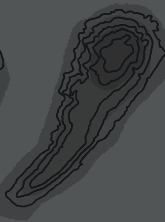
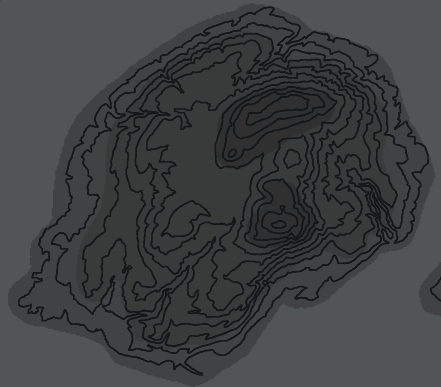
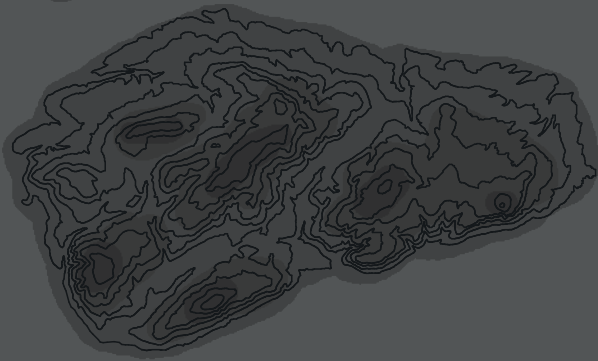
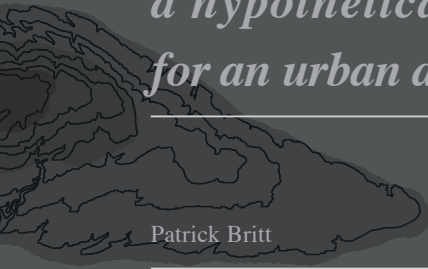


Thurgau Hills

*a hypothetical scenario
for an urban development*

Patrick Britt



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for an urban development*

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Énoncé Théorique de Master en Architecture
SAR / ENAC / EPFL

Sous la direction de Professeur Harry Gugger
et Barbara Mações Costa

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Introduction

The further we move away from cities, the bigger the challenges we face in territorial planning. The lack of vision and strategy for the (former) agricultural regions in Switzerland are present in the constructions of the last decades. Considering the scenario that the population of Switzerland will continue to grow - up to the thought of ,laba'¹ that there could be 16 million inhabitants in 2048²- the pressure on the rural areas will be intensified.

The central region of the Canton Thurgau is an interesting example of the „Even Covered Field“³ in Switzerland. The region is typified by its slightly sloped territory and its location within the triangle of the cities Zurich, St. Gallen and Konstanz. Moreover, the area is characterized by agricultural production, a network of low developed villages and industrial spots connected with main roads or railway lines. Besides the pressure from the three cities, the other challenge for this region is the deterioration of the old, formative agricultural structures.

The publication ‘Switzerland – An Urban Portrait’⁴ identified five different typologies in the Swiss territory. A big part of the central Thurgau area is labeled as ‘Quiet Zone’. The potential and scenario of this typology stays quite vague and it is therefore accompanied by uncertainty for the inhabitants of these areas.

The main goals of this work are to question the strict division of Switzerland into five typologies and to identify a scenario for future development of the so-called ‘Quiet Zones’.

In the first part of this study the ‘Urban Portrait’ will be deliberated, with a special focus on the definitions of the ‘Quiet Zone’. To overcome the fixation on the five typologies and to widen the view on the territory, three urbanistic theories that deal with territories in rural areas will be presented. The three theories will help to do a reading of the area in North-Eastern Switzerland and to identify structuring elements. The result is the creation of a map with an alternative view of the territory. A zoom on one of the identified elements will show a more precise potential for the development of the area. Out of this reading of the territory, a scenario of the studied region will be presented.

1

Laboratoire Bâle (laba) is an architecture and urban design studio of the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).

2

Harry Gugger et al., Swiss lessons: Teaching and Research in Architecture, Zürich: Park Books, 2014.

3

San Rocco - The even covering of the field, 2011.

4

Roger Diener, Jacques Herzog, Marcel Meili, Pierre de Meuron and Christian Schmid, Switzerland – An Urban Portrait, ed. ETH Studio Basel (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006).

1. Urban Portrait of ETH Studio Basel *a description*

1.1 General description of 'Urban Portrait'

Aim / Motivation

The research at ETH Studio Basel for the 'Urban Portrait of Switzerland' started with the hypothesis that "globalization [...] reinforces differences in patterns of urban behaviour."⁵ This hypothesis is the antithesis to the common sense of urbanism in the 1990's that described the world's cities as "increasingly indistinguishable".⁶

The idea was to verify this hypothesis on the nearest object of study – on Switzerland. It's an analysis on the current state of urbanization and an investigation of future potentials for the urbanization of a growing country.

Participants

The foundation of the ETH Studio Basel – Contemporary City Institute – as part of the Department of Architecture, Network City and Landscape of the ETH Zurich in 1999 was the starting point for the 'Urban Portrait'. The Institute was set up by Architecture Professors Roger Diener, Jacques Herzog, Marcel Meili and Pierre de Meuron and the Sociology Professor Christian Schmid. Between 1999 and 2003, approximately 160 students built the foundation for the study within the frame of the design and research studios.⁷ In the two following years, 2004 and 2005, the Studio Basel was processing the collected materials and preparing the publication which got published in 2006.

Time / Period

The beginning of the 21st century with the upcoming Swiss Expo02 marked a time period people started thinking about Switzerland current state and its future. Not only the ETH Studio Basel started seeing Switzerland as a whole unit at this time. There were several other research projects. The most discussed one is called 'Stadtland Schweiz'⁸ by Avenir Suisse, headed by Angelus Eisinger and Michel Schneider, and took place in 2003.

Feedback

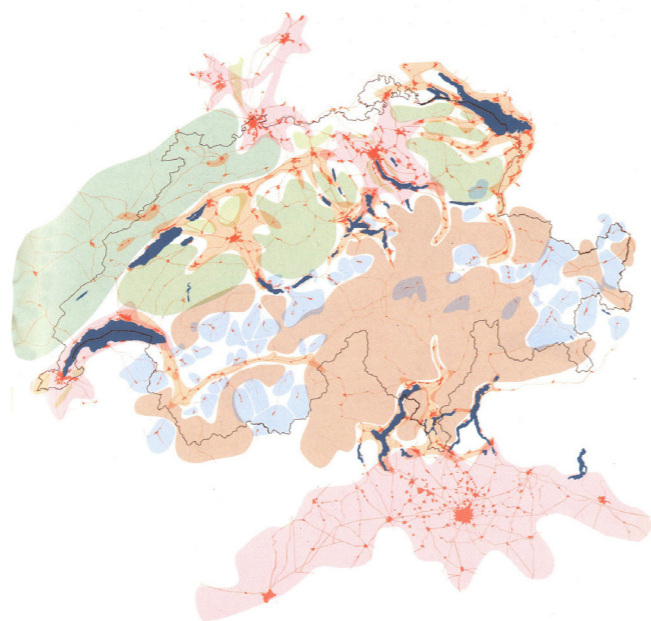
Compared to other urbanistic studies in Switzerland, the 'Urban Portrait' received a feedback from a wide range of different parties. The overcoming of the usual city and agglomeration division and the labelling of the rural areas encouraged all areas to think about its potentials and challenges. In the 'Quiet Zones' and 'Alpine Fallow Lands' the inhabitants felt discredited by this designation at first. The tutors could explain the potentials and benefits through

⁵ Roger Diener, Jacques Herzog, Marcel Meili, Pierre de Meuron and Christian Schmid, *Switzerland – An Urban Portrait*, ed. ETH Studio Basel (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006) p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁸ Angelus Eisinger and Michel Schneider, *Stadtland Schweiz*, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2003).



„Switzerland - An Urban Portrait“, Map

the following debate.⁹ Also cities labelled as part of a ‘Network of Cities’, like Bern, envied the three metropolitan centres Zurich, Basel and Geneva-Lausanne.¹⁰

The new view of the territory had an impact on the political strategies for the spatial development of Switzerland. The Swiss Federal Council presented the new concept for the spatial development (‘Raumkonzept Schweiz’¹¹) in 2012 and some new aspects as the three metropolitan regions and description of the different ‘small- and medium-sized town’ regions (similar to Network of Cities) revealed the influence of the ‘Urban Portrait’.

