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

Village Life
Spring 2022

Rheinau

A Landscape of Care: Beyond the Utopian Island

Lazar Riva and Lelan Yung



A village of “otherness” begs the question of origins and roots. Only when this is realized can the whole picture of Rheinau be unfolded. Through eras reaching as far back as the Middle Ages, this land—in a geographically unique situation—has served varieties of purposes as a centre for religion, social therapy, and in recent times, biodynamic agriculture. Hosting these activities (or remnants of), along with the agenda of a largely commuter-inhabited village today creates a heterogenous atlas of building typology, topography, and lifestyles.

This mosaic of land use is an exceptional scenario for a commune in the Canton of Zurich. With the support and realization that new worlds are possible beyond the private enterprise, imagining Rheinau’s full array of socioeconomic program as a self-sustaining, mutualist system could become a potential model for village life.



RHEINAU, ZH

Elevation: 370 m.a.s.l.
Surface: 8.9 km^2
Population: 1316 inh.
Population density: 147 inh./km^2
Population growth: 1.1 %
Average yearly income: 72,743 CHF/yr.
Population over 65 years old: 20.6 %
Share of foreign population: 19.7 %

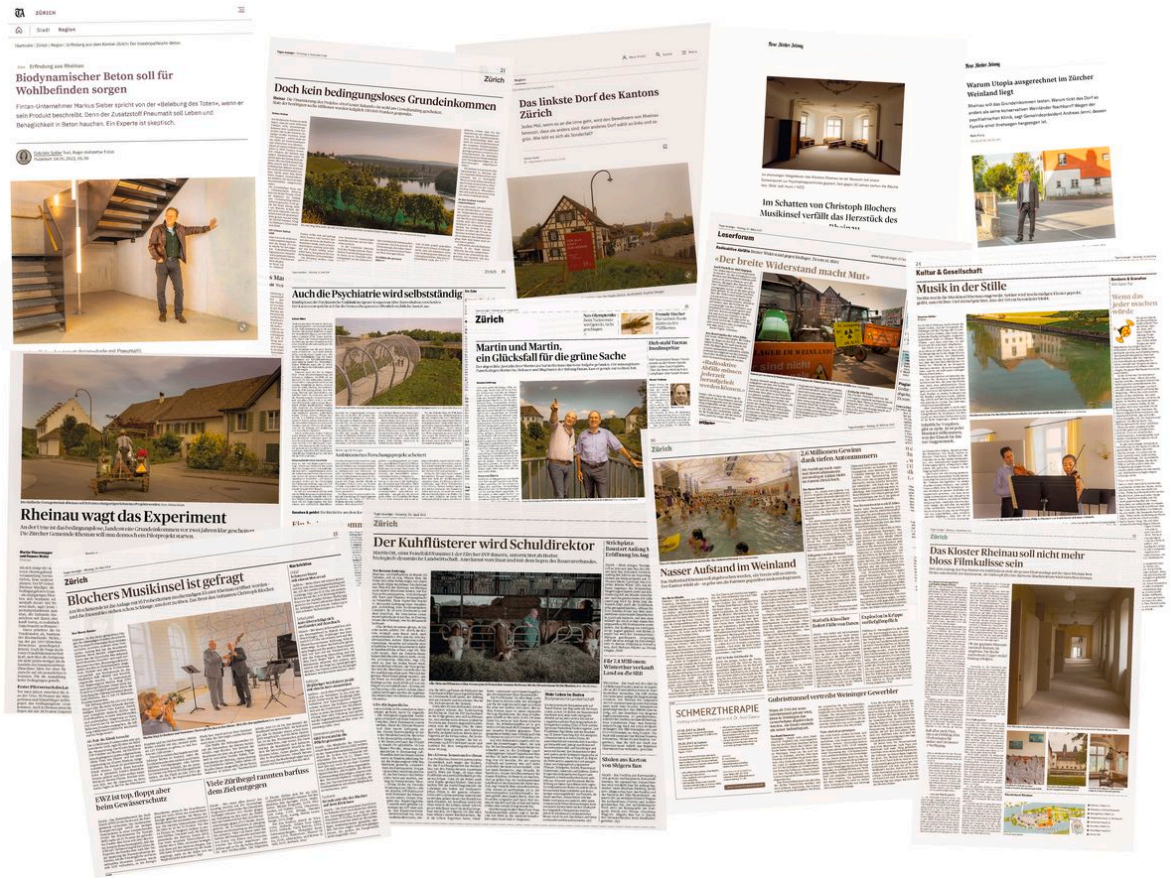
Unravelling the Heterotopia



Rheinau is a place of many places – a rural patchwork, thanks to its geography, history, and development of social program. Observations and perceptions of the village can be heavily influenced by the location one finds themselves in.

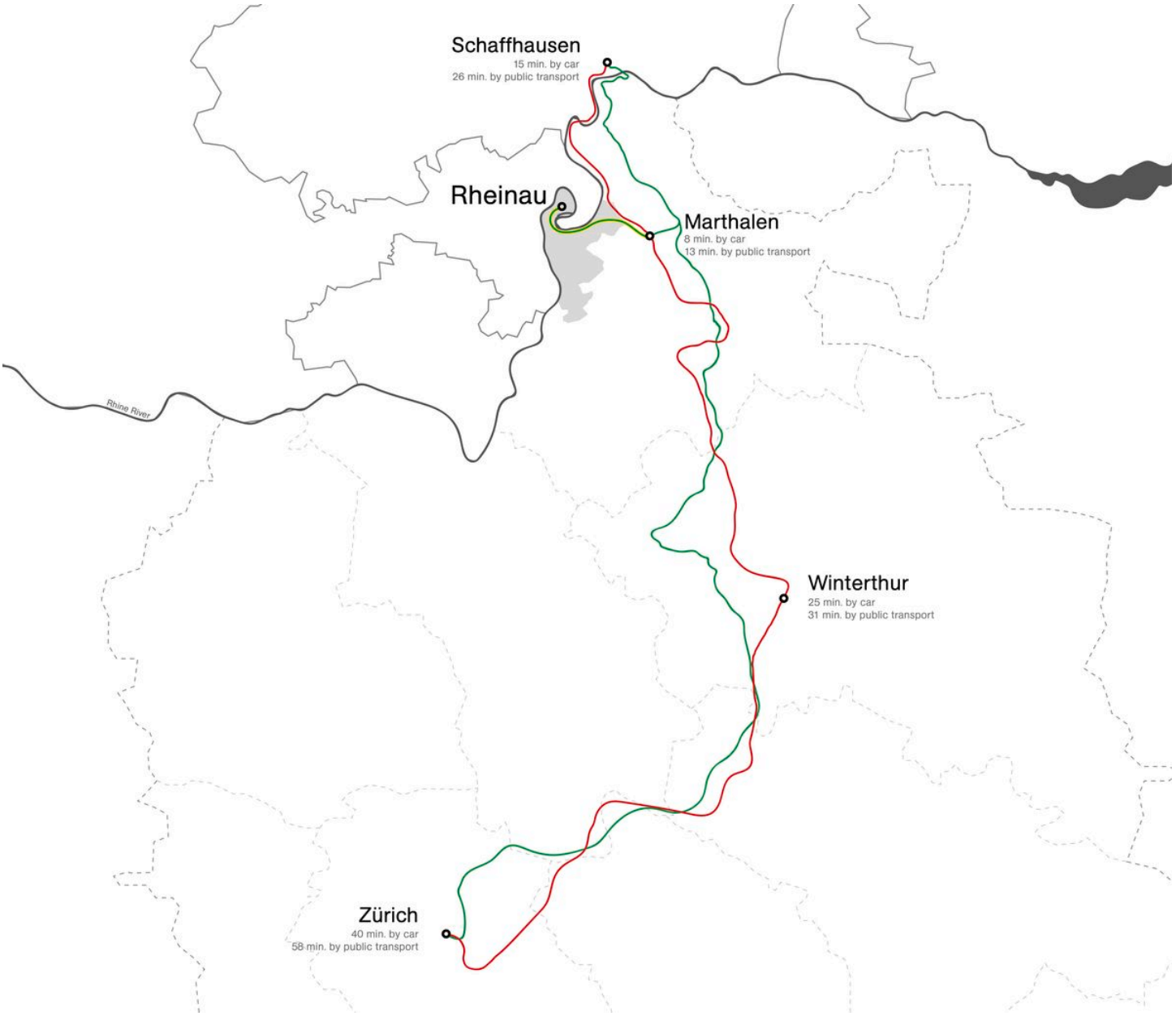


From the Idyllic Rhine to Biodynamic Wine



First Reading. Sources: Tages-Anzeiger, NZZ

Although somewhat secluded, Rheinau today is not left out of conversation and interest. In recent years, activity in the village has included topics of Universal Basic Income, revitalisation of unused Monastery space, social therapy, and biodynamic farming. This has created an eccentric perception of Rheinau through news articles and media.

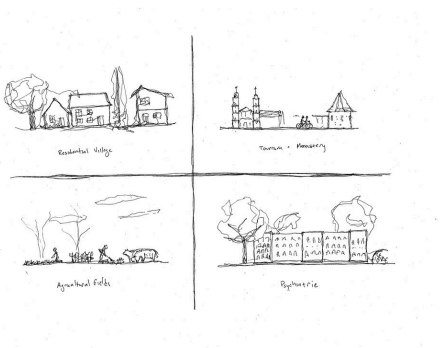


Visiting Rheinau

Train Car PostAuto Bus

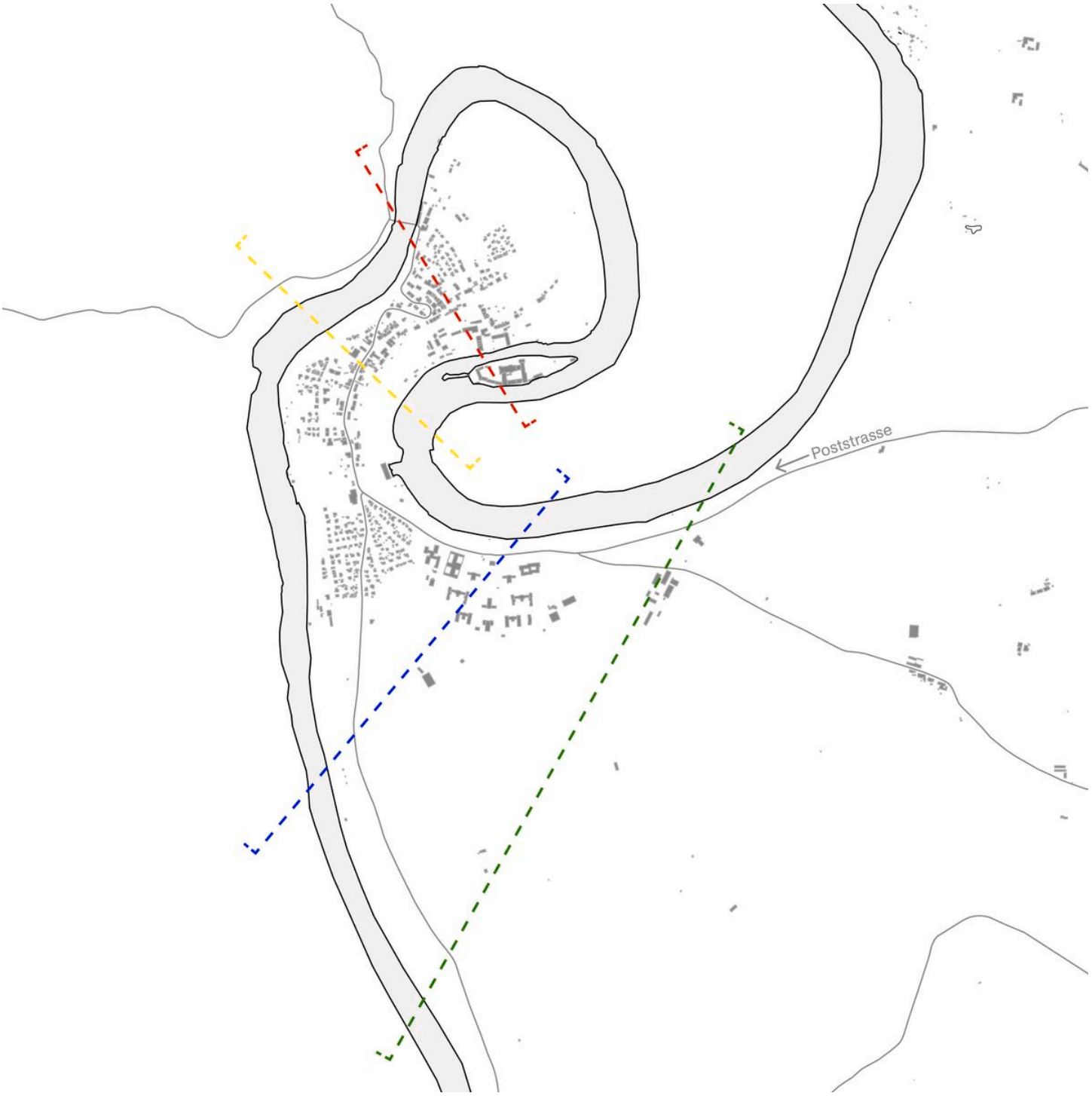
The communal borders of Rheinau lie on three sides to the Rhine, making it a historically strategic boundary point. Acres of farmland and forest act as a physical buffer from the rest of the canton. An absent train station and an hourly bus stop attribute to a quieter environment, although an entrance into Germany via covered bridge makes the village a through pass for shoppers and travellers. Travel to and from Rheinau involves either a drive by car or a ride on the PostAuto, which makes its route between the village and the nearest train station in Marthalen about six kilometres away.





Islands on the Island

This unique village is actually the subject of several worlds, with various institutions making up their own influential territory in Rheinau. Along with program from the residential village, there is also considerable land area used by industries of agriculture, healthcare (psychiatry), and historic preservation tourism. Combining these functions into one village attributes to the heterotopic quality of the village as an ‘otherworldly’ landscape.



