of care. Infants were handed over to a wet nurse outside the hospital, returning once they were weaned. The hospital children were cared for by a Kindermutter ("child mother").

In the early 15th century, hospital children – equipped with a bell – were still being sent into the city to beg. Later, people came to fear that the children would become accustomed to this and attempts were made to raise them through work to become "useful" members of society who would be able to live independently outside the hospital in adulthood. The Kindermutter was therefore expected to combine "maternal kindness" with "paternal strictness" and to act as a good role model for the children by being pious and diligent.

Schooling was initially limited to religious instruction. A hospital child was sent to school for the first time in 1492; others followed and occasionally further education was paid for, for example at the university of Freiburg im Breisgau. Others learned a trade: they might work in the hospital bakery, on the hospital's farms where crops were grown and livestock reared, or with a master craftsman in the city who pursued a commercial trade. The first girls did not go to school until 1681. It was rare for girls to learn a trade. They were occupied in the hospital and supported financially when they married.

When the public hospital was built, the Kinderstube (literally "children's room") was accommodated in a separate building. In the 18th century support was increasingly restricted to children of Freiburg citizens. The task of training the children was assigned to the Brotherhood of St. Martin. The Brotherhood also provided vocational training for poor children who did not come from the Kinderstube. Rules were laid down that not only specified the children's duties but also set out sanctions for abusive masters.

In 1869 the Kinderstube was replaced by an orphanage in the north wing of the former Jesuit boarding school near the Bollwerk in the Old Quarter. The public hospital continued to support the new orphanage financially. The orphanage employed three teachers in addition to the director. Children between the ages of 4 and 16 received religious instruction and a primary school education; craftwork and music and drawing were also taught. The former Jesuit boarding school building was demolished at the end of the 20th century. The orphanage had already moved to the Foyer des Bonnesfontaines in the 1970s. The children's home cares for children and young people with personal and family difficulties and is still supported by the citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde).

An extra storey was added to the Kinderstube building in 1887. During the reconstruction and modernisation work that followed the fire at the public hospital, elderly and bedridden patients were accommodated in the Kinderstube. In 1939-40 a storey was removed. The building was then used variously as a police post, service apartment, smoking room, workshop and storeroom and for a variety of other purposes. In the 1990s the city marked the 100th anniversary of the University of Freiburg by donating the Kinderstube to the university for cultural and social activities. The building initially housed the university radio station Unimix, the Catholic pastoral care team and a research office. It is currently used by the radio station and the Student Housing Foundation (Stiftung für Studentisches Wohnen); part of the building is now the Laure Dupraz room.

THE COMMONS

The is where the Porte de Payerne used to be, through which one left the city. Outside the city walls but still under the city's control lay the Burgernziel. This was a green belt around the city with many shrubs and bushes; it served as a common belonging to the city. Citizens could allow their cows and goats to graze here – although this declined in importance as crafts and small-scale industry expanded – and they could gather wood. The citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde) of Freiburg also owned farms, vineyards and woods on the land. The commons also included the wells that provided the city with drinking water into the 20th century. Under civic law, citizens were entitled to a share of the assets of the citizen's community (the Bürgergut); people

received a sort of “minimum income in natural form”. The citizen’s community supported various social institutions in kind and with money.

One of the peculiarities of social assistance in Switzerland is the historically great importance of the community in which one has the right of citizenship (Bürgerrecht). The citizen’s community was usually responsible for supporting impoverished citizens. This resulted in communities being reluctant to accept new citizens. Itinerants, outcasts and the sick were particularly affected by this. In the wake of wars or epidemics the communities were often more generous as they needed workers.

Social assistance from the citizen’s community (Bürgergemeinde) continued after a fashion until the late Middle Ages; after that the system was wound down and more and more people were excluded from support. Only very limited assistance was provided and it was accompanied by strict social control. With urbanisation and increasing mobility, the pressure on this responsibility grew, because it was no longer appropriate to the times. More and more cantons signed a concordat that involved the community of residence contributing to the costs of poor relief. The last canton joined this concordat in 1967. However, in 1977 the constitution was amended. Under the law on public responsibility for assistance, the Confederation has relinquished its authority in the area of social assistance and transferred it to the cantons, which in turn normally delegate it to the communities of residence. This results in major differences in social assistance, even though the Swiss Conference of Welfare Organisations (SKOS) attempts to enforce nationwide recommendations. Since the law came into force in 1979, the citizen’s community is only responsible for people who have no place of residence.

The main university building stands partly on the commons and partly on the site of the cemetery that belonged to the public hospital and was still within the city walls.

