Diploma Thesis Booklet

Lukas Nussbaumer

Slaves of Growth

A Society Based on Growth

Since the start of the industrial revolution, the western social system has been built on constant growth. Growth in population, economic performance, technological capabilities, cultural output – no area of human life has been untouched by this dynamic. In the course of advancing colonialism and globalisation in the 19th and 20th centuries, this system was implemented around the globe and is omnipresent today.

It is not the case that this system of growth only has negative aspects. Today we live with a level of properity that would have been unimaginable just a few decades ago. We live longer, healthier lives and have more leisure time than any generation before us. All these achievements have been made possible thanks to this growth-orientated system.

But it can no longer be ignored that we are at a breaking point. The planetary boundaries have been reached or already exceeded in many areas. The climate crisis as well as the biodiversity crisis are both negative consequences of this system. A change of course is therefore urgently needed.

A side note: It is probably noticeable that the term capitalist system is not explicitly mentioned here. This is because a capitalist system is logically structured as a growth-orientated system, but a growth-orientated system does not necessarily have to be a purely capitalist system. For example, the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe were also very growth-orientated and saw themselves in competition with the capitalist countries of the West.

Modernist Architecture as an Expression of Growth

Modernist architecture is closely linked to the system of growth. The rather reduced and simple forms and the renunciation of individualised ornamentation of modern architecture corresponded exactly to the possibilities provided and also needed by the industrialised and growth oriented economic system of the post-war period.

Again, it must be said that this was not just a bad thing. It was essential that the destroyed cities were rebuilt and that new housing and infrastructure were created for the growing population. This is still an important reason for the quality of life we enjoy today.

But a rethink is urgently needed in architecture and the construction sector as a whole, at least in high-income countries. Does it always have to be higher, faster, better? Does every village need a new, larger gymnasium? Even if initial approaches have been made in recent years, we need to start scrutinising more closely what exactly is needed. The way we have operated over the last 80 years urgently needs to be rethought

The Demographic Bomb

It is not news that society is increasingly ageing and that families have fewer and fewer children on average. This is a trend that can be observed worldwide, and Europe is the region where this trend is most advanced after East Asia and Japan in particular. With a certain time lag, this means that the population is beginning to shrink. In Western Europe and especially in Switzerland, the shrinking of the population is currently still being prevented by an immigration surplus, but in the long term even this will no longer be able to stop the decline.

This population decline is not evenly distributed. While many urban areas in Western Europe can expect steady growth in the coming decades, many rural communities are facing a significant decline in population.

These differences can also be recognised at a local level. The region around the Klausen Pass is a good example of this: regional centres can continue to grow or at least maintain their population figures, while the population in the villages is already shrinking. On the Glarus side, this is shown by the fact that the population in Schwanden, the regional centre, has remained relatively stable over the last 50 years, while it has shrunk drastically in Linthtal and Rüti at the back of the valley. This is also evident on the Uri side: Bürglen near Altdorf grew strongly from 1950 to 2000 and has since stagnated, while the population in Spiringen and Unterschächen has stagnated for over a hundred years and has shown a slight decline for 25 years.

These trends will become increasingly apparent in other places over the next few years. Even cities will probably experience a decline in population sooner or later. We can benefit from the fact that strategies and projects can be tested now in places that are already suffering from population decline.

Vacancy as a Potential

The stagnating or declining population in the valleys has, in addition to all the disadvantages that arise from this, a potential: spaces are available at very favourable prices. In cities, market pressure is very high and there is almost always someone willing to pay more. It's different in these rural areas: the landlords are often happy if they have anyone renting their property at all.

That's where this project comes in: As properties are extremely cheap to buy or rent, spaces can be created in them that are difficult to find in cities. Studio spaces or event rooms can be created that are not designed to generate the largest possible margins in profit. Things can be tried out, and if they fail, it's no big deal.

Locally rooted organisations could be used as sponsors. These villages often already have a dense network of associations and organisations. Some of these would only need to be slightly reorganised to meet these requirements.

New ideas could emerge in such places, which could then allow for organic and sustainable growth. Initially tried out on a small scale, they could bring a new dynamic to the village. This is not about reversing the megatrends of population shrinkage in these regions, but it could at least create a new dynamic.

This project wants to try out this approach in two places that are currently empty but are important for the local community. A process will be designed to show how, with few resources, such a place could be given a new lease of life.

Architecture as a Process, not a Project

The topic of 'growth' has emerged as the central theme of this work. The canton of glarus in particular has a rich history in this respect: as one of the earliest industrialised regions outside the uk, it has experienced several boom phases, followed by periods of stagnation and shrinkage. In the last 50 years, the rear Glarnerland in particular has clearly been shrinking. The schächen valley on the urner side is another area that has experienced steady growth but has shrunk in recent decades. So what next? Due to the ageing of society and declining birth rates in almost all industrialised countries, this issue, which is already a hot topic in the alpine valleys, will soon become a priority in large parts of europe. In Germany, the population is already shrinking, especially in rural areas. Even here in Switzerland, which is one of the few regions in europe that can still expect stable population growth in the coming decades, the population will also start to shrink in the second half of the 21st century at the latest (which is 25 years from now!).

