



OFFENE RENNBAHN OERLIKON



<u>Introduction</u>	5
Cycling racetracks in CH	6
Site plan	8
Floor plan, EG	10
Floor plan, top view	12
Sections	14
Zoning	16
Construction Detail	18
Section	20
Embedded Energy	22
 <u>Actors</u>	 25
Actor Network Mapping	26
Actor Motivations & Visions	28
Use diagrams, daily / seasonal	30
Open Letter, Swiss Cycling	32
Interview, Alois 'Wisel' Iten (IGOR)	34
Maintenance Work	40
Städtische Denkmalpflege, Entlassung, 2012	42
Kantonale Denkmalpflege, Aufnahme, 2015	44
Interview, Offene Rennbahn	46
 <u>Historical Overview</u>	 49
Timeline 1900-today	50
Building Biographies	52
A Visual Chronology	54
Historic Mapping	72
Urban Palimpsest	76
 <u>Brief</u>	 80
Listing the Offene Rennbahn	81
Re-zoning the Offene Rennbahn	82
Densifying the Offene Rennbahn	83
 <u>Appendix</u>	 84



Introduction

The Offene Rennbahn is an open racetrack for cycling, built in 1912 by private actors in Oerlikon. Since 1951, the racetrack, and the land it stands upon, is owned by the city, who does not feel that it lies in its responsibility to financially support race activities in any way. Races are currently organized by a semi-professional initiative of volunteers, consisting of cycling enthusiasts and former professionals, called IGOR (*Interessengemeinschaft Offene Rennbahn*). Race activities and the existence of the structure are secured until 2030. After this date, the city of Zürich has left open what will happen, but has designated the entire plot as a zone for potential development, in a W6 housing zone. Already before 2012, the 100 year anniversary of the racetrack, IGOR was told by city officials that the anniversary year would be the last. And many times before that, the racetrack only narrowly avoided destruction thanks to the initiatives of dedicated cycling enthusiasts.

Can we move beyond precarity and secure a long-term future for the Offene Rennbahn?

The Offene Rennbahn is under enormous economic pressure. Race activities have been attracting low numbers of spectators for many years now. In its heydays, the racetrack hosted more than 10'000 spectators per race. Nowadays, on the 22 Tuesdays that races may take place per year, around 700 people show up. The atmosphere at these events is collegial, nostalgic, strange but comforting. It is a weekly ritual for a close-knit community that comes out every week in support of the athletes and of the sport. It is the last remaining open racetrack in Switzerland, and one of the last in Europe. But on the 343 other days of the year, and especially during the Winter, the Offene Rennbahn is a desolate and lonely, closed-off space. The public may not enter. High chain-link fences surround the entire area. Many alternative uses have been tested throughout the centuries, to financially support the structure and its race activities. None of these alternative functions have remained until today.

Can we open up the Offene Rennbahn as a public space for Oerlikon?

The Offene Rennbahn is an anachronism. And yet it has its own place in the present. For more than one hundred years, athletes have raced around in circles, at higher and higher speeds, while spectators have screamed and shouted in support and joy and frustration. World championships were held here seven times, more than any other racetrack that still stands today. In some international circles, Oerlikon was better known than Zürich! But very little speaks

of the spectacle and glory that the Offene Rennbahn hosted in the past. Only the comically oversized tribunes, on which the spectators appear like small clusters of ants may serve as a reminder that this space held a bigger meaning to a larger number of people in the past than it does today. And yet, this history is reenacted every Tuesday. Young athletes are riding on the same track that cycling legends like Hugo Koblet and Ferdy Kübler once claimed as theirs, and they certainly dream of reaching the very same heights.

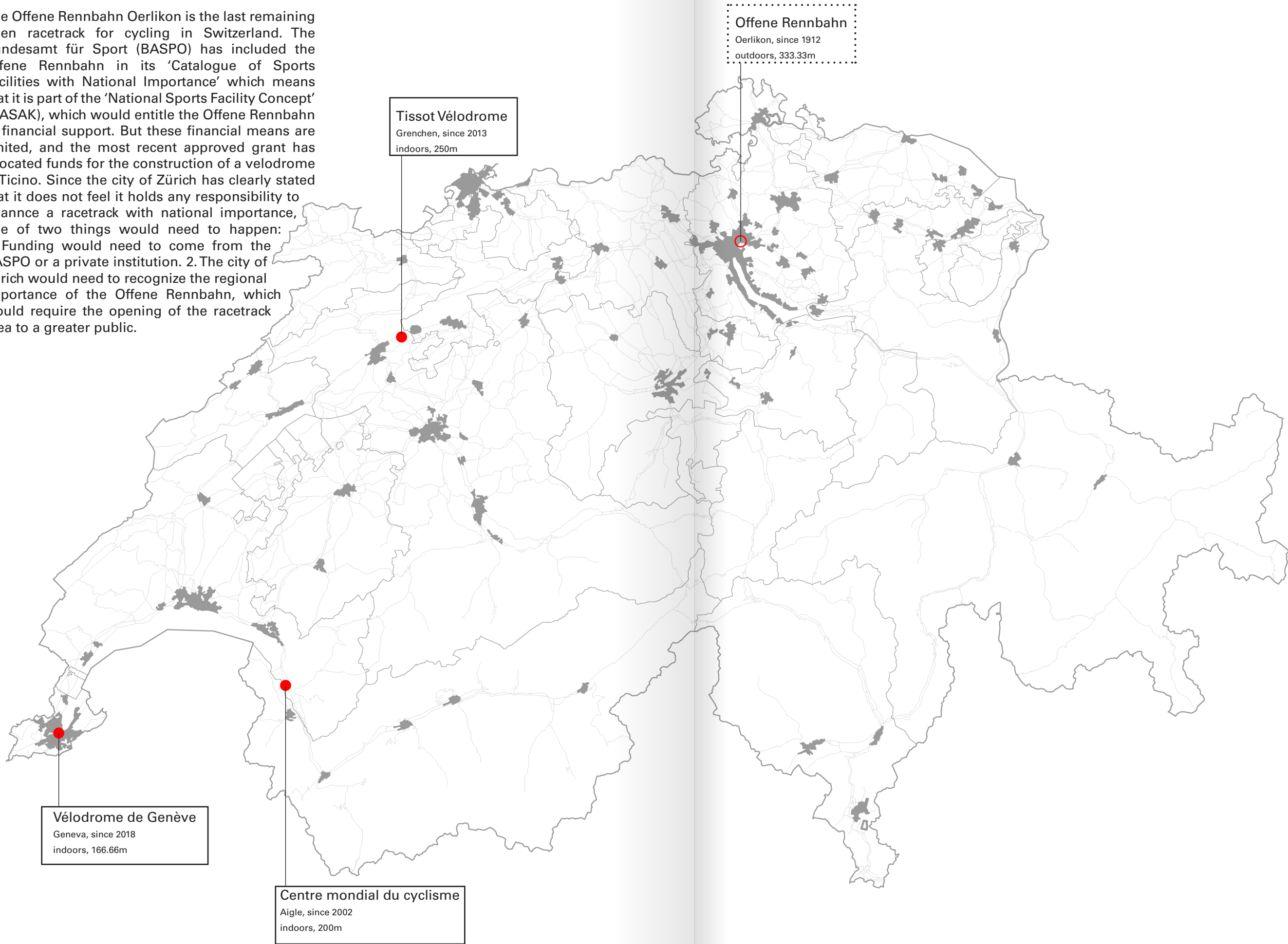
Can we find a way preserve the Offene Rennbahn and its history without being paralyzed by nostalgia?

