LUZERN (CH)

ZÄME

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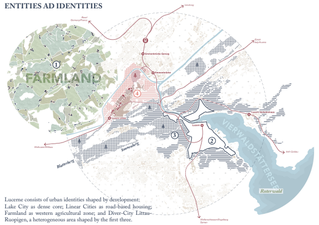
ENTITIES AD IDENTITIES



Lucerne consists of urban identities shaped by development: Lake City as dense core; Linear Cities as road-based housing; Farmland as western agricultural zone; and Diver-City Littau-Reussigen, a heterogeneous area shaped by the first three.

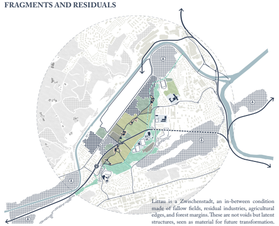
1. FARMLANDS
An agricultural mosaic in the west, where scattered farms cultivate both land and memory, anchoring the city to rural identity.

2. LAKE CITY
A compact, vibrant European core where living and working intertwine, shaped by density, tradition, and a strong urban rhythm.

3. LINEAR CITIES
Developments stretched along roads, composed of residential blocks and private gardens, where life flows between infrastructure and secluded green spaces.

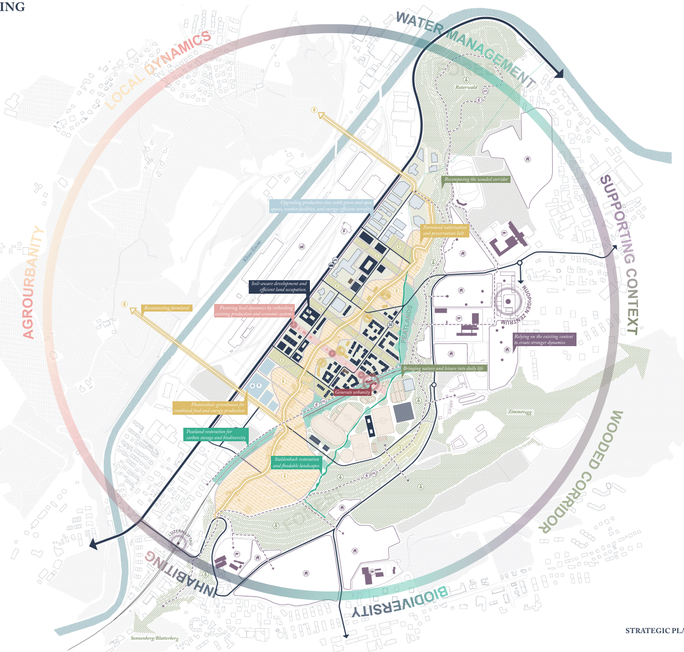
4. DIVER-CITY
A fragmented urban fringe born from layered developments, where coexistence of contrasting lifestyles shapes a complex and diverse social landscape.

FRAGMENTS AND RESIDUALS



Littau is a Zwischenstadt, an in-between condition made of fallow fields, residual industries, agricultural edges, and forest margins. These are not voids but latent structures, seen as material for future transformation.

RECOMPOSING


WATER MANAGEMENT
LOCAL DYNAMICS
SUPPORTING CONTEXT
WOODED CORRIDOR
BIODIVERSITY
INHABITING
AGROURBANITY
Reussweg als wasserlandschaft
Upcycling industrial sites into green spaces
Farmland extension
Soft mobility network
Soft mobility network
Soft mobility network