At the moment, this issue still seems a long way off, at least in Switzerland, and the SVP even warns of a '10 million Switzerland', but I believe that we as architects should start thinking now about how we will deal with this situation. Architecture is a discipline that has a long-term time horizon. Once a building is built, it stands for decades, if not centuries.

How does architecture function in a post-growth society? Architecture as it is currently practised around the globe is extremely strongly focussed on growth. Everything should always be newer, bigger and better. Even if this seems desirable at first glance, the question arises as to when enough is enough. When does this approach no longer make sense? I believe that at the latest when fewer and fewer people live in a place and fewer and fewer people use the architecture, this approach no longer works. The Schächental in the canton of Uri and the rear Linthtal in the canton of Glarus are exactly at this point: there are simply fewer and fewer people using the architecture. What kind of architecture makes sense in a place like this?

I have therefore tried a different approach with this work: To understand architecture not as a project, but as a process. You don't just develop a project and then build it, you start with small interventions. And if a dynamic develops from this, the intervention adds value and is used by people, the next intervention can take place on the basis of this. Another big advantage of this approach is that you always get concrete feedback? Is the intervention working as planned, is it being used by people? If so, you can build on it. If not, you have to try something else or abandon it altogether. I believe that this approach is both socially and ecologically more sustainable than the type of architecture practised today.

This work attempts to sketch out the idea of this approach in two places, one in the Schächental in Spiringen and one in the Lithtal in Rüti. What could such first steps look like in order to create a place that is used by the people of the valley and perhaps also from outside, be it for parties, to work or simply to socialise. Whether it would actually work cannot be proven. But you have to start somewhere.





Former Wollen Weaving Mill Rüti

In order to transform the former wollen weaving mill into a communal venue, a sponsor is needed to ensure that the building is maintained and financed.

This project proposes developing existing associations into organisations that can fulfil this function. The organisation do not pursue the idea of making a profit from the buildings. The main goal of the organisation should the promotion of the village community life. They can also ensure the basic utilisation of the structures themselves by holding regular events (e.g. an annual village festival) in them.

There is a village association in Rüti, which was founded after the municipality merged with the neighbouring municipalities to form Glarus Süd. The main purpose of the association is described in the articles of association as follows:

- Culturalevents
- Events of various kinds to promote village life
- Educational and leisure activities (e.g. excursions)
- Periodic publication of Rüti-Infos

The village association is therefore ideally suited to act as the owner and sponsor of the new community centre. It may be necessary to change the legal form in order to optimally fulfil the tasks.

A New, Old Productive Place

The wool weaving mill in Rüti has been one of the most important employers in the region since it was founded in 1850. Together with the spinning mill at the southern end of the village, it was probably the most productive place in Rüti.

Since the closure of the two factories in 2002, there are no longer any such productive places in Rüti. Rüti has become a pure residential village. The new social centre should change this. A new kind of productivity should be made possible, more broadly defined than before. Be it in a creative, artistic or researching way. It should also enable regular events and activities.

Open ground floor with a stage	
	Library with teakitchen
Open work space	
	Toilets
	Studio space
Music space	

Building History

1850 Construction of the cotton weaving mill

1883 Switch to wool processing

1900 Extension building ,Jaquard-Weberei' in the north

1916/17 Extension of the ,Jaquard-Weberei' with the ,Neue Weberei'

