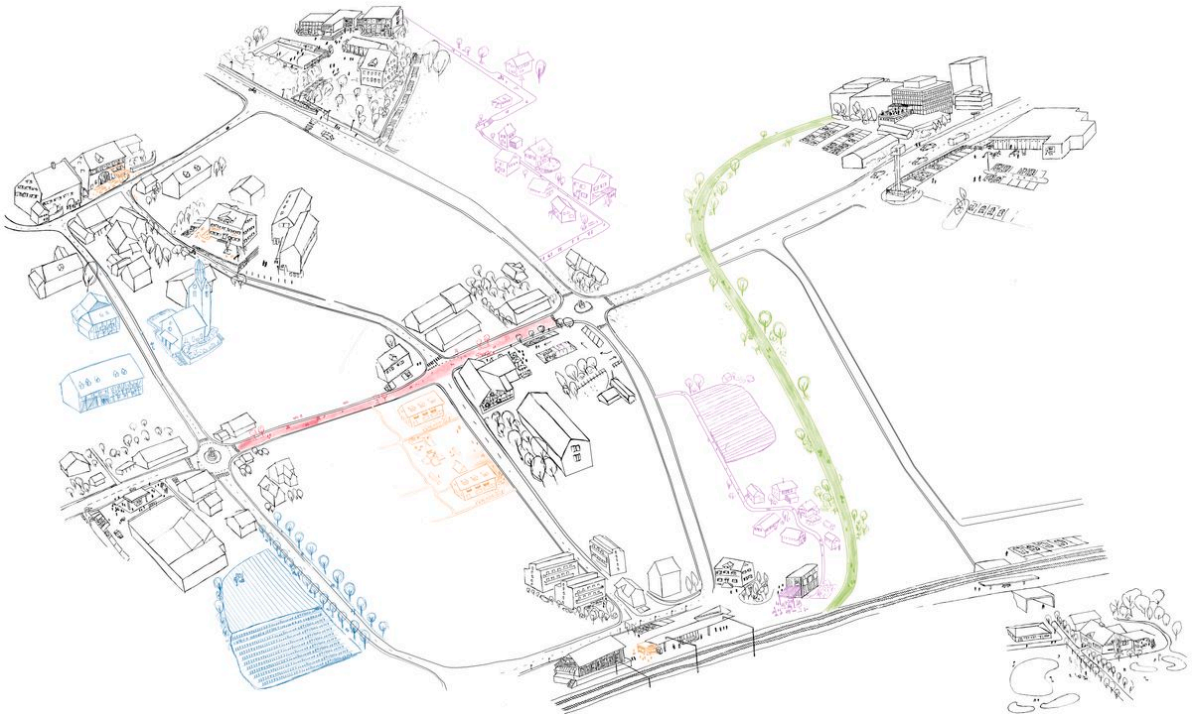
ETH Zurich Department of Architecture
ARCHITECTURE OF TERRITORY
Chair of Architecture
and Territorial Planning
Professor Milica Topalović

Village Life
Spring 2022

Otelfingen

Restitching the Urban Fabric

Laura Pfeiffer and Selin Civi



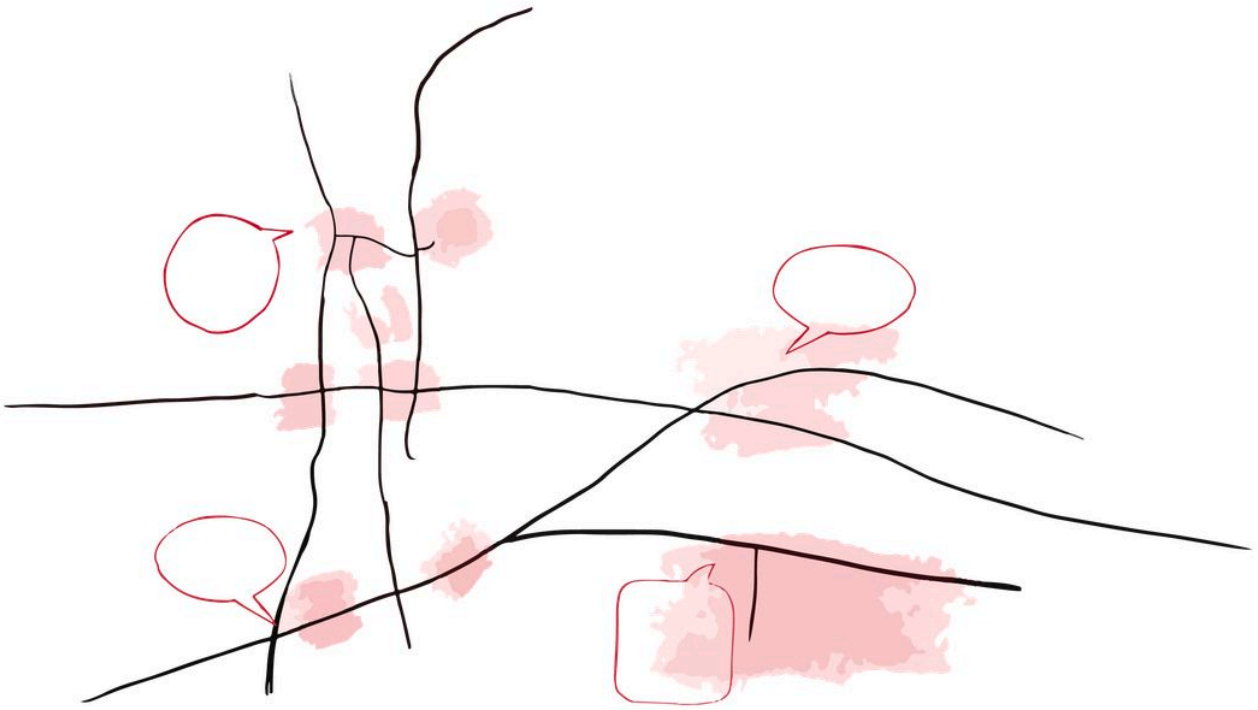
In Switzerland it is known that infrastructure is the secret urban planner. Otelfingen—with its history of characterising infrastructural developments—presents itself as a prime example to prove this statement. With every new infrastructural thread connecting the village to the outside world, patches of central functions accumulated themselves in the proximity of transportation routes. With the introduction of the car, urban growth quickly transformed into an uncontrolled sprawl. As a consequence, the village can be read as a patchwork of contrasting centralities, that have little to no interaction with each other. By analysing patterns of movements a restitching of the urban fabric is introduced with precise interventions dealing with the existing condition of fragmentation. Dividing roads are worked out into differentiated threads with the emphasis of pedestrian friendly connecting character among the patches. The repaired urban fabric revitalises the social sense and raises the attractiveness of village life.



OTELFINGEN, ZH

Elevation: 440 m.a.s.l.
Surface: 7.2 km^2
Population: 2,943 inh.
Population density: 412 inh./km^2
Population growth: 21.4 %
Average yearly income: 83,866 CHF/yr.
Population over 65 years old: 16.3 %
Share of foreign population: 23.1 %