1.2 Method

The hypothesis “*globalization reinforces differences in patterns of urban behaviour*”¹² was the leading theme of the research. The theory of the complete urbanization of the society in the late 1960’s from the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901 – 1991) was the theoretical background for the study.¹³

Out of Lefebvre’s theory, the ETH Studio Basel developed a new theoretical framework for a practical analysis that is based on three concepts that guided the study: networks, borders and differences.¹⁴

The following indicators were mainly used for the collection of data of the different regions:¹⁵

- Commuters*
- English at the workplace*
- Altitude*
- Branch structure*
- Population structure*
- Population growth*
- Full-time agricultural operations*
- Number of overnight stays*
- Commune size*

1.3 Five Typologies

By looking at the Swiss territory as a complete urban carpet, they developed a “*typology to help recognize the differences in the nature of the urban and within the various urban forms.*”¹⁶

⁹ René Hornung, *Stille Zonen für den Thurgau*, Tagblatt 21. July 2008.

¹⁰ Interview with Christian Schmid in the radio-show ‘Kontext’, SRF 2 from 17. June 2015.

¹¹ Schweizerischer Bundesrat, *Raumkonzept Schweiz*, 2012.

¹² Roger Diener, Jacques Herzog, Marcel Meili, Pierre de Meuron and Christian Schmid, *Switzerland – An Urban Portrait*, ed. ETH Studio Basel (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006) p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

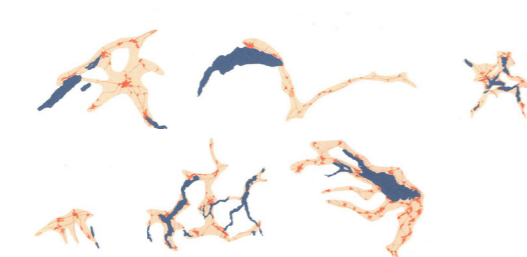
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

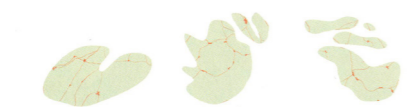
¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 193.



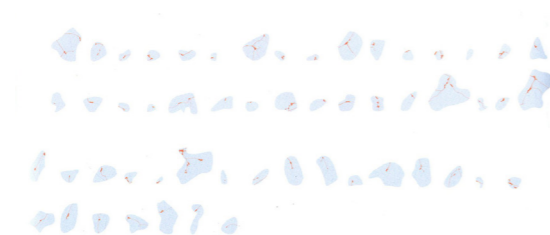
Metropolitan Regions



Network of Cities



Quiet Zones



Alpine Resorts



Alpine Fallow Land

Five typologies from
'Switzerland - An Urban
Portrait'

Through the examination of the three categories 'networks, borders and differences' they discovered five urban typologies in Switzerland: ¹⁷

17
Ibid., p. 18, 198-216.

Three Metropolitan Regions

Six Network of Cities

Three Quiet Zones

Fifty-two Alpine Resorts

One Alpine Fallow Land

These five types should be understood as ideal types, which illustrate a common set of problems, and not as homogeneous places. ¹⁸

18
Ibid., p. 193.

1.4 Content of the Publication

The book 'Switzerland – An Urban Portrait' is published in three volumes with 1016 pages and a big map. The small format of 16 to 16 centimetres, the big amount of pages and the weight of 1.8 kilogram gives more the impression of a box of information than a classical book.

It is divided into the following volumes:

Book 1: Introduction – Switzerland presented in Terms of Networks, Borders, and Differences

State of Mind of Switzerland through the eyes of the architects (Herzog and Meili figure the spokesman of the Institute) and the theoretical background and methodology for the study by the Sociologist and Geographer Schmid

Book 2: Borders, Communes – A brief history of the Territory

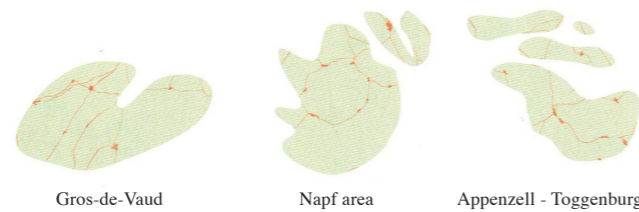
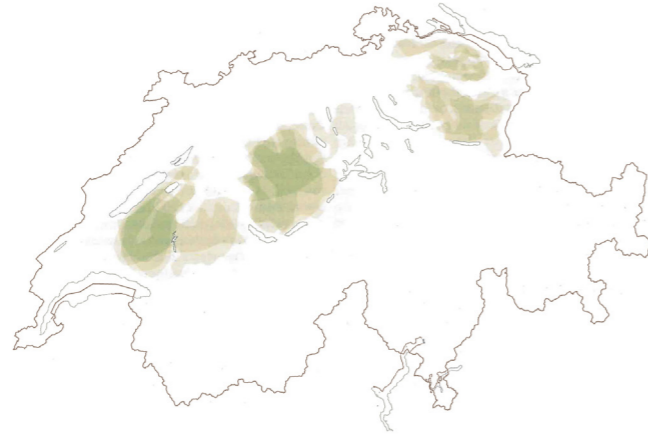
History of Switzerland with the focus on territorial and urban development

Book 3: Materials – for an Urbanistic Project

Collection of studies to proof the division of the territory in the five typologies

Map: Switzerland's Urban Potential – A Thesis Map

Proposal for a new view on the Swiss territory (and guideline for a future development)



top
 Quiet Zones in the Swiss
 territory
 down
 Quiet Zones with their
 urban network in red

1.5 Quiet Zones

The focus of this study will be on the so-called 'Quiet Zones'. The name suggests a diffused image that will not merge with the scenarios presented in media about the ongoing growth of the population of Switzerland - mainly through immigration and the resulting urban sprawl in the Swiss Midland.

During their research, the ETH Studio Basel came to the following definitions of the Quiet Zones:

*The quiet zones are agrarian and industrial landscapes that are mutating into urban park landscapes. On the map they look like giant parks that separate the metropolitan regions and the cities from one another.*¹⁹

19
 Ibid., p. 860.

*The most important feature of the quiet zones is relative distance from larger centres. For the most part, they lack even smaller centres.*²⁰

20
 Ibid., p. 209.

*But they have lost their rural character long ago. Agriculture may still define the look of the landscape, but it is no longer the economic base of these areas. Instead, they increasingly fall within the catchment areas of metropolitan regions and network of cities.*²¹

21
 Ibid., p. 209.

According to this, the Quiet Zones are mainly former agricultural areas within the Swiss Mainland that (until today) successfully resisted the take-over by the urban sprawl. Thanks to the relative big distance to urban centres, they could keep their autonomy but at the same time they depend (mainly economically) more and more on the areas of the Network of Cities and Metropolitan Areas.

The 'Urban Portrait' discovers some crucial changes that are already taking place in these regions:

*On the other hand, the same regions, under pressure from the hegemony of the city, are gradually being transformed into urban "parks", precisely because of this tendency toward inertia. They serve as recreation areas, as nodes of decentralized leisure time activities, as terrain for sports or supraregional, specialized opportunities for consumption.*²²

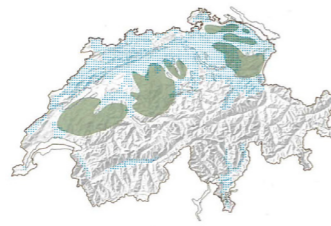
22
 Ibid., p. 742.

This extends the radii of commuter patterns. They subject the quiet zones to transformation that is slow and therefore initially difficult to recognize.

First the empty buildings of the old village are occupied by newcomers with



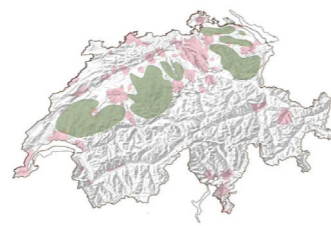
Flatlands - Mountain Regions



Industrial Regions - Agrarian Regions



Protestants - Catholics



Cities - Landscapes



top
 Characteristics of the Quiet
 Zones
 down
 Blurry borders of the Quiet
 Zones

long-distance commutes. Conversely, the residents of the village begin to work elsewhere but without moving away from the village. New companies set up operations in the abandoned halls of the old factories. Finally, village lands are zoned for housing, which promises newcomers a place to retreat from city life. Highly subsidized agriculture thus becomes a kind of park gardening service for a national landscape.²³

23
 Ibid., p. 742.

[...] urban ambitions in the quiet zones are starting to overlap: the urban need for nature, the desire for a historical sense of belonging, the longing for peace and quiet, the search for new rituals of recreation and special forms of consumption, and finally concrete demands on the real estate market.²⁴

24
 Ibid., p. 743.

There is a peculiar change going on in the Quiet Zones. The built environment and the image of the landscape stays 'quiet', but at the same time the urban lifestyle already arrived, even though it came silent and almost invisible.