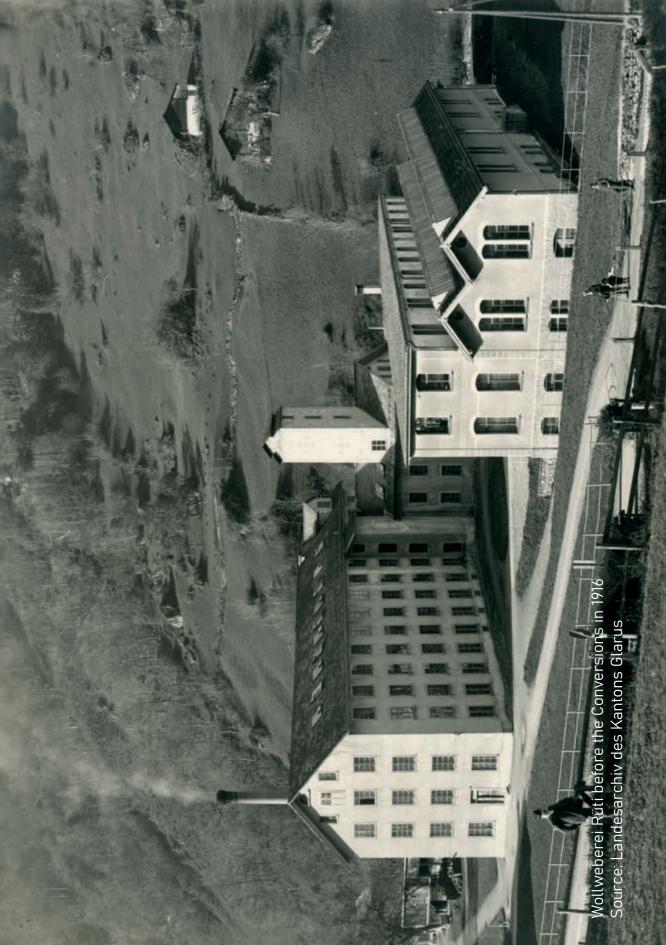
2002 End of production on the site

Since 2002 Interim uses

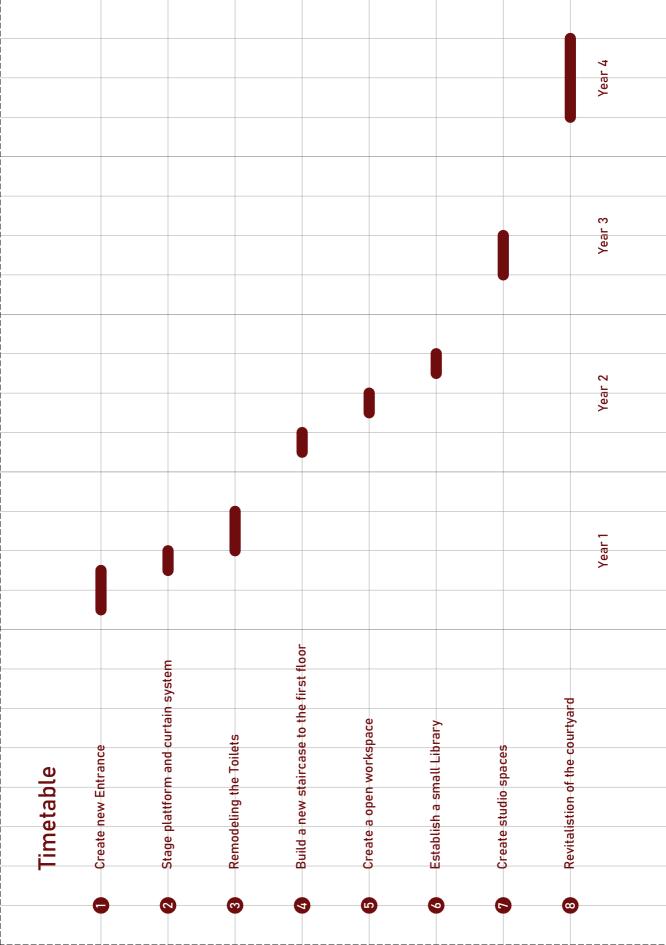
 \Diamond











1 • A New Entrance

Plants as a Means of Enhancing Architecture

The intermediate wing of the former woollen weaving mill is located at the head of the courtyard and connects the hall to the north with the southern wing. In order to keep the necessary intervention as simple as possible, a window on the ground floor will become the entrance door. As the floor slab is 30 centimetres higher than the courtyard, this difference in height must be overcome with two steps and a ramp to ensure barrier-free access. A bench, a canopy and a wall to the right of the entrance with a notice board complete the entrance. This also makes it easier for visitors to find their way around, as these elements clearly mark the new main entrance.

Required Elements

- New entrance door
- · Wooden elements for the entrance
- Notice Board

- · Remove window and break out wall for entrance door
- Carpentry work for the construction of the porch
- Installing a new door
- Attach notice board

2 • Stage Plattform and Curtain system

Open Ground Floor for Events of All Kinds

The open-plan ground floor will be left as a large space. Only at the entrance is a wall made of plywood erected as a windbreak. It will also serve as a wardrobe. A curtain system is installed in the room in order to achieve partitioning. This makes it possible to organise smaller events in the rooms. To keep the installation of this system as simple as possible, it is fixed to the steel beams and to the walls. The power cables also run along the curtain rails, enabling power to be supplied throughout the hall. A simple stage made of laminated plywood is erected in the centre of the room, which is freely usable. At the northern end of the hall there is an area that can be used for storage of the furniture and lockable boxes for associations.

Required Elements

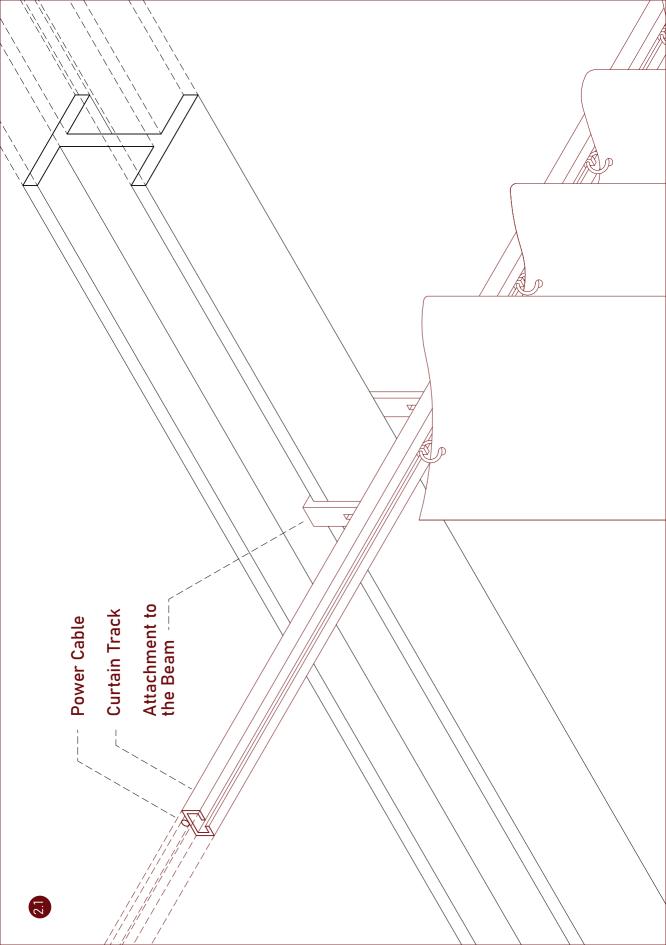
- Plywood wall
- Plywood stage
- · Curtain railwit power cables
- Heavy wollen curtains
- Stackable furniture
- Lockable Boxes