Voices from a Fragmented Village

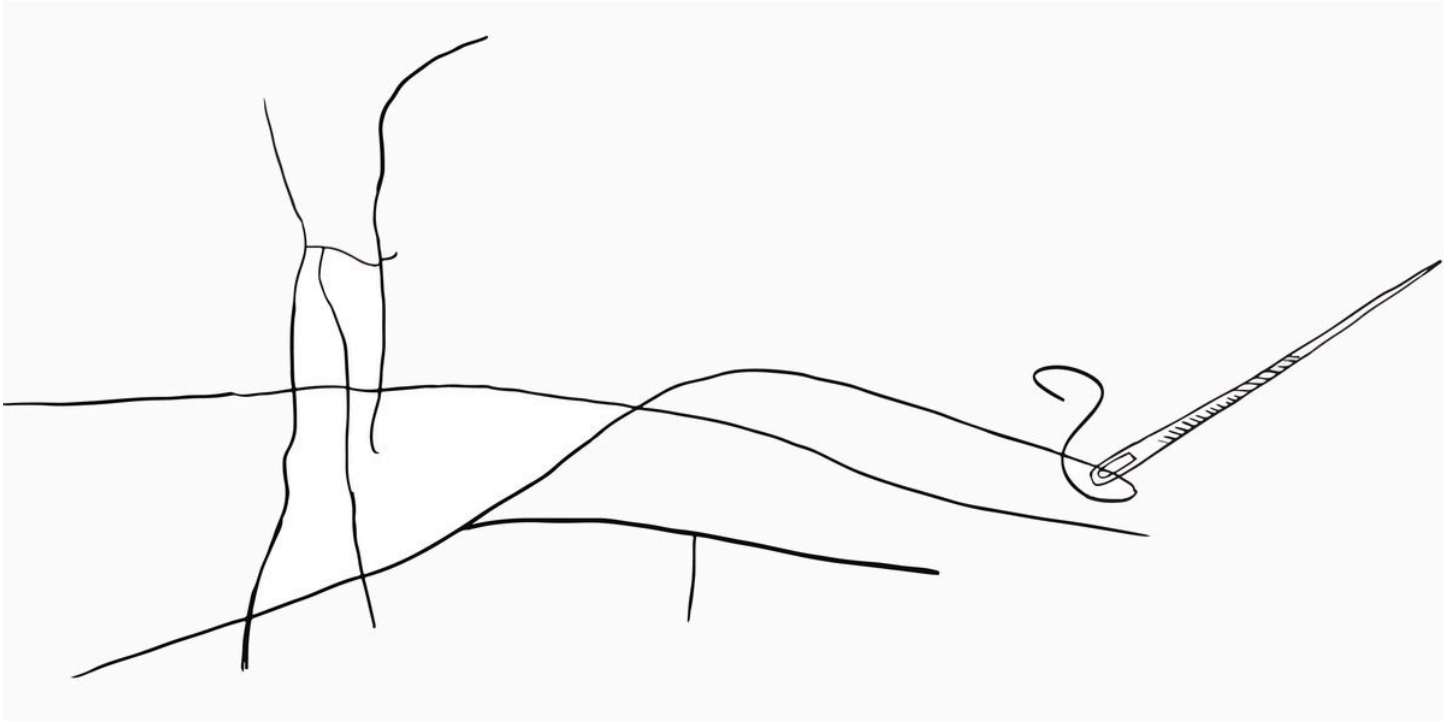


The fragmented structure of Otelfingen leads to very varied perceptions of the same place depending on the type of service one is using. It becomes visible that different central functions attract different users. While the locals are missing central functions in their village core, commuters from the surrounding region enjoy the easily by car reachable leisure offers such as the golf park.

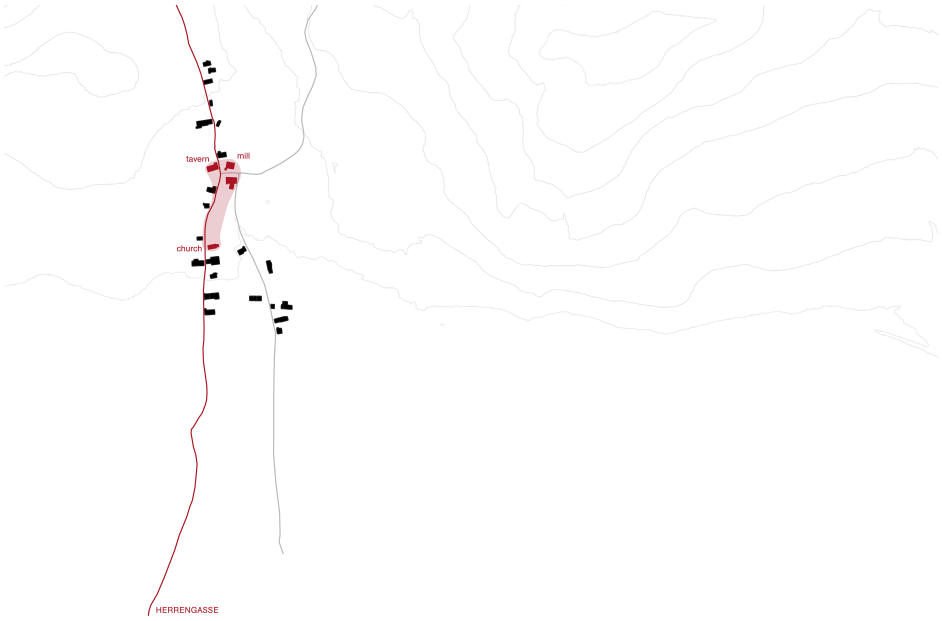


Voices from a Fragmented Village, video essay, 2022.
https://youtu.be/CN9X4DsuJuA

Infrastructure as Spatial Planner



In the historic timeline of Otelfingen the influence of the infrastructural roads in the urban development becomes visible. The Village displays the typical story of a Swiss village. Today it presents itself with highly contrasting spatially and functionally divided areas; the core as a place to live, the industrial area as a place to work and the golf park as a recreational zone.





2000-2022: Emerging Patchworks.

Identified Centralities and Essential Infrastructure

New Buildings

Existing Buildings

The beginnings of the village of Otelfingen can be found in the middle of the 13th century. In these times the church is of particular importance, especially for the surrounding villages, as it remained as a reformed church after the Reformation. An important connection to neighbouring communes was the Herrengasse in these times. At that period, it was the main connection especially for all churchgoers on Sunday. The mill is also worth mentioning. It served for the central supply of the village. The three monasteries of St Blasien, Fahr and Wettingen where the main land owners. The monastery also considered it useful to have its own tavern in Otelfingen for people passing through. Thus, confirming the important role of religious actors in spatial development of that time.

In the pre-industrial phase of 1800-1900 the main drivers for development were mainly of infrastructural nature; on one hand, the Hubgasse, today's Landstrasse as a longitudinal joint was developed and formed together with the the Hinterdorfstrasse a Cardo and Decumanus and on the other hand the train station was perceived at that time as the "gateway to the rest of the world". It was something that the inhabitants had been demanding for a longer period. Its positioning further south later resulted in the stretching out of the village core. The positioning of the railroad station is due to the fact that it should be in between all the neighbouring villages which hints at an early sense of cooperation between the communes. In addition, three other taverns were given the tavern rights at this time: the brewery (1811), the Höfli (1860) and the Frohsinn (1874). Directly next to the Höfli, a doctor, Mr. Vontobel, also settled in. The first school building was built around 1819, even before the Zurich School Law was enacted in 1832.

After the construction of the station building in 1877, the first railroad line was established. The effects of the train station as a catalysator for further development can be observed in the fact that for example owners of big industries such as Alfred Güller settled close by: he was the owner of part of the then engraving company Albert Güller Söhne. For him it was the preferred location due to the possibility to export the postmark and the connection to the rest of Switzerland. Additionally, the formation of services such as the restaurant Bahnhöfli underlined the process of the formation of centrality in this area. Parallel to this development at the railroad station, another school building was built in the village in 1930 as a secondary school building, which still serves as a library today. In this stage the core is still lively and part of the development as new buildings like the secondary school buildings are being added.



Mill, 1405. Source: Stiftung Mühle. [https://muehleotelfingen.ch/]



Brewery, 1885. Source: Stiftung Mühle. [https://muehleotelfingen.ch/]



Train Station Otelfingen, 1968. ETH Archive. [https://www.e-pics.ethz.ch/index/ETHBIB.Bildarchiv.ID/ETHBIB.Bildarchiv_654499.html]



Jelmoli Discounter, 1969. Zürcher Unterländer Newspaper. [https://www.zuonline.ch/jelmoli-war-in-den-1960er-jahren-als-discounter-erfolgreich-220449196762]

The period between 1950 and 1970 was characterized by new opportunities. with the melioration of the reed the active shaping of the landscape took on another dimension. It enabled construction of a new railroad line through the previous reed. The first industrial building in Otelfingen was built in early 1960s where today the grocery store SPAR is located inside, and furthermore, the huge warehouse Jelmoli was built along the new railroad line outside the village. For some time it even served partly as a discount store. Additionaly, houses for workers of the Jelmoli where build close to the village core. It is again the positioning of one important building that had a crucial influence in later developments; it represented the first step in the formation of the industrial zone, which was detached from the rest of the village. The functional division of the village is starting to take shape. At the same time, the study for the “New Town” in Otelfingen was also developed. Originated by the publication “Achtung: die Schweiz”, which formulated an idea to build a model city according to the latest urban planning findings instead of a national exhibition the Expo 64, as a sign of Switzerland’s start into modernity and at the same time as a measure against the housing shortage especially in Zurich and the urban sprawl that was developing from there. While the Expo reference soon faded into the background, a study group took up the idea of developing generally applicable principles for the construction of a new Swiss city or, more generally, for new settlement centers. The «Neue Stadt» was an idea of a city that never existed. However, the publication resulted in a public outcry of the inhabitants of Otelfingen as they did not feel included in the process and perceived the plans as a threat.