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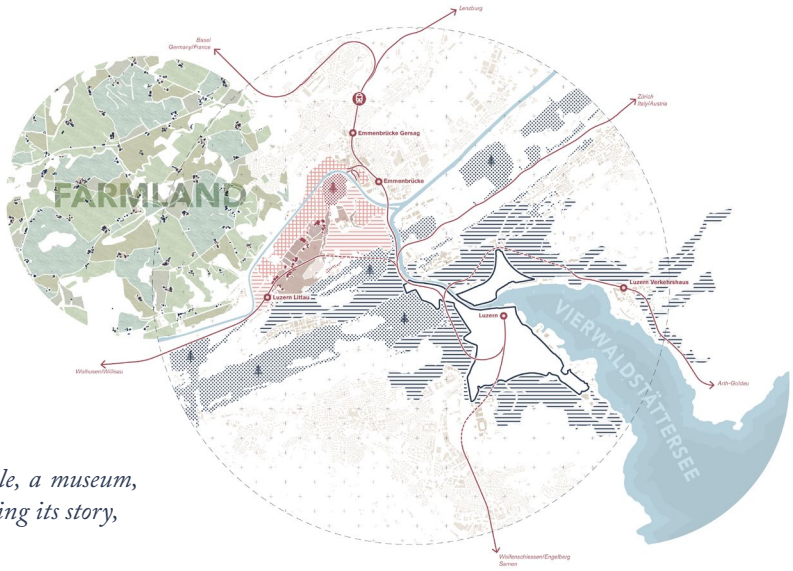
ZÄME



There's a city in Switzerland that's actually two.
One is proudly on postcards, with bridges, spires, a castle, a museum, and trains that run on time. The other hasn't finished telling its story, and its future will be built by its people, ***together.***

ENTITIES, IDENTITIES, FRAGMENTS AND RESIDUALS

In the monumental study "*Switzerland – An Urban Portrait* ", the ETH Studio Basel redefines the country not as a patchwork of cities and mountains, but as a woven continuum of urban life—an archipelago of territories shaped by mobility, infrastructure, and everyday practices. Within this framework, Littau emerges not as a periphery of Lucerne but as a porous edge, a hinge between urban density and rural persistence, between the logic of the city and the rhythms of the landscape.

From this point of view we can actually say that Luzern is made up of different identities given by the process of urban development in the time. Four entities emerge in the urban structure, strictly tied to different kinds of living in the territory: The ***"Lake City"*** represents the dense, classical European city, where people live and work synergistically; the ***"Linear Cities"*** are all those developments whose structure is based on road infrastructure and consists mainly of multi-family residences surrounded by private green spaces; ***"Farmland"*** is all the west agricultural land of the city, a constellation of farms in a patchwork of green shades; the porous edge of Littau-Ruopigen tha we called the ***"Diver-City"***.
The development of the first three has generated this part of the city characterised by a high level of diversity, in structural terms and ways of living and working that often do not communicate with each other, consisting of fragments and residuals.

As the authors affirm in "*Switzerland – An Urban Portrait* ", Littau is neither a village nor a city, but a *"Zwischenstadt"* an in-between condition, typical of many Swiss territories. It holds no grand monuments, but it is rich in latent structures: fallow fields, residual industries, agricultural edges, forest margins. These fragments, often overlooked, are precisely what An Urban Portrait invites us to read as raw material for the next phase of urban thinking, not as voids, but as vessels of potential transformation.
The Swiss urban landscape is not a dichotomy of natural versus built, it is systemic, layered, and alive. Littau embodies this condition: shaped by migration flows, commuter infrastructure, and shifting land uses, it carries within it the traces of past economies and the possibilities of new ecologies. It is not fixed; it is formative.
We are to engage in territorial strategies rather than urban design alone; Littau becomes an ideal site for experimentation as well. It is here that a new urbanism can begin with a careful listening to existing gradients: of land, of use, of community.
Littau's adjacency to Lucerne positions it within a metropolitan field, yet it retains the texture of a local territory. This duality makes it suitable for a regenerative model of urbanization, one that reconciles density with openness, production with habitation, and ecological risk with spatial generosity.
A shift from designing cities to designing processes, logics, and frameworks. Littau offers just that: a site where agriculture can coexist with housing, where mobility nodes can be reframed as connectors of communities, where public space can grow not from imposition but from cultivation, socially, ecologically, structurally.