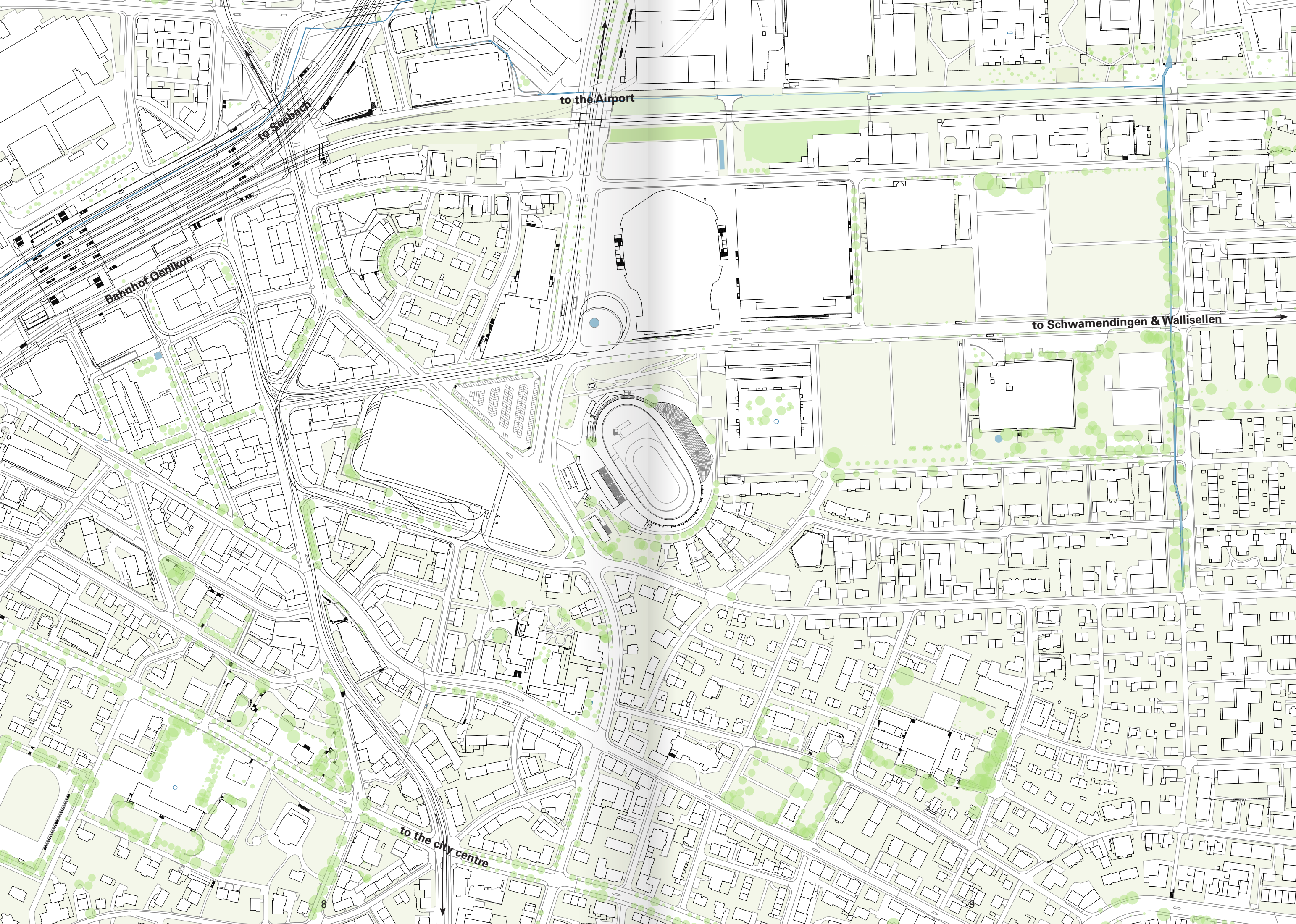
It is the goal of this diploma project to envision a way forward in which the continued existence of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon is ensured. There are many reasons why we should protect this building from destruction; because it is a building with a long history that has touched the lives of countless athletes, spectators and politicians; because it was a vital actor in the development of Oerlikon after 1912; because it would take a cyclist roughly four hundred years of continuous cycling at 50 km/h to produce as much kWh oil-eq as was used to build the racetrack; because the Offene Rennbahn is collaborative urban project that has been ongoing for more than one hundred years; because 700 people come out every Tuesday in the Summer season to watch the races under an open sky; because it is the last open racetrack in Switzerland; because young athletes depend on the Offene Rennbahn for the chance to train for international competitions; ... And yet, the Offene Rennbahn is under continuous threat of destruction. A legitimisation for its existence that would outweigh the benefits which its destruction to build city-owned housing will need to be found. The research phase is dedicated to historical, architectural and sociological investigations with the intention of getting to know the actors, both living and long dead, that have and will continue to influence and be influenced by the Offene Rennbahn.

Cycling Racetracks in Switzerland

The Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon is the last remaining open racetrack for cycling in Switzerland. The Bundesamt für Sport (BASPO) has included the Offene Rennbahn in its 'Catalogue of Sports Facilities with National Importance' which means that it is part of the 'National Sports Facility Concept' (NASAK), which would entitle the Offene Rennbahn to financial support. But these financial means are limited, and the most recent approved grant has allocated funds for the construction of a velodrome in Ticino. Since the city of Zürich has clearly stated that it does not feel it holds any responsibility to finance a racetrack with national importance, one of two things would need to happen:

1. Funding would need to come from the BASPO or a private institution. 2. The city of Zürich would need to recognize the regional importance of the Offene Rennbahn, which would require the opening of the racetrack area to a greater public.