BON PASTEUR

Until 1981, municipal authorities in Switzerland could order someone to be placed in “administrative detention”. No court decision was required for this, which thus breached the principle of the division of powers. Those detained in this way were often not even questioned or listened to and they had no avenue of appeal.

Administrative detention was justified by claiming that it was a mean of preserving public order and tackling poverty. Most of those detained came from the lower social classes. Men were often committed to the institution because they were considered to be “workshy” or “addicted to drink” and hence unable to fulfil the role of sole provider. Women were frequently detained because of behaviour that did not accord with the role of women as then perceived and that was regarded as “dissolute” or “immoral”. Such behaviours could include disobedience to parents, premarital or extramarital sexual relations or alleged prostitution. The women’s behaviour could also be a response to situations outside their control. For example, Claire was committed because she was thrown out of the house by her mother and therefore spent the nights in the houses of various men. Sexually transmitted disease or tuberculosis, “insanity”, theft and – in the case of children and young people – “being in need of training” were grounds for committal.

In Freiburg canton there were two institutions for girls and women placed in administrative detention. Women of legal age were usually sent to Bellechasse prison north of Murten, where they were treated in the same way as convicted prisoners. From 1926 until 1965, girls of 15 and above were detained in the Bon Pasteur Institute until they were released or until they reached the age of majority at 20. The Bon Pasteur, which is located on a hill in Übewil on the edge of the city, also housed girls who entered the institution by other routes. Administrative detention was intended partly to serve as a punishment and partly to train “fallen” and “immoral” girls to become productive members of society. To this end, the girls attended courses in subjects such as shorthand, languages and household management. In the Bon Pasteur girls could also serve apprenticeships as seamstresses or ironers.

Instruction, discipline and training for work were portrayed as benefits for the women, but in reality they more closely resembled a prison sentence. Contact with the outside world was strictly controlled and limited. For examples, letters to the girls’ families were confiscated. Many of the girls attempted to escape. If a girl did escape, the overseer informed the police and a search was launched. Inmates’ reports refer to nightmares and suicidal thoughts.

The Bon Pasteur Institute was managed by nuns. Until the 1950s there was also an outpost of the institute in Lully (near Estavayer-le-Lac). When that was closed, the inmates were all transferred to Freiburg. The Bon Pasteur Institute was closed in 1965 because of a lack of sisters. The building now belongs to the Fondation les Buissonnets, which operates various facilities for people with disabilities.

Administrative detention was not the only enforced welfare measure used in Switzerland in the 20th century: other measures involved Verdingkinder – “contract children” who were removed from their families and rehoused with people such as farmers who needed cheap labour – and Heimkinder who were placed in children’s homes where they were often abused. Forced sterilisation was also practised. Enforced welfare measures were not banned until 1981. The practices are now being investigated. In 2013 the Federal Council officially apologised to the victims of enforced welfare measures. In 2014 it launched a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for the victims of administrative detention. That same year an emergency aid fund was established to help

victims of enforced welfare measures who were in financial difficulties. This was a bridging measure until the initiation of reparations in 2017, accompanied by an academic inquiry into these practices.

HOSPITAL OF OUR LADY

It is not known exactly when or by whom the "hôpital des pauvres malades de la bienheureuse Vierge Marie" was founded, but it was certainly in existence in 1249. It was probably founded by the citizen's community (Bürgergemeinde), who managed the hospital and may have been given one or more existing buildings. The adjacent Basilica of Our Lady served as the hospital church, which was why the hospital was named the Hospital of Our Lady. The hospital consisted of an assortment of fairly small one- or two-storey buildings which were built one by one. Some larger buildings were also added.

Like other hospitals at this time, it provided care not only for the physically and mentally ill – with the exception of lepers – but also for children, the elderly, beggars and other needy people, and travellers. Its work was modelled on the seven works of mercy mentioned in the Bible: clothing the naked, giving water to the thirsty, feeding the hungry, sheltering the stranger, relieving the sick, visiting the prisoner and burying the dead. All these tasks were performed by the Hospital of Our Lady, which thus played a key part in the city of Freiburg's welfare system. At first, support was provided irrespective of whether or not someone was a citizen of the city. Over the centuries, though, the support offered became more and more restrictive and various tasks were transferred to specialised institutions. This also meant that the Hospital of Our Lady served as a sort of free old people's home. The elderly who were taken in bequeathed their property to the hospital. Because it was usual in the Middle Ages for well-off citizens to remember the hospital or the citizen's community in their will, the Hospital of Our Lady had by the middle of the 15th century amassed considerable wealth. In 1445 it was the richest taxpayer in the city. It was even able to grant the city low-cost loans in times of need.

Because of space problems, the Hospital of Our Lady was demolished and replaced by the public hospital, which was opened in 1699.

Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost

The Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost was for a long time the second most important institution involved in supporting the poor, the sick and travellers in Freiburg. The first mention of it is in 1264. It is not known who founded it, but it was an association of lay citizens who took no religious vows. It is thought to have had several hundred members – both men and women – from different social classes. The Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost assisted the poor in the city of Freiburg with gifts of money or goods. There were weekly distributions of money; bread was provided regularly and meat was handed out on the eve of certain feast days. Cloth and shoes were distributed before the onset of winter. Care was taken to ensure that all the needy were provided for. If insufficient bread was available, more was bought from the baker. If it was meat that was lacking, coins were distributed so that some could be purchased. At any one time the Brotherhood was providing for several hundred people; the numbers increased over time. The Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost also paid the costs of medical treatment and provided financial support to pregnant women and poor students.

At the beginning it was usual for non-citizens to also receive support. Large numbers of citizens mentioned the Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost in their will. These donations were believed to ensure the donor's salvation. This interplay between provision for the poor and provision for the hereafter is well represented on the side panels of the Bugnon altarpiece, which were probably painted in 1506-07. The side panels of the altarpiece depict the "saved souls" that the angels are taking into heaven and the distribution of cloth, meat and bread to the poor but also show the increasing restrictions and the expulsion of the ineligible.

These restrictions on aid commenced at the very end of the 15th century. In 1498 the Council banned the distribution of bread and meat to foreigners. The native poor received a metal token that enabled them to be identified. From then on, outsiders were barred from the distribution of gifts. More and more restrictions were imposed on the provision of care to the poor, with a distinction being made between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. From 1580 onwards there was a list of those who were entitled to receive support; money for them was collected by a tax collector known as a Stüwrsammler. Some aspects of the public distribution of gifts (such as the weekly distribution of money) were abandoned at this point. However, the new system did not work well and the amount of money that came in steadily decreased.

From the end of the 16th century onwards the importance of the Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost declined sharply. The 17th century saw the first attempts at introducing work programmes for the poor. In 1680 the government had a medium-size cloth works build at the Place de Notre Dame. It occupied the building to the right of the granary (grenette) that was demolished in 1950. In the cloth works, wool was spun, woven and dyed by the poor.

The government thus created jobs and supported the production process financially. Almost a century later, another large brotherhood, the Brotherhood of St. Martin, used the same building for work programmes for the poor.

7

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

The undocumented migrants' movement began in Lausanne. In April 2001 157 Kosovan migrants were given sanctuary in Bellevaux church. Some of them had arrived in Switzerland as seasonal workers or refugees. They became undocumented migrants when their temporary residence permits expired. They campaigned for the right to remain and called for residence and work permits for everyone who had lived and worked in Switzerland for four years.

Two months later, on Whit Monday, St. Paul's Church in Freiburg was occupied by undocumented migrants who called for collective regularisation for everyone in their position. The occupiers were a far more varied group than those in Lausanne. Among the 80 individuals there were some who had originally arrived in Switzerland with only a tourist visa. In their manifesto the undocumented migrants pointed to the economic contribution that they make. Because there was then a particular shortage of agricultural workers, the migrants were supported by cantonal parliamentarians who had close links with farmers. The authorities' response to the occupation was hesitant. The "toleration period" was repeatedly extended. After nearly three months an initial attempt was made to clear the church. However, the entrance was blocked by more than 80 sympathisers, who included four members of the National Council. When the building was eventually cleared in the night, the undocumented migrants were no longer there. The occupation triggered various support campaigns in Freiburg. The occupation in Freiburg was an important turning point for the undocumented migrants' movement in two respects. Firstly, it called for the right to remain for all undocumented migrants, not just one particular group. The number of such migrants is estimated at between 70,000 and 300,000. Secondly, the movement leapt the language barrier and began to spread in German-speaking Switzerland.

8

RELEASE

In 1972 some students at Freiburg University set up a counselling centre at Rue des Alpes 30 for young people with problems, mainly with soft drugs and alcohol. They invited the young people to come in the evenings, helped them look for accommodation or jobs and offered a listening ear; they also made music with them and watched films. The main aim was to prevent the young people descending into the hardcore drugs scene. The name Release refers to the release from addiction.

The students wanted to tackle the increasingly visible problem of drug addiction through an alternative approach to social work. They focused on low-threshold support without compulsion and criticism. They were strongly influenced by the protests of 1968 and were opposed to institutions. At Release there was no registration process, there were no files and initially no trained social workers. At first Release had difficulty making contact with the young people. French-speaking social workers were therefore employed to undertake street social work.