For the future of the Quiet Zones, the 'Urban Portrait' mentions one main potential:

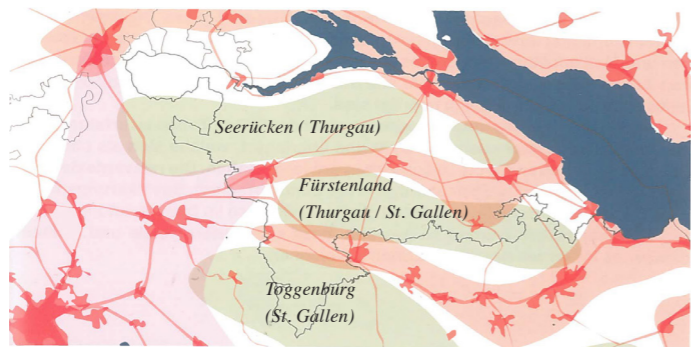
[...] they are the only areas with more or less intact landscapes that lie relatively close to the centres. These green islands should be seen as urban spaces that are extremely important to Switzerland.²⁵

25
 Ibid., p. 212.

1.6 Quiet Zone Thurgau

The area of the Quiet Zone Thurgau is taken as a case study to investigate potentials of the Quiet Zones and to verify if the area can still be labelled or zoned as Quiet Zone and clearly distinguished from the Network of Cities and Metropolitan Area next to it.

If we have to look at the big map of the 'Urban Portrait', it seems that the Eastern Switzerland Quiet Zone will disappear first in the form of the presented figure. It is already divided into three (or four) slices by the Network of Cities cutting through. The big, southern part of it – the Appenzell and Toggenburg regions - seem more constant considering their clear topographical difference to the Network of Cities. The two smaller, northern parts are mostly situated in the territory of the Canton of Thurgau and in the 'Urban Portrait' publication they are already presented with quite blurry borders towards their bordering zones.



To understand the whole region, the description of the ‘Network of Cities’ in Eastern Switzerland gives a concise overview:

*The network of cities in eastern Switzerland exhibits a background of three interwoven yet clearly distinct figures: the ring of former textile manufacturing locations from Rorschach via St. Gallen up to Wil; the urban landscape around Lake Constance, which includes Friedrichshafen and Lindau in southern Germany, also known as its ‘Arcadia’; and the urban sprawl from Bregenz to Buchs in the Rhine Valley.*²⁶

26
Ibid., p. 668.

The specific research about the Eastern Quiet Zone in the third book of the ‘Urban Portrait’ mainly focused on the Appenzell region, whereas the quiet parts of the Thurgau were just mentioned once:

*Today the large urban axes cut through the area, leaving behind patches of landscape like melting fields of snow. The flatter sections in the north already show signs of being a commuter park that is settling in around the agrarian villages.*²⁷

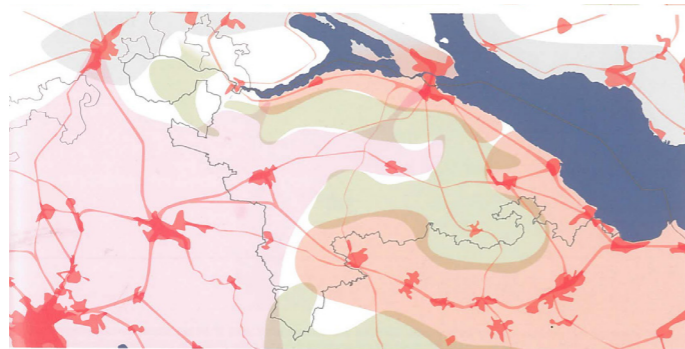
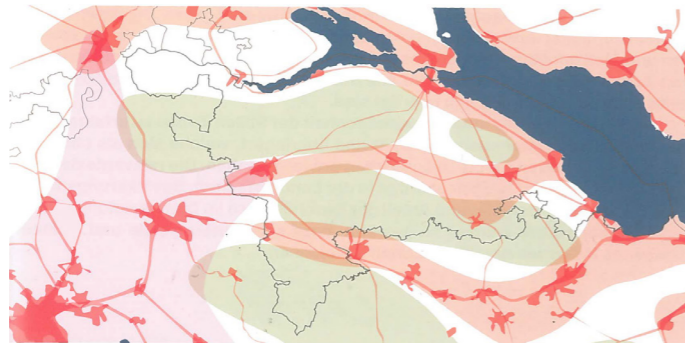
27
Ibid., p. 860.

The merging with the bordering zones and the function as a commuter park for the more urbanized areas were thus already present in 2005.

The canton Thurgau has always been a borderland influenced by the bigger cities St. Gallen, Constance and Winterthur / Zurich. With the decentralized position of its principal town Frauenfeld towards Zurich, a distinct cultural, economical and political centre is missing. The canton has always been orientated towards its neighbours. The Lake of Constance is its most evident territorial figure even though for a large part of the population the view on the second biggest lake of Switzerland is blocked by the canton’s hilly landscape.

top
Thurgau with typologies
from the 'Urban Portrait'
down

Thurgau with the redefined
typologies from the 'Stille
Zonen Thurgau' study



1.7 Study 'Stille Zonen Thurgau' by ETH Studio Basel

An intense debate took place after the publication of the 'Urban Portrait' about the situation of Switzerland and its future development. Mainly the regions that were labelled as 'Quiet Zone' or 'Alpine Fallow Land' were scared of their indefinite future as they were uncertain about the impact this label may have on their region. Also the Thurgau region wondered what the 'Quiet Zone' which covered more than half of their territory could mean. The 'Think Tank Thurgau'²⁸ commissioned the ETH Studio Basel to develop a further study about the Quiet Zones in the Thurgau region and to test potentials of the area in developing practical projects.

The study 'Stille Zonen Thurgau'²⁹ was done by a project team containing the architects Mathias Gunz and Christian Mueller Inderbitzin and the professors Marcel Meili and Roger Diener.

They named two phenomena with the biggest influence on the territory of the Thurgau: the ongoing expansion of the Metropolitan Area of Zurich that make demands on the Thurgau as attractive living space for their commuters and the unresponsiveness and defencelessness of the Quiet Zones against the broadening of the neighbouring Metropolitan Areas and Network of Cities.³⁰ This results in a big threat for the Quiet Zones with the pressure from growing agglomerations and the internal, implosive moment of a shrinking agriculture.

The Quiet Zones are situated in central places in the Thurgau region where the orientation towards the different urban networks around are neutralised. Regarding this, the study sees the Quiet Zones as bond of the 'Thurgau Identity'.³¹

For a deeper understanding of the area, the following parameters were analysed: household size, employees in agriculture, English at the workplace, employees in non-productive industries and population density.³² The interpretation of these criteria on the Quiet Zones resulted in a division of it into three different types: The core zone, pressure front and the fallow land.³³

From an economical perspective the **core zones** depend mostly on agriculture and aren't affected (yet) by the expanding sprawl of city networks. Most of the landscape can still be seen as cultural landscapes / cultivated landscapes.³⁴

Expanding urban settlements and periurbanization are confronted with a traditional, rural lifestyle in the **pressure front** areas. They are situated in parts of the Quiet Zone close or next to expanding urban networks.³⁵

28
Foundation that deals with political, economical and cultural developments in the Thurgau

29
Mathias Gunz, Christian Mueller Inderbitzin, Thurgau – Projekte für die Stillen Zonen, (Sulgen: Niggli, 2008).

30
Ibid., p. 20.

31
Ibid., p. 90.

32
Ibid., p. 108-111.

33
Ibid., p. 112.

34
Ibid., p. 114.

35
Ibid., p. 116.

Fallow lands are areas that were once urbanized through the process of industrialization. The shrinking industrial production in these areas in recent years resulted in an obliteration of the village centres and the public life. At the same time, new detached housing settlements were built on the borders of the villages.³⁶

36
Ibid., p. 118.

1.8 Conclusions and Problems and Potentials for the Central Thurgau Area

Looking at the entire Thurgau region and taking the precedent studies in account, following problems and potentials can be called:

Problems / Threats:

becoming a commuter area (for Zurich, St. Gallen and Konstanz areas)
low economical force
shrinking agricultural sector
dependence on private transport through broad urban sprawl
no common identity of the region / orientation towards exterior spots

Potentials / Chances:

'intact' landscape, closeness to landscape
space / building area
slightly hilly landscape
rivers – East: Thur and Sitter, West: Murg
strengthen the workers in the 2nd sector instead of trying to rebuild a city working structure

The low urbanized areas in the middle of the region previously named as 'Quiet Zones' could play an important role in the future development of the region. They could serve as a cultural landscape centre for the whole region to compensate for the missing central, urban centre. The potential of the large fields that are available through the shrinking of the agricultural sector and its landscape should be used to develop an alternative living and economy model to the growing cities.