to the Airport

Bahnhof Oerlikon

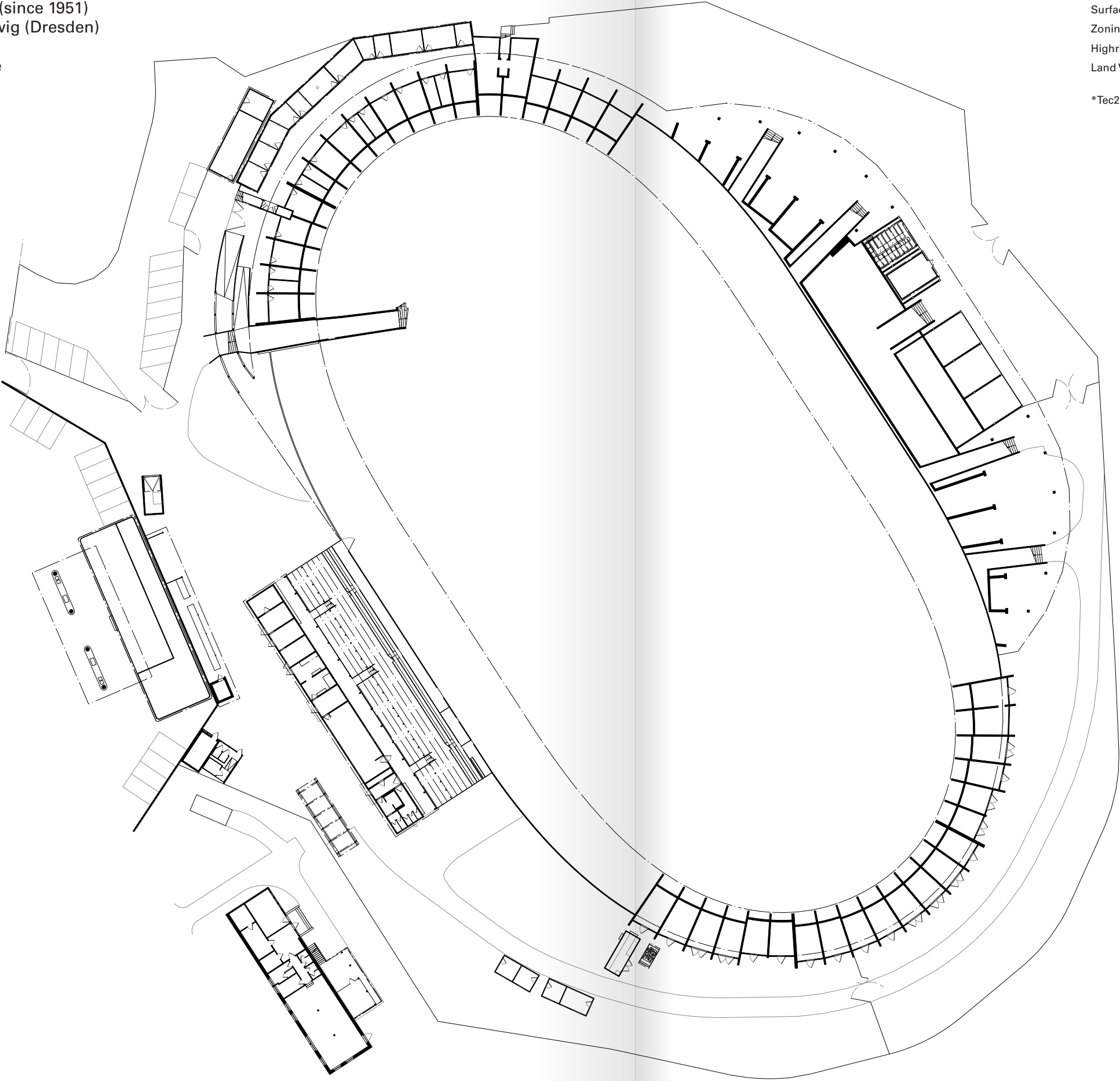
to Schwamendingen & Wallisellen

to the city centre

Name Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon
Location Dörflistrasse 90, 8050 Zürich
Owner Stadt Zürich (since 1951)
Design Richard Ludwig (Dresden)
Engineering Jaro Polivka
Realisation Sander & Cie
Opening 1912

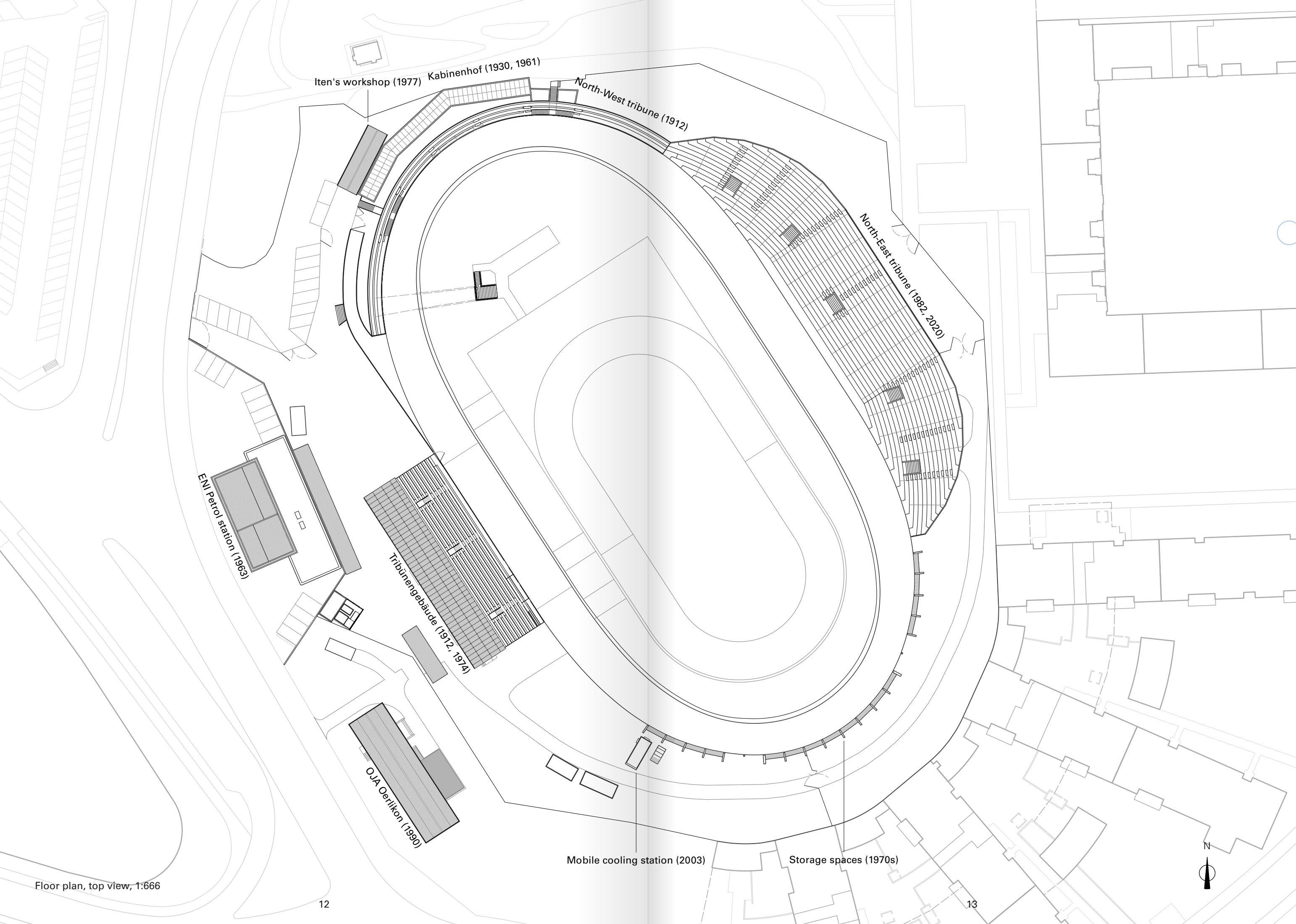
Denkmalschutz Kantonales Inventar (since 2012)
Kommunales Inventar (1986-1990)
Surface area 19'860 m²
Zoning W6 (six-storey housing, 100%)
Highrise zone Zone II, up to 80m
Land Value 50'000'000 CHF*