In the early days Release was funded mainly by the Solothurn section of the Seraphisches Liebeswerk ("Seraphic Work of Charity"); financial support from the canton of Freiburg did not commence until 1977. For at least 15 years, all the money went into a common kitty, the use of which was discussed and decided by everyone on a democratic basis. Looking back at the euphoria of the early days, one of the founders said that they believed at the time that Release could solve the drugs problem. Although this goal was not achieved, a permanent institution was created.

In 2006 Release merged with LIFAT (Ligue fribourgeoise pour la prévention de l'alcoolisme et des autres toxicomanies) and the organisation Reper was born. This counselling centre for the prevention of drug addiction and social exclusion shares the vision of Release. Like Release, Reper campaigns politically for the decriminalisation of drug use.

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IMPRESSUM

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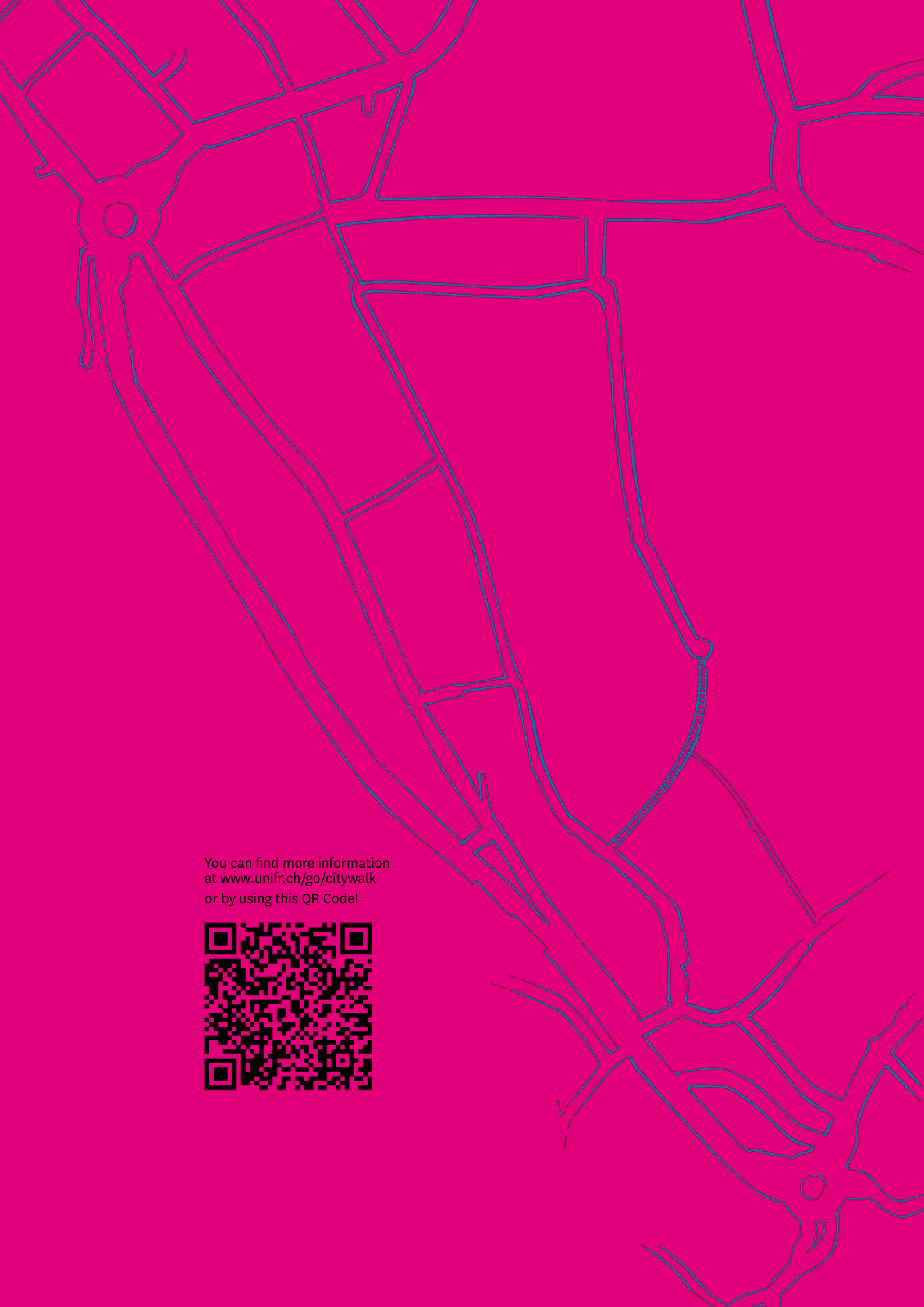

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