Building Specification

- Install curtain system
- · Build plywood wall and plywood stage
- Hang up curtains
- · Placing occassion furniture and boxes

Picture and Plans

- 2.1 Detail curtain system, 1:10
- 2.2 40 x stackable chair, found on useagain.ch on 10.12.2024, 20.- per chair





3 • Remodeling the Toilets

Remodeling the Toilets on all Floors

The toilets are located at the northern and southern ends of the intermediate wing. These should all be renovated, with only one toilet per room to be installed in the toilets on the south side (in contrast to the two that are there today). This will make these toilets barrier-free. The toilets and washbasins will all be procured from the 'Bauteilbörse' and thus reused. A simple plywood panel will be used as the table and the necessary pipes will be laid visibly. Large mirrors are attached to the wall.

Required Elements

- Re-used toilet from the ,Bauteilbörse' (for 50.- per piece)
- Re-used washbasins from the ,Bauteilbörse' (for 100.- per piece)
- Pipes
- Mirror
- The rooms are also being repainted

Building Specification

- · Remove old toilets and partition walls
- Place plywoodboard as table
- · Install reused toilets and washbasins
- Install mirror

Picture

3.1 Reused toilet and sink unit, found on bauteilbörse.ch at 3.12.2024, for 60.- and 20.-



4 • A New Staircase

A Better Connection Beween the Ground Floor and the First Floor

The existing staircase between the ground floor and the first floor is very narrow and unfavourably positioned in the corners. As this connection will be very important due to the further interventions, a new staircase should be created. Here, too, it is important to minimise the impact on the existing building. As a result, the existing hole in the ceiling should not be widened. Like most of the other elements, the new staircase is made mostly of plywood panels.

Required Elements

- Laminated plywood panels
- Narrow steel supports

- Remove the old staircase
- Build the new staircase on site
- install the new staircase

5 • Open Workspaces

A Place to work for People of the Village and Beyonde

In the southern part of the first floor, open workspaces are to be created that can be used freely. This should offer people who live in Glarus South and work in Zurich, for example, an alternative to commuting. The elements used to divide the zones are the same as on the ground floor. walls made of plywood panels and heavy woollen curtains. Only an additional sound-absorbing wall will be installed to allow louder events, exhibitions or similar to be held in one part, while work can be carried out in peace in the other.

Required Elements

- · Plywood walls
- · Sound-absorbing wooden stud wall
- · Heavy wollen curtains
- Re-used Furniture
- Lockers

- Build wooden stud wall and light plywood walls
- Install curtain system
- install the new staircase
- Placing occassion furniture and boxes

6 • Establish a Library

A Place to work for People of the Village and Beyonde

A small library and a studio flat will be set up on the north side of the second floor. The library will be stocked with literature relevant to the community and the site. It will also be part of the library network , swisscovery', which will allow users to have books sent there for free.

There will also be a small tea kitchen and a bar table where people can meet for a coffee and socialise, for example.

ERKA modular system (or a similar system) is used for both the teakitchen and library shelving. Such shelves can often be bought cheaply at clearance sales. They will also be used to create a bar table.

Required Elements

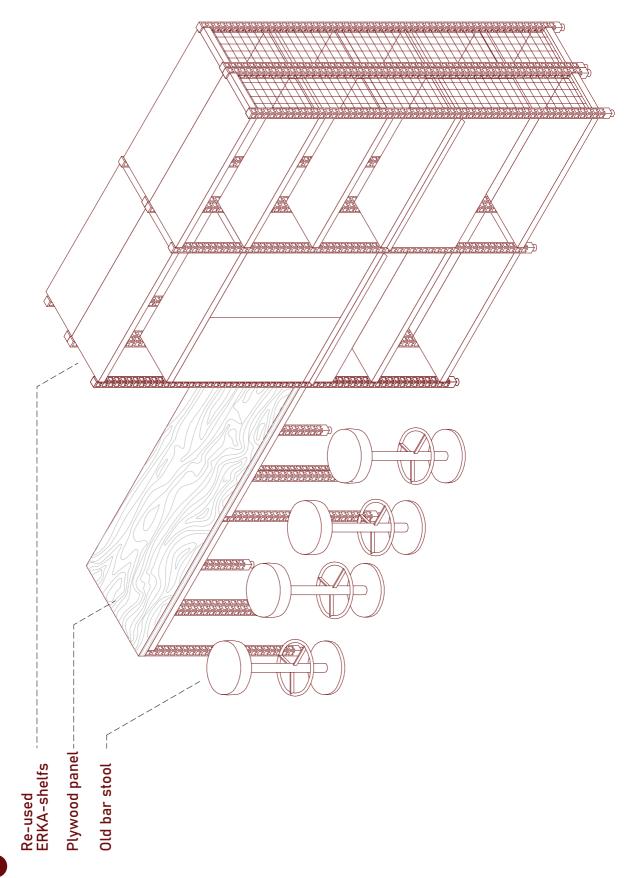
- ERKA shelves (or similar) from a clearance sale
- Sofa
- Fittings and pipes