The phase of development between 1970-2000 is marked by the wish to preserve existing village structures. The core was seen as worthy of preservation and part of the heritage and lead to the Boppelserstrasse shifting of spatial development to the east side of the old village so that the the old village centre could be preserved and new housing settlements were built right next to the bypass road. As new families settled in Otelfingen and the need for a larger school building also increased. Thus, between 1970 and 1990, the primary and secondary school buildings were built. The workers of commerce in the core frequented the restaurants of the village for lunch. However, with the entry of young families near the core the tolerance of commercially induced noise emission was low which led to many workshops emigrating to the industrial zone. Consequently, this led to the dying out of the formerly lively core. Something that characterises the village up to this day. Because the commerce is now run on high speed traffic, it has long outgrown the historical center leading to a sprawl. At the same time the industry developed outside the village, where for example the sports center Otelfit was built around 1970 or the Avia gas station in 1999.

In the present day we can see the polarity of industrial zone and natural spaces and how in these circumstances nature can only survive in an artificial and commercial setting such as the Golf Park which was developed in order to save the original reed land and later agricultural land from being built up. It even has its own railroad station directly connected to the park. The extinction of the core is further exacerbated with the leaving of the few remaining services as well as the prevailing heritage protection of the buildings. Additionally, there is a parking interdiction. But in addition to this development, other services were opened, such as the youth centre of the Unteres Furttal in 2015 at the train station in. The industrial area also continued to develop. For example, the Aldi was opened at that time and across the street on the 6th floor of a commercial building the Lovely Kids daycare center, which is primarily intended for employees in the industrial area.



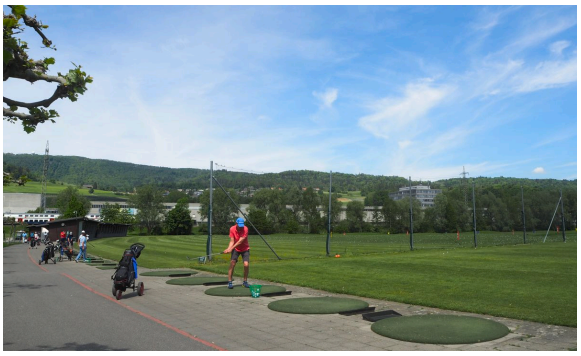
Newly built Houses.



Parking lot at Train Station Golfpark Otelfingen.

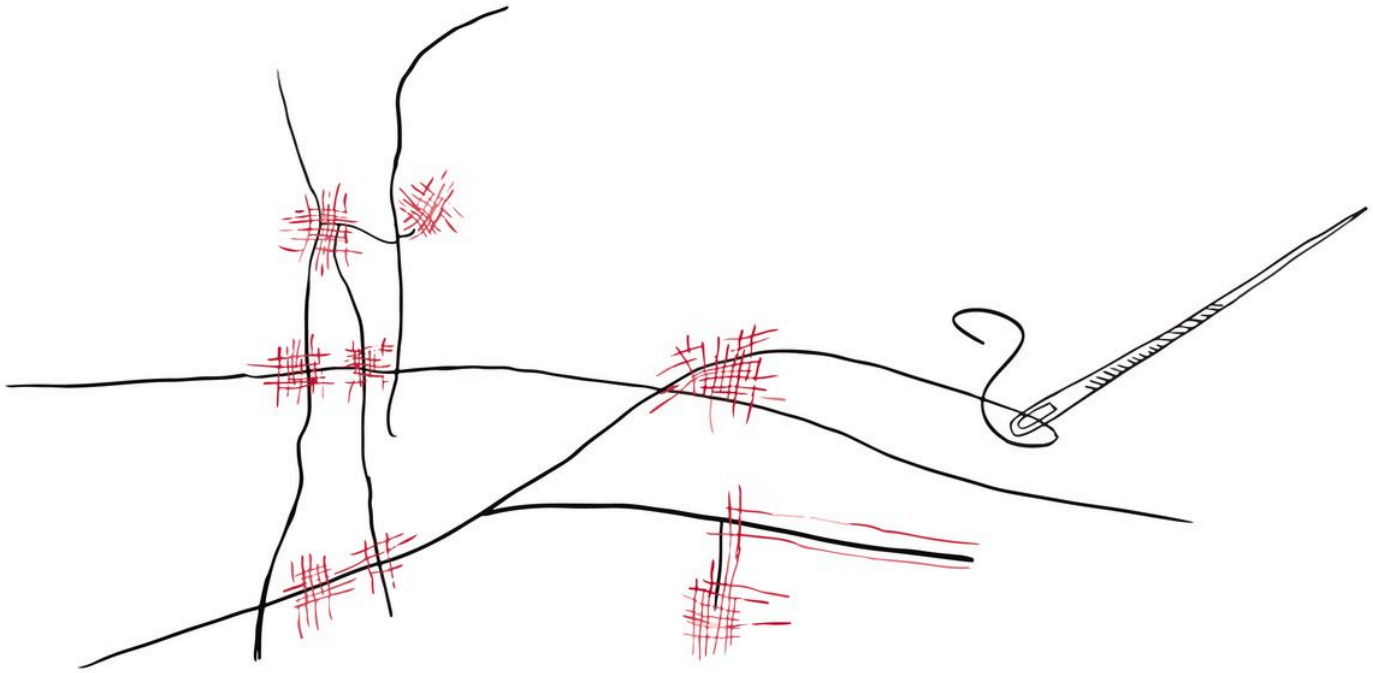


Avia Gas Station in Industrial Area.

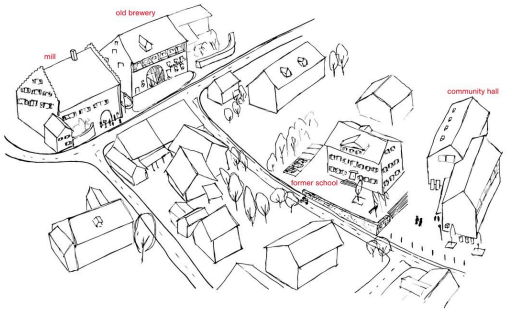


Golf Course Otelfingen.

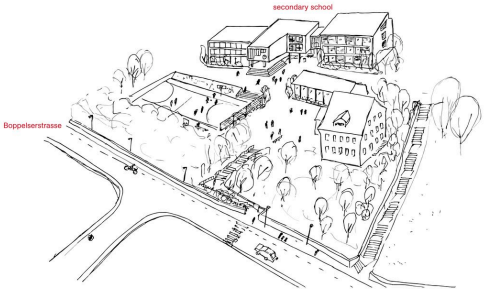
Patches of Centralities



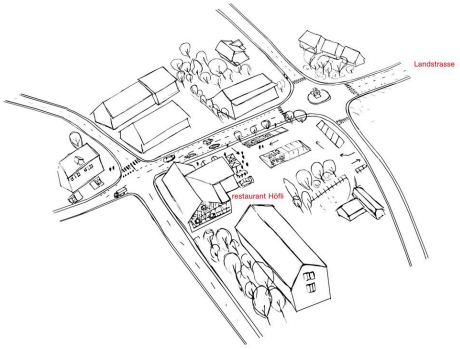
The patchwork of centralities which emerged, still shapes the image of the village. The fragmentation is perceived differently depending on the user; for some it is home for others only work or recreational place. In the perception of different people, a common feature is the fact, that Otelfingen is missing linking elements betweens centralities. Furthermore, the car acts as the main mode of transportation in the village.



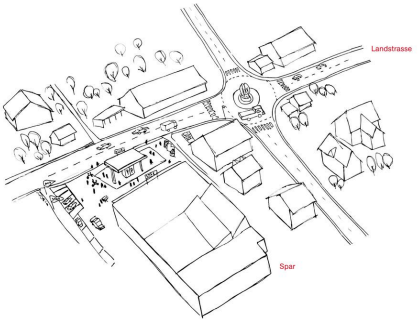
The old Village Core.