*Tec21, 21, 2012, p. 17



Floor plan, ground floor level, 1:666





Iten's workshop (1977) Kabinenhof (1930, 1961)

North-West tribune (1912)

North-East tribune (1982-2020)

ENI Petrol station (1983)

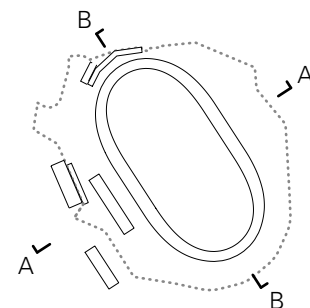
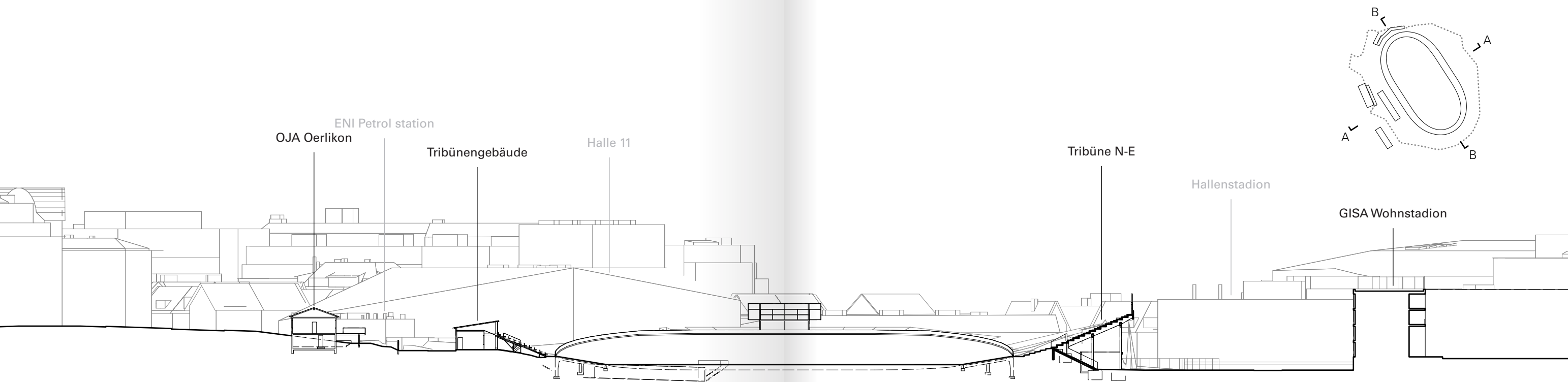
Tribünengebäude (1912, 1974)

OJA Oerikon (1990)

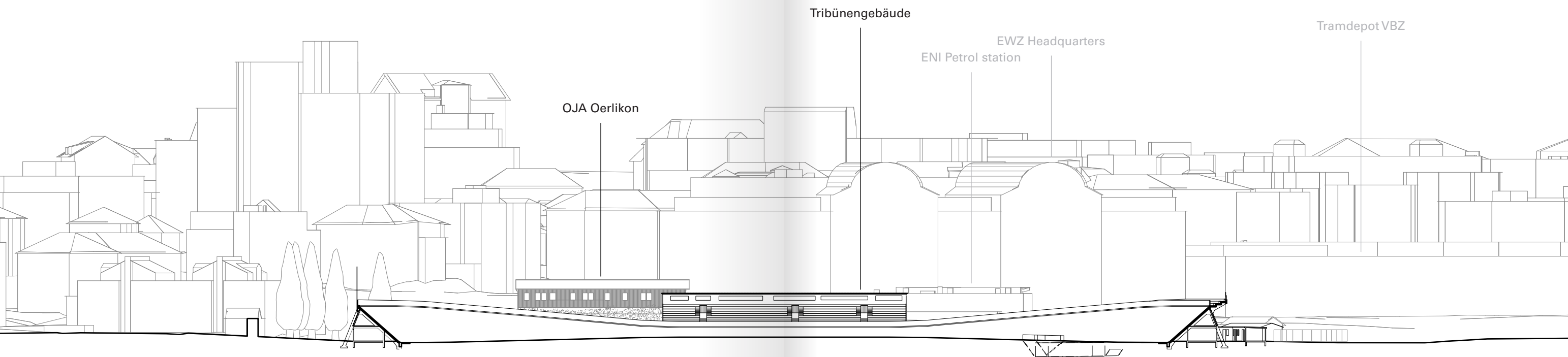
Mobile cooling station (2003)

Storage spaces (1970s)