Slicing the Landscape

- Farm
- Farm and Psychiatry
- Village and Farm
- Village, Farm, and Monastery

Getting to Rheinau most often means going along the Poststrasse, the main road connection from the motorway or Marthalen station into the village. Whether by car or by PostAuto, the journey itself already tells the story of heterotopia through the window.

The Farm



The Fertile Plain with the Farm



The Fertile Plain with the Farm

The first topia presented is the biodynamic farmscape of Gut Rheinau, blanketed in green and dotted with agricultural buildings. A closer look even presents evidence of strip farming and permaculture, contrary to conventional farming practices.



a
Polycultural Crop Fields

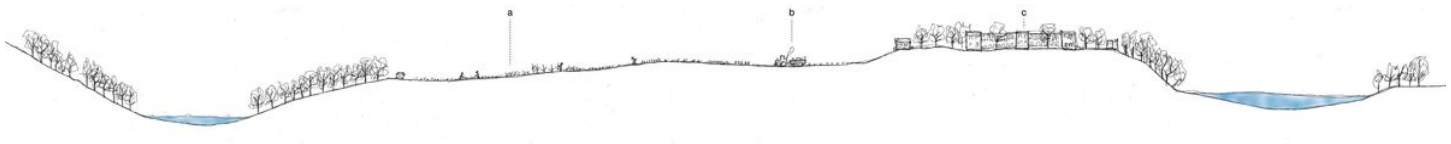


b
Salads in the Soil



c
Farmyard of a Community

The Farm and the Psychiatry



The Psychiatry on the Plain

The next stop reveals the current psychiatry campus. Here there are multiple buildings for both temporary and long-term patients, and the adjacent farm scenery and idyllic view of the Rhine make it a peaceful haven.



a
Cooling House behind Vegetable Beds

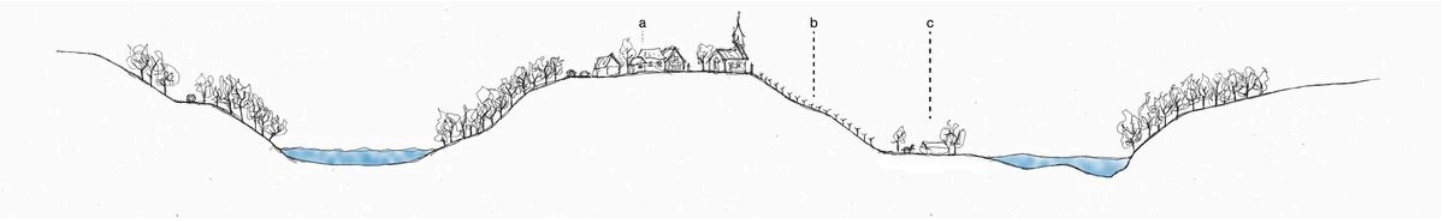


b
Farm Machinery on the Fields



c
Psychiatry Buidlings for Temporary Patients

The Village and the Farm



Village Centre draped by Forest and Vineyard

Arrival into the residential scene of Rheinau still presents territory from the farm, with grape vineyards and orchards flanking the eastern face of the hill towards the Rhine.



a
Prevalent Single-Family Housing

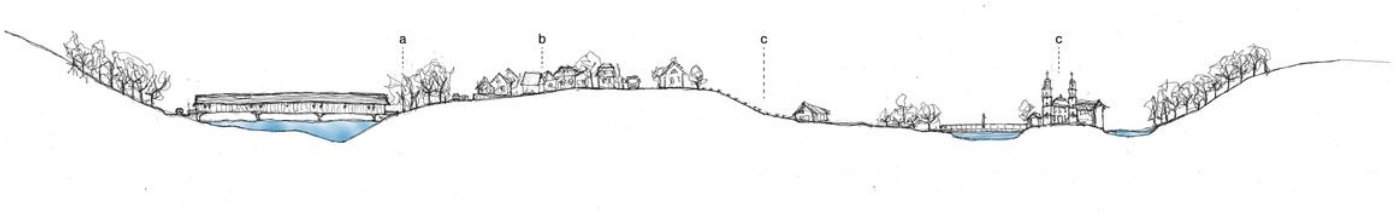


b
Biodynamic Vineyards



c
Silva Pasture

The Village, Farm, and Monastery



Heritage Village Core between Germany and the Monastery

The last stop by bus lands in the historic village centre, where a few steps in either direction leads to housing, kita, or butcher for the farm. At the edges of the Rhine appear a rather busy bridge to Germany and the historic monastery, which has become a tourist attraction.



a
Bridge Across the Rhine to Germany.



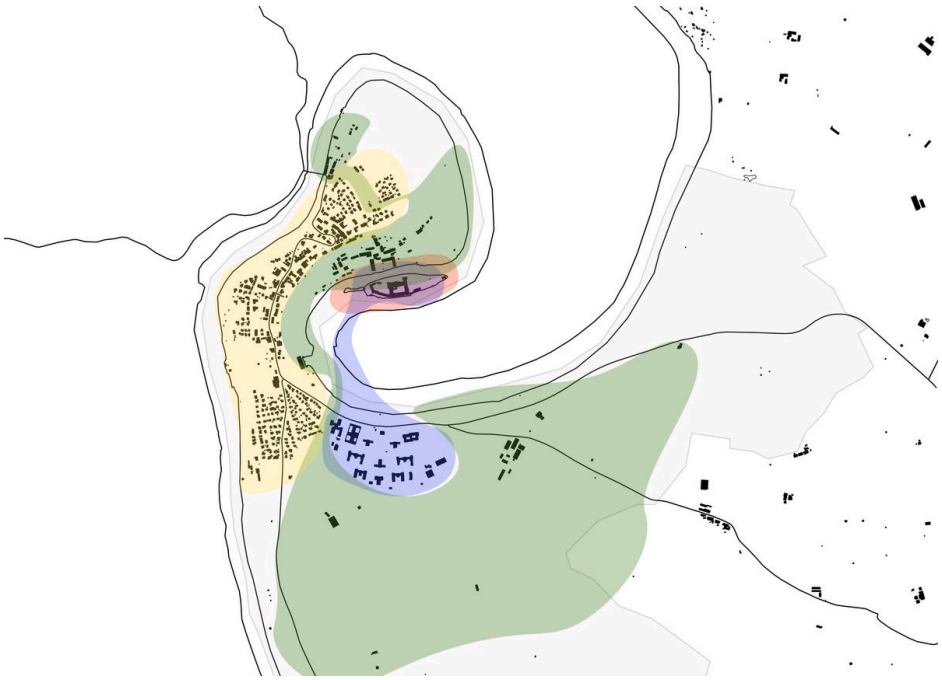
b
Mix of Heritage and 60s Housing



c
From Kita to Butcher



d
Imposing Entrance to the Monastery



Rheinau, a Heterotopia

This tour of topography shows a linear structure of Rheinau, introducing a story of several worlds. The eccentric perception aligns itself with a heterogeneous mosaic of program. One clear continuation, however, is the presence of the farm through all profiles.



All in One?

Three Stories of Territory



The historic accumulation of territory enabled the emergence of unique institutions. With the observations of this diverse and multilayered landscape, knowing how these territories came to be gives hints to explain today's current programmatical conglomerations in Rheinau.



Growing a Heterotopia

The historical context of Rheinau can be told in three separate, but overlapping stories that narrate the influences of St. Fintan, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Martin Ott. These characters are symbolic figures of broader organisational structures that formed the territory we have today: the Monastery, the Canton, and the [Stiftung] Fintan Foundation.

Fintan and the Founding of the Monastery



The Monastery as Territorial Power.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau [http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].



A Strategic Location beyond Remoteness.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau [http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

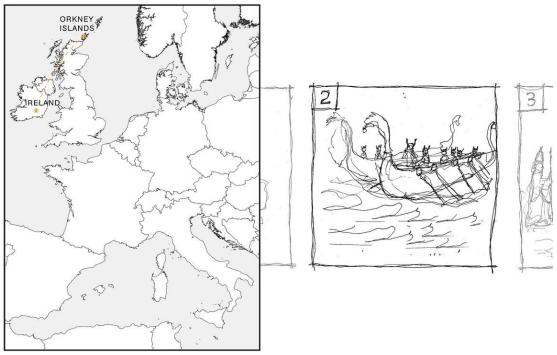


Saint Fintan Watching over Rheinau.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau [http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

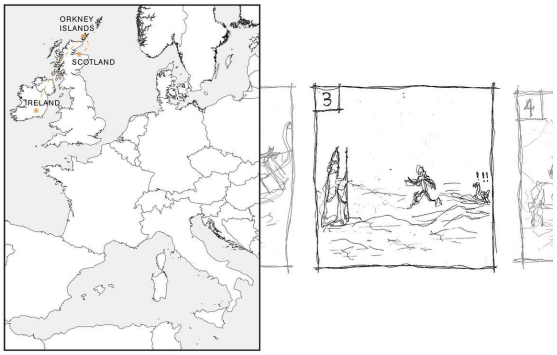
First, the story of Fintan, an Irish-born nobleman-turned-monk. He arrives in the present-day area of Rheinau in 851 AD, establishing himself as a hermit amongst an Allemanic tribe and a Benedictine Monastery founded in 778.



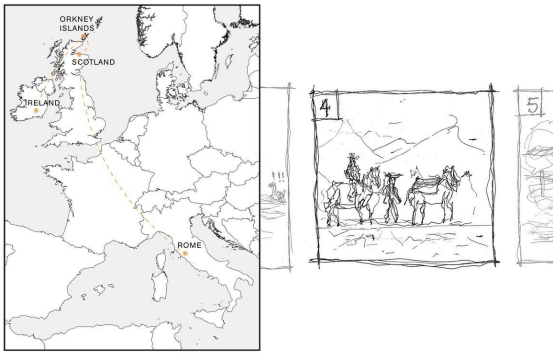
Fintan was born into Irish nobility in the province of Leinster.



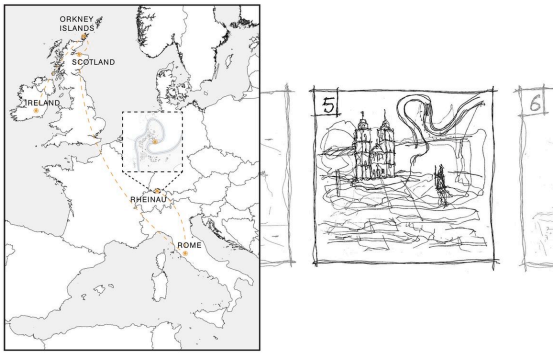
His family was captured by Vikings and taken prisoner in the Orkney Islands of present-day Scotland.



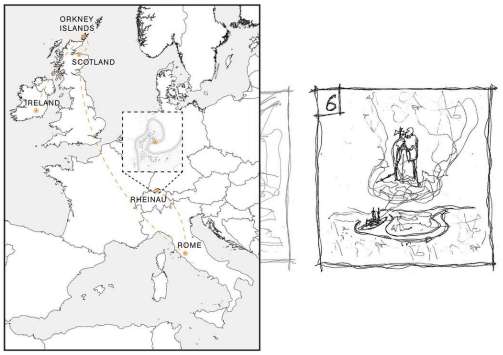
Fintan escapes to Scottish mainland, where he stays with a bishop and becomes a clergyman.



He embarks on a pilgrimage to Rome, stopping in numerous places around the continent along the way.



Fintan travels to Rheinau and is taken in as a Benedictine monk, and eventually becomes a hermit.



Fintan dies in Rheinau, where his remains are buried in the Monastery. He gains a Saint status for the commune.

The Rheinau Abbey stayed influential for much of the next several centuries as a site for religious pilgrimage and eventually became part of the Holy Roman Empire. However, after territorial disputes from noble families on both flanks, the monastery signed a protection agreement with the Old Swiss Confederacy. A brief but overwhelming Reformation movement from Zurich occupied the monastery in 1529, causing it to become abandoned, but three years later it was re-established as an anchor point for the Counter-Reformation.



Territory of the Monastery.

The territorial influence of the Rheinau Abbey stretched far into the early history of the canton, not to mention the European continent, as a religious hub and archive along a spiritual point on the Rhine.

Napoleon and the Cantonal Autonomy



A Harsh Wind Blows from the West.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau
[http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

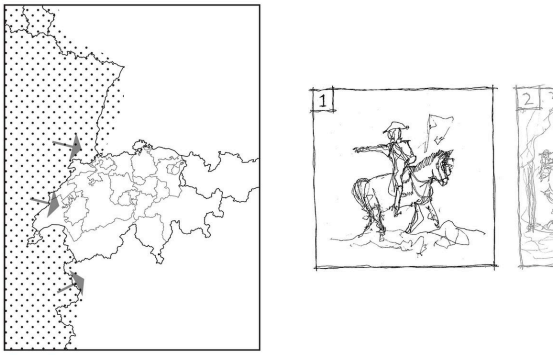


Monastery Transformed
into Psychiatry by Canton.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau
[http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].



Patients Had Hard Working Days on the Fields.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau
[http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

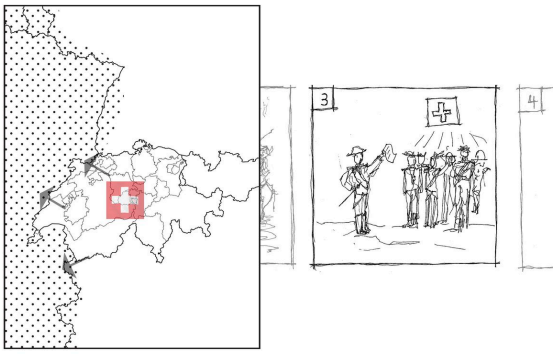
Next, the story of Napoleon, who in his conquest of Europe also occupied present-day Switzerland for a period of time starting in 1798. After attempting to dissolve the existing confederate governing structure and create a more centralized Helvetic Republic, public resistance caused Napoleon to restore the confederation, again giving back authority to individual Cantons. This includes Canton Zurich and is the period where the commune of Rheinau is first established.