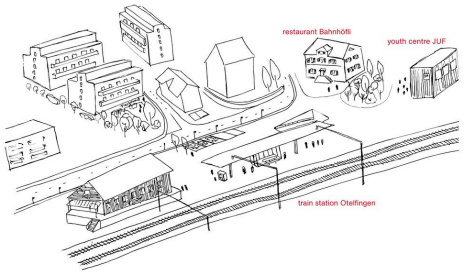
The School.



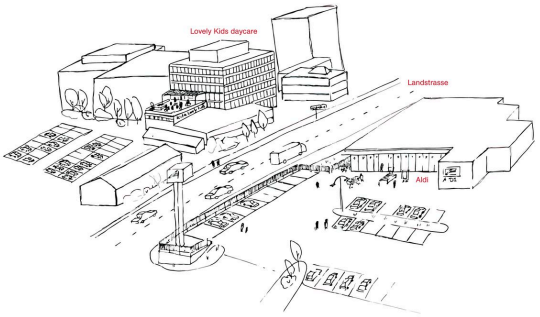
The new Village Core.



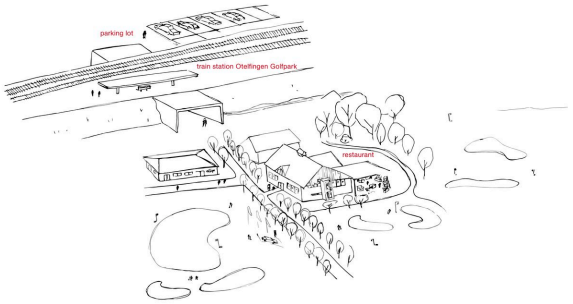
Commercial Hub 1.



The Station.



Commercial Hub 2.



The Golf Course.

The mill is an important social service for the core of the village until today even though the use changed, its symbolic value remained important. Around 1968, a foundation bought the mill and renovated it. Since then, the mill has served as a space for various events, such as concerts, book readings and theatre performances. The offer is appreciated not only by the old-established population, but also visited by residents of neighbouring municipalities. The old school building was used as a community hall until 1974 and is now discussed for further projects in the future. Its placement on a prominent spot with the new community hall next to it underlines its perception as a centrality of the village core.

The secondary school (SEKUF) is shared with the communes of Boppelsen, Dänikon and Hüttikon. Additional services, which the communes share and that are located in Otelfingen is the musical school (MUF) and the youth centre (JUF).
This all leads to the situation, that for the younger generation of the Unteres Furttal Otelfingen becomes the epicentre for their everyday lives; this is exacerbated by the fact that even after school they spend their free-time in Otelfingen; on the campus of the school or in the youth centre nearby the train station. Their modes of transportation are by foot, by train or by moped.

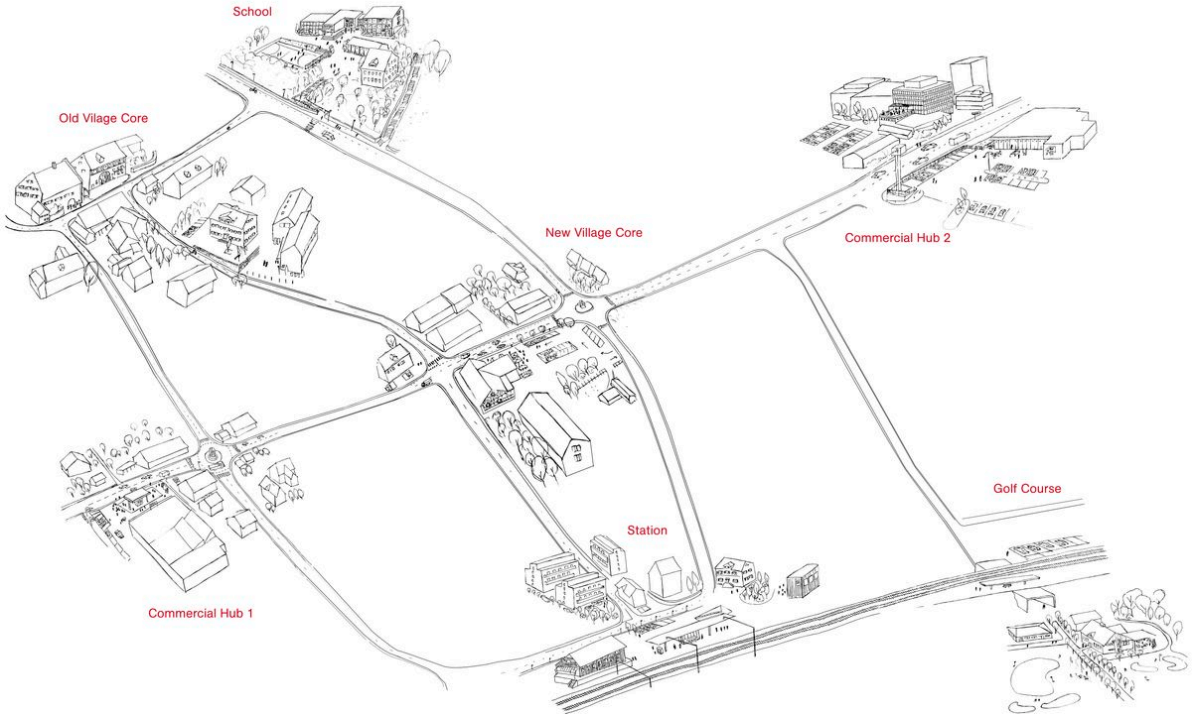
The restaurant and bar Höfli, which is located right at the main street, does serve as a restaurant until today. It is especially a place for the middle and older generations to get a good drink after work and gather with friends.

The first industrial building of Otelfingen is now known as the SPAR. It is the only possibility to buy groceries in the village, so has a central function for the inhabitants and even for the surrounding. People come here to shop and the youth hang around in front of the building and use it as an informal gathering space.

Like the restaurant and bar Höfli, the restaurant Bahnhöfli is also still existing. Right around the corner of the train station, there is also the youth centre, which serves for kids between 12 and 17 years old in the area of the Unteres Furttal. The train station itself is also a common meeting place of the youth.

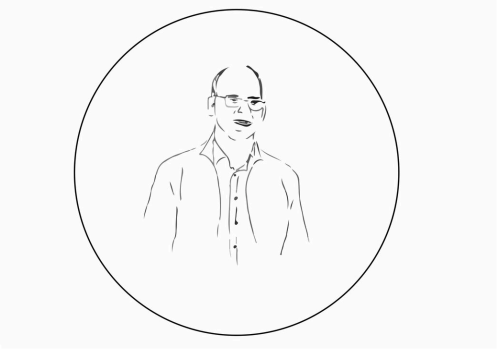
The Aldi is an important service as it attracts many people from the surrounding villages as we could see in the video. It is entirely made to fit the mode of transportation of the car and it is hard to get access to it as a pedestrian. Next to it, we can see the day care centre “Lovely Kids” which emerged in the newer developments of the industrial zone and and serves primarily to provide childcare for the workers there.

The Golfpark is for some people the only reason to know Otelfingen. It is visited, that people come with the purpose to play golf and then leave again. Because there is also a restaurant, the visitors feel perfectly content by staying in the park and do not need to see more of the village.

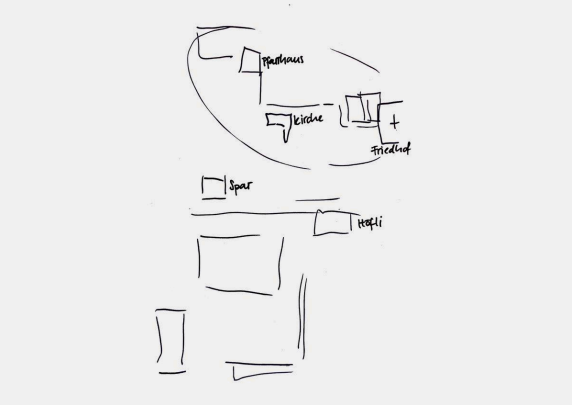


Patches of Centralities.

The centralities seem to work, however their sprawl across the fabric and the fact that they do not show any interaction is a very prominent feature of the village. The road in Otelfingen takes an important role. Due to the division and spread of the fabric and because of the few services within walking distance a car is a prerequisite for mobility within the village.