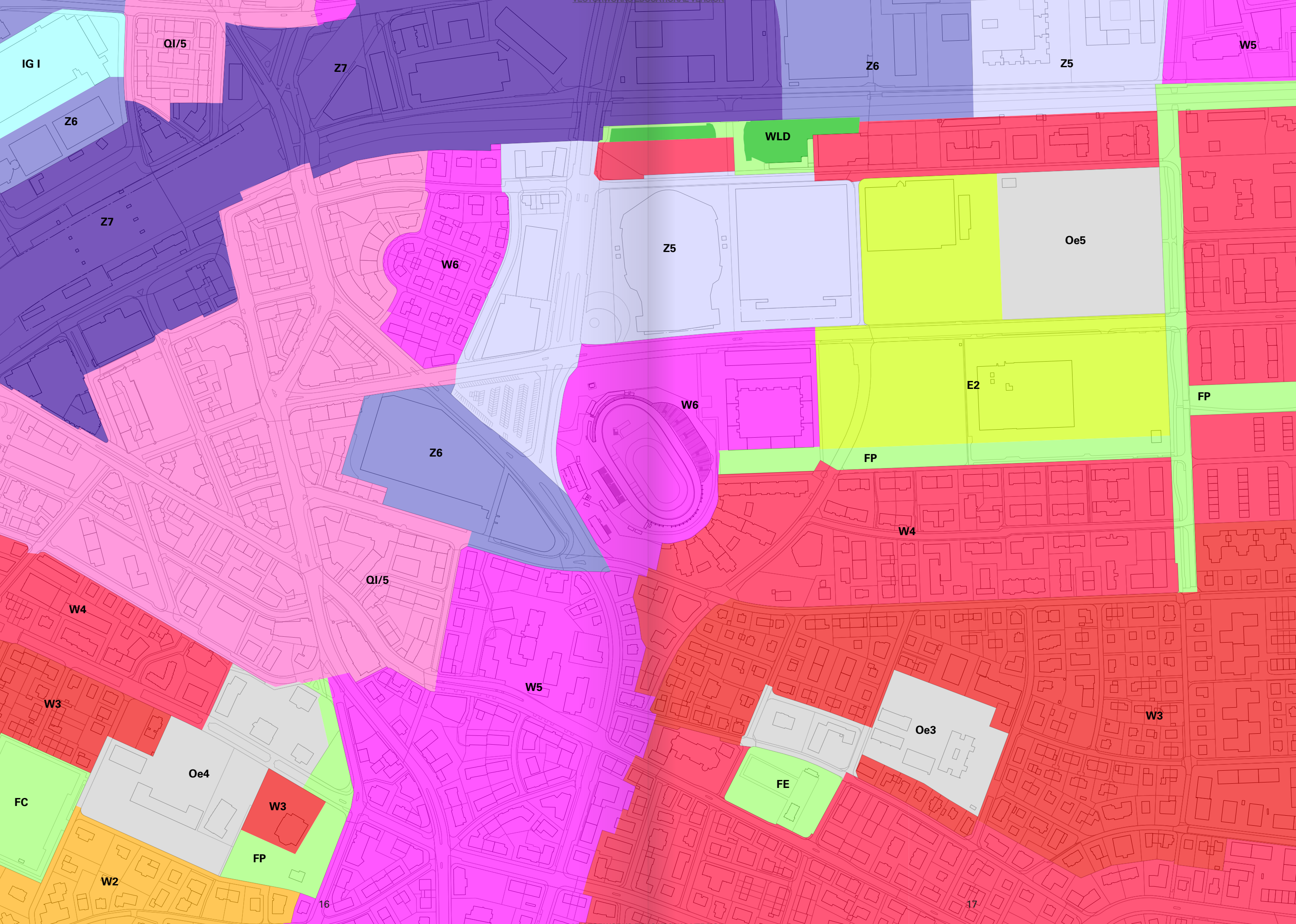


Section AA, 1:666



Section BB, 1:666

Zoning plan, 1:3'333



Construction Detail 1:20

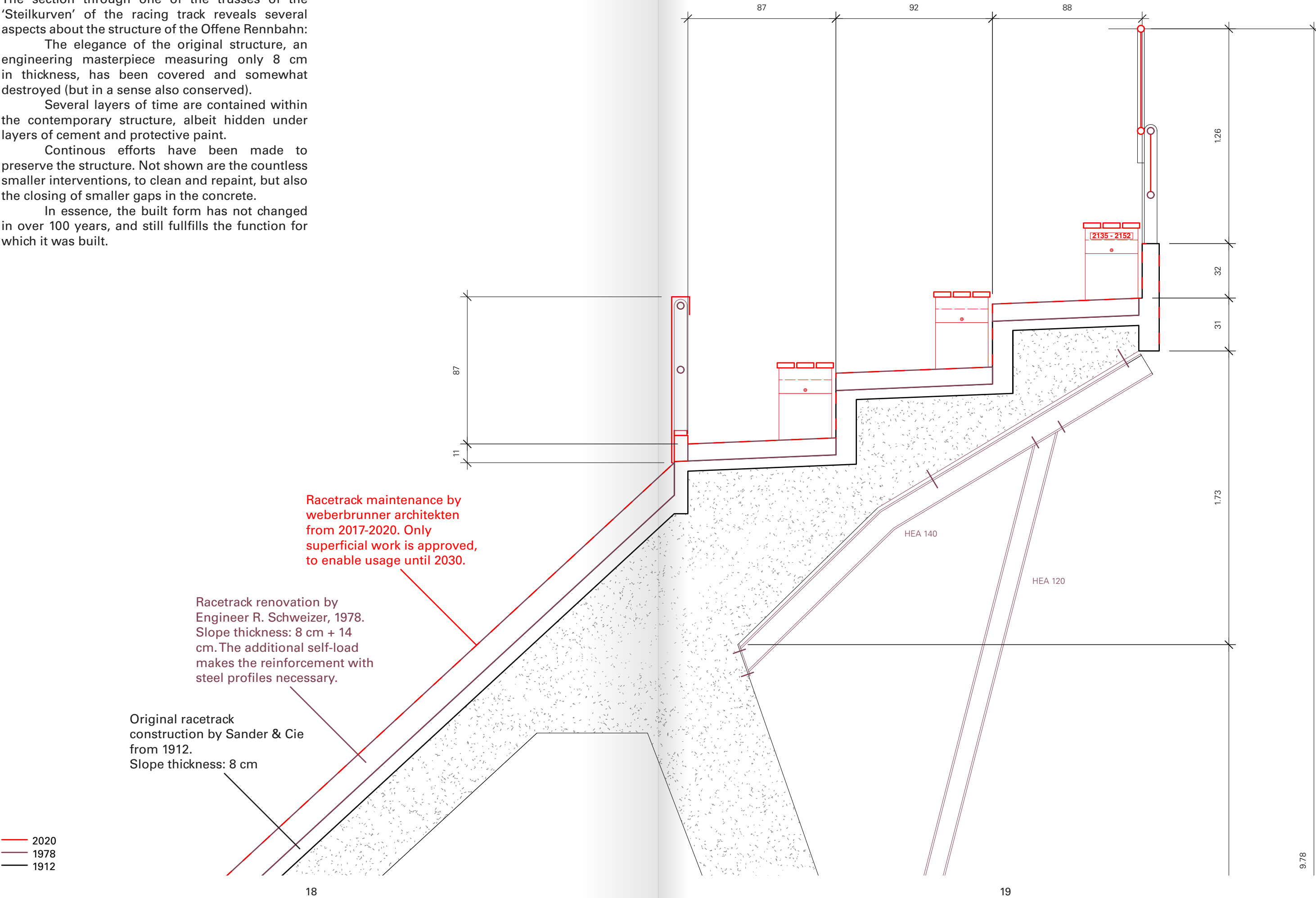
The section through one of the trusses of the 'Steilkurven' of the racing track reveals several aspects about the structure of the Offene Rennbahn:

The elegance of the original structure, an engineering masterpiece measuring only 8 cm in thickness, has been covered and somewhat destroyed (but in a sense also conserved).