Building Specification

- · Install new teakitchen in the corner
- Assemble shelves
- Placing occassion furnitur

Plans

- 6.1 Library shelfs with bar table, 1:20
- 6.2 ERKA modulesystem, developed in 1870







7 • Studio Spaces

Create Studio Spaces

Two studios are being built on the top floor, which can be rented at very favourable rates. The aim is to offer young firms a place where they can start teir buisness. It is also possible for artists and musicians to use these spaces.

The big advantage of this location is that if these people are successful with their idea there is enough room to expand.

The same elements are used as on the lower floors: the curtain system with integrated power supply and a wooden partition wall between the studios.

Required Elements

- Plywood walls
- Sound-absorbing wooden stud wall
- · Heavy wollen curtains
- Re-used Furniture
- Lockers

- Build wooden stud wall and light plywood walls
- Install curtain system
- · install the new staircase
- · Placing occassion furniture and boxes

8 • Revitalisation of the Courtyard

Plants as a Means of Enhancing Architecture

Until about 15 years ago, the courtyard had individual free-standing trees, but today it is an empty gravelled area that has a lot of potential for further land-scape architectural development. As a first step towards reorganising the outside space, a row of bushes could be planted along the outside wall. In addition, a tree adapted to the current climate could be planted next to the entrance. Other elements such as a playground, seating etc. would also be conceivable. This could create an outdoor space that invites people to spend time there.

Required Elements

- Climbing plants (Humulus lupulus)
- Bushes and shrubes (Alnus viridis, Cornus sanguinea, Hippocrepis emerus, Ribes alpinum, Ribes petraeum Wulfen etc.)
- Perennials
- Playground and benches

- Loosen the base and add new hummus
- Planting shrubs, perennials and trees
- · Placing new benches and a playground

Former Restaurant St. AntonSpiringen

In order to transform the former restaurant St. Anton into a communal venue, a sponsor is needed to ensure that the building is maintained.

This project proposes developing existing associations into organisations that can fulfil this function. The organisation do not pursue the idea of making a profit from the buildings. The main goal of the organisation should the promotion of the village community life. They can also ensure the basic utilisation of the structures themselves by holding regular events (e.g. an annual village festival) in them.

The ,Kooperationsbürgergemeinde Spiringen' (cooperative civic community of Spiringen) is one of 17 civic communities that form the cooperative community of Uri. This organisation could serve as the sponsor for the St. Anton Community Centre.

The process of a cooperative municipality taking over a property is not entirely new in the canton of Uri. For example, the cooperative municipality of Altdorf took over a restaurant so that it remains open to the public.

Revival of a Former Village Centre

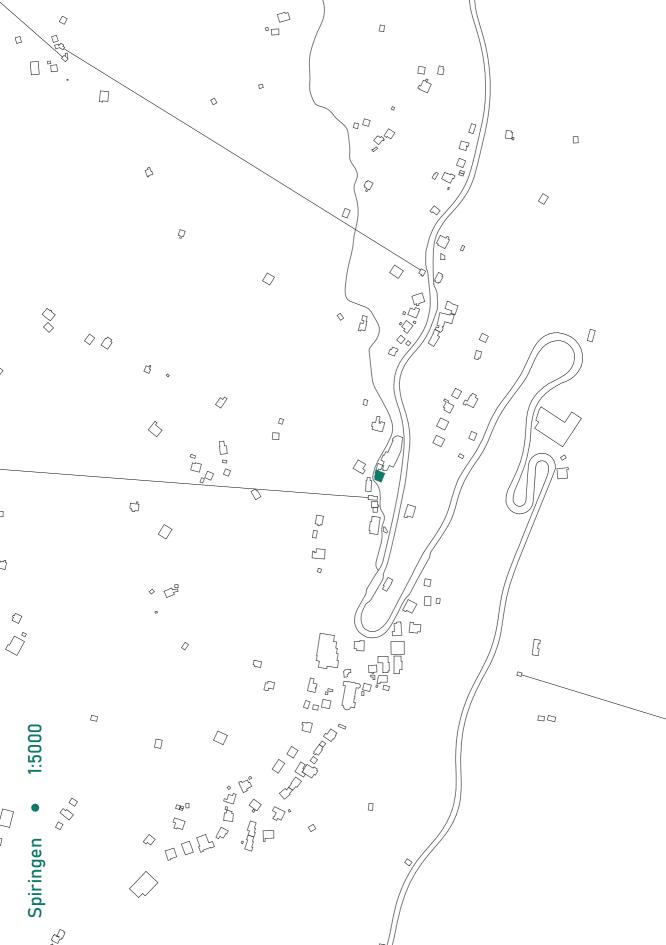
The St. Anton restaurant and guesthouse was an important meeting place in Spiringen for 140 years until its closure in 2015. People met to see neighbours, eat together, catch up on village gossip and much more. Since its closure, Spiringen has lacked such a place.