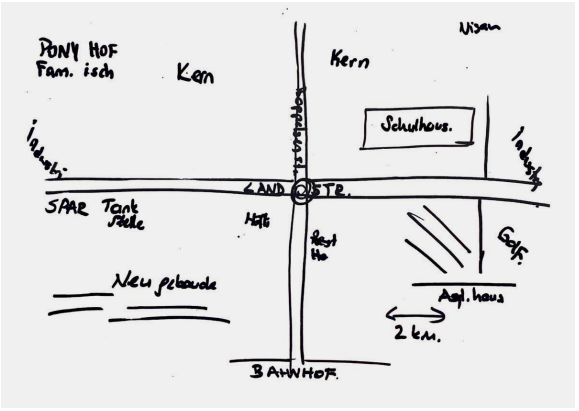
Pastor; Mr. Fehr.



Perception Map Mr. Fehr.



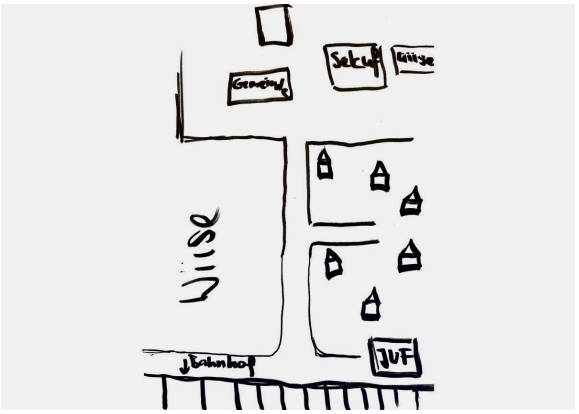
Owner of the Restaurant Höfli; Nisan



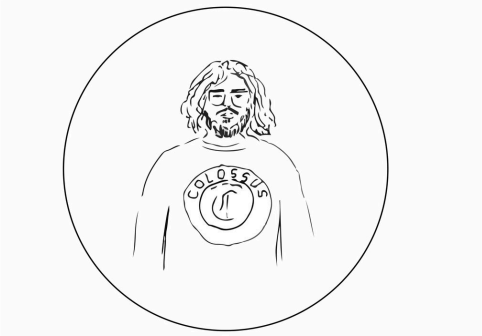
Perception Map Nisan.



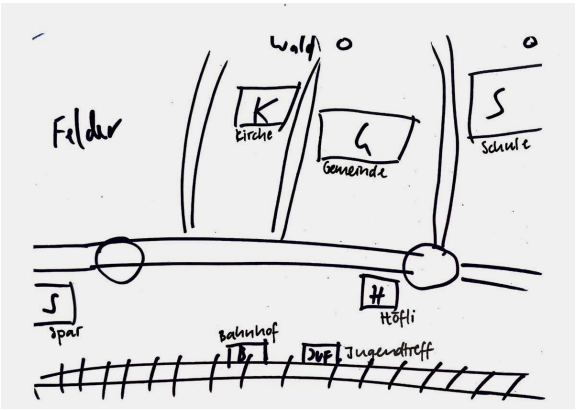
Youth of Otelfingen; Elena and Lenia.



Perception Map Elena and Lenia.



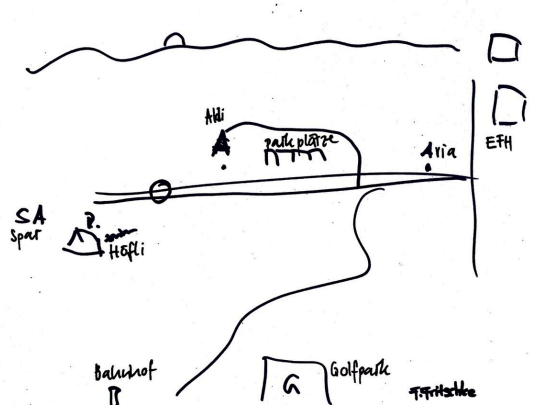
Worker of the Youth Centre; Jan.



Perception Map Jan.



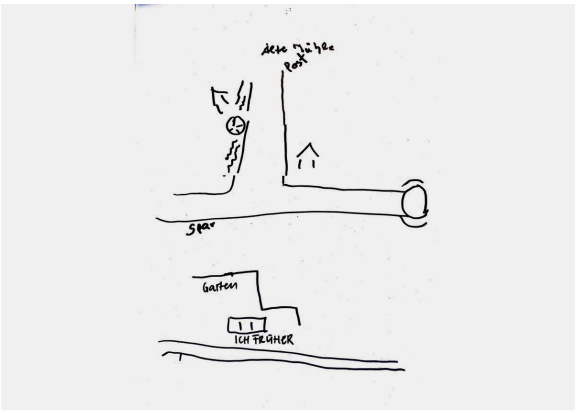
Worker of Avia Gas Station; Mrs. Fritzsche.



Perception Map Mrs. Fritzsche.



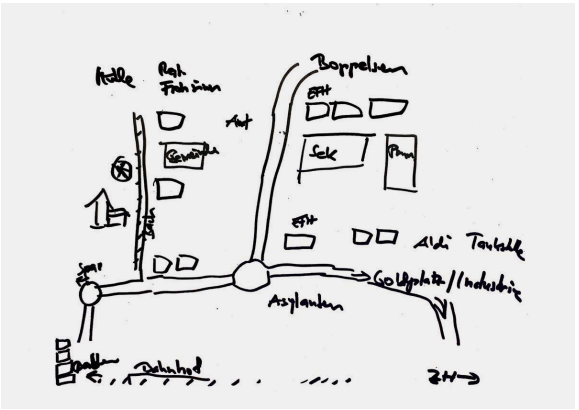
Golf Player; Mr. Scherrer.



Perception Map Mr. Scherrer.



Inhabitants of the neighbouring Community; Mr. and Mrs. Bigler.



Perception Map Mr. and Mrs. Bigler.

The seperated character of Otelfingen can be also seen in the perception maps of different people, that either live or work in Otelfingen. It shows nicely, what different services and places they know from the village.

… there is a village life but it is not as lively as it used to be Mr. Fehr, pastor.
Mr. Fehr works and lives in Otelfingen and spends his daily life mainly in the old village center of the village.

.. we go often to Shoppi Tivoli … it is easy to go by car Nisan, owner of the Höfli.
Nisan is a young mother of two children and moved here after buying the restaurant Höfli, located at the main street. She doesn't spend her free-time in the village even if she lives there. She goes often shopping at Tivoli in Spreitenbach. Even if Nisan doesn't spend her free-time in the village, she knows some parts of it (mainly the school) because of her kids.

…we used to have three restaurants, now none Elena and Lenia, youth of Otelfingen.
Elena has been living her whole life in Otelfingen and only knows Lenia through school as she lives in Dänikon. Both dislike the recent developments in the village.