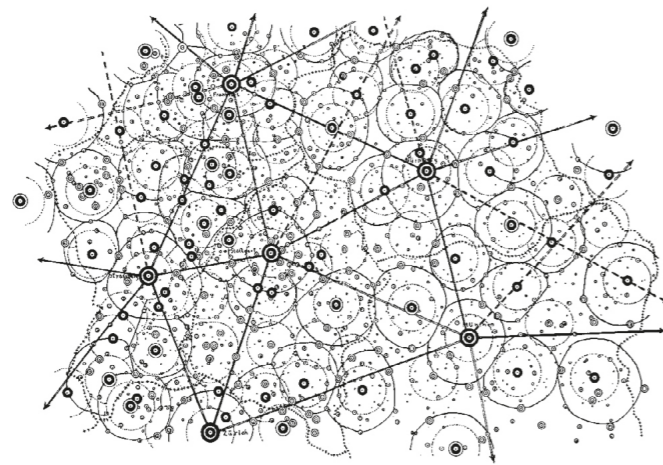
2. Expanding the Urban Portrait *other views on the terri- tory*

To enlarge the view on the territory of Eastern Switzerland, three different theories of urbanism are introduced that deal with landscape and urbanism in non-city like territories. They should help to overcome the dichotomy of city and countryside and facilitate, as the theory of Lefebvre guided the 'Urban Portrait', the discovery of new potentials and forms in the suburban context around the 'Quiet Zones'. At the same time they should support a reevaluation of the division of the Swiss territory into five zones as well as guide a precise lecture of a certain context and area.

The theories covered in this chapter were all written in the last 20 years and deal with contemporary issues and problems of urbanism in the current period of 'complete urbanization' as Lefebvre said. But all of them refer to much older theories and statements of geography, sociology and urbanism. They were selected among a bigger amount of texts due to their different background and point of view on urbanization. James Corner has a background as a landscape architect and tries to mix his profession with urbanism. Sébastien Marot is educated as a philosopher and became a critic and teacher in architecture and landscape design. His work is focused on the issue of sub-urbanism and the way design may address the temporal texture of sites and situations.³⁷

Paola Viganò and Bernardo Secchi are trained as architects and urbanists. In their research and practical work, they put their main focus on a strong relation of territorial structures and the urban form in a complete urbanized context that they called the 'Horizontal Metropolis'.

37
The Berlage, 2013.



Walter Christaller - The System of Central Places in Southern Germany

2.1 Landscape Urbanism by James Corner

The landscape architect James Corner proposes to combine the disciplines of landscape architecture with urbanism to enlarge the spectrum, the influence and the possibilities of the two disciplines. Landscape urbanism views the emergent metropolis as a thick, living mat of accumulated patches and layered systems, with no singular authority or control. The contemporary metropolis, seen as a dynamic, open-ended matrix, is out of control. Corner tries to see this as a strength instead of a weakness. His main essay (or manifesto) 'Landscape Urbanism'³⁸ describes the new discipline in five keywords.

38
Corner, 2014, p.
290-297.

Horizontality

Horizontality conquers the centralistic organization of the ancient city – countryside structure deriving from the medieval time. Corner calls it the “*transition from hierarchical, centric, authoritative organizations to polycentric, interconnected, expansive ones*”. As he illustrates with the diagram of ‘The system of central places in Southern Germany’ by the German geographer Walter Christaller from 1933, he proposes a view “*from the object to the field, from singularities to open-ended networks*”.

Infrastructure

New potential is added to the given field through the instrumentation of infrastructural catalysts. The entry of geometry, materials, and codes is rather seen as an infrastructure that is able to liberate a future sets of possibilities than an architectural way to control composition or to determine a social program.

Forms of Process

Corner wants to overcome the believe in control of history and process through spatial form. He points out that the processes of urbanization are much more significant for the shaping of urban relationships than the spatial forms. A utopia of process should lead the search for new organizing structures and cities rather than a utopia of form. The emphasis should shift from how things look like to how they work and what they do.

Techniques

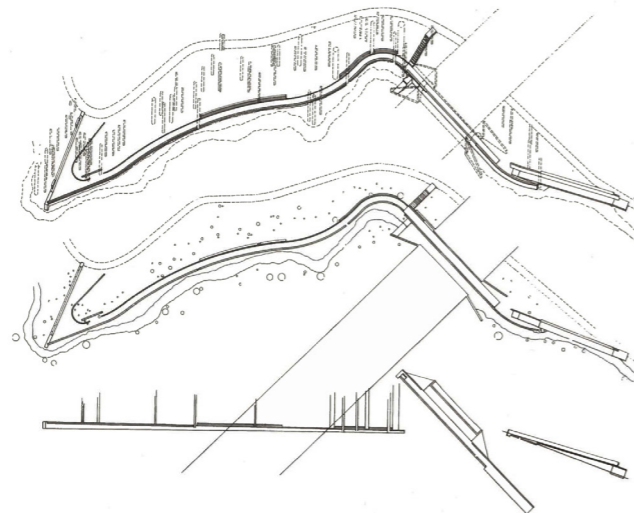
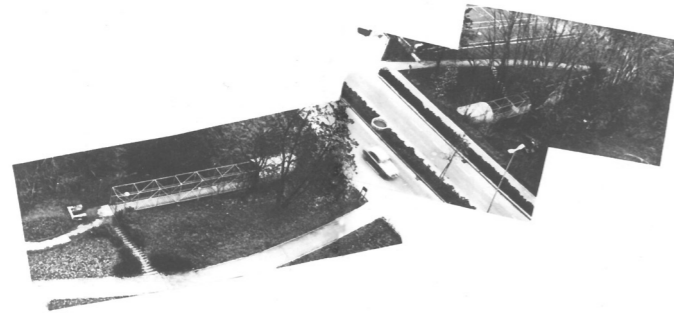
A combination of the techniques of a landscape architect and the urbanist methods create a larger set of tools and a bigger influence on the planning than the traditional planner has had in the past. Mapping, cataloguing, surface

modelling, implanting, managing, cultivating, phasing and layering from the landscape side are used in combination with the urbanist tools such as planning, diagramming, organizing, assembling, allotting and zoning.

Ecology

Corner takes ecology to underline that all life is connected, it is “*bound into dynamic and interrelated processes or co-dependency.*” In his understanding, cities and infrastructure are as ecological as forests and rivers. There is no ‘outside’ anymore, everything is connected.

“Bringing all these points together, landscape urbanism can offer new directions because of its extensive scale and scope, its inclusive pragmatism and creative techniques, its prioritization of infrastructure and process, its embrace of indeterminacy and open-endedness, and its vision of a more wholesome and heterogeneous world. Underling all of these claims is [...] the soft world of ecology.”



top
Georges Descombes - Parc
à Lancy, photo of tunnel
down
Georges Descombes - Parc
à Lancy, axonometric
drawings

2.2 Suburbanism and the Art of Memory by Sébastien Marot

The philosopher Sébastien Marot, who specialized himself as a critic in the field of architecture and urbanism, published in 1999 in the revue 'Le Visiteur' the text 'L'Art de la mémoire, le territoire et l'architecture'.³⁹

Four years later, the English publication was released with an even more incisive title called 'Suburbanism and the Art of Memory'.⁴⁰ It can be seen as the manifesto for 'Suburbanism'.

The great question in the field once known as urban design is no longer that of Alberti's day – how to choose the site where a city or a given programme will be built – but how to accommodate sites that have now all been subsumed, in one way or another, by the suburban condition.

*This new situation entails a complete **role reversal** between the two major categories for reasoning involved in any given project: **site and programme**. While the methods and routines of urban design have traditionally mimicked those of architecture, thereby perpetuating the dominance of programme (and of an approach that goes from programme to site), the **suburban condition** calls for an **inversion of this hierarchy**, in which **site becomes the regulatory idea of the project**.*

*For this alternative approach and its critical concerns, which today come most clearly into view in the realm of landscape architecture, I propose the name '**sub-urbanism**'.*

Marot understands his definition of 'sub-urbanism' as the opposite definition to Rem Koolhaas' manifesto for the 'super-urbanism' in 'Delirious New York'.⁴¹ While the 'sub-urbanism' could be seen as a design experiment which holds the site as the matrix in which the program is to be deciphered, 'super-urbanism' stands for an attempt to inventing the site through the manipulation and building of the program. The site, setting or landscape is seen as the infrastructure whose meaning is put into play in every project. The function of the program is thus to become a tool that explores, reads, reveals, invents and represents the site.