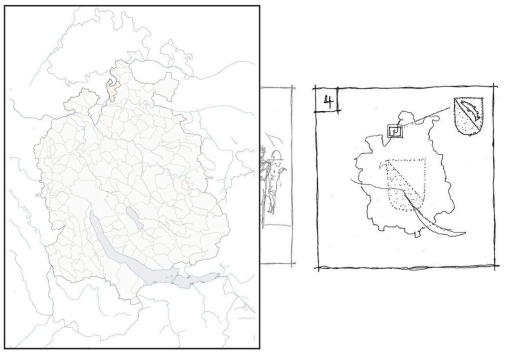
During the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte rose to prominence as a military and political leader.



The French Army invades Switzerland, and transforms the Confederation into the centralised Helvetic Republic.

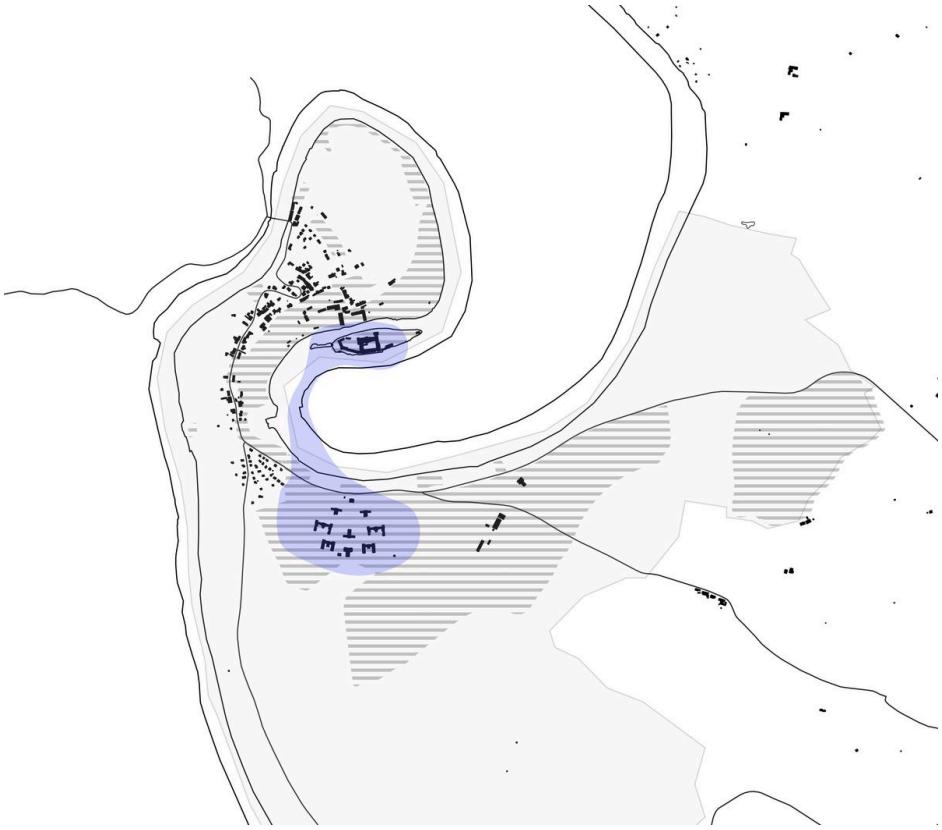


Due to strong resistance, the Republic collapsed. Napoleon enacted the Act of Mediation to restore the Confederation.



The Act of Mediation brings back the Canton of Zurich, which takes in Rheinau as a municipality of the region.

Cantonal autonomy dating back to the Napoleonic times survives today, giving ownership of land in Rheinau to the Canton of Zurich. Starting in 1868, when the Canton of Zurich decided to close down and expropriate the monastery, such as to claim ownership for its territory. Nowadays by leasing the land to independent organisations, Zurich can gain credit for enabling new experimentational practices, but can also just as easily shut operations down. This targets the vulnerability of cantonal land that is not as established in the overall village fabric.



Territory of the Canton and Subsequent Psychiatric Clinics

Territorial influence from the Canton exists still today, and in Rheinau especially it has unique authority. With the consumption of monastery and agricultural area, Zurich owns an unusual amount of continuous land in the village, compared to other communes in the region.

Martin Ott and the Stiftung Fintan



Anthroposophic Practice of the Morgenkreis.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau [http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

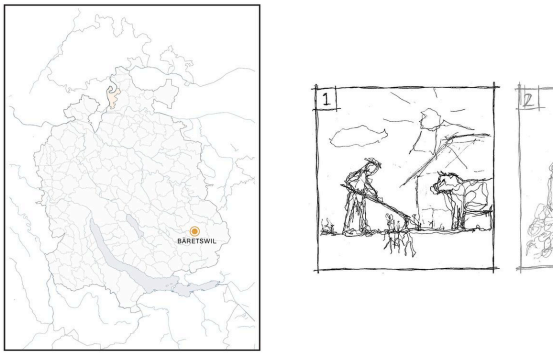


Original Tenant Community of Gut Rheinau.
Source: Gut Rheinau [https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/hof/gut-rheinau/].

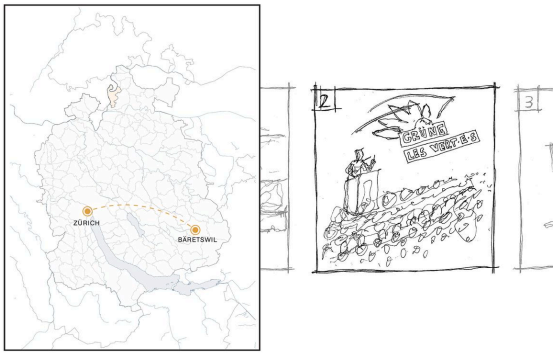


The Cow as a Sensitive Social Creature.
Source: Dokumentationsstelle Rheinau [http://www.dokstelle-rheinau.ch/].

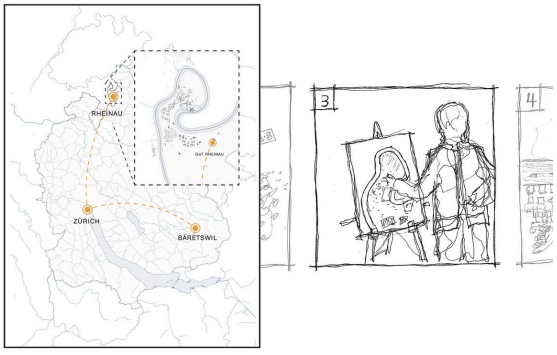
And now the story of Martin Ott, a leading figure in Switzerland for the integration and popularisation of biodynamic farming. As a trained agriculturalist and political member, he has made a strong impact in the progression of biodynamic and organic farms. In Rheinau, he established Stiftung Fintan—in no coincidence related to the late St. Fintan—as an experimental foundation collaborating biodynamic agriculture with social therapy.



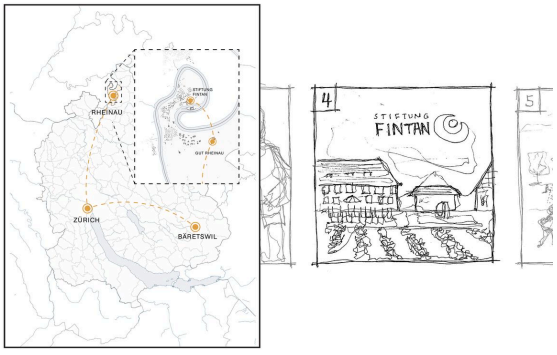
Martin Ott grows up on a farm and undergoes apprenticeships in both conventional and biodynamic farming.



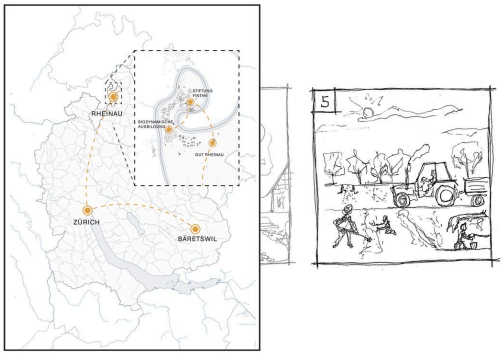
He also becomes politically active, joining the Swiss Green Party as a representative in the Cantonal Council.



Ott is chosen to lead a commission to set in motion an alternative agricultural practice on cantonal land in Rheinau.



Ott's leadership allows Stiftung Fintan to be created with a socially integrative farm at the heart of its practices.

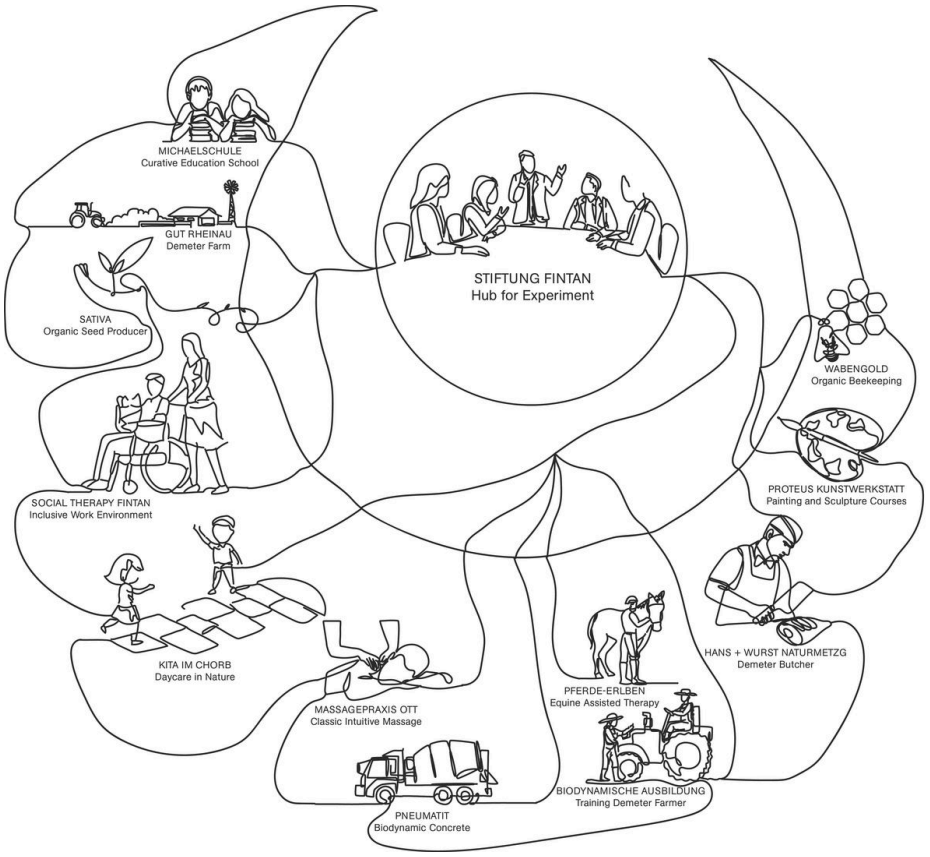


Martin Ott also founds the School of Biodynamic Farming in Rheinau, where he remains active today.

The correlation of Fintan's name to the foundation underscores the lasting territorial influence in Rheinau from the monastery to the foundation. Parts of the two organisations overlap, creating a patchwork and rooting both influences deeper into the village network. Stiftung Fintan becomes an economic producer for Rheinau and builds a link for several pre-existing contingents where they can interact and contribute symbiotically for the benefit of the whole.

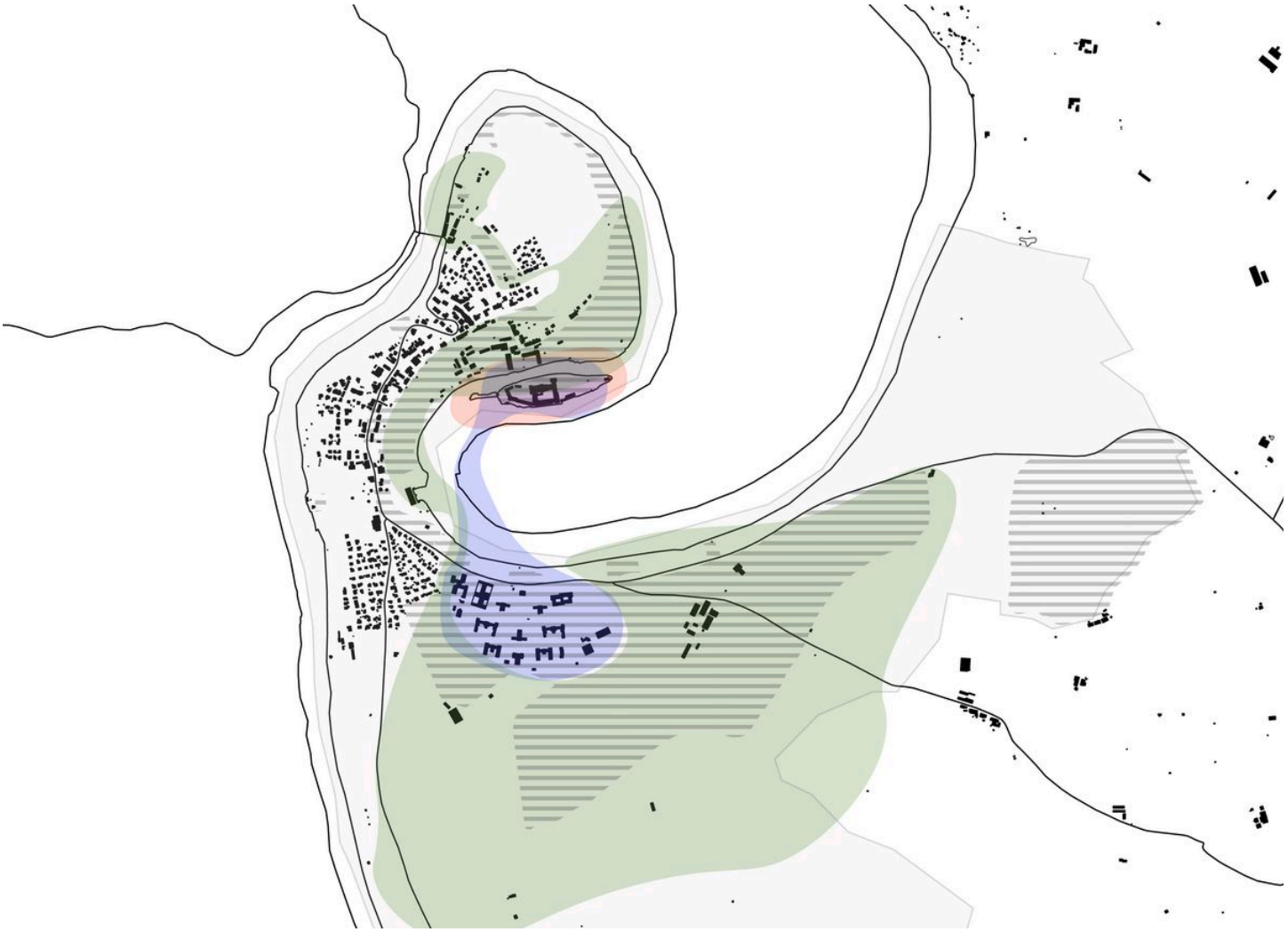


Territory of the Stiftung Fintan



Stiftung Fintan
Diverse and Biodynamic

These stories give context to the heterotopic landscape of Rheinau that is seen today. Each organisational structure, whether from the Monastery, Canton, or Foundation, has had a sense ownership in the commune. The territorial influences that these special institutions made still compose a large part of Rheinau and serve as a point that the village remains as a place where experimentations and new ideas can be accepted and realised.