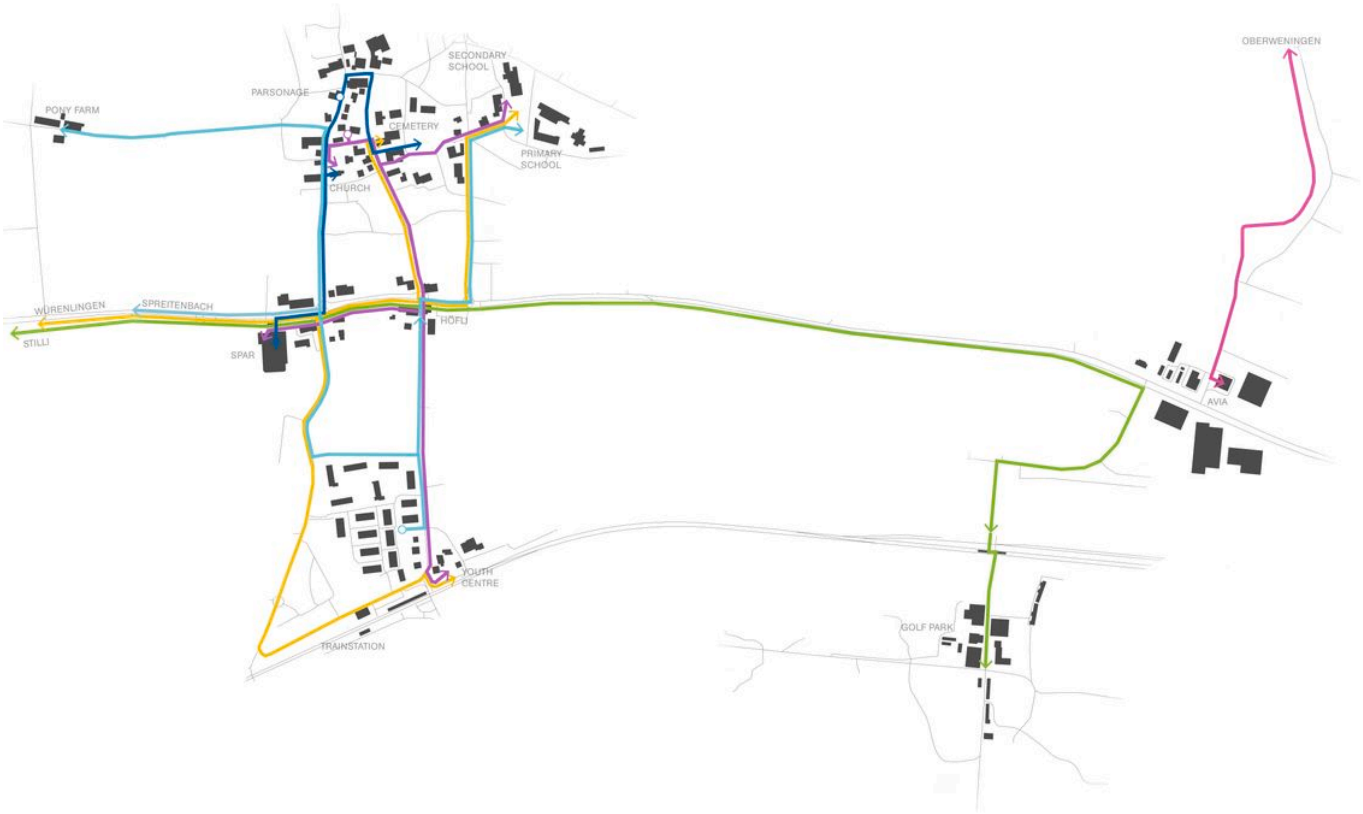
.. a centre for the whole community would be nice Jan, Worker of the youth centre.
Jan is a social worker and works for the youth centre in Otelfingen. He lives in the canton of Aargau. He told us many things about the youth in the village and its surrounding and how they try to to generate a place, where they can meet up.

I do not know more … Mrs. Fritzsche, worker of Avia gas station.
Ms. Fritzsche works in the industrial area at the Avia gas station since 20 years. She lives in the neighbouring commune Oberweningen. She goes to work by car everyday and in her 20 years of working at the gas station she never went to the old village core. She mainly has a limited spatial and functional perception of Otelfingen.

.. to play golf I drive 20 minutes by car Mr. Scherrer, Glolf Player.
Mr. Scherrer once lived in Otelfingen in a single-family house near the train station and moved recently to Stilli in the canton of Aargau. He now only comes to Otelfingen by car to spend some of his freetime at the golf park.

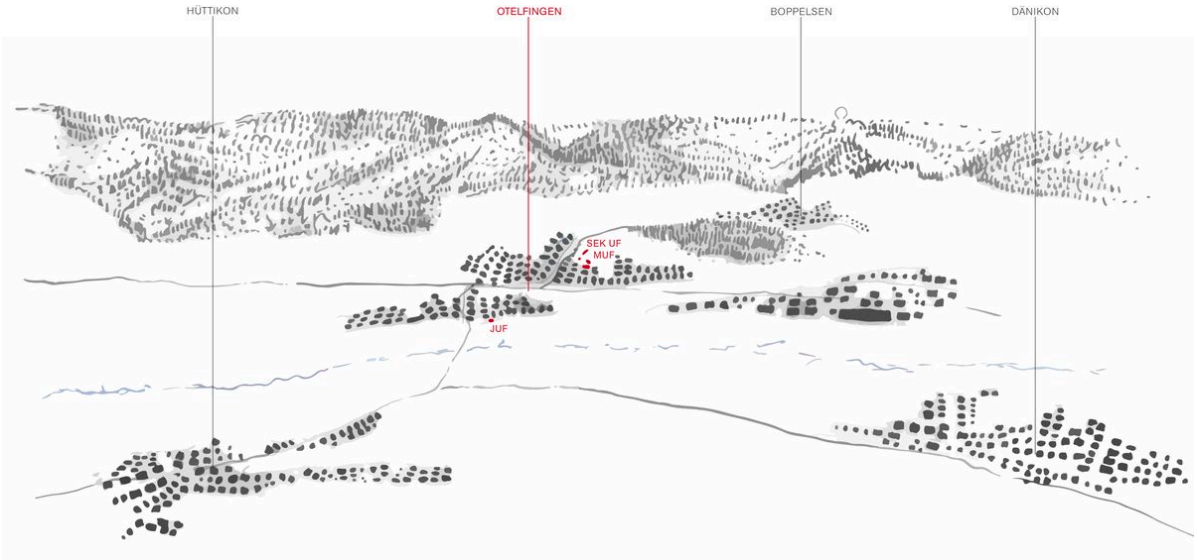
.. houses all over, houses all over Mr. and Mrs. Bigler, Inhabitants of Neighbourhood.
The couple Mr. and Mrs. Bigler live in the neighbouring community Dänikon. Even if they don’t live in Otelfingen, they know many things about the village, because they like to go to some of the events, that take place in the mill and because there kids went to the secondary school in Otelfingen.

In this map the overlapped pattern of movement of the interviewed people can be read. Evidently it is often the case that the everyday life happens in limited space and does not overlap. For many activities the car takes up an important part. Only in the old village core the car is more of a hindrance.



Everyday Patterns of Movement.

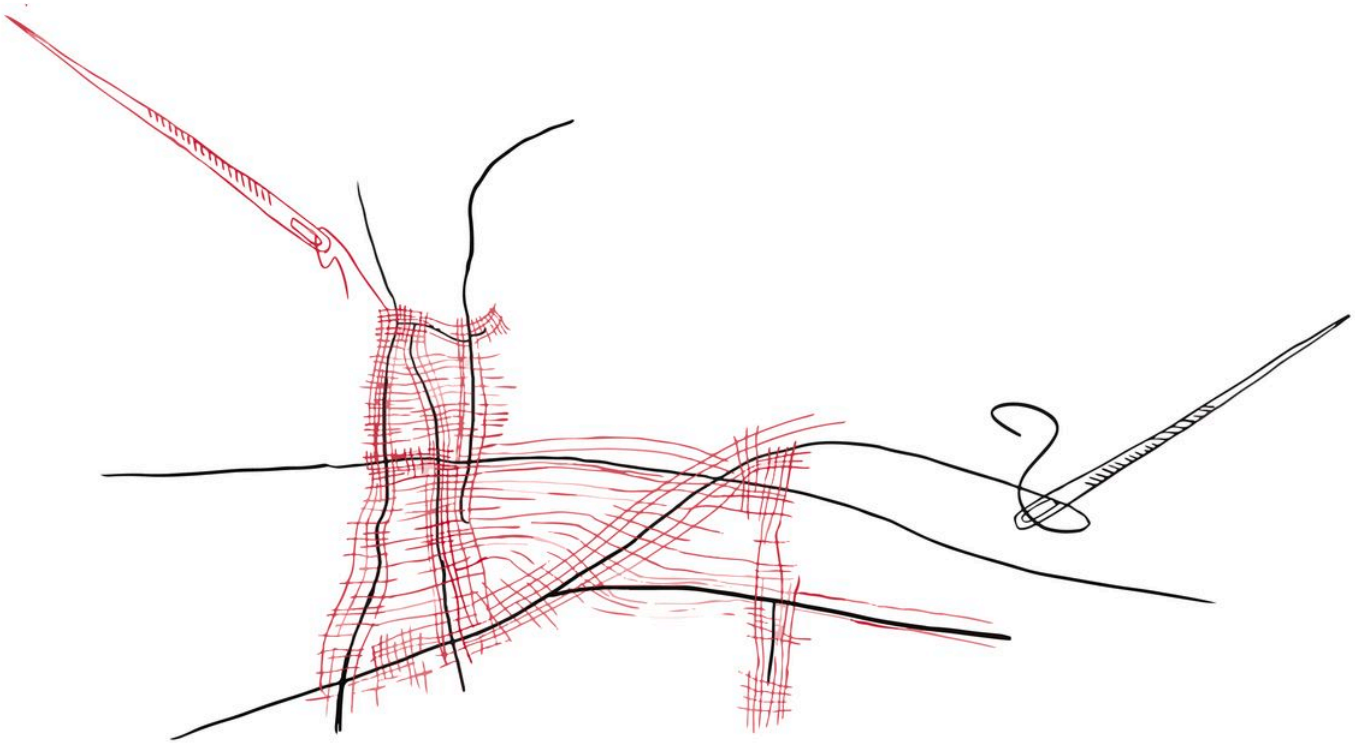
- Ms. Fritzsche
- Mr. Scherrer
- Priest
- Lenia and Elena
- Nisan
- Jan