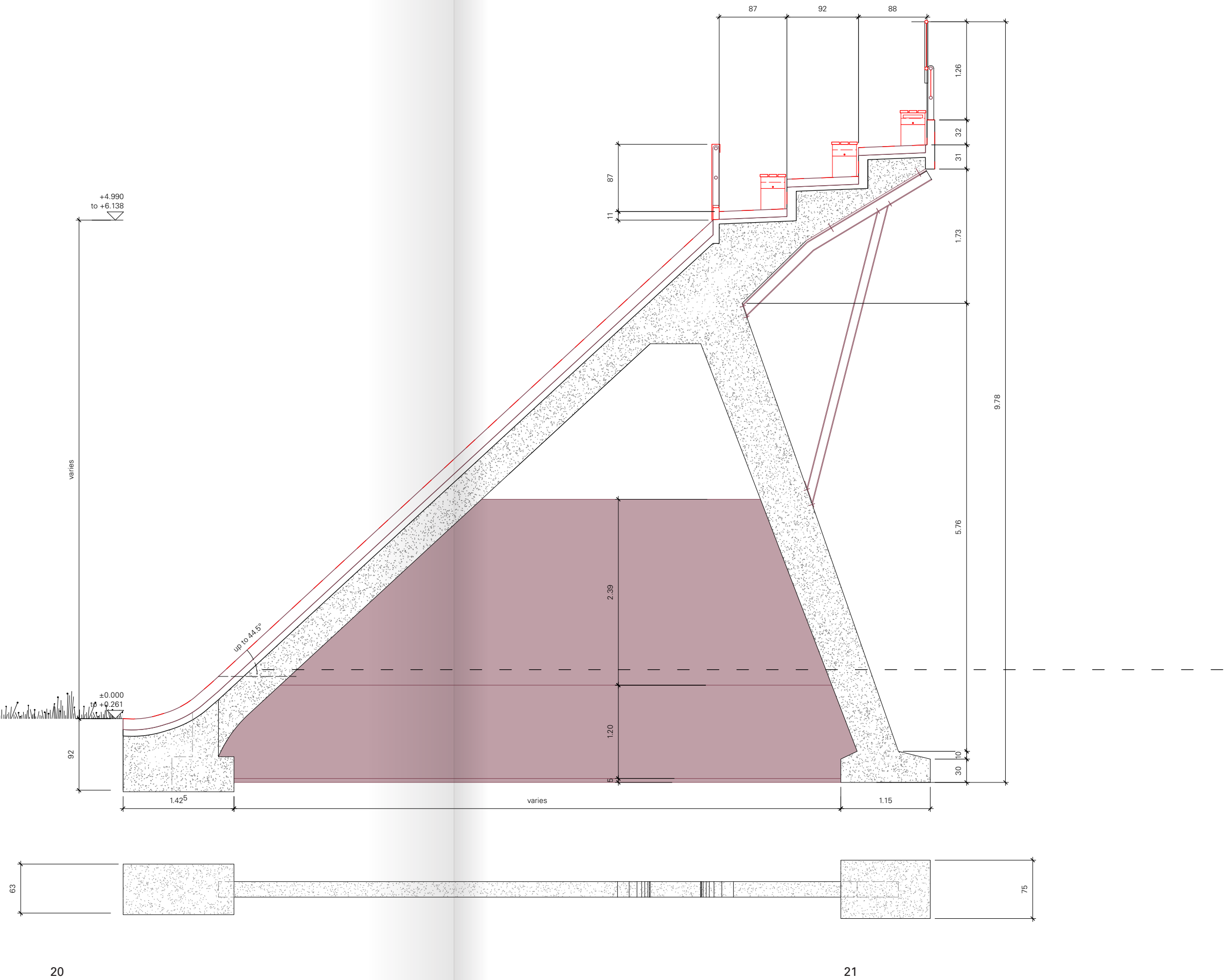
Several layers of time are contained within the contemporary structure, albeit hidden under layers of cement and protective paint.

Continuous efforts have been made to preserve the structure. Not shown are the countless smaller interventions, to clean and repaint, but also the closing of smaller gaps in the concrete.

In essence, the built form has not changed in over 100 years, and still fullfills the function for which it was built.



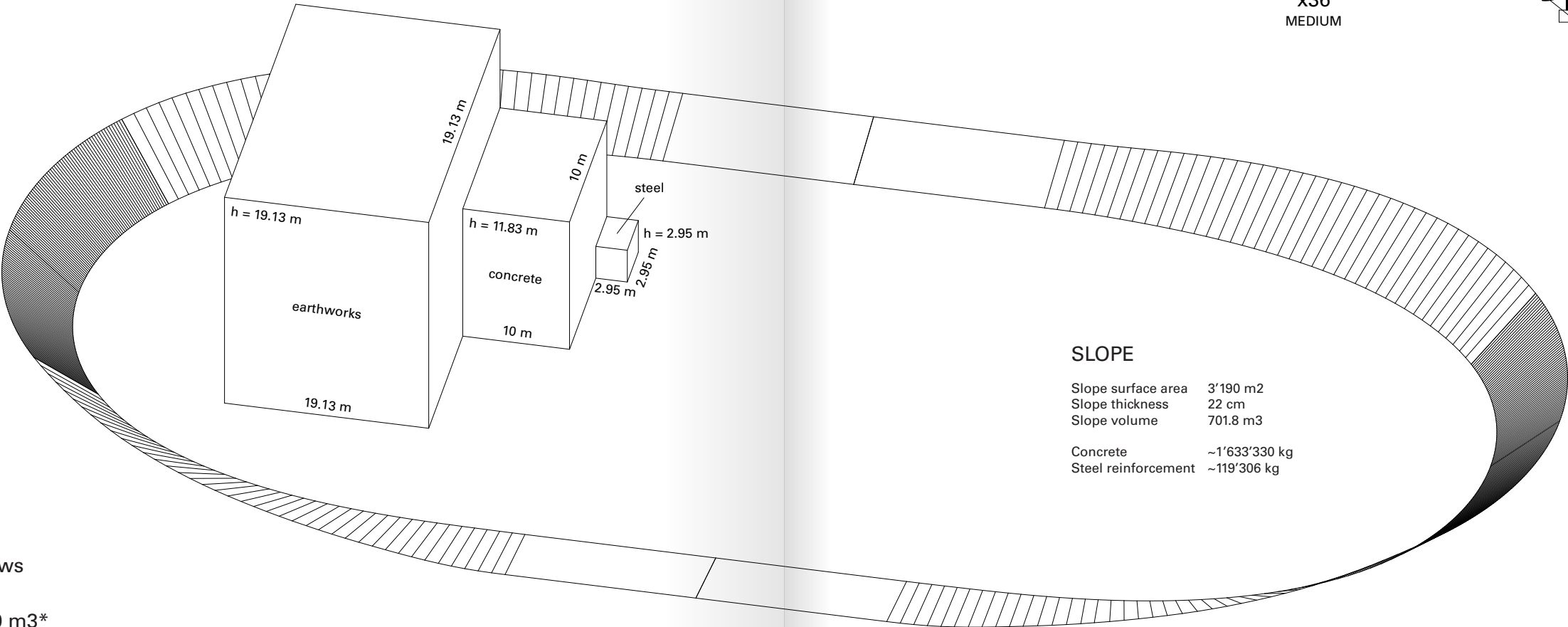
Section through one of the *Steilkurven*.



Embedded Energy

This is an attempt to visualize the amount of material and energy used, as well as CO2 emitted, to create the Offene Rennbahn. Only the racetrack itself has been taken into consideration for this calculation, and this includes the slope of the racetrack as well as the trusses carrying the slope.

As a basis for the calculations, reference values from the KBOB Ökobilanzdaten have been used.



Total building materials flows construction of the racetrack

Earthworks	7'000 m3*
Concrete	~2'757'322 kg or 1'183.4 m3
Steel reinforcement	~201'314 kg or 25.6 m3

*SBZ, 59/60 (1912), p. 336

Non-renewable energy (grey energy)

Concrete	0.175 kWh oil-eq/kg*
Steel reinforcement	4.99 kWh oil-eq/kg*
Concrete	~482'531.35 kWh oil-eq
Steel reinforcement	~1'004'556.86 kWh oil-eq

*KBOB / ecobau / IPB 2009/1:2022

Equivalent greenhouse gas emission

Concrete	0.101kg CO2-eq/kg*
Steel reinforcement	1.52 kg CO2-eq/kg*
Concrete	~278'489.5 kg CO2-eq
Steel reinforcement	~305'997.3 kg CO2-eq

*KBOB / ecobau / IPB 2009/1:2022

Average inhabitant of Zürich

Average energy consumption	22'000 kW/h per capita per year*
Concrete (GE)	22 years
Steel reinforcement (GE)	46 years