In four chapters, he unfolds his background and understanding of the territory through the juxtaposition of four reflections. 'The Art of Memory' by Frances Yates published in 1960 is the rediscovery of the 'Art of Memory' invented by the Greeks and then passed on to the Romans. In the 1930's, the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud focused his work on memory as well, mainly on the phenomena of voluntary and involuntary memory. The interest in the sub-urban

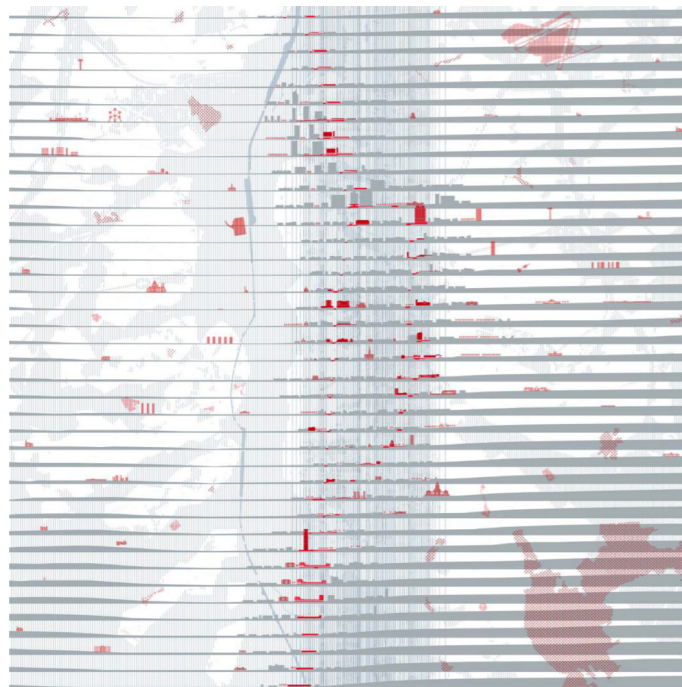
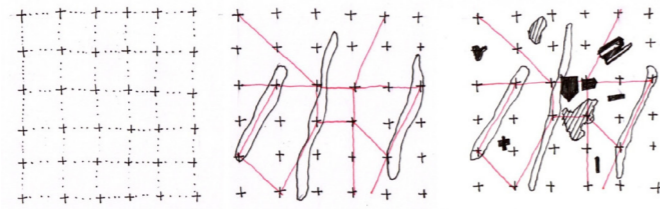
39
Marot, 1999.

40
Marot, 2003.

41
Koolhaas, 1978.

condition for Marot was arisen by the artist Robert Smithson, who created an art piece out of his suburban stroll in 1967 (A tour of the Monuments of Passiac, 1967). He discovered a series of hidden monuments by changing his point of view and following an unknown river. A park in Lancy in the Genevan suburbs designed by Georges Descombes in the 1980's is the most contemporary reference of Marot. Each of the elements that form the park like stairs, tunnels and bridges respond sensitive to the site. We can consider it as the build manifesto for his idea of 'sub-urbanism'.

2.3 Horizontal Metropolis by Paola Viganò and Bernardo Secchi



top
Studio Secchi and Viganò,
Brussels 2040 - Isotropy
Diagram, 2012

down
Studio Secchi and Viganò,
Brussels 2040 - Horizontal
Metropolis, 2012

The two architects and urbanists Paola Viganò and Bernardo Secchi worked on several urbanistic projects in Europe around 2010. The similar, but unprecedented urban condition they found in Brussels, in Flanders and in the Veneto led them to name this condition the 'Horizontal Metropolis'.⁴²

Nowadays, every village (in Europe) is confronted with metropolitan and territorial subjects. The 'Horizontal Metropolis' describes this contemporary diffuse urbanity and is able to overcome the ancient dichotomy of centre and periphery. The natural and artificial water system and the iron system (trains, tramways) were instrumental in creating a diffuse city, but this condition, its results and its potentials has to be reconsidered now.⁴³ The 'Horizontal Metropolis' model is illustrated with the 'Diagram of the Cellular Metropolis' of Erich Gloeden that shows the horizontally arranged set of equivalent cells that form a city for millions of inhabitants.⁴⁴

The 'Horizontal Metropolis' is a fully integrated area in which open and agricultural/planted fields do not separate and specialise functions, they weave patterns and relationships that have fluid boundaries. It is not – as the name may suggests – a homogeneous and consensual landscape. The 'Horizontal Metropolis' is full of differences and its spatial contrast enrich the landscape.⁴⁵

This concept can be seen as a contemporary possible construction of a different urban principle. Every project within the 'Horizontal Metropolis' is inscribing an individuality to all the places and cultures that are touched. The 'Horizontal Metropolis' still requires this.⁴⁶

In their way of looking at the contemporary European urban condition, they developed a reading of the site for the study 'Brussels 2040', that can be adapted to other – also not so dense – places. A big map was produced as a final result of the study. First of all, they start with an isotropic look at the territory and therefore they define an exemplar frame – mainly the most neutral form: the square. Four main layers compose the map itself: Firstly, the 'junction as a field condition'. It points out the main infrastructural junctions within the isotropic field. The second layer is adapting the surface that is divided into water, built space and green space. As a third layer they juxtapose a series of sections through the territory for a three-dimensional understanding of the place. The layer on the top is called 'Alphabet'. The main punctual figures of the city are marked as the airport, monuments of the city or a big forest'. The juxtaposition of all these layers offers a new, horizontal reading of the city without the common reading from the centre to the periphery.⁴⁷

42
Viganò, 2015, p. 23.

43
Secchi and Viganò,
2015, p. 37.

44
Vigano, 2013.

45
Ibid.

46
Ibid.

47
Secchi and Viganò,
2010.

2.4 **Methods and Instruments taken from the three theories**

Out of the three theories discussed above, a working method is developed for a deeper understanding of the chosen site. It will help to evolve a scenario for the whole region and to advance the understanding of the place through an architectural project. By focusing on the most important and specific points of the three models, the created reading is structured in four parts:

First: Horizontality

To begin the reading, the (Central European) site has to be seen as completely 'metropolised'. The construction of a wide and continuous physical and virtual network allows a horizontal and equal view on the whole territory.

Second: Reading

The reading of the site should rather be considered as a guide to a deeper understanding of the place than an analysis of the built elements there. The territorial and geographical figures as well as the natural and man-made infrastructures should be read carefully and the site should be understood as a palimpsest.

Three: Process

We have to widen our view on the field through the conjunction of different views and disciplines that work with the territory. Apart from more technical methods like 'mapping' and 'layering', the most important lesson we can take from landscape architecture is to look at the project as a (long-lasting) process.

Four: Program

The program and scenario for a site should then grow out of this reading and be the specific solution for a specific place.

3. Territorial Reading of the Thurgau area

3.1 Cartography: Layering beyond Surfaces

Method

Learning from the three theories from the preceding chapter, a territorial reading of the area around the Thurgau (presented in the first chapter) is attempted. A choice of significant layers and their precise reading, as single layers and as meaningful combinations, will guide to a new view of this area.

Layers Description

Basic territorial layers:

Topography: shows the base of the territory, especially important in the hilly surrounding of Eastern Switzerland

Hydrography: the water network follows the topography and forms strong limits and connections

Planar occupation of the soil:

Forest: constant form of soil-occupation that has a strong cultural acceptance to be protected and plays an important role in the ecological balance

Urbanization: growing form of soil-occupation that represents the inhabited places by humans

Linear occupation of the soil:

Roads: network of public roads that connects places for individual private transport

Railways: network of public railway lines that connects places with public or semi-public transport facilities

Types and Programmes:

Typologies of the Urban Portrait Switzerland : the five different typologies of the Swiss territory that were identified by the ETH Studio Basel

Public programmes in Quiet Zones: programmes that have a strong impact on the surrounding or receive a strong attraction of people