This is where ZÄME begins, on the margin, as a system grown from existing structures. Littau becomes the seedbed for a fertile urbanism, one that acknowledges the layered reality of Swiss territory and dares to articulate a new narrative of coexistence.
We no longer see Littau as a suburb to be densified, but as a threshold to be reimagined. It invites a kind of urbanism that is not only spatial, but temporal and relational. A place where care replaces control, and where the urban future is not constructed from scratch, but cultivated from within.
This is the story ZÄME seeks to tell: a story of re-sourcing, drawing from what is already there, and weaving it into a city that is more resilient, inclusive, and alive.

THE VISION

ZÄME is a prototype for a fertile city, productive, inclusive and adaptive.
It proposes an urban model where ecological systems, food production, inhabitation and manufacturing operate together. In a context shaped by fragmented development and climate urgency, the project repositions urbanization as a living process grounded in context, participation, and regeneration.

In this sense, the project aims to develop a new paradigm of living and urban development in Switzerland that integrates greater density and innovative use of open and built space with the porosity, relational spaces, and living comforts to which local communities have historically been accustomed. The goals are to make a purposeful contribution to the debate on densification in the Swiss context, overcoming the apparent dichotomy between building intensification and quality of life, and offer a concrete opportunity to develop the area.
Starting from a general strategy of territorial recomposition, the project vision aspires to redefine the agriculture-nature-human relationship within a new urban condition, based on a relational balance between the parts. The human being is no longer conceived as a shaping subject, but rather as an equal player within a synergistic relationship where each part benefits from one another.
In parallel, the project fosters quality of life and workplace through a combined approach of restorative environments theories and the 15-minute city.

HOW?

But how to achive it?

Five interconnected thematic frames allow us to always keep in mind the purposes and shape the strategies and actions:

Proximity farming: eat your city!

The project aims to reconnect people with agricolture. To do so the project integrate farming and agricolture in the daily life contexte of people, bringing the practice to each of the inhabitants and workers, by making it accessible from homes or workplaces, both as a recreational space and as a space to take care of.

Let nature take its space

To face climate change there is only one way, embraces nature and make space for it. The city is conceived to be resilient to risk linked to climate change crisis. Trees to lower temperature and flooding areas for extreme events. At the same time, nature imposes itself in the daily lives of inhabitants and workers, conferring quality and psycho-physical well-being.

Take your time, everywhere!

Open space for outdoor living, whether public, private or mixed, there will always be a corner, a plaza, a meadow or orchard, a park, a woodland path or a sport to take your break, whether from work or your

everyday life. Interior spaces for everyday life, whether at work or at home there will always be room for customisation according to one's needs. and last but not least, commercial activities, ateliers and services make complete these open or indoor spaces.

Eco-social combinatio of uses

"Unity and diversity" form the guiding principle for integrating productive, residential, and public spaces. The combination of these three functions, distinct yet deeply compatible, gives to the new neighborhood an identity rooted in the harmony of differences. Traditionally, productive spaces have been seen as separate from, or even incompatible with, residential and public spaces. This project overturns that separation by proposing an hybridisation capable of generating new social and spatial dynamics that are psychologically positive for those who live in and move through these spaces. The coexistence of work, daily life, and collective relationships creates a more complete, inclusive, and resilient urban condition.

Do it together!

The project introduces a governance model based on a strong alliance between public institutions and cooperative organizations, with a limited involvement of private investors. This balance ensures that the development, management, and future transformation of the neighborhood remain in the hands of collective and public interests. The cooperative and public partnership guarantees accessibility, long-term affordability, and democratic participation in decision-making processes, avoiding speculative dynamics and fostering a shared responsibility over the neighborhood's evolution.

These five frames provide clear guiding principles and at the same time present themselves as a flexible framework within which different actions and strategies are possible and commonly shared.