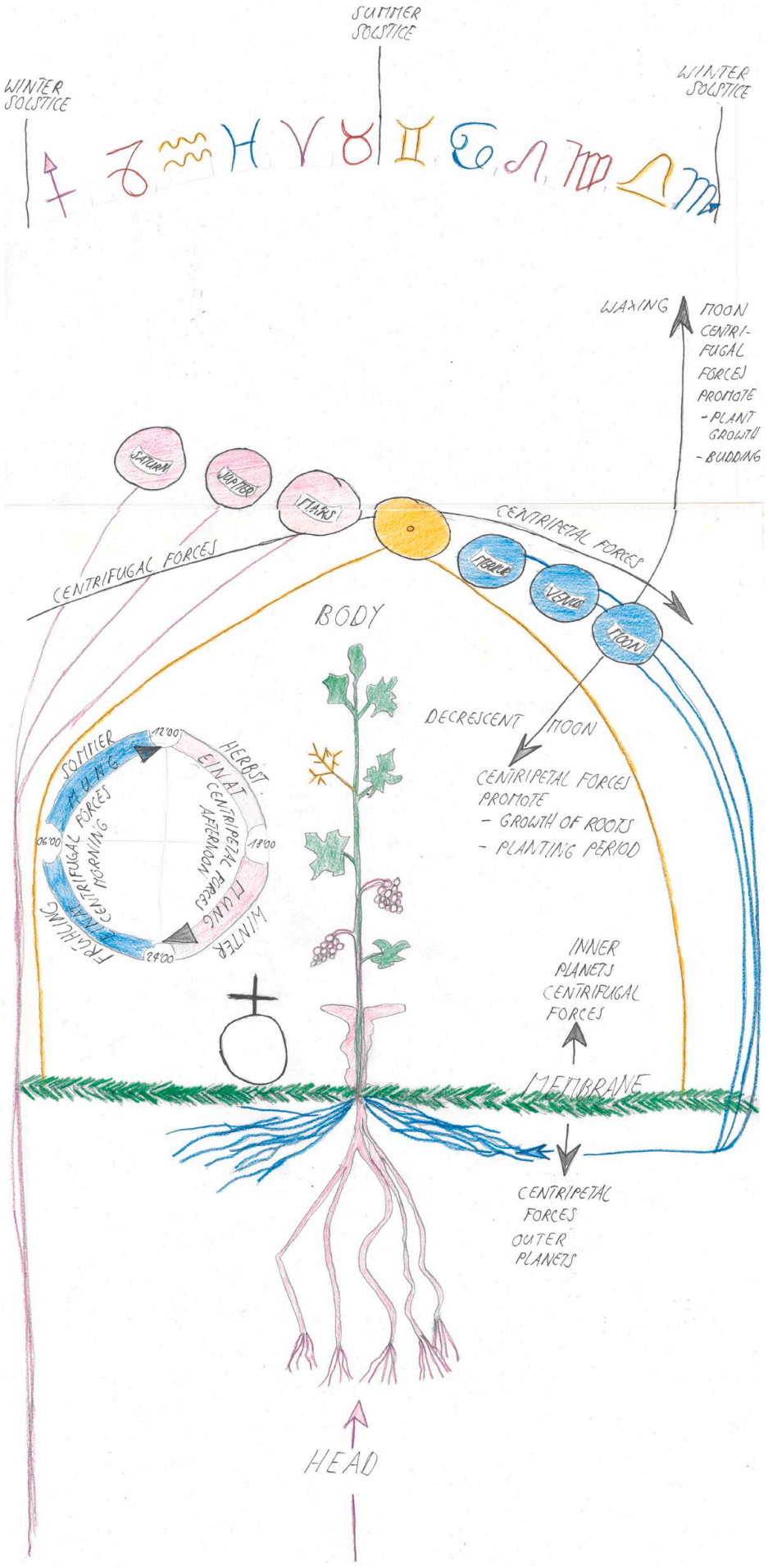
Heterotopic Territories and Cantonal Land.

Gut Rheinau: an Agricultural Utopia



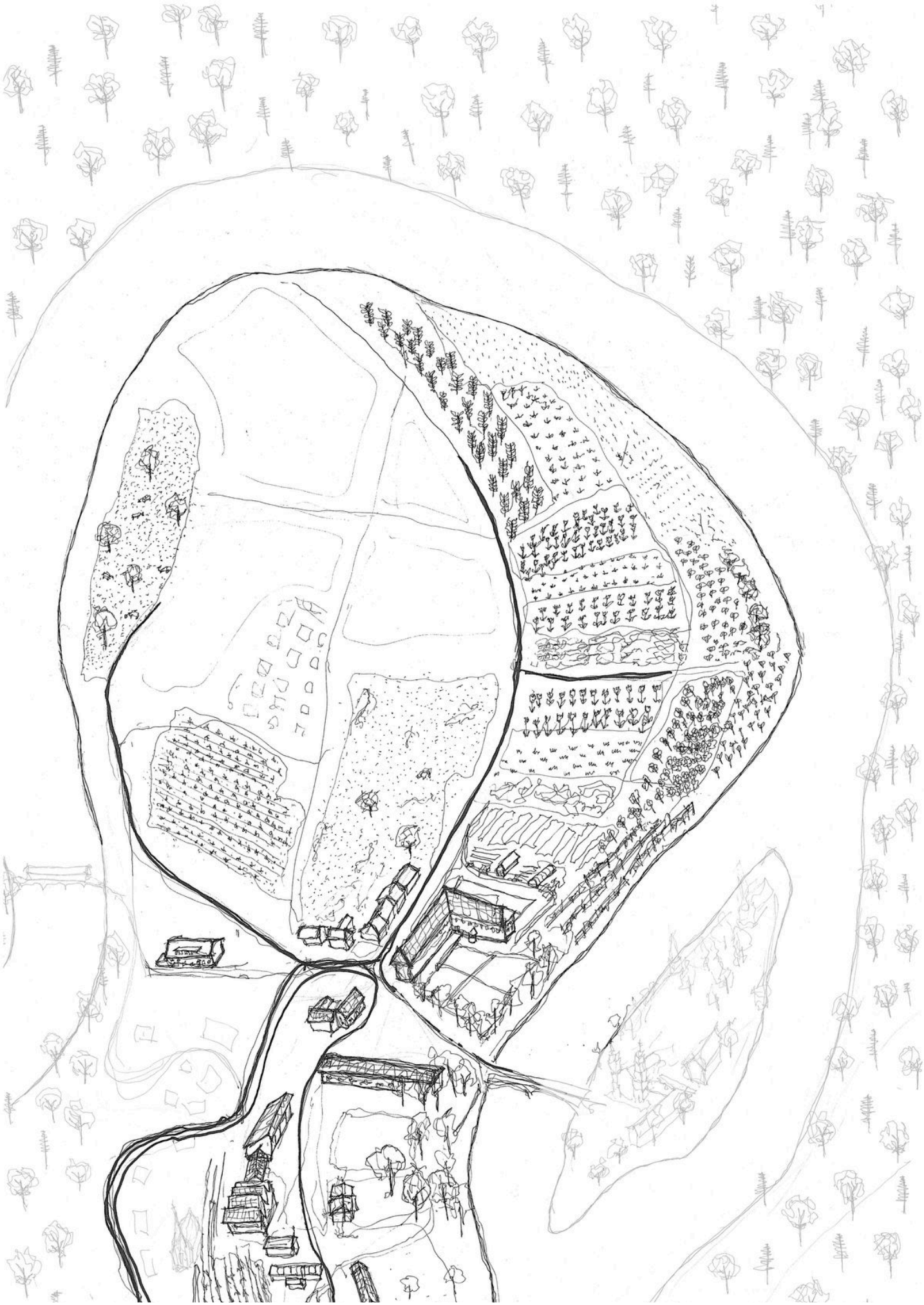
A fourth structure emerges from Rheinau and today holds arguably the most stake in territory. With land from the Canton, Gut Rheinau has become a full-scale biodynamic operation, but its full potential as a participator in the village is yet to be fully realised.

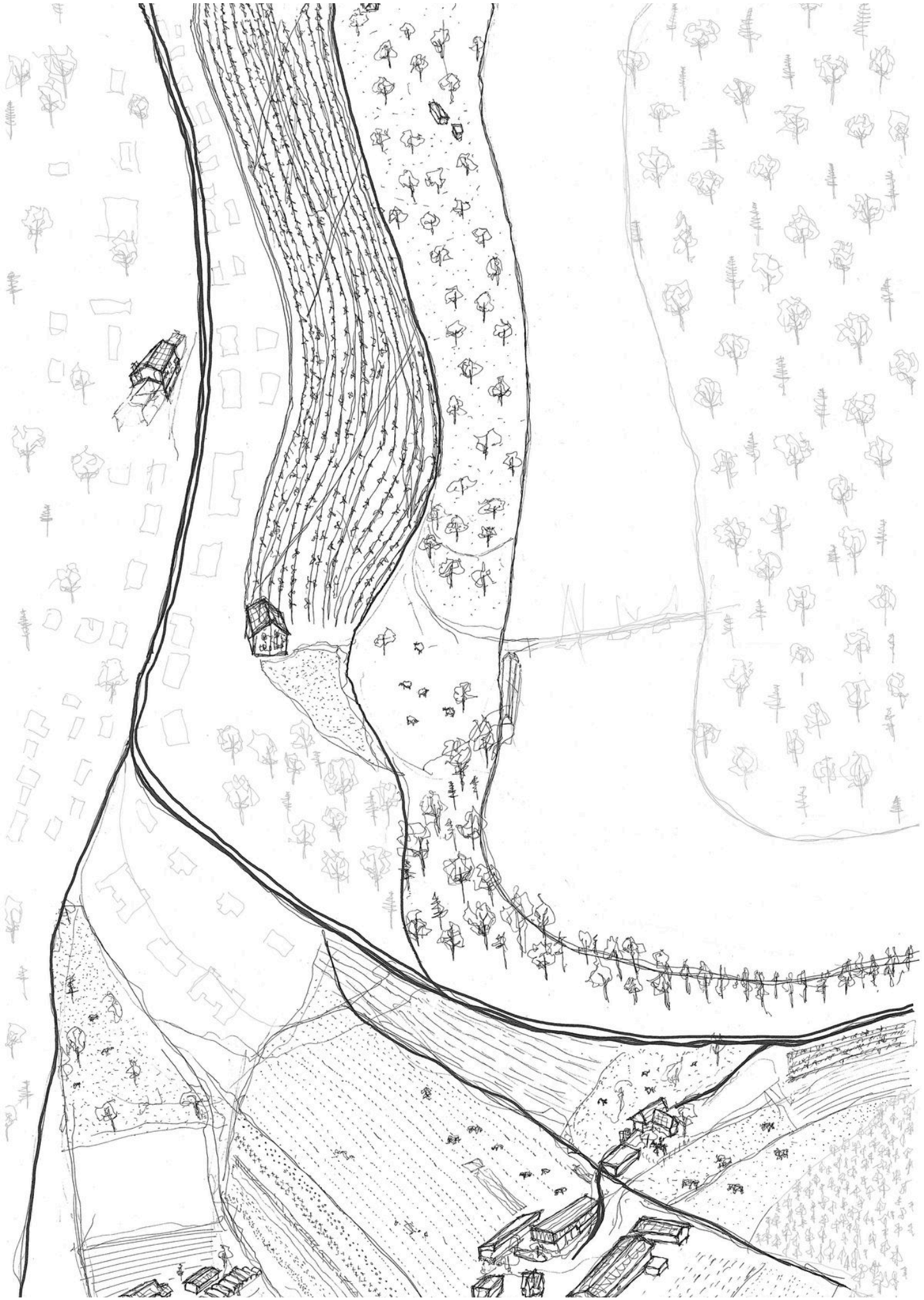
Biodynamic agriculture has roots in an esoteric and anthroposophical way of thinking. Many of the practices on Gut Rheinau are derived from this strategy, which uses the cosmos and interpretations of centrifugal planetary forces as reasonings behind its practices. Although the initial underlaying philosophies might be controversial, the pragmatic results, production, and resilience of the farm are not something to turn completely away from.