Basic territorial layers



Topography



Hydrography

Linear occupation of soil

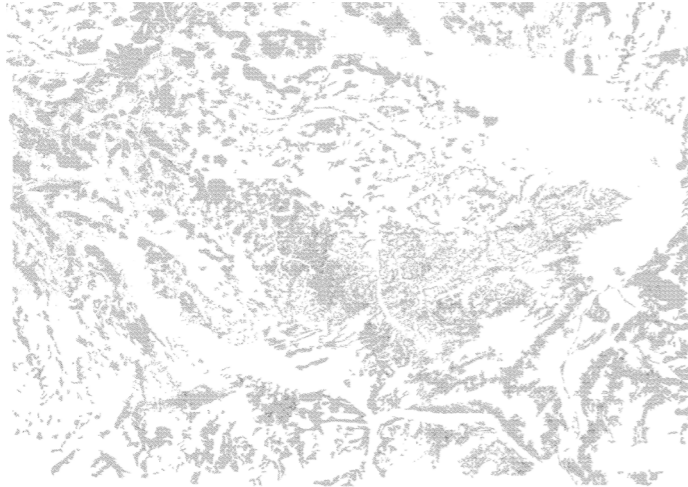


Railways

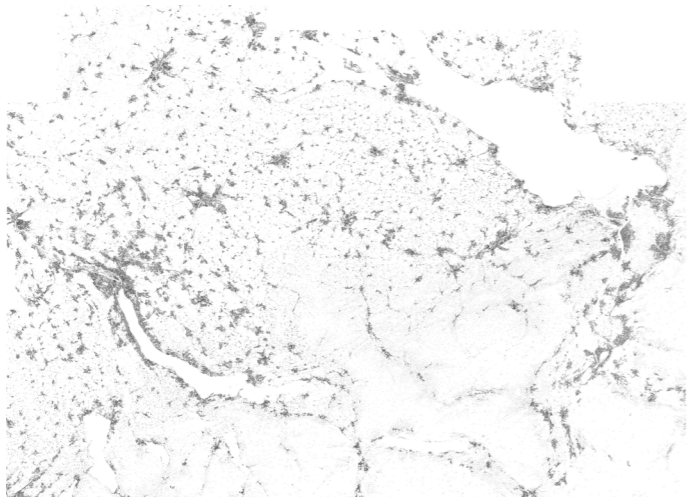


Roads

Planar occupation of soil



Forest



Urbanization

Types and Programmes



Urban Portrait Switzerland



Public programs in Quiet Zones

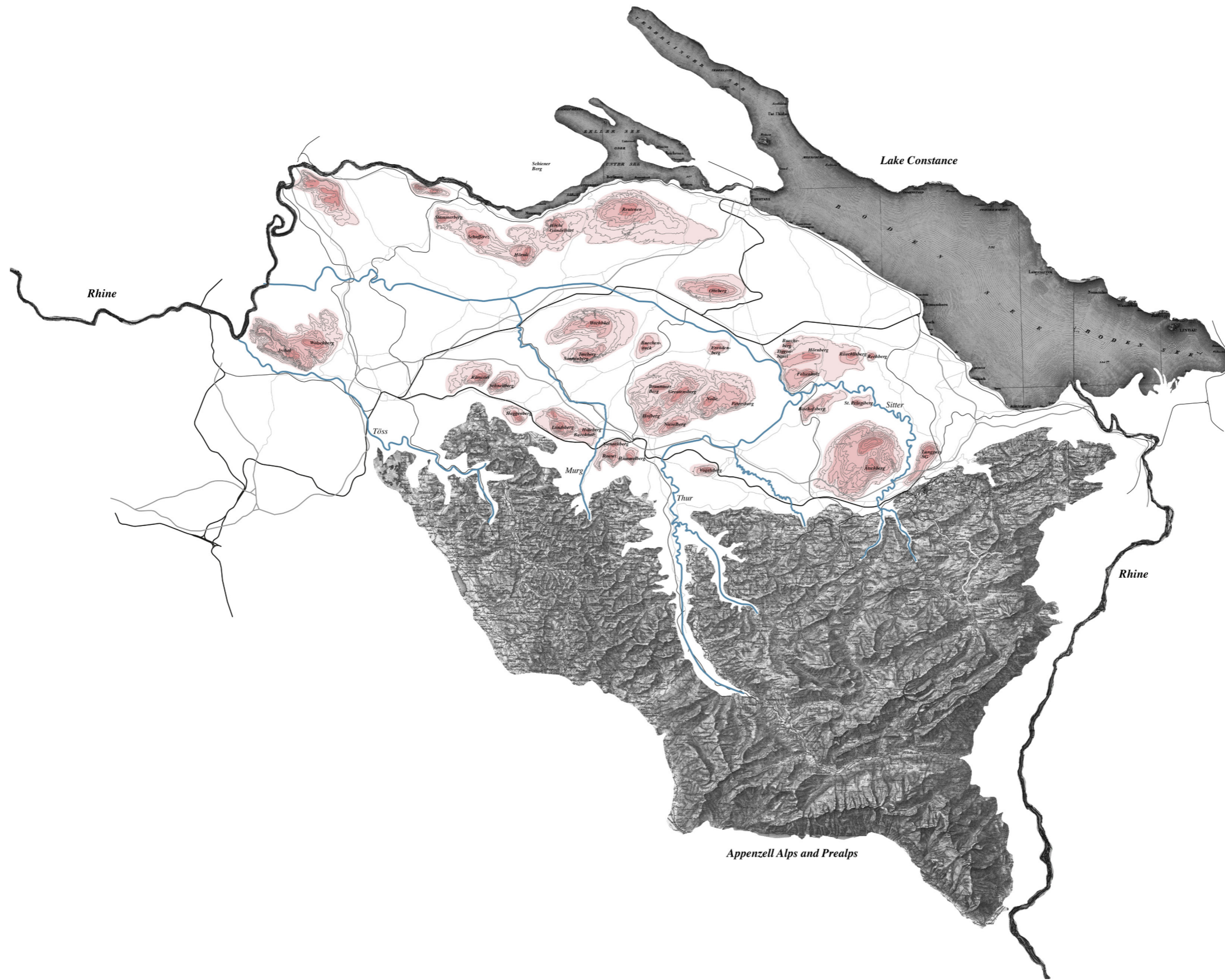
3.2 **Map I: the Thurgau territory**

Map I

As defined in the second chapter, the territory of North-Eastern Switzerland, that contains the Thurgau region in the North, is seen as a horizontal carpet. All parts of this area are well connected by several networks.

The reading of the topographical situation and the hydrographical system present an area that is mainly defined and limited by two strong figures. In the North by the Lake Constance and the river Rhine that flows through it. In the South, the Appenzell Alps and their Prealps form a strong topographical limit that begins with an altitude of 700 meter and leads up to 2'500 meter with the peak of the Säntis. The territory between the two limits is characterized by the gently rolling hills and the flatter areas, where the main infrastructures and urbanized parts can be found. The biggest rivers of the area, the Thur, the Sitter, the Murg and the Töss all have their source in the Appenzell Alps and flow into the Rhine.

A big potential of this area are the equally spread hills. Even if all of them are inhabited by humans through the construction of roads and buildings, compared with the rest of the area they seem 'quiet' and green. A dense network of public and private transport facilities connects them to the more urbanized areas and centres that surround them all.



Appenzell Alps and Prealps

3.3 Hills

Having defined the hills as an important figure in the area around the Thurgau, all the chosen hills are presented by name, altitude and the central element or figure that occupies the peak.

The catalogue is divided in two parts. It represents two types of hills that can be defined:

The big ones form a group of several peaks and reach an altitude around 700 meter. They are occupied by small villages and well connected to the surrounding network or even have important connections passing through. Forest always occupy a part of the hill and often its peak.

The smaller type of hills is usually marked by just one central peak. They are not generally defined by a high altitude. They can just be slightly higher than their surrounding but the different type of occupation makes them readable as a clear hill figure. Their peaks are often occupied by a public element like a forest, a church or even a small village.