The spatial programme of the new communal centre, which belongs to the "Kooperationsbürgergemeinde Spiringen' should resume this function in a modified form. It should no longer be a profit-orientated restaurant, but a building that can be used for various occasions and events. It should also serve as a place to work and spend time or as a meeting place for the people of Spiringen and thus fulfil its function as a communal centre.

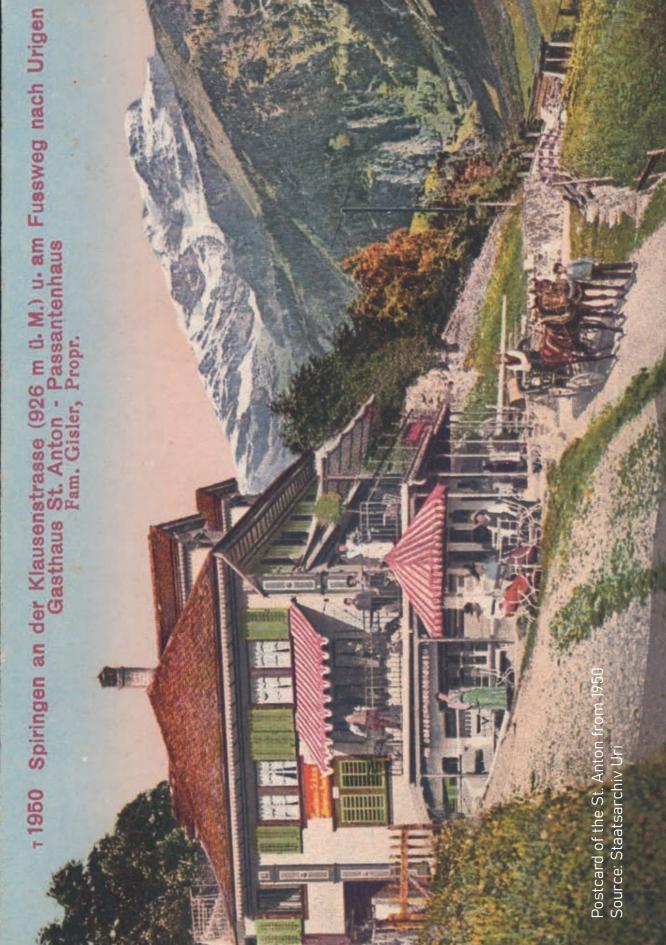
	Toilets
Guest room	Vitaban and storage
	Kitchen and storage
Library	
	Emthy room
Studio appartement	
Bathroom Bedrooms	Atelier

Building History

1874	Construction of the restaruant and bakery St. Anton
1911	Extension of the sun terrace
1930	Reconstruction of the roof
1933	Construction of the first electric cable car in the canton of Uri next to
	the restaurant, culverting of the creek
1958	Extension of the dining room
1963	Relocation of the bakery to the neighbouring building
1970	New construction of the building east of the restaurant with flats and
	parking garage
1977	Replacement of the terrace and renovation and enlargement of the
	retail space
2022	Refurbishment of the residential building and again replacement of
	the terrace

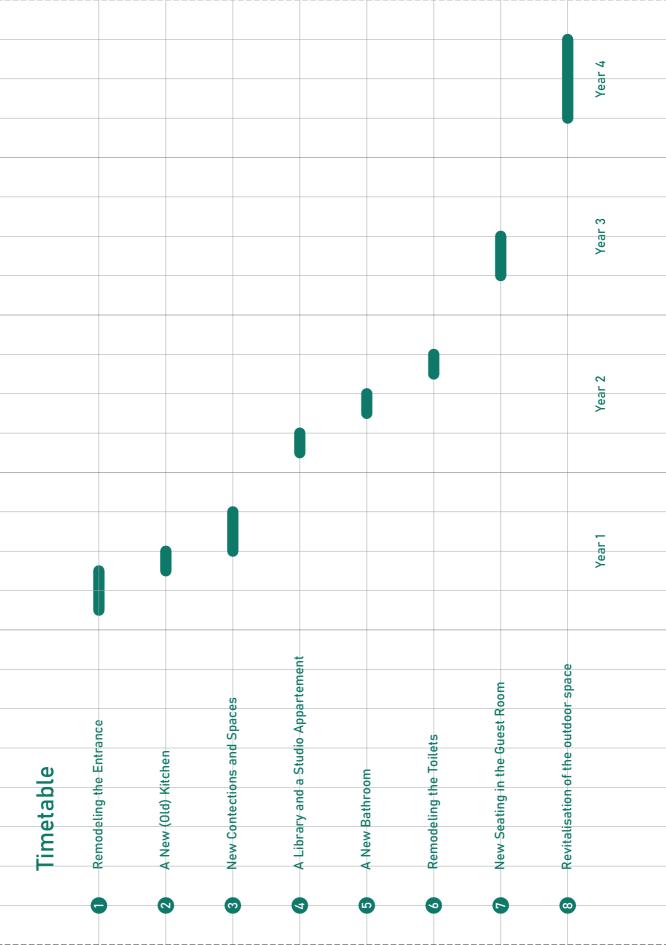












1 • Remodeling the Entrance

A new entrance for all

The redesign of the entrance should enable it to fulfil several functions: The main aim of this intervention is to create a disabled-accessible entrance to the first floor. This should enable the building to fulfil its function as a place that is accessible to all.