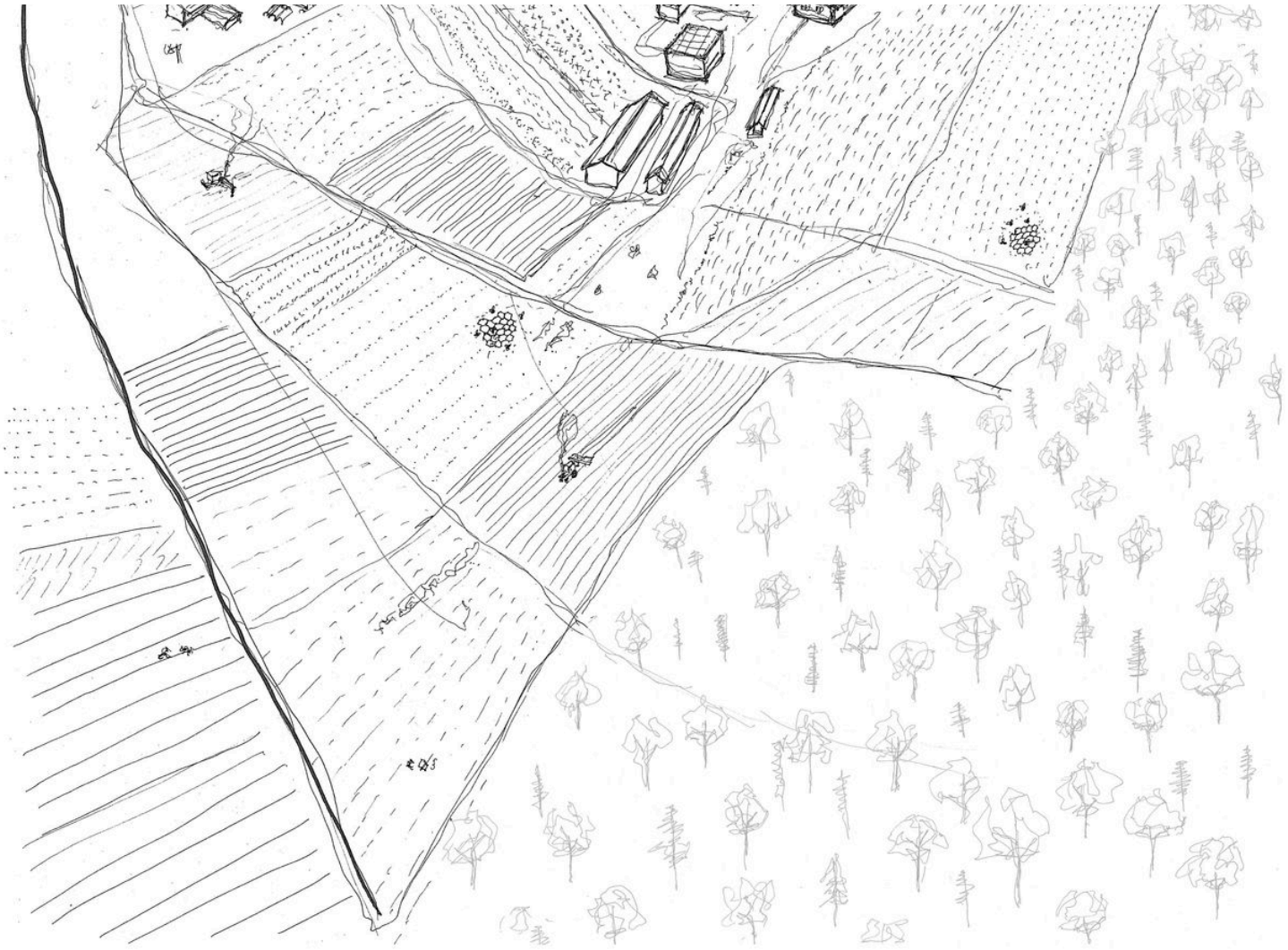

SUMMER SOLSTICE
WINTER SOLSTICE
WINTER SOLSTICE
WAXING MOON CENTRI-FUGAL FORCES PROMOTE - PLANT GROWTH - BUDDING
SATURN
JUPITER
MARS
CENTRIFUGAL FORCES
CENTRIPETAL FORCES
MERCURY
VENUS
MOON
BODY
DECRESCENT MOON
CENTRIPETAL FORCES PROMOTE - GROWTH OF ROOTS - PLANTING PERIOD
SOMMER
HERBST
EINAT
WINTER
FRÜHLING
CENTRIFUGAL FORCES
CENTRIPETAL FORCES
AFTERNOON
MORNING
12'00
18'00
24'00
06'00
INNER PLANETS CENTRIFUGAL FORCES
MEMBRANE
CENTRIPETAL FORCES OUTER PLANETS
HEAD

Tying the Spiritual in the Living Being to the Universe

Gut Rheinau is the biodynamic farm associated with Stiftung Fintan, founded in 2003 and certified by the organisation Demeter International. As the most recent large-scale territorial development in Rheinau, the land and practice is still evolving, with discussions on how to become more integrated with the local village. However, its size makes the farm one of the largest of its kind in Switzerland, becoming a potential model for the future of biodynamics. Here is how it works.

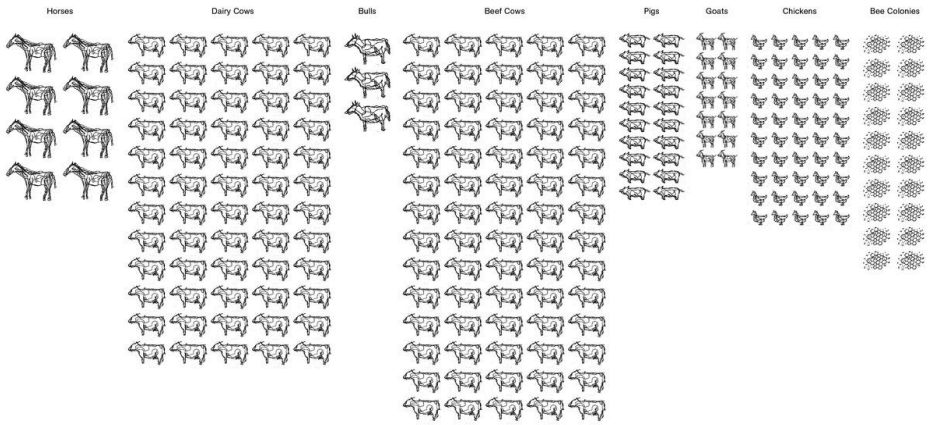






Territory of Gut Rheinau

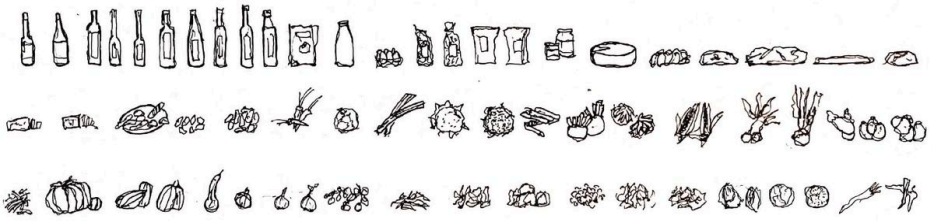
Gut Rheinau maintains an agricultural lifestyle founded on the basis of self individuality and idyllic economic and natural loop cycles. Managed as a biodynamic farm, the company produces a wide range of products from organic seeds to biodynamic cheese. Networks of meadows throughout the canton-owned farmland also foster wild growth, while external research centres aid in improving soil and land conservation, plant and seed production, and animal health and well-being.



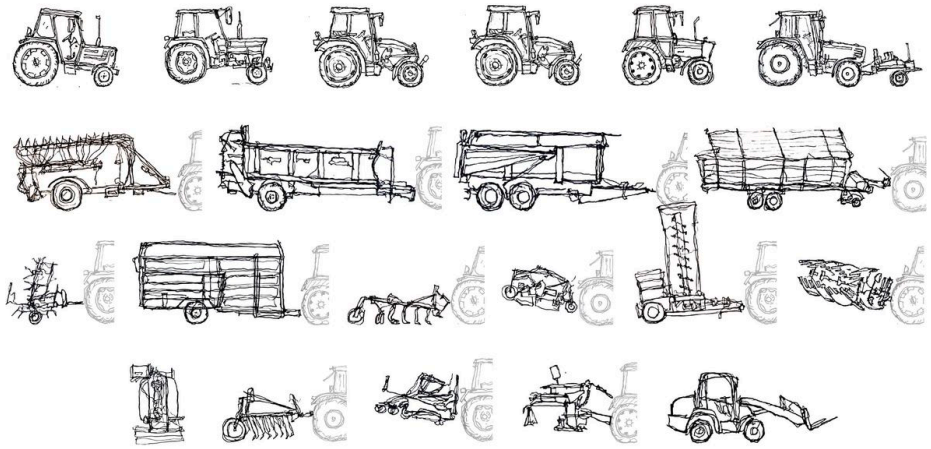
The Animals. Source: Gut Rheinau
[https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/hof/gut-rheinau/]



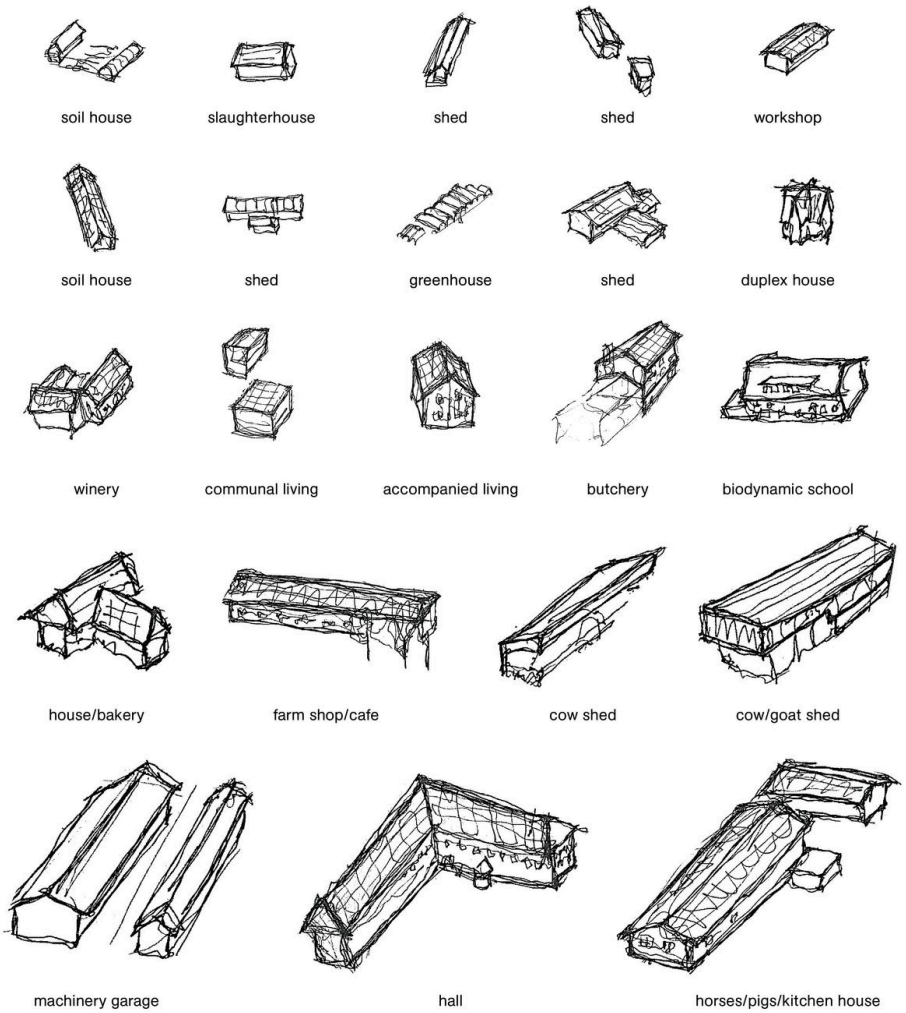
The Team. Source: Gut Rheinau
[https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/hof/das-team/]



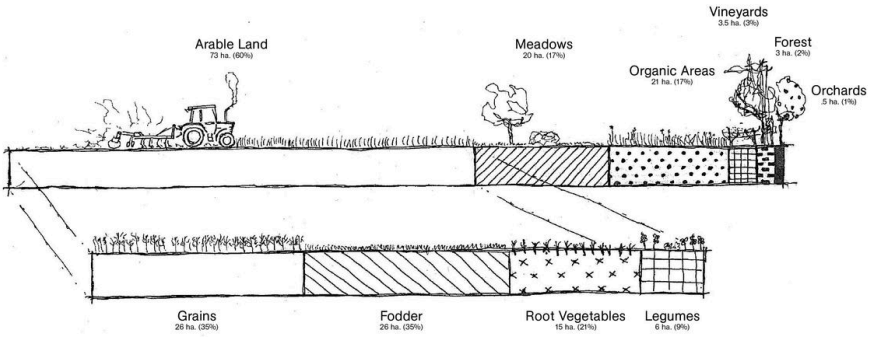
The Produce. Source: Gut Rheinau
[https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/hof/die-produkte/]



The Machines. Source: Gut Rheinau [https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/brot-maschine-landwirtschaft/unsere-maschinen/]