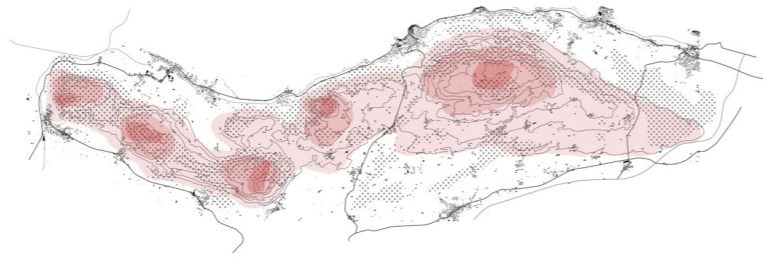
Following pages:

Name (from left to right)

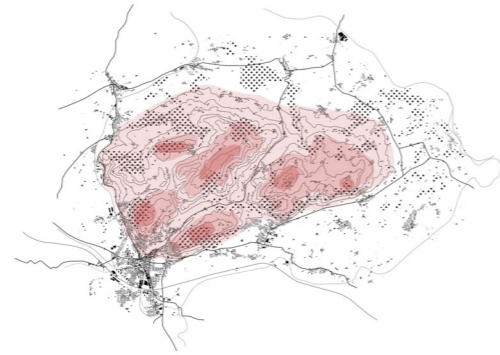
Altitude

Central Element on Peak

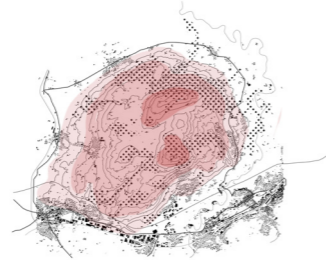
Stammerberg
 639 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Schafferez
 632 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Hörnli
 670m.a.s.l.
 Forest and Ponds
Höchi Gündelhart
 639 m.a.s.l.
 Castle and Forest
Reutenen
 906 m.a.s.l.
 Village and Castle



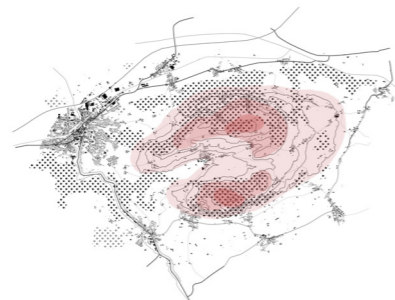
Hofberg
 723 m.a.s.l.
 Look-out tower
Braunauer Berg
 732 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Nieselberg
 718 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Greutensberg
 775 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Nolle
 735 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Petersburg
 730 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



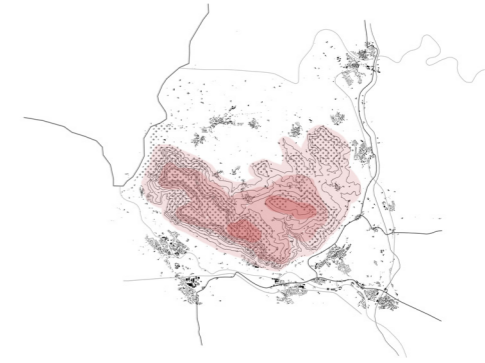
Tannenberg
 903 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Aetschberg
 906 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



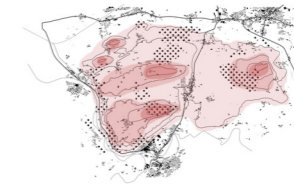
Immeberg
 706 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Wachbuel
 703 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



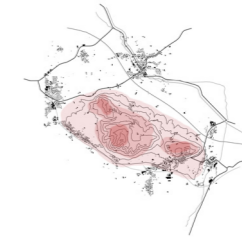
Irchel
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 Forest
Wolschberg
 627 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



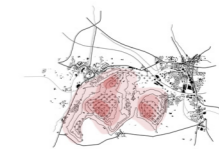
Tiggenbauel
 511 m.a.s.l.
 Vineyard and Forest
Buecheberg
 540 m.a.s.l.
 Vineyard
Felsenholz
 594 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Hörnberg
 544 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Räuchlisberg
 501 m.a.s.l.
 Castle



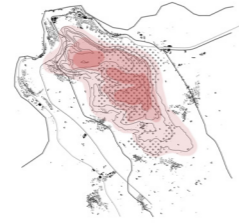
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 Forest
Hilteberg
 636 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



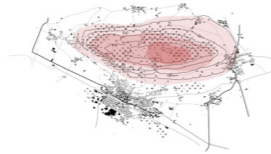
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 Forest
Sirnacherberg
 676 m.a.s.l.
 Forest
Hummelberg
 682 m.a.s.l.
 Forest



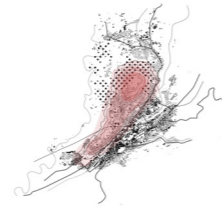
Cholfirst
579 m.a.s.l.
Forest



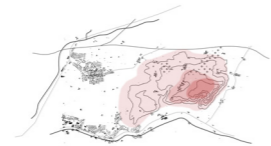
Otteberg
703 m.a.s.l.
Forest



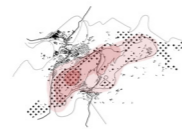
Heiligkreuz
787 m.a.s.l.
Zoo



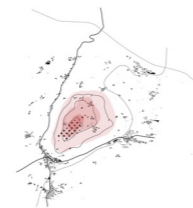
Rämistel
649 m.a.s.l.
Forest



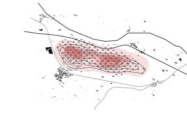
Bischofsberg
618 m.a.s.l.
Forest



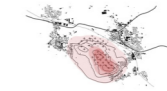
Buechenstock
560 m.a.s.l.
Forest



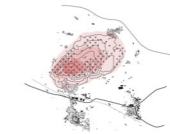
Rodenberg
588 m.a.s.l.
Forest



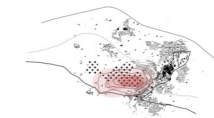
Haggenberg
635 m.a.s.l.
Forest



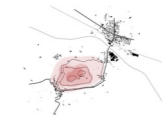
Schneiberg
671 m.a.s.l.
Forest



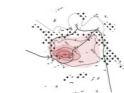
Vogelsberg
702 m.a.s.l.
Forest



Freudenberg
533 m.a.s.l.
Village



St. Pelagiberg
601 m.a.s.l.
Church



Rechberg
518 m.a.s.l.
Farm



3.4 Map II: One Hill

Map II

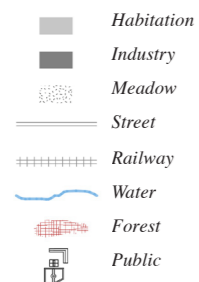
One of the bigger hills, situated in the centre of the area defined in the previous map (Map I), is taken as a case study for a deeper reading of the territory and to discover potentials for a future development of this area.

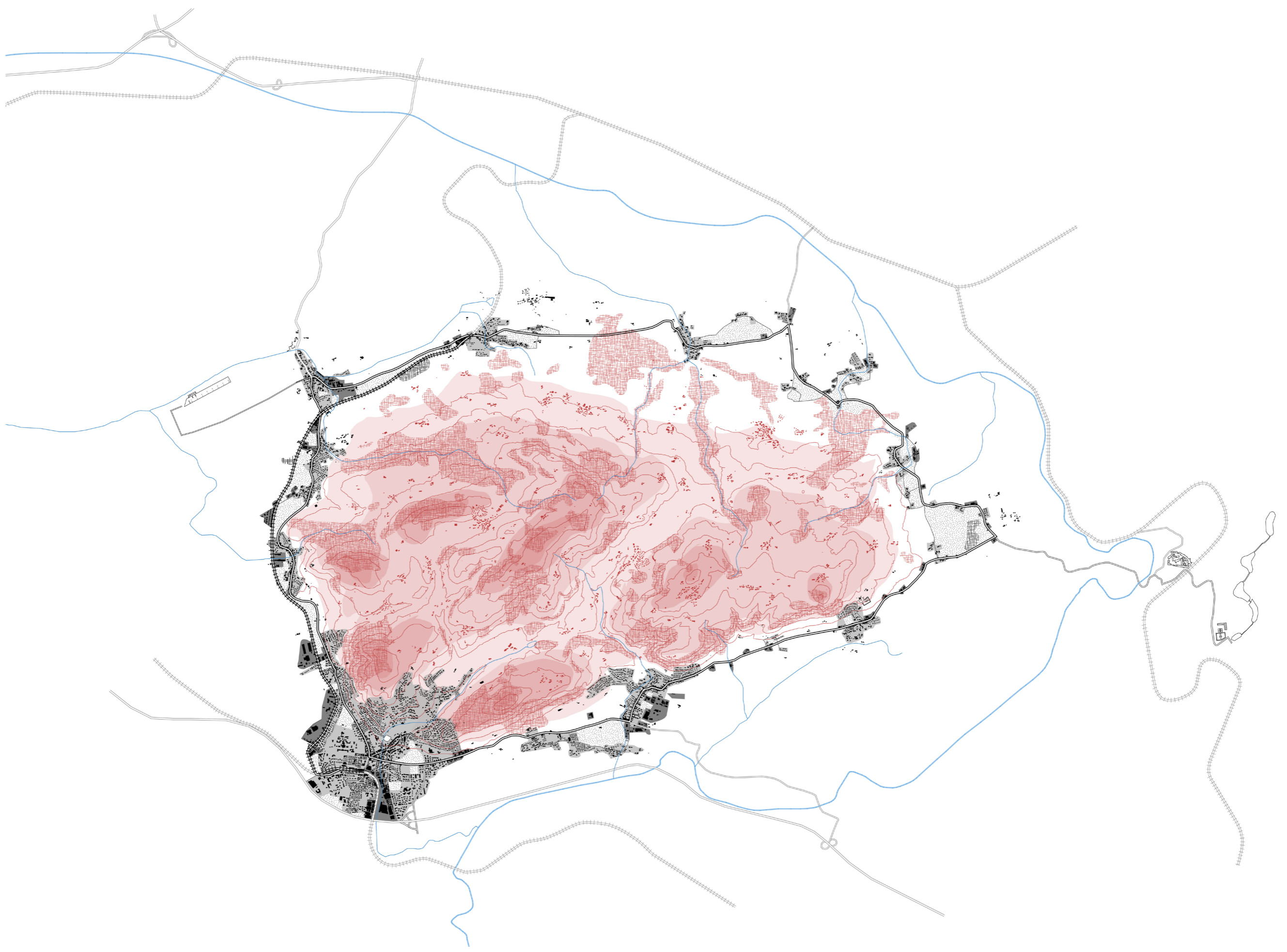
The hill is located between the small cities Weinfelden in the north and Wil in the south. Several peaks with an altitude between 620 and 775 meter form it. The main infrastructure lines that are connecting the two more urbanized areas in the north and the south are running along the western slope. Small villages and single farms, apart from a bigger village situated close to the highway, characterize the east and the north side.