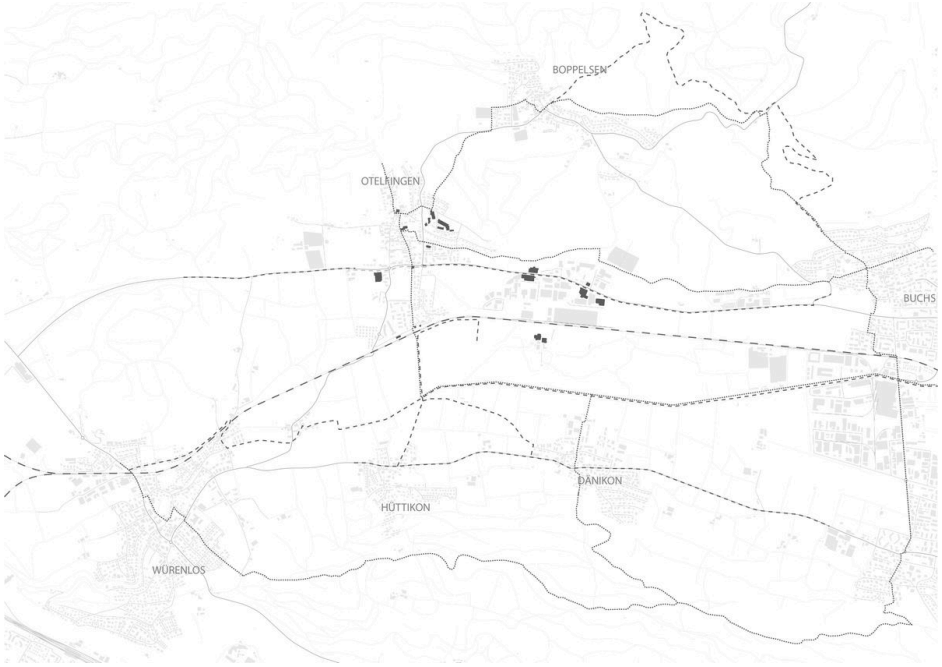
Otelfingen as a Regional Centre.

To put the village into context of its surrounding; Otelfingen has not only its different independent centralities but acts itself as a centrality for the neighbouring communes, because of the shared facilities such as SEKUF, MUF and JUF.

From Patches to Fabric



A reflected differentiation of traffic is needed to make space for various conceptualised routes among the centralities. This would enable to give Otelfingen the cohesion back, that it needs to stop the sprawl of its development. Additionaly, the tendency of filling up the remaining empty lands with appartments and houses for sole economic reasons is harmful to the village life as it prevents the social meeting spaces, the inhabitants would wish for.



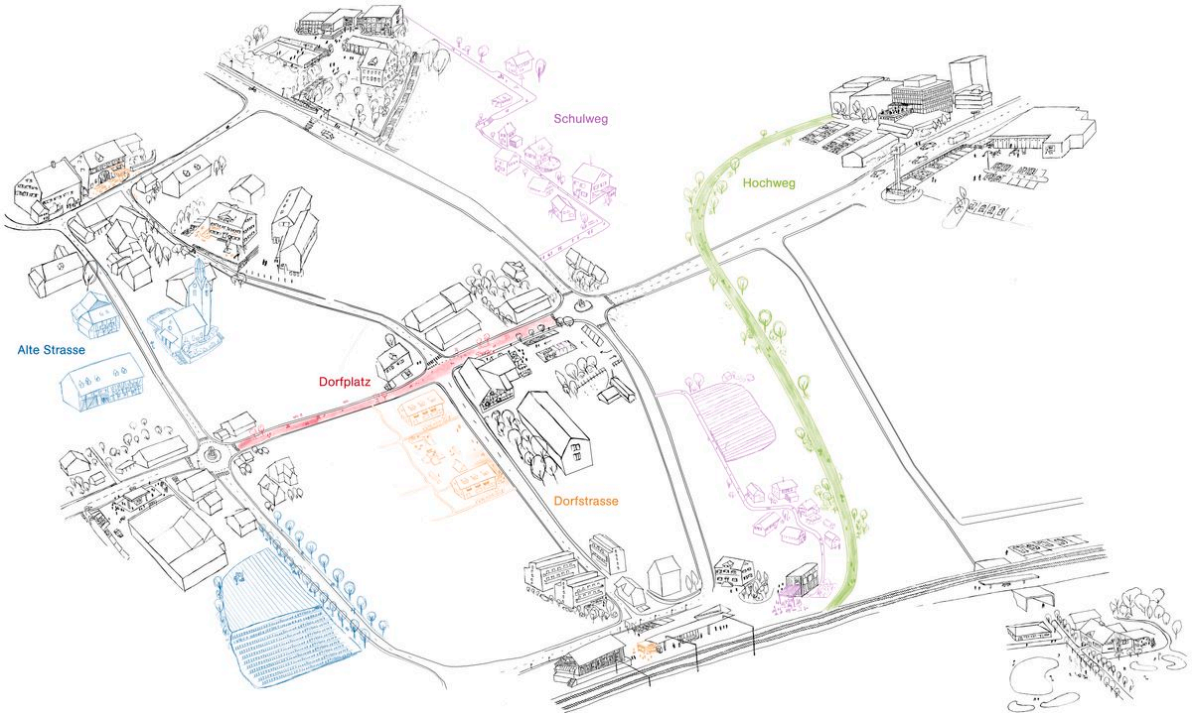
Analysis of Connections.

The map shows how Otelfingen and its prominent parts are well embedded into a network of the broader agglomeration and the many existing routes for alternative modes of transportation. The dotted line is representing the hiking path, the large dashed line stands for the train connections and the small dashed line for the biking paths. However, two circumstances are standing out; one is, that these roads are partly used by cars in high speeds as well and second the centralities themselves do lack the connections among each other. Thus the network shows some gaps in crucial parts.

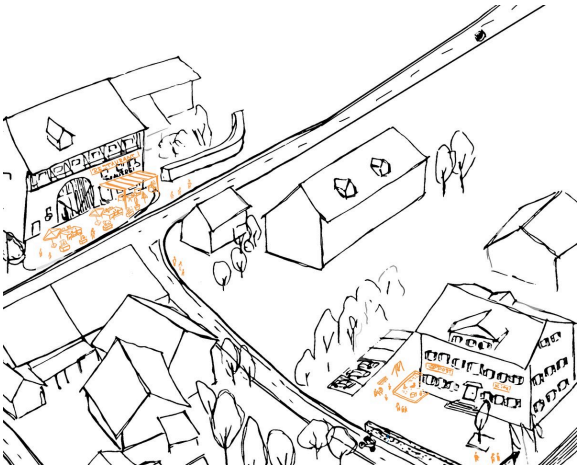


Perimeter of Interventions.

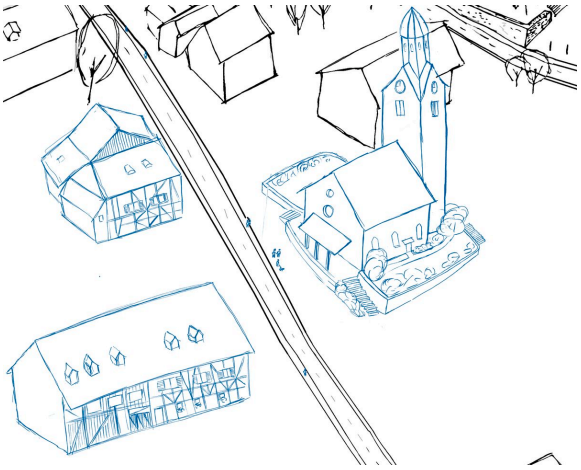
Existing Buildings | Identified Centralities | Essential Infrastructure



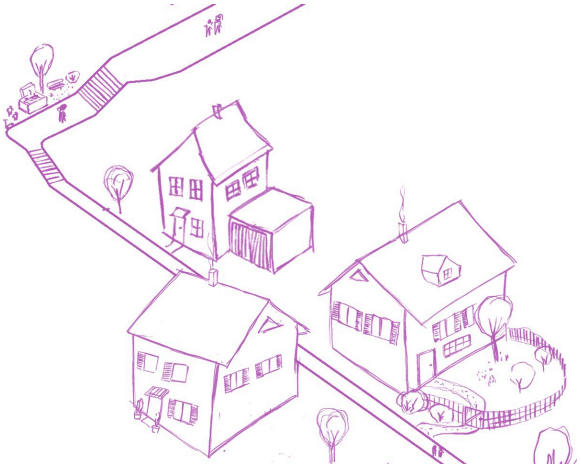
The proposed interventions aim to reconnect the existing patches of urban fabric by introducing new connecting threads, which also reactivate the detached patches. These are each shaping and characteristic in their atmosphere and are mainly support alternative modes of transportation.