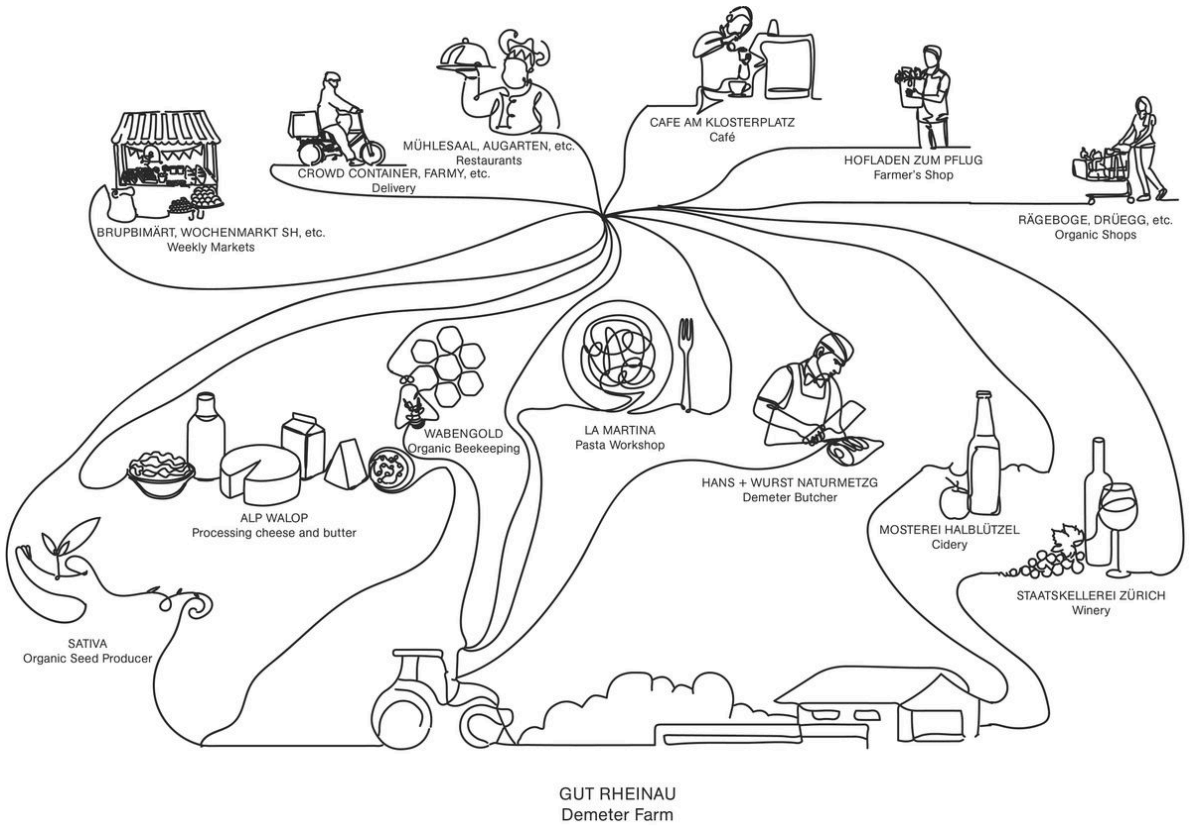


The Buildings. Source: Gut Rheinau [https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/unsere-partner/stiftung-fintan-1/]



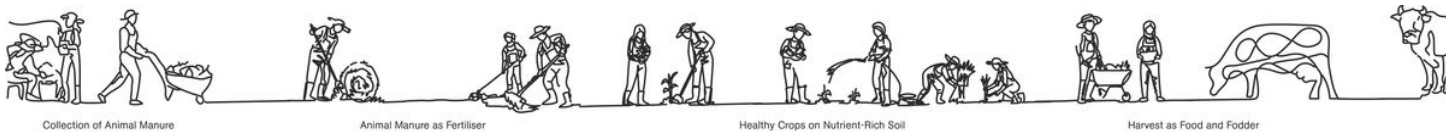
The Land Use. Source: Gut Rheinau
[https://www.gutrheinau.ch/themen/hof/gut-rheinau/]

Gut Rheinau stocks produce and goods that are mainly sold in markets and organic shops or directly to cafes and restaurants. This way they ensure responsible and caring use of their fresh products instead of selling to larger supermarkets as a commodity.

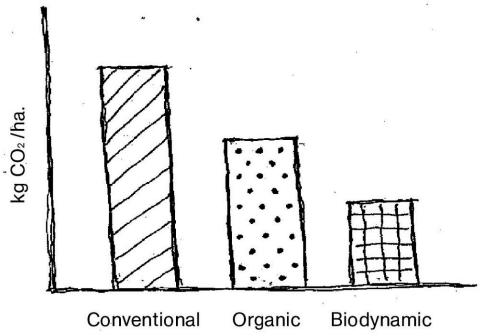


Cultivating, Processing, Selling

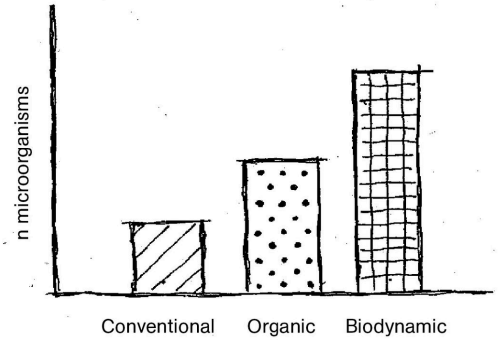
There are significant profits to be found in environmental and lifestyle considerations for biodynamic agriculture. In comparison to conventional farming economies, biodynamic practices are able to incorporate a cyclical network of production that produces less waste and utilises all seasons of the year. Biodynamic farmers are more connected to the land and care, in contrast with conventional farmers who may have instead more connection to machines and efficiency.



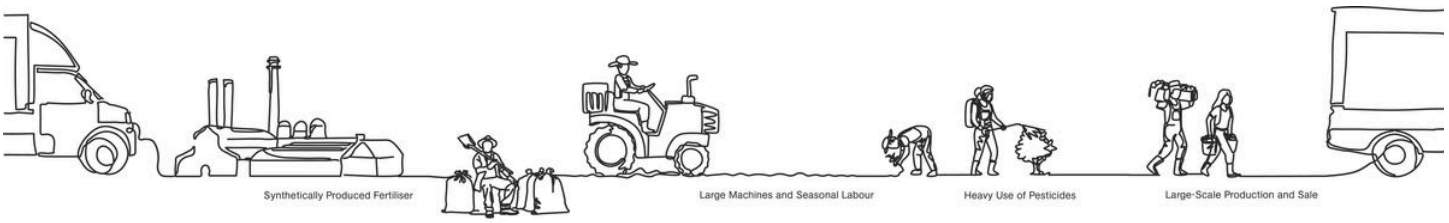
Closed Cycle on Biodynamic Farm



Climate Impact

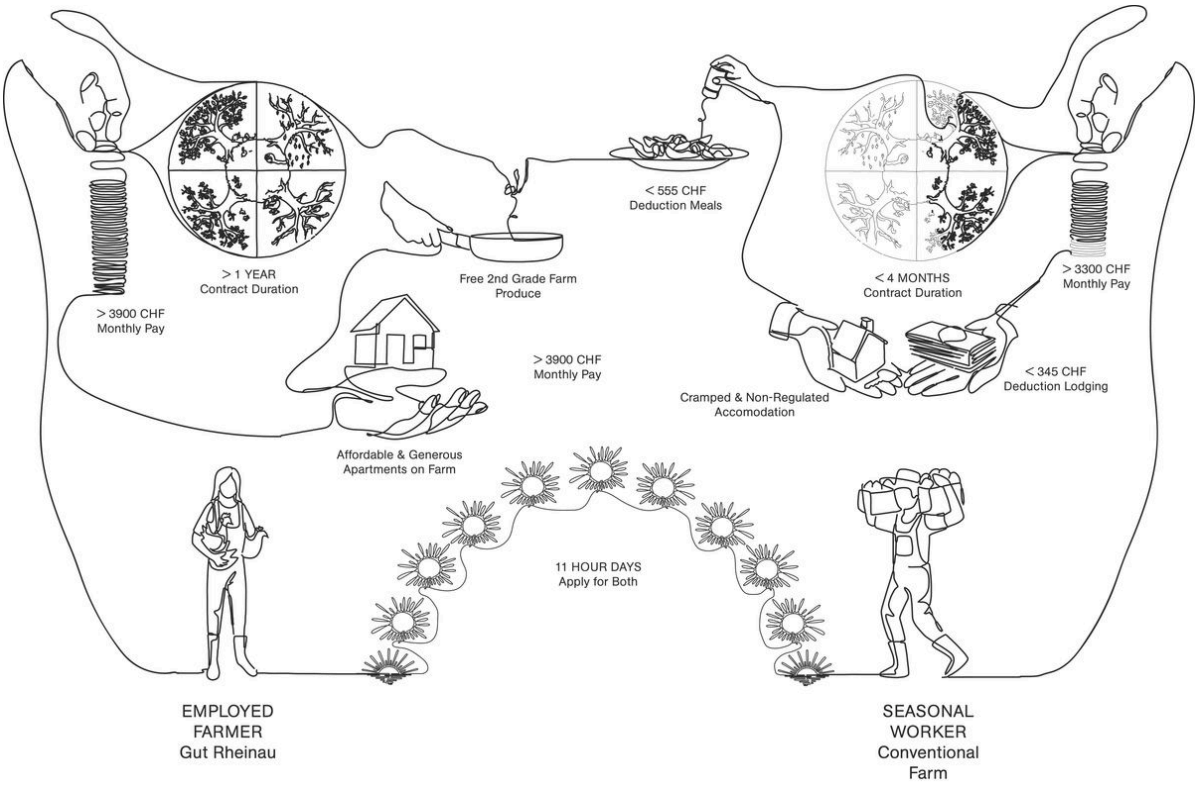


Life in Soil



Decoupled Cycle on Conventional Farm

Biodynamic and conventional practices have stark differences but working conditions can still be comparably strenuous. Long hours and low pay are seen in both, except biodynamic farmers can be afforded to stay year-round on long-term contract because of the longer working season.



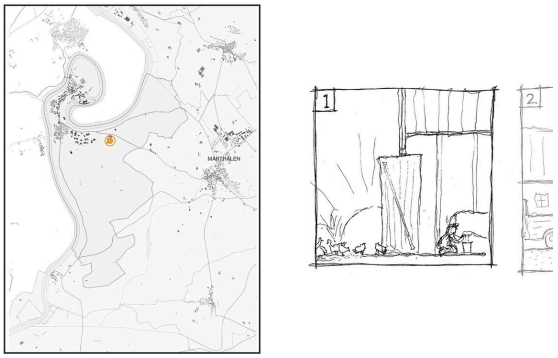
Utopia Caught Up with Reality

A utopic image can be perceived when looking at this unique system. However, a closer look into the people of the farm and of the village can reveal some disconnects which could result in future complications should the farm model be tested on resilience or multiplicity. Although Gut Rheinau covers more than half of the commune's land area, there doesn't seem to be much involvement from the farm, nor the residential villagers, to develop communal networks.

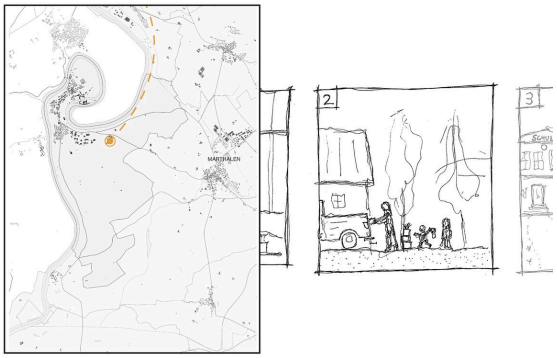


LADINA
Manager of the poultry, bakery and farm shop

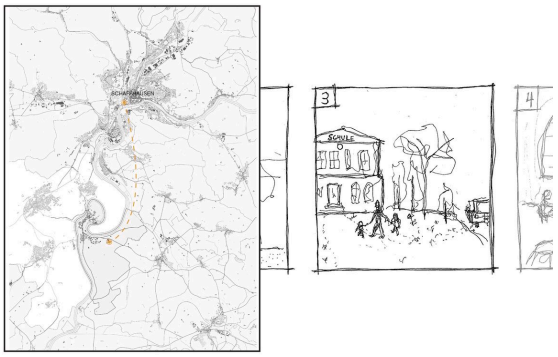
Born into a farming family in Davos, Ladina has spent most of her life in agriculture. She has worked on farms around the globe until finally coming to Gut Rheinau, where she lives with her husband and their four children. Her kids do not go to the local school, but to the anthroposophical school in Schaffhausen.



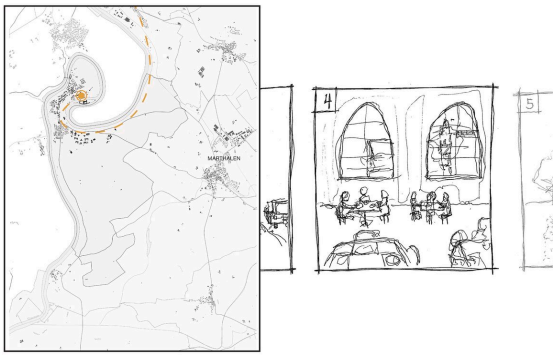
Ladina works at the Gut Rheinau, where every morning she milks the cows and feeds the chicken and geese.



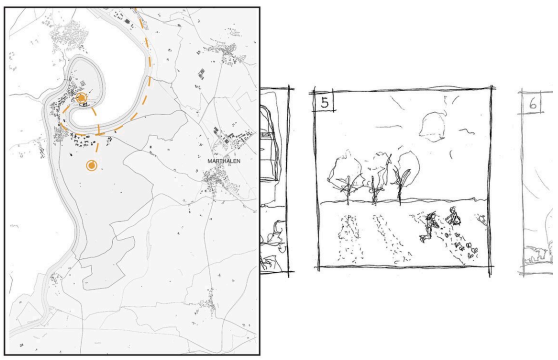
As her children pack for school, she loads the small truck with produce to sell at the weekly market in Schaffhausen.



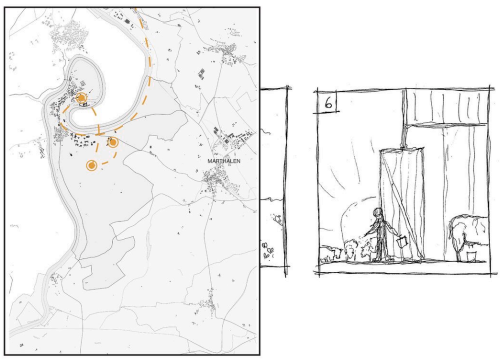
She takes her kids with her to Schaffhausen, where they go to the anthroposophic Steiner school.



After the morning market, Ladina heads back to Rheinau for lunch to eat at the Stiftung's restaurant beside the Monastery.



In the afternoon she helps out on the vegetable field at the Solboden, where young spinach is being planted.

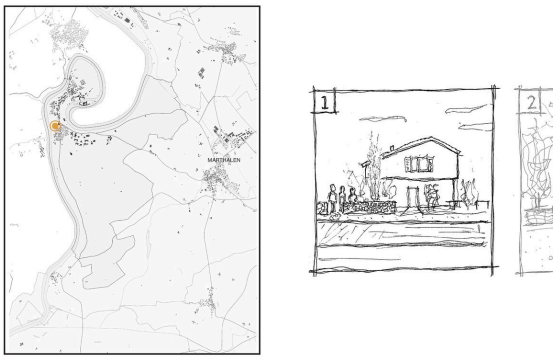


While her husband picks up their kids from school, Ladina goes to the barn to milk the cows and feed the pigs and sheep.