*Stadt Zürich, Gesundheits- und Umweltsdepartement

Professional cyclist

Average energy output 400 W/h at a speed of 50 km/h*

Concrete (GE)	1'206'328 hours or 138 years
Steel reinforcement (GE)	2'511'392 hours or 287 years

*<https://www.roadbikerider.com/average-wattage-cycling/>



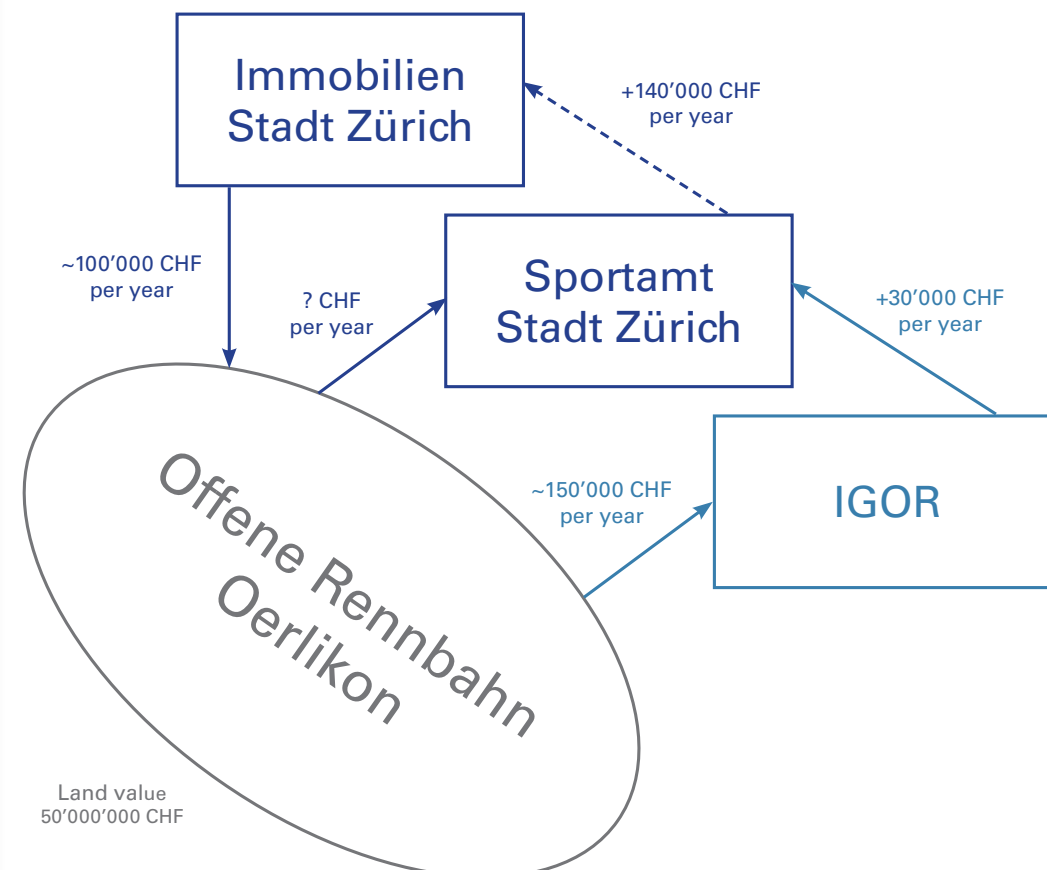
Actors

This chapter will introduce the various actors that move within and without the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon. Much of this research has been gathered in dialogue with the actors in questions, but sometimes archival documents were consulted to take the place of an actual dialogic partner.

An actor network map will offer a visual overview over these actors, and their motivations and visions will be discussed. A study of the seasonal use cycles on a weekly and yearly basis will offer a visual representation of the current state of under-use of the Offene Rennbahn site. A collection of documents, such as the open letter in defense of the Offene Rennbahn by the president of Swiss cycling, or the protocoll of the session of the city council in which the Offene Rennbahn was released from the inventory of

the *Städtische Denkmalpflege* will elucidate the sometimes conflicting positions held by the various actors. Two interviews, one factual, the other fictive, will circumscribe interactions with the Offene Rennbahn as a physical place and actor.

Unrealised potential relationships will be discussed, as a potential solution to the problem of under-use. By painting as broad a picture as possible, the field of tension surrounding the Offene Rennbahn is slowly made tangible.



Data: Tec21, Stadt Zürich Sportamt

This is an attempt to visualize the complex interplay of actors that move within the context of the Offene Rennbahn. Like planets around a sun, these actors orbit the Offene Rennbahn, most only rarely actually coming into direct contact.



Actor Motivations & Visions

Stadt Zürich

Legal owner of the plot since 1951. Purchased the land with the intention to further develop the site at some point. Supportive of race activities until 2030. Does not see it as part of its mission to finance a cycling track with national importance. Plans to develop the area along the Wallisellenstrasse, and to build up to seven stories of unspecified function (probably housing) on the site, which would replace the current structure (demolition).

Städtische Denkmalpflege Zürich

The building heritage protection service of the canton of Zürich. Entered the Offene Rennbahn into its inventory in 2015, which does not guarantee protection, but only states that there is reason to believe that the object is worthy of protection. In the event that the city should decide to demolish the structure, the Baudirektion will need to decide whether or not to protect the building.

Kantonale Denkmalpflege Zürich

The building heritage protection service of the city of Zürich. Entered the Offene Rennbahn into its inventory in 1986, but removed it again in 1990, citing the poor structural condition. A political motive for this decision is highly likely.

IGOR

Interessengemeinschaft
offene Rennbahn Oerlikon

Interest group of former athletes and cycling enthusiasts. Working mostly on a voluntary basis. Organizers of Tuesday evening races and other sports activities (mainly trainings) on the racetrack since 2003. Strong personal ties to the place in many cases. Wish to keep operating the Offene Rennbahn as an important center for races and trainings, as a structure with a long and rich history.

Swiss Cycling

Swiss Cycling is the umbrella organization for professional and semi-professional cycling activities in Switzerland. Part of the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) and Swiss Olympic. Have positioned themselves strongly in support of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon as a site of national and international importance.

OJA Oerlikon

Offene Jugendarbeit

Youth centre financed by the Sozialdepartement of the city of Zürich. Operating since the 1980s, the OJA Oerlikon provides youth with a safe space for guided and unguided activities. Have stated an interest in the area of the Offene Rennbahn as an outdoor space with a lot of potential for use. Currently not possible because a fence prohibits access to the area.

GISA

Baugenossenschaft

Building cooperative operating mainly in the area directly neighboring the Offene Rennbahn. Purchased the land from the city in Baurecht. Regularly issue noise complaint towards the Offene Rennbahn, strongly insisting on *Nachtruhe* from 22:00 onwards. Have stated in the past that they would take legal actions against any building project on the plot of the Offene Rennbahn (e.g. roof structure planned by Jürg Vogel from IGOR).

ENI

Petrol station 24/7

ENI is a global energy company that holds 6.7% of Switzerland's market share of Refining & Marketing and Chemistry, dealing in gas and electricity. They currently operate 271 service stations across Switzerland. The company aims to go carbon-neutral by 2050. The Dörflistrasse 80 station also includes a shop which is open from 05:00am to 04:00am every day. No relationship to the Offene Rennbahn.