A TERRITORIAL STRATEGY: RECOMPOSING

The general "Recomposing" strategy sets out to start from the fragments and residuals and "recompose" them according to 6 major intentions whithin the vision framework, each of which draws different types of action on the territory and defines the structure within which the masterplan takes shape.

Agrourbanity

Valorising existing farms by transforming the Bodenhof/Schachenhof road into a symbolic and functional spine connecting revitalized farms through a clear and recognisable identity. New urban farms will host agricultural services such as education, cooperative headquarters, animals, tour visits...
A preserved agricultural belt extending along the neighbourhood, with perpendicular strips infiltrating the urban fabric for shared gardens.
The new Schachenhof axis extends northwest across Thorenbergstrasse and the Kleine Emme, reconnecting with Luzern's broader agricultural territories.

Inhabiting

Inhabiting aims not only to design the built development but also to define relationships among agriculture, buildings, and nature. It envisions a rich mix of uses and shapes the spaces of interactions that will host these new relationships, fostering vibrant, integrated environments where diverse activities coexist seamlessly.

Biodiversity and water management

Restoring peatlands, historically present in the area with their ecological and carbon-sequestration benefits, while creating floodable areas to manage water and enhance resilience. This strategy, besides creating a buffer zone from the railway and avoiding unnecessary fencing, weaves natural habitats into the urban landscape, supporting rich biodiversity, improving microclimates, and strengthening the neighbourhood's environmental performance and identity.

Wooded corridor

Connecting Roterwald to Zimmeregg and Sonnenberg forests through a new wooded corridor, as a nature generator and structural element, to diffuse and enhance biodiversity, natural presence in the new neighbourhood and leisure/sport places as well.

Local dynamics

Generating vibrant, self-sustaining interactions among residents, workers, agriculture, gardens, and local products to foster a lively local economy. These dynamics will embody the identity and brand of this new neighborhood, highlighting creativity, production, and a strong sense of place.

Supporting context

Reinforcing connections with existing facilities (schools, community centers, residential areas, sports grounds ...) anchoring the project within its broader urban environment, strengthening continuity, accessibility, and shared identity.

MASTERPLAN

The masterplan starts from the heritage farmland belt as a spark of urbanity, generating the urban spaces, the building footprints, the shared cultivated areas, the new productivity hubs, the sports park, and the station, all orbiting around the central "axis". The Agricultural belt is all the area designated with the cooperative as the preservation zone, and the agricultural landscape is preserved as a heritage for future generations. A memory of a period when city and countryside had no clear borders, the belt is a future-oriented reality, the century-old existing farms will slowly reconvert into educational farms, agricultural research hubs, and administrative centers for the shared agricultural fields. The existing road connecting the farms will become a promenade for leisure walks in the agricultural landscape.

The lively neighborhoods evolve around the new farmer market axis and are the heart of life in the area. Mixed-use buildings generate urbanity and create a sense of identity, with their low carbon footprint and recycled materials they contribute to the resourcing process. They host a diversity of programs thanks to their flexible design, which allows the ground floor to be adapted to diverse activities and the top floors with their compact floor plate can be used for both commercial and residential programs. By walking in the neighbourhood one could find a series of creative workshops, research laboratories, shops, and art galleries, go for some groceries at the market, and have lunch at the food hall, after going for a walk in the farmlands landscape and admiring the community life around the agricultural boulevards.

Shared cultivated areas will be the stage for the daily life of the community, a system of different scales and use of fields will allow the neighbourhood to produce food for itself and to export it outside. Guided by the stewardship of the new agro-cooperative the residents will grow and take care of the shared orchards and allotment gardens, and share the harvest. Common grounds, private gardens, and green roofs could also be used as a productive landscape to maximise food production. While the crop fields will be a prerogative of the heritage landscape, as they are a scaled-down version of the most intensive agricultural activities that usually take place in the countryside and so require an expert workforce and specific machinery. At their opposite the greenhouses represent the smallest scale of food production or leisure gardening, where small allotment plots can be shared at times within neighbours of the same building, with the community, or with the public such as visitors from all around, and they become leisure space as well during winter times.