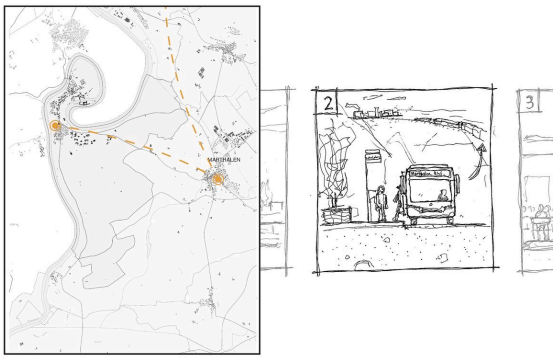


TIM
Secondary school Teaching Assistant

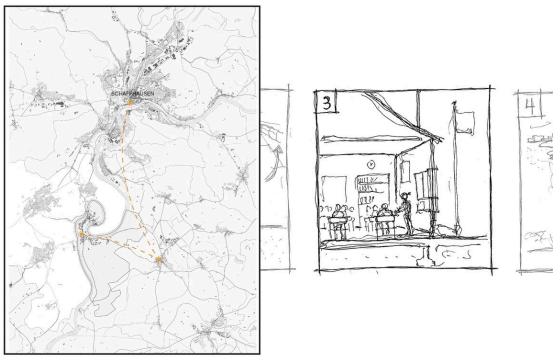
Even though growing up and still living in Rheinau today, Tim's social life mainly takes place in Winterthur, as he did his six years of grammar school there. Whilst very much appreciating the idyllic rural setting of Rheinau, he is not part of any local association and would not call himself active in the village life.



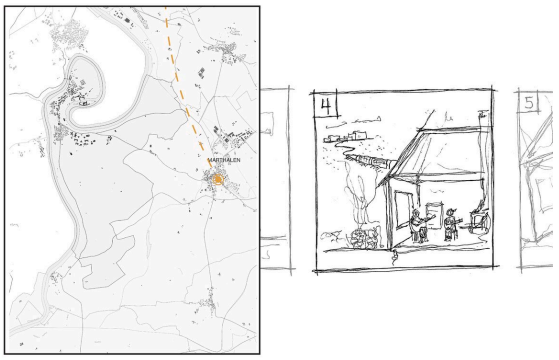
Tim, a university student, grew up and lives in a single-family house in Rheinau with his parents.



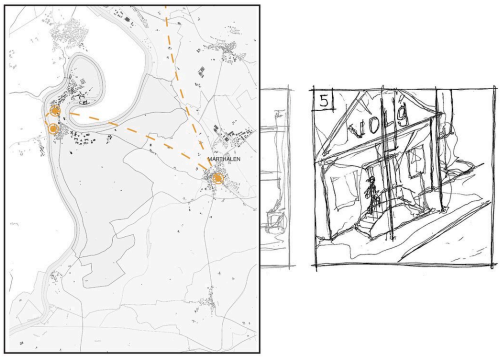
Every morning, he takes the Postauto from Rheinau to Marthalen, where he then catches the train to Schaffhausen.



There, he works as a teaching assistant in a secondary school as part of his preparation for pedagogic studies in Zurich.

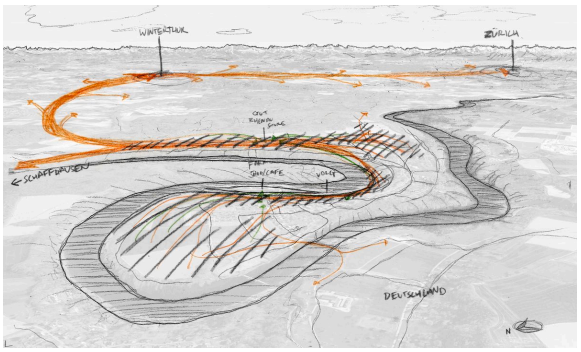


After finishing work, Tim travels by train back to Marthalen, where he meets his guitar teacher for a music lesson.

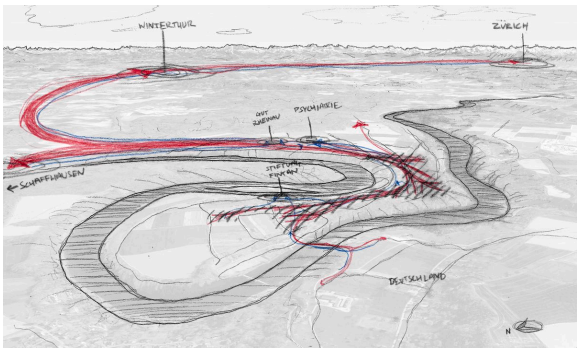


After the lesson, he catches the bus back to Rheinau. He buys some groceries at the local store, Volg, before heading home.

Even though Tim and Ladina both live in Rheinau, they almost never cross paths. This could contribute to the fragility of both their ‘worlds’: an aging village, where the younger generations leave to find work and accommodation in the cities, and an insecure traditional agricultural practice, that could change at a moment’s notice with the canton’s existing ownership over the territory. To bridge this divide also means to strengthen the hold and authority of the people living in Rheinau, developing a territory of commons that counters a model of land ownership by a singular dominant figure.



Rural Production and Urban Consumption

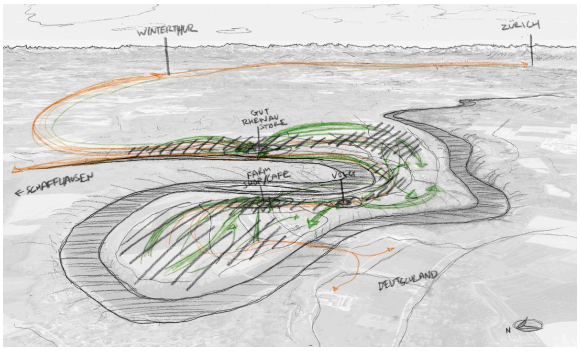


Sleeping Village and Working City

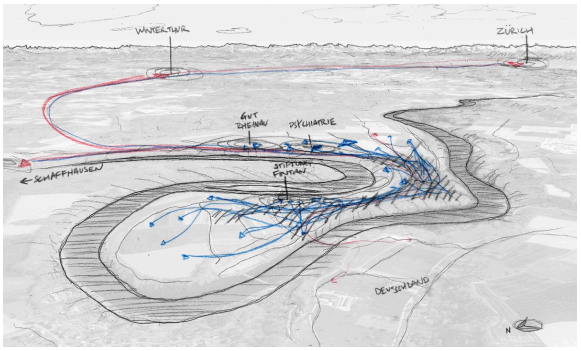
Gut Für Rheinau: Resilient Commons of Care



Because most of Rheinau's residents are commuting to work in other parts of the Canton, their influence on the territory they live in is minimal. The employees of Gut Rheinau live and work the land of the village, but most, if not all, of their production goes away to bio stores and markets in the cities. What if these flows of production and consumption could merge?



Local Food



Local Care

Biodynamic farming has become the latest experiment in Rheinau, but it is still in a fragile system with a need for manpower under a capitalist extraction model that does not leave much production for the producing region. To enhance resilience, an imagined scenario of communal agricultural practice can be rooted into everyday village life, involving more people and anchoring authority in more local organisational structures.



TIM
Secondary school Teaching Assistant

Even though growing up and still living in Rheinau today, Tim's social life mainly takes place in Winterthur, as he did his six years of grammar school there. Whilst very much appreciating the idyllic rural setting of Rheinau, he is not part of any local association and would not call himself active in the village life.



JAN
Mechanical Engineering student

Studying at the ETH Zürich, Jan lives in a student residence in Zürich to reduce commuting. However, he still goes back to Rheinau on a weekly basis. Since growing up there, he has been very involved in the local gymnastics association as well as the swimming association. He currently works at the swimming pool of Rheinau as a lifeguard during the weekends.



MARION
Physiotherapy Intern at the Hospital in Glarus

With her grandfather having already grown up in Rheinau, Marion's family has been living in the village for over a couple generations. Because of going to the grammar school in Winterthur, she sees the city as her main place for social life but still enjoys coming back to Rheinau for its rural calmness and picturesque landscape.



LADINA
Manager of the poultry, bakery and farm shop

Born into a farming family in Davos, Ladina has spent most of her life in agriculture. She has worked on farms around the globe until finally coming to Gut Rheinau, where she lives with her husband and their four children. Her kids do not go to the local school, but to the anthroposophical school in Schaffhausen.



LUCA
Vegetable Cultivation

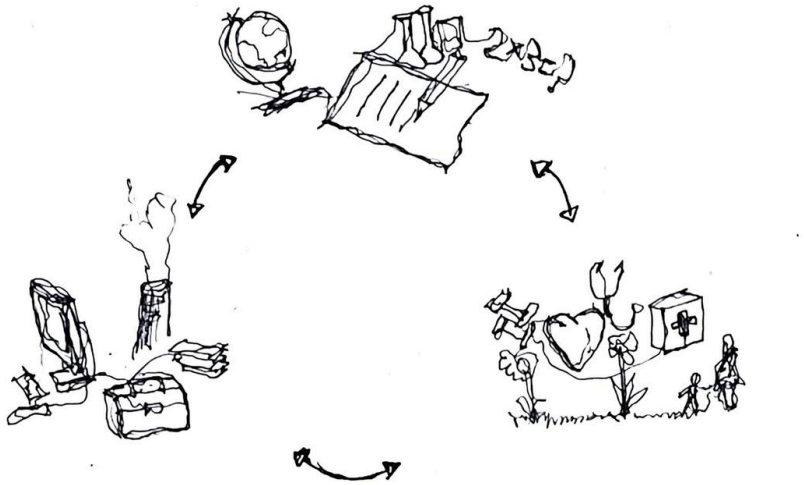
Luca grew up and still lives in Schaffhausen, driving the short distance to Rheinau on a daily basis. Before joining the biodynamic farm in Rheinau, he has been working in agriculture for several years, ranging from conventional farms to other organic farms and even travelling around Switzerland as a shepherd.



JULIA
Vegetable Cultivation and Graphic Designer

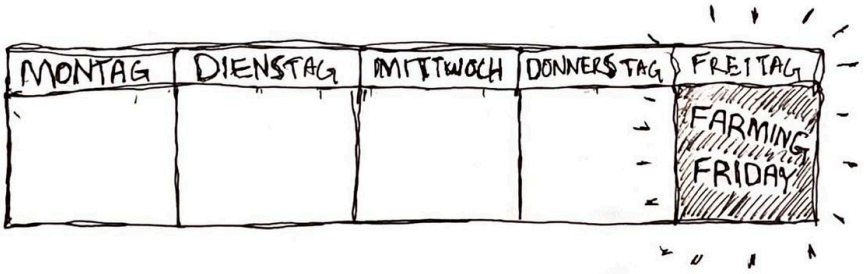
Following her education in social anthropology and Islamic studies at the University of Zurich, Julia worked in various projects combining aspects of organic agriculture and refugee work. She has been working at Gut Rheinau for several years and also lives in one of the offered apartments located on the farm itself.

Constructing the commons, in reference to Silvia Federici's text *From Crisis to Commons*, involves a critique and transformation of everyday life. Dissecting the events of everyday life brings three broad elements: Education, Work, and Care. These categories can be used to imagine a new village dynamic for Rheinau centred around space for commons, with intent for the model to be reproduced throughout the canton.



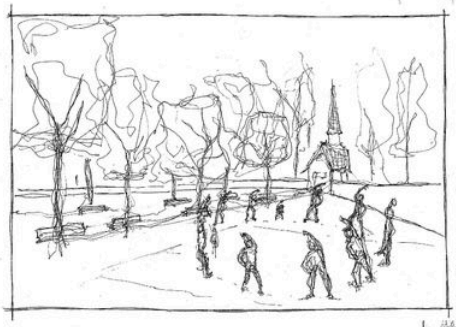
The broad elements of everyday life.

The proposal is to imagine a village of commons, where citizens become a direct contributor to the success and resilience of the commune. Introducing symbiotic networks connecting the farm and village can strengthen the roots of both. To do so, several interventions can emerge out of imagined scenes from the aforementioned elements of everyday life. These take place on a Friday, where instead of commuting out for work, village residents are permitted and able to stay in Rheinau to participate in a communal weekly event that aims at fostering Care for the Landscape, Body, and Mind.

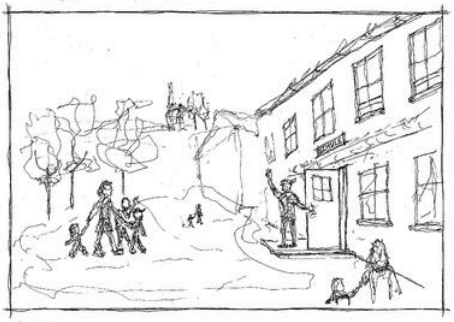


Fridays are for the Farm!

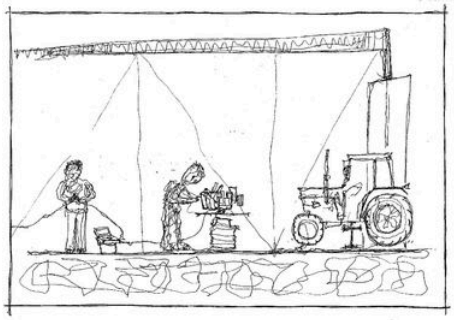
A Farming Friday in Rheinau



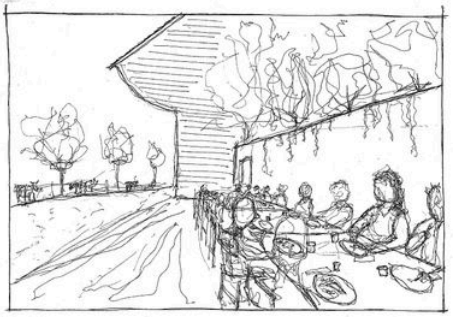
This morning, Ladina, Julia, and Luca attend an outdoor yoga and stretching course, held weekly by Marion on Fridays. This event is also open to all village residents, taking place in the peaceful monastery grounds. Marion, as a physiotherapy intern, can receive practicum credit for her instruction.