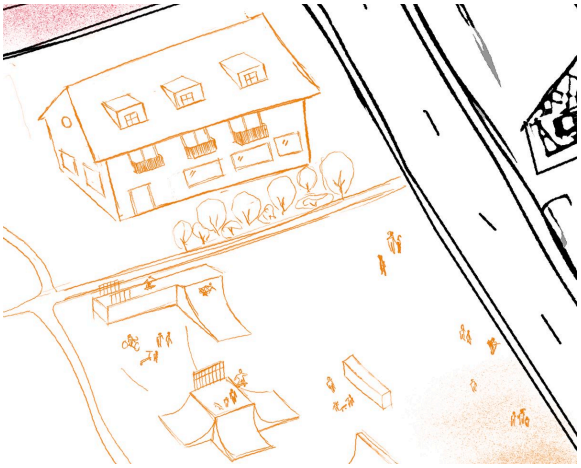
Revival.



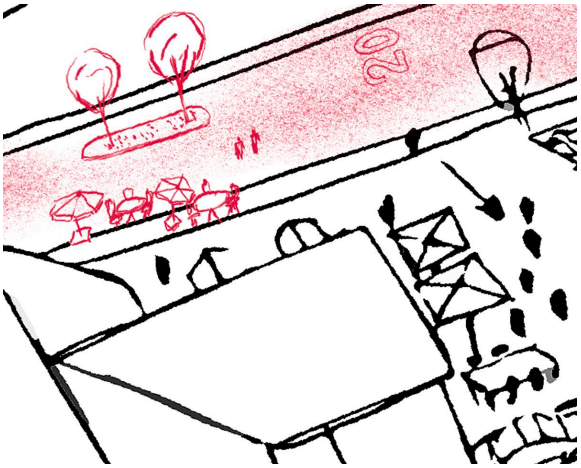
Heritage.



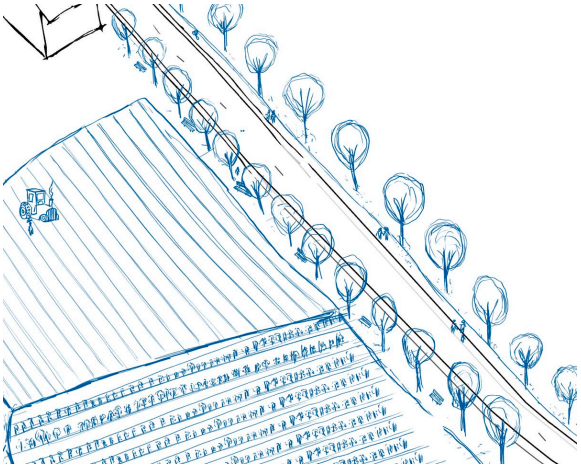
Safety.



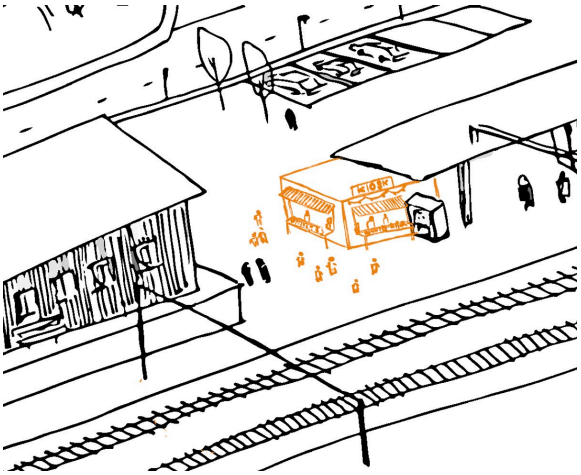
Attraction.



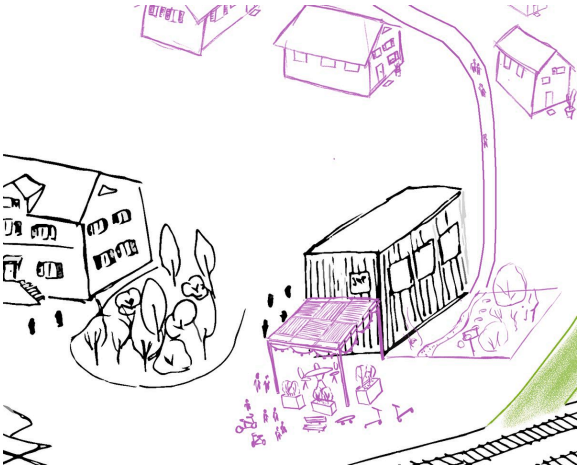
Meeting.



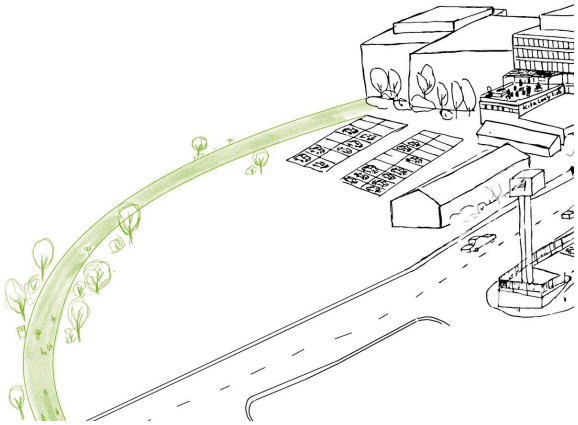
Scenery.



Upgrade.



Activation.



Revitalisation.



Würenloserstrasse.



Alte Strasse: a Scenic Stroll.

The Alte Strasse is emphasizing the scenery of Otelfingen. The focus lies in the landscape and the atmosphere of a promenade stroll with rows of trees on the sides and an additional bike path in the lower part. In the upper part atmosphere is shaped by historic facades showing, putting in scene the heritage of the village.



Bahnhofstrasse.



Dorfstrasse: Pedestrian Encounters.

The Dorfstrasse represents the main road of the village with the old mill and the community hall as anchor points. The core is revived with a restaurant in the building of the old brewery. The old school building is given back central functions with a postal office and a childcare added. Further south are a new market place and skatepark located. As the main street it is aimed to be the most frequented and prominent connecting thread through the village. Its ending point is the train station, which is being upgraded with a kiosk and the reactivated youth centre next.



Landstrasse.

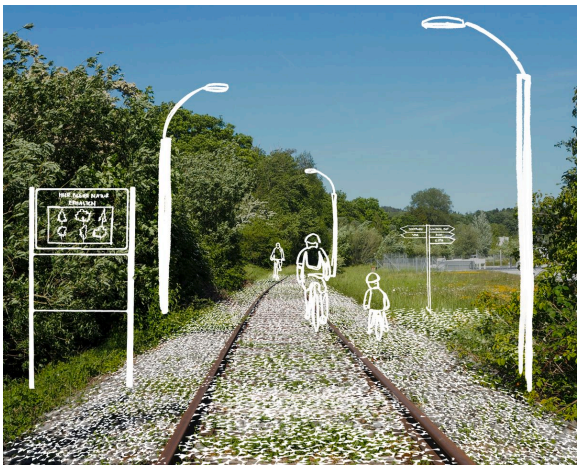


Dorfplatz: beyond the Car.

The Dorfplatz is the meeting point of the Ober- and Unterdorf, where the whole street is rethought as a meeting place with the speed limitation of 20. Thus the formerly dividing street becomes pedestrian friendly and raises the level of social activity



Schipkapass Train Line.



Hochweg: the Natural Connection.

The Hochweg is revitalizing the old infrastructure of the Schipkapass Bahn; it connects the industry with the Aldi to the lower part of the village, while giving room for various recreational activities.

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