The Productivity Hub is where industrial, manufacturing, creative, services and linked common spaces sites are more concentrated and reimagined in a new kind of way of existing and coexisting. Existing structures are preserved and adapted, embracing their material memory while opening up to new uses. These hubs host small-scale industries, maker spaces, training centres, and collective workshops, forming a new productive fabric that resonates with the restorative city concept. Outdoor courtyards and winter gardens provide space for informal encounters between workers, while green corridors connect the hubs to surrounding cultivated areas and the public. Always porous, always open to the landscape, these are places where work is no longer isolated, but embedded in the rhythms of community and nature.

The Sports Park develops from a pre-existing structure where the sports fields were just adjacent to the landscape, squeezed in between the allotment gardens and the stream. The new sports park seeks to embrace nature; it is generated from the stream that molds the mountain stones, and brings them to the valley as pebbles. Those pebbles become the structure of the sports park, ditching the grids, the sports fields are arranged organically, each pebble hosts a sports field, a patch of woodland, or becomes a water retention basin that can host sports. The existing buildings are incorporated and transformed to welcome indoor activities and sports, while around the station, the central axis links the urban grid to the park.

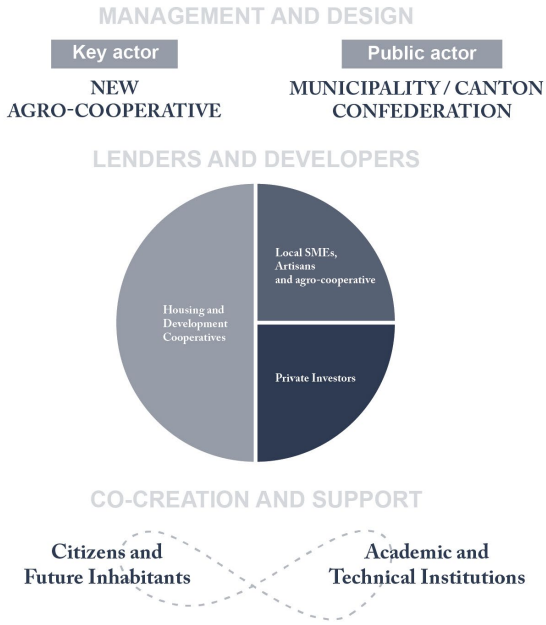
The Station, an hub for slow mobility and urbanity generator, linked to the heritage symbol of the connection, becomes a new bridge for Littau, formally and contextually, by linking the Sports Park with the main market axis. Its light conformation allows for small offices and retail spaces while maintaining the fundamental element of the historic bridge structure: the roof, which is reinterpreted in a brand new XLAM truss that can span over the train banks, sheltering the commuters while allowing light to penetrate. The green base, typically populated with the same space flowers, is now inhabited by a variety of seasonal and local species, while the void in between these two elements, like in its original version, allows the gaze to go through, connecting visually and keeping the whole together.

THE PROCESS

This process outlines a transformative approach, turning enclosed farmland into a vibrant, inclusive neighbourhood where agriculture, nature, and urban life interweave. Rather than relying solely on conventional market-led development, the strategy foregrounds agro-cooperative and public actors as key drivers of long-term value creation, social cohesion, and ecological restoration.

1 - Agro-cooperative
2 - From Ownership to Partnership
3 - Seeding Innovation
4 - Rooting the Community
5 - The Living Landscape

Together, these five phases propose as weel a replicable model of cooperative urban development, balancing economic innovation with environmental care and social inclusion.



An hybrid model, where the public sector and the cooperative ecosystem lead development with a long-term vision, while the regulated contribution of private actors supports economic activation, innovation, and functional diversification.