To visualize these characteristics, the main connections that surround the hill and its main figures are part of the map. They form a belt or ring with different types of building structures, industrialized areas, productive agriculture and forests.

Agricultural fields and forest occupy a big part of the hill. Two-thirds of the surface ⁴⁸ is still used for agricultural production. Some small villages and hamlets with less than 300 inhabitants form a network of buildings. The small streams that have their source on the hill pass through the villages on the base of the hill of their way to the Thur or the Murg.

48
*Politische Gemeinde
Braunau, 2015.*





3.5 Palimpsest

The look at the wider territory of the Thurgau region with the help of the three urbanistic theories presented in the second chapter guided to a new reading. It can be seen as an alternative view on the territory than the 'Urban Portrait' and its following study presented. There is no aim to define zones for whole areas. This work tries to read the territory as a palimpsest⁴⁹ and find figures in the existing terrain. It tries to not focus on current urbanistic trends, instead it looks at the area with a distant and naïve way to discover potentials for a future urban development that works together with the found situation. It tries to not invent a new type, its only aim is to continue the writing on the palimpsest.

To continue this writing, it will be important to consider the parts three and four from the reading of the theories: *Process* and *Program*.⁵⁰ The development has to be seen as a long-lasting process. The focus on the infrastructural elements will help to establish a structure that allows and controls the future development. The program of the specific intervention has to be the outcome of a precise reading of the site. It's the possibility to build a sustainable project that can help to create an identity for the place.

How this writing could be continued is presented in the form of a scenario in the following chapter.

49
Definition by André Corboz in his essay 'The Land as Palimpsest', 1983.

50
Chapter 2.4 – Methods and Instruments taken from the three theories. Page 37.

4. Quiet hills with metro- politan belt

4.1 A Hypothetical Scenario

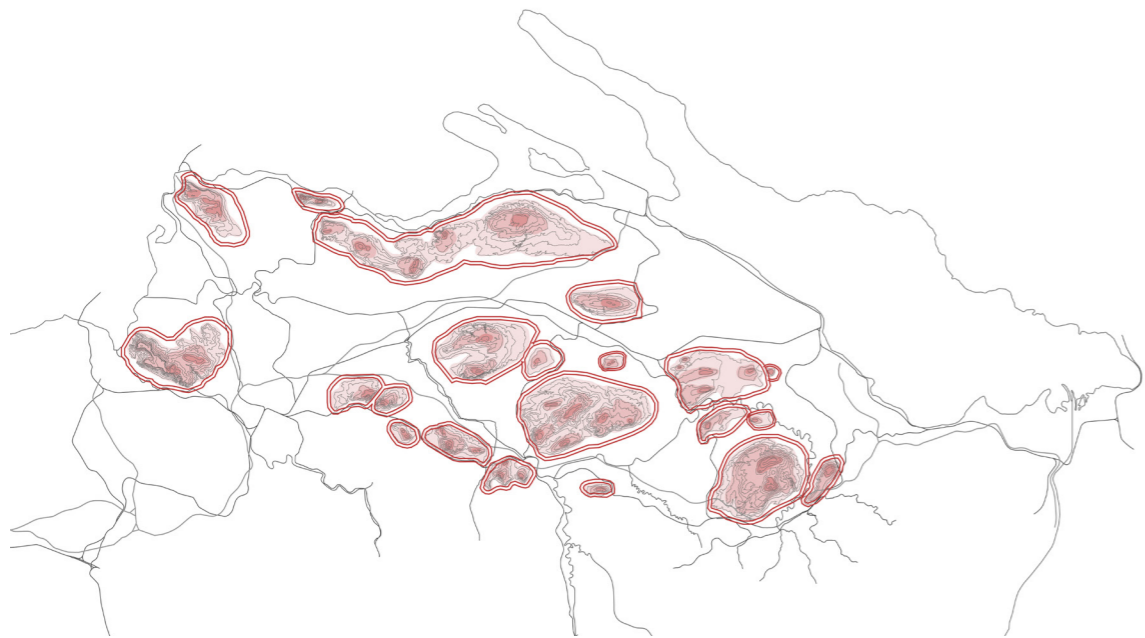
The territory of the Thurgau with its hills shows a potential for a new way of urbanization for former rural areas. All the hills are well connected to the urban network of Switzerland or can even be named as part of it. To overcome the division of the Swiss territory into five typologies, each of the presented hills can have its metropolitan parts with a fast connection to the big centres and its quiet parts.

A new type of living and working structure could be developed in this area. Each hill will have its dense urbanized belt surrounding it that is established along the existing infrastructure. Particular streets and railway lines that surrounds the hill will be selected to attract all the future building developments along these axes.

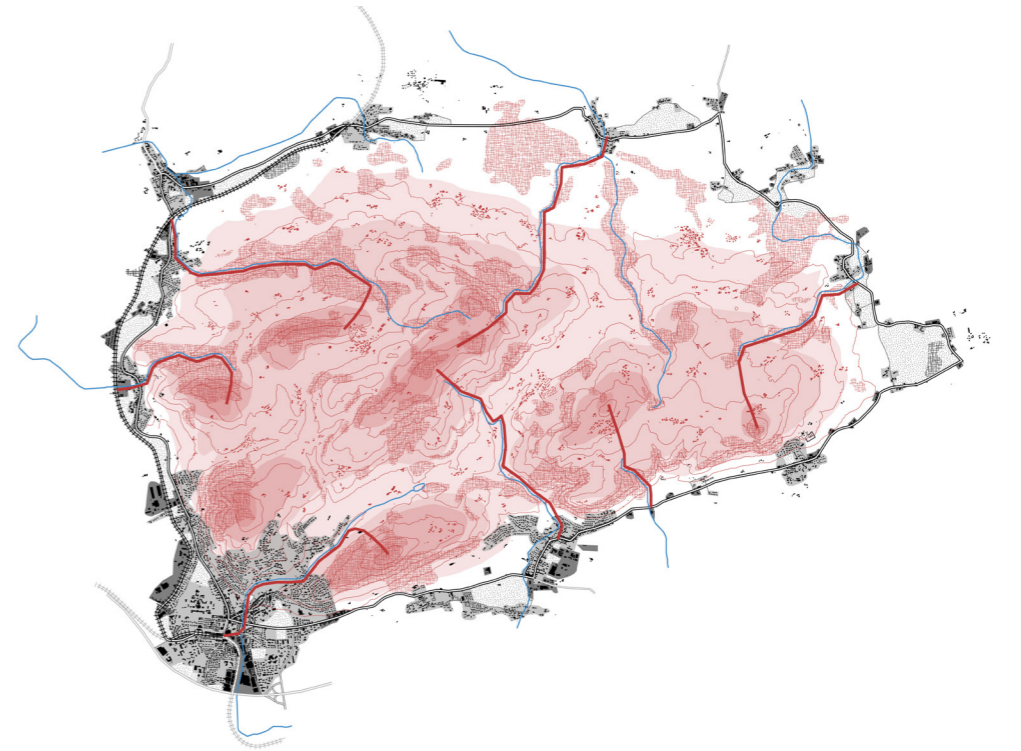
In the middle of the belt is the hill that works as a big backyard for all the inhabitants, workers and visitors. Along the existing streams that have their source on the hills and pass through the belt, the main connections between the denser areas along the belt and the peaks of the hill will be placed.

This typology of settlement substitutes the existing city – village – hamlet structure in this area. Everyone will be inhabitant of a belt and they all share their common space in the centre – the hill.

Scenario Thurgau Hills



Scenario One Hill



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Drawings

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