At the same time, the entrance area should be a place where people can find out about events taking place at St. Anton in the near future. A notice board will be set up for this purpose. There should also be an opportunity to order and return books free of charge via the swisscovery library network, for which purpose there should be a collection and return box at the entrance.

Required Elements

- Reused entrance door (bought on Ricardo for 300.–)
- · Two stone blocks made of Gotthard granite
- · Wooden stud wall planked with plywood
- Collection and return box
- Notice hoard

Building Specification

- Preparing the entrance for construction (dismantling of necessary elements, etc.)
- Demolition of the wall section where the new door is to be installed
- · Placement of the steps made of Gotthard granite
- · Creation of formwork and subsequent concreting of the entrance ramp
- Placement of the Gotthard granite seat niche and construction of the timber stud wall behind it
- · Install repainted entrance door, pick-up box and notice board

Pictures and Plans

- 1.1 Old Door, found on Ricardo,ch for free
- 1.2 Gotthard granit for the guarry in Wassen UR





2 • A New (Old) Kitchen

When replacement makes sense

The kitchen of the former Restaurant St. Anton is extremely outdated and no longer fit for purpose. In this case, it therefore makes sense to replace it completely. There are many fairly modern catering kitchens available in Switzerland at reasonable prices, so one will be installed in the St. Anton. The room layout will also be minimally adapted.

Required Elements

- Occasion catering kitchen (around 15000.-)
- · Two stone blocks made of Gotthard granite
- Wooden stud wall with water installations
- Splash protections
- Paint

Building Specification

- Removal of the old kitchen and preparing the room for construction
- Demolition of the wall section
- · Creation of timber stud wall with water installations
- Painting the walls
- · Pick up and installation of the kitchen elements
- · Installing the splash protections behind the kitchen elements

Pictures and Plans

- 2.1 Elevation Kitchen facing south, 1:50
- 2.2 Elevation Kitchen facing north, 1:50
- 2.3 Second-hand industrial kitchen, found on Ricardo.ch on 3.12.2024, 4'000.-
- 2.4 Second-hand industrial dishwashing station, found on Ricardo.ch on 3.12.2024, 3'000.-







3 • New Contections and Spaces

Reorganisation of the second floor

The second floor has individual rooms that already have great qualities. These can be emphasised and enhanced with small interventions. By removing individual partition walls, new, more open spaces can be created. The insertion of a new door creates a circular route through which the floor can be opened up in a completely new way.

A movable mirror wall in the empty room allows it to be subdivided, making it usable in different ways. Rods are attached along the walls, which can be used to 'hang' the furniture in order to make the room freely usable. To make this possible, the existing furniture will be retrofitted with hooks. This intervention is inspired by the shaker comunnity in the USA, which built furniture that could be hung up, thus making it easier to maintain the space.

A studio and a focus room will be set up in the other rooms, which can be used free of charge by the community. The central room will be used as a storrage room with lockers so people and associations can keep their stuff on site.

Required Elements

- Movable mirror wall
- Rods
- Parquet for patching the floor where necessary
- · Timber stud walls with windows and built-in furniture
- Curtains

Building Specification

- · Removal of partition walls and preparing the new door opening
- Patching the parquet where necessary
- · Insert the new door
- · Installation of the mirror wall
- Installation of the Timber stud walls with windows and the built-in furniture
- Placing the new furniture

Picture

3.1 Refernce: Shaker community furniture



A Small Library and a Studio Appartement

Reorganisation of the second floor

A small library and a studio flat will be set up on the north side of the second floor. The library will be stocked with literature relevant to the community and the site. It will also be part of the library network , swisscovery', which will allow users to have books sent there for free.

In addition, a new studio apartment is created by carefully placing a new partition wall. This can be rented by people for certain periods of time, for example to focus on a project. They can also use the infrastructure of the entire building, but have their own personal space to retreat to.

Required Elements

- · Parquet for patching the floor where necessary
- Timber stud walls with windows and built-in furniture
- · Furniture for the library and the studio appartement

Building Specification

- · Removal of partition walls
- Patching the parquet where necessary
- Installation of the Timber stud walls with windows and the built-in furniture
- Placing the new furniture

5 • A New Bathroom

Retrofitting the Third Floor with a Bathroom

On the third floor, a new bathroom is installed in the smallest of the four bedrooms. This will turn the top floor into an area that can be used as overnight accommodation for people who have attended an event on site, for example. The intervention is kept as small as possible; for example, the cables are routed visibly in order to minimise the impact on the structure. The other three bedrooms are only refurbished where necessary.

Required Elements

- A re-used toilet from the ,Bauteilbörse' (for 50.-)
- Re-used bathtub and taps rom the ,Bauteilbörse' (for 500.-)
- Pipes
- Curtains
- Built-in shelf as room divider.