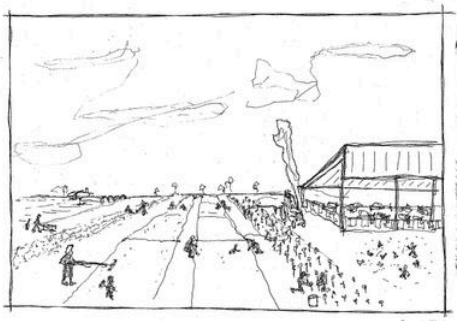
Ladina then takes her kids to the new intercultural school in Rheinau, where Tim works as a teaching assistant. He gains teaching experience through this instead of needing to travel to Schaffhausen every day; in addition, Ladina can be sure her children go to a school that celebrates all forms of thought and education in a location that is close to home.



Jan helps to manage a new communal repairs workshop in the village on Fridays. Other village residents can also come to this workshop for bicycle or automobile maintenance. Today, he is working with Luca to update farm machinery equipment. He is also applying his thesis research from the ETH to the equipment to develop and refit older machinery with electric or biogas systems.



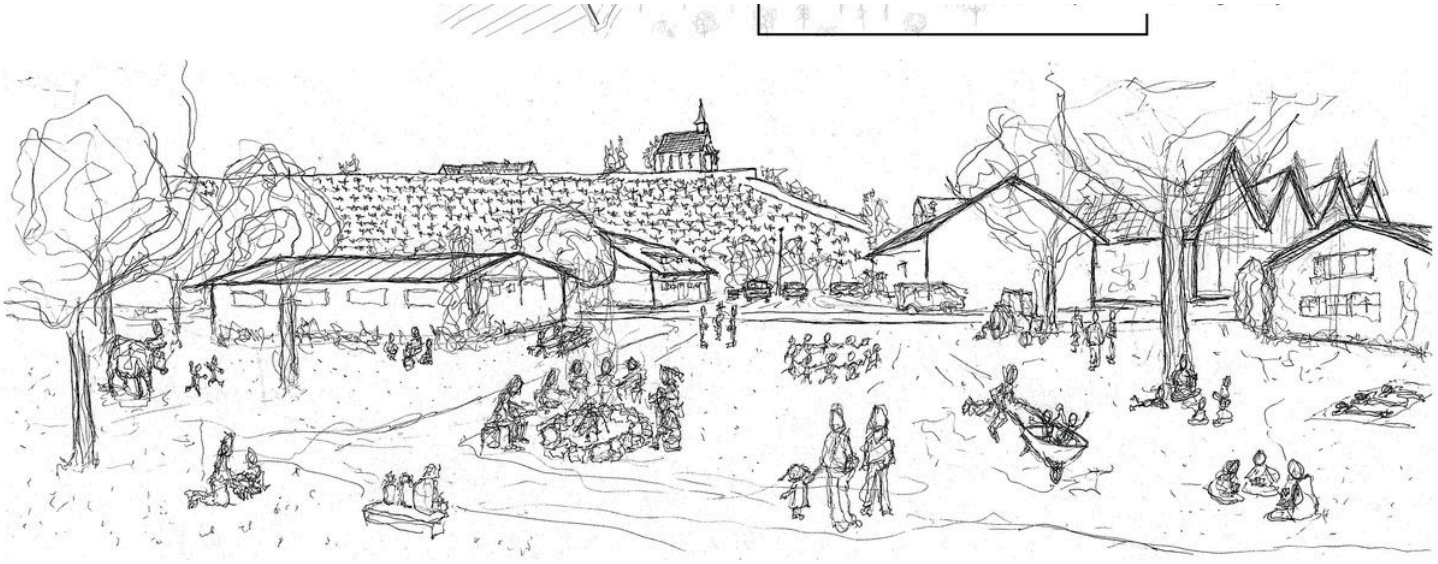
At midday, Tim takes his class to Gut Rheinau, where a common luncheon awaits. The meal is prepared with help from patients form the psychiatry, using local produce from the farm. The students eat together with farm workers and patients from the psychiatry, fostering a social atmosphere inclusive of all population groups in the village.



After lunch, other village residents join the group at the farm for the 'agriculture afternoon'. They help with various tasks, including planting, harvesting, milking, trimming, and cleaning. Students from the school are also available to help: each is paired with a farm employee or village resident. With this practice comes the encouragement for a shared aspect of childcare. The students also use this experience on the farm for their creative hands-on projects assigned by the school.

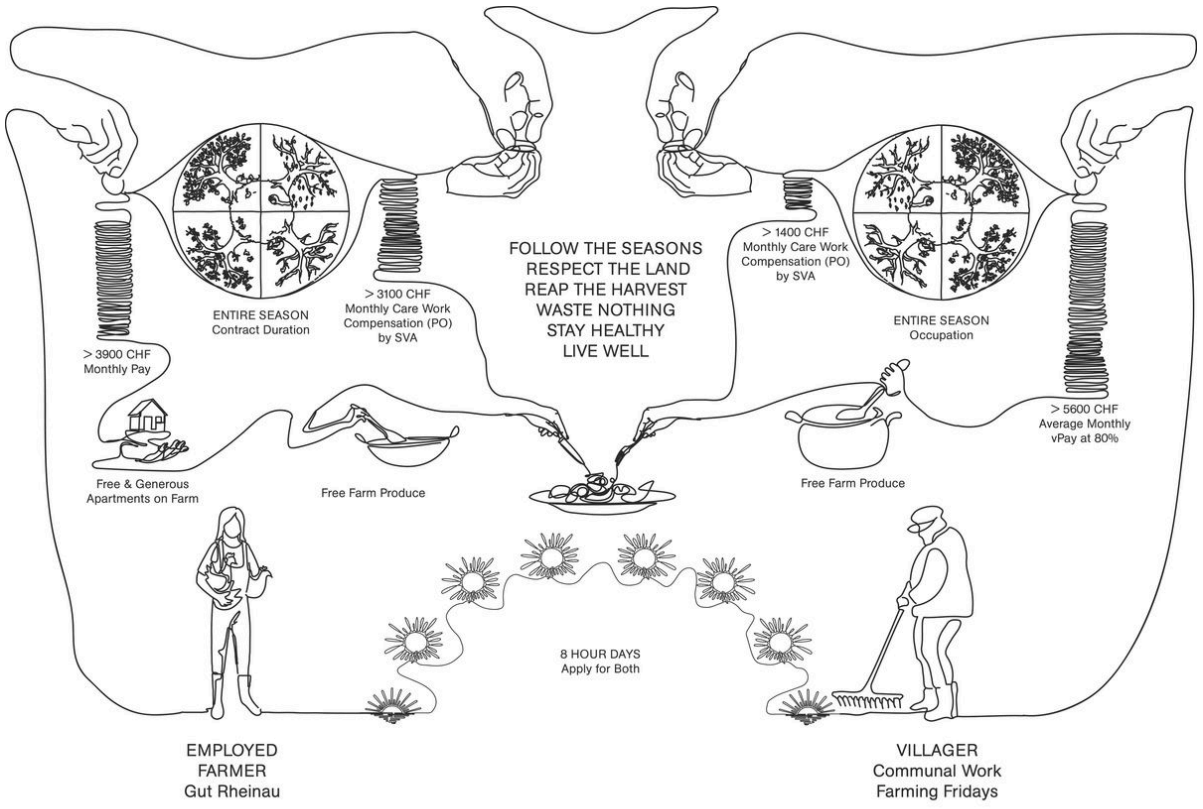


As sundown approaches, the village residents once again gather around Marion for a stretch session. Each family goes home with a bag of farm produce to be used for the week, as a token of thanks for their help on the 'Farming Friday'.



The day ends in a gathering for dinner at a space on the farm, where all village residents mingle together and enjoy a relaxing evening having a barbeque and socialising, meeting the cows and stargazing. They reflect on their Farming Friday as a day of Care for the Landscape, Body, and Mind.

These scenes are examples of how communal interactions can influence a beneficial change in social dynamics at both a village scale and an individual scale. Instead of just residing in Rheinau, a citizen learns, contributes, and socialises in Rheinau through various lifestyle activities around education, work, and care. As a village, the farm with cantonal ownership becomes integrated with everyday life, gaining importance as a common space instead of just being a capitalist commodity.



Enabling Valuable Care Work

The notion of Care is not to be overlooked. In a societal time of production, efficiency, and commodity, one must stop to reflect on their wellbeing. This concept of Farming Fridays is a first step into rethinking and reproducing what it means to live as a caring village citizen, whilst also providing roots of appreciation and resilience for companies of care like Gut Rheinau. With the Swiss Social Insurance (SVA) nowadays paying for days of military or civil service for the “Greater Good” of the country, this initiative of monetary compensation ought to also be tied to such practices of care—because caring for the landscape, living beings, and a healthy local community contributes to the “Greater Good” for the people and climate.



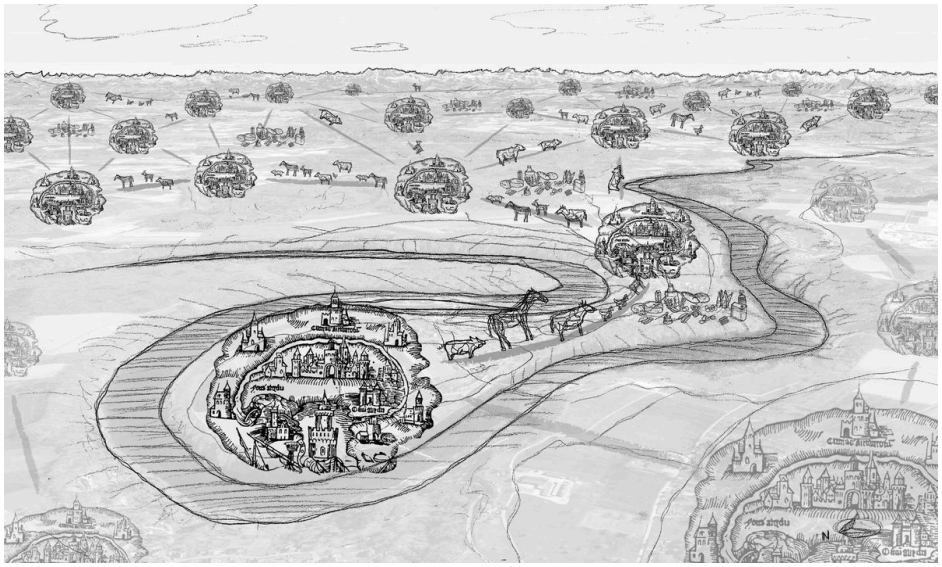
Gut für Rheinau

In the end, the projection of an optimistic and empowering relationship between Rheinau residents and Rheinau landscape is aimed at the restructuring of everyday life. Providing a commons of care, one that invests in the local production, strengthens roots in dependencies between village residents and village industries. This bond starts to decentralise the authority of cantonal ownership and becomes the grounds for developing a direct governance from those who actually use the land.



Rheinau, a Utopia? Source: Thomas More's *Utopia*. [https://www.epfl.ch/labs/lapis/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LAPIS_VETU19_UTOPIA_ENG.pdf]

Rheinau's situation of already semi-public cantonal land, along with its heterotopic tradition, provides good grounds for such socio-economic experiment. This imagined Utopic Ideal of Rheinau brings a question, now, of how a decentralised model of commons could become a reproducible system for other villages in Switzerland and beyond.



Connected Networks of Commons beyond the Utopian Island

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With great pleasure we would like to thank Marion Reutemann, Jan Sigrist, and Tim Dorer for taking their time to give us the younger generation's perspective and experience of Rheinau. For the proactive support with relevant research and mapping material we would like to specifically thank Tiffany Steiger from the Gemeinde Rheinau. Further a big thank you to David Jacobsen for guiding us through Gut Rheinau and giving us an initial overview of the farm. Last but not least we would like to thank very much Julia Huber, Karin Soltermann, Katharina Schmid, Hubert, Luca, and Yannick for being such amazing and engaged coworkers during the joined farming sessions and their valuable insights into the everyday agricultural practice.

SOURCES

- Basic Country Skills; Martha Storey, John Storey; 1999.
- Critique de la vie quotidienne; Henri Lefebvre; 1947.
- Der Gärtnerhof: Ein Siedlungsziel für tüchtige Landleute und Gärtner; Max Karl Schwarz; 1947.
- Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriss; Rudolf Steiner; 1910.
- Die Schweiz, ein städtebauliches Portrait; Roger Diener, Jacques Herzog, Marcel Meili, Pierre de Meuron, Christian Schmid; 2005.
- Ein Weg zum praktischen Siedeln; Max Karl Schwarz; 1933.
- Gebaute Lebensräume; Dieter Wieland; 1982.
- Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action; Elinor Ostrom; 1990.
- Handbuch der Landwirtschaft; J. A. Schlipf; 1898.
- Philosophie der Freiheit; Rudolf Steiner; 1894.
- Ratgeber für den praktischen Landwirt; Hans Haase; 1960.
- Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons; Silvia Federici; 2015.
- Rheinauer Buch II; Stefan V. Keller; 2014.
- Rheinauer Buch 2000; Stefan V. Keller; 2000.
- Rheinauer Druckgrafiken des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts; Stefan V. Keller; 2011.
- The Complete Guide to Self-Sufficiency; John Seymour; 1976.
- The Self-Sufficient Gardener; John Seymour; 1978.

This work by Lazar Riva and Lelan Yung was created as part of the design studio Village Life at ETH Zurich in Spring 2022. The PDF is intended for educational purposes only. Its commercial distribution is strictly forbidden.

© 2025, Architecture of Territory

Architecture of Territory
Professor Milica Topalović

TEACHING TEAM
Muriz Djurdjevic
Dorothee Hahn
Milica Topalović
Jan Westerheide

Prof. Milica Topalović
ETH Zurich
ONA G41
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
8093 Zurich
Switzerland
+41 (0)44 633 86 88
www.topalovic.arch.ethz.ch