Building Specification

- Installing the toilet and bathtub
- Installation of the dividing shelf
- · Hanging the curtains on the new curtain rails
- Refreshing the remaining bedrooms

Picture

5.1 Old Bathtub, found on tutti.ch on 5.12.2024, 300.-



Remodeling the Toilets

Barrier-free Toilets on the First Floor

The toilets on the first floor are accessible via the old entrance door. However, this still has a step, so they are not accessible without barriers. This intervention should rectify this by raising the floor of the bathroom by 30 centimetres. This requires all toilets to be repositioned. A new washbasin will be placed against the wooden stud wall that was built for the new entrance. Instead of the three urinals, only one will be retained and an additional toilet will be installed, which can be used by people with walking disabilities.

Required Elements

- A re-used toilet from the ,Bauteilbörse' (for 50.-)
- · A re-used washbasin the ,Bauteilbörse'
- Pipes
- Curtains
- Built-in shelf as room divider

Building Specification

- · Removal of partition walls
- Installing the toilet and bathtub
- · Installation of the dividing shelf
- · Hanging the curtains on the new curtain rails
- Refreshing the remaining bedrooms

Picture

6.1 Reused toilet and sink unit, found on bauteilbörse.ch at 3.12.2024, for 60 - and 20 -

7 • New Seatings in the Guestroom

Reconfguration of the Guestroom

New seating niches are installed along the façades and next to the tiled stove to give the room a cosier atmosphere and to enclose the currently free-standing folding wall. These are so simply designed that they can also be built by laymen under the guidance of a carpenter. The existing chairs and tables will be refurbished and can continue to be used. In addition, the room, like the kitchen, will be repainted to match the colour of the façade and the new shade of green. This will emphasise the qualities of the existing coffered ceiling and panelled walls.

Required Elements

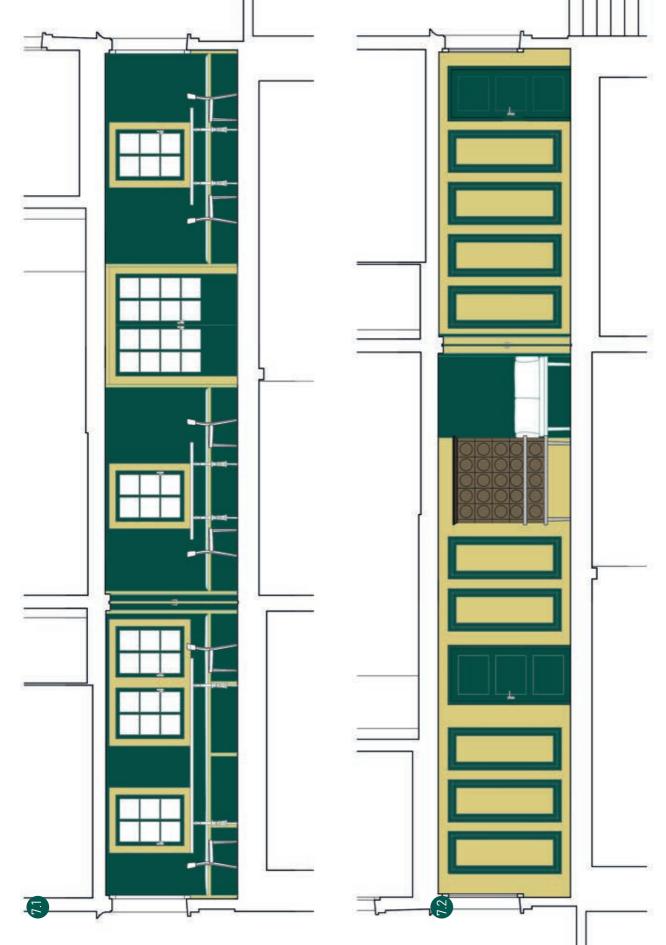
- Materials to build the seating niches
- Paint

Building Specification

- Remove the existing furniture
- Assembling the seating niches
- · Installiation of the seating niches
- Refresh the existing tables and chairs
- · Repaint the room

Plans

- 7.1 Elevation Guestroom facing south, 1:50
- 7.2 Elevation Guestroom facing north, 1:50



8 • Revitalisation of the Entrance

Plants as a Means of Enhancing Architecture

Unfortunately, the terrace, which was renovated in 2022, is not a feast for the eyes. But demolishing such a new structure makes no sense, either ecologically or economically. By installing a climbing aid and planting new climbing plants, a new situation can be created with simple means.

This welcoming situation can be further enhanced by tearing up the tarmac and planting native shrubs around the entrance to the village shop. By placing a bench, visitors are invited to linger.

Required Elements

- Climbing plants (Humulus lupulus)
- Bushes and shrubes (Alnus viridis, Cornus sanguinea, Hippocrepis emerus, Ribes alpinum, Ribes petraeum Wulfen etc.)
- Perennials
- Re-used bench

Building Specification

- · Tear up the tarmac around the entrance
- · Loosen the base underneath and add new hummus
- · Installing a climbing support on the terrace
- · Planting climbing plants, shrubs and perennials
- Placing new bench

Plans

8.1 Axonometry Terrace, 1:33