Quartierverein Oerlikon

The Quartierverein Oerlikon is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of the population of Oerlikon on a political level. Its members also organize various public events, such as the Oerlikerfest, which takes place once in a year and the Christmas market, which takes place in the Winter season. In 2019, the Offene Rennbahn hosted the Oerlikerfest in its interior for the first time.

The Offene Rennbahn is an important landmark for the community of Oerlikon, even while it remains closed for most of the year. Various actors have given their voice in support of the continued existence of the Offene Rennbahn. Other voices call for the opening of the Rennbahn as a public space. As a structure which is owned by the public hand, the Offene Rennbahn should become more open and thereby legitimize its existence to a larger part of the population. Actors such as the OJA Oerlikon could act as caretakers, provided that financial support is provided by the city.

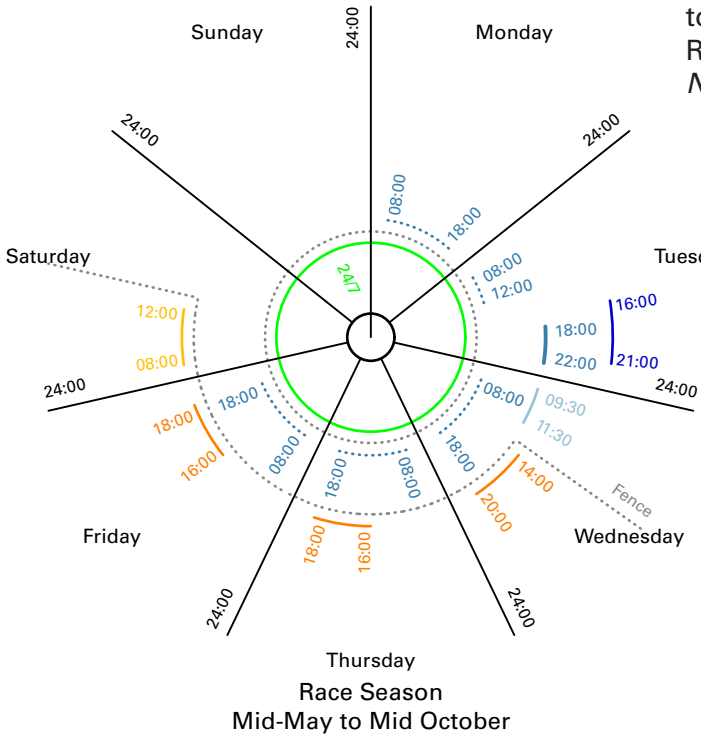
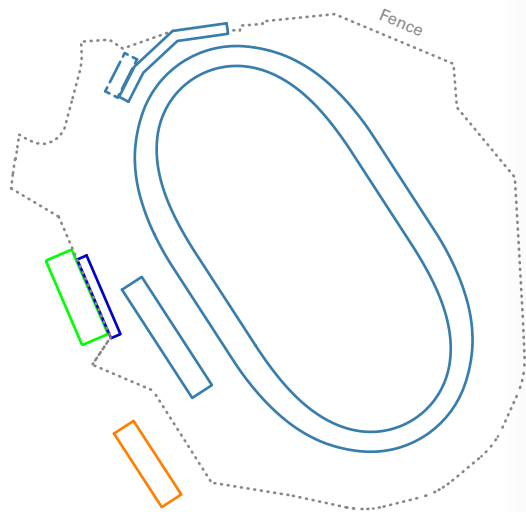
Use diagrams, daily / seasonal

Visualization of the yearly, seasonal and daily use of the Offene Rennbahn which clearly reveals the current state of underuse. A city owned property, open to the public only on 22 evenings per year.

Race season is from the middle of May until the middle of October every year. Use for track cycle training lasts from beginning of April until the end of October. Before the Corona-pandemic, the *Oerliker-Fest* took place in the racetrack interior at the end of June.

During off-season, the racetrack is not used for sportive activities at all, and generally remains closed to the public. In past off-seasons, the racetrack interior has been used as a parking lot for the Hallenstadion staff, but also as the location for a Christmas market.

The OJA youth centre operates all year-round, but as it stands, does not have access to the Offene Rennbahn premises.

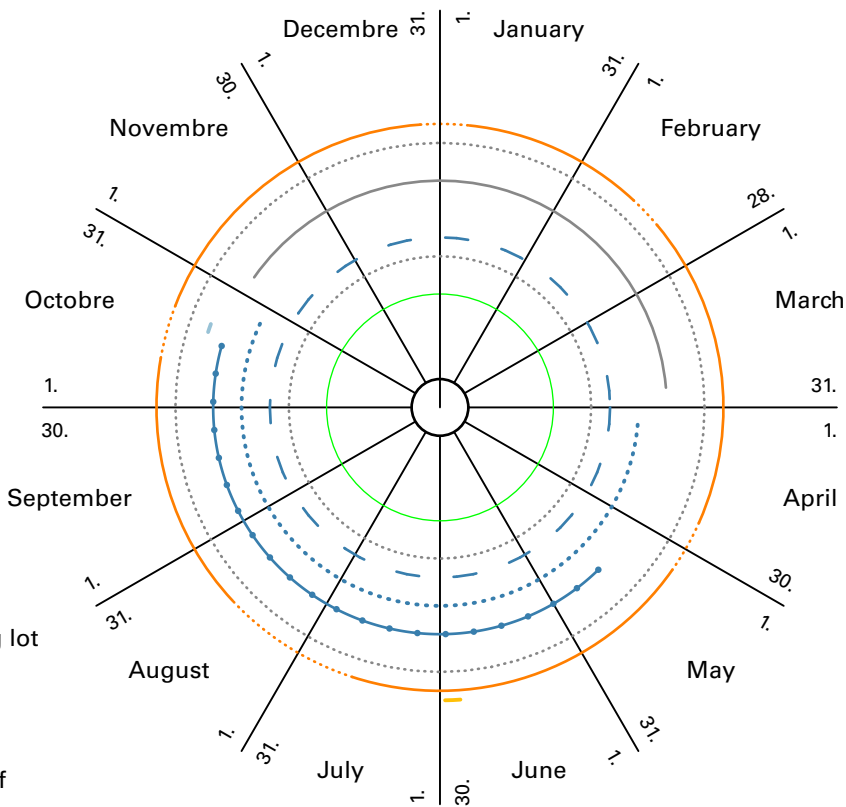
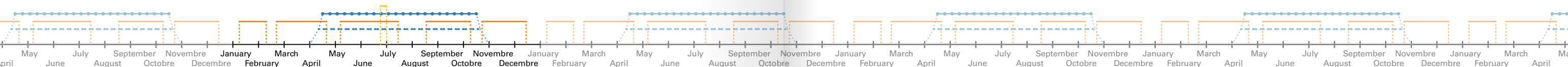


During race-season, from the middle of May until the middle of October, the *Offene Rennbahn* is open to the public on Tuesdays, from 16:00 until 22:00. Races start at 18:45 and go until 22:00, when the *Nachtruhe* forces all loud activities to be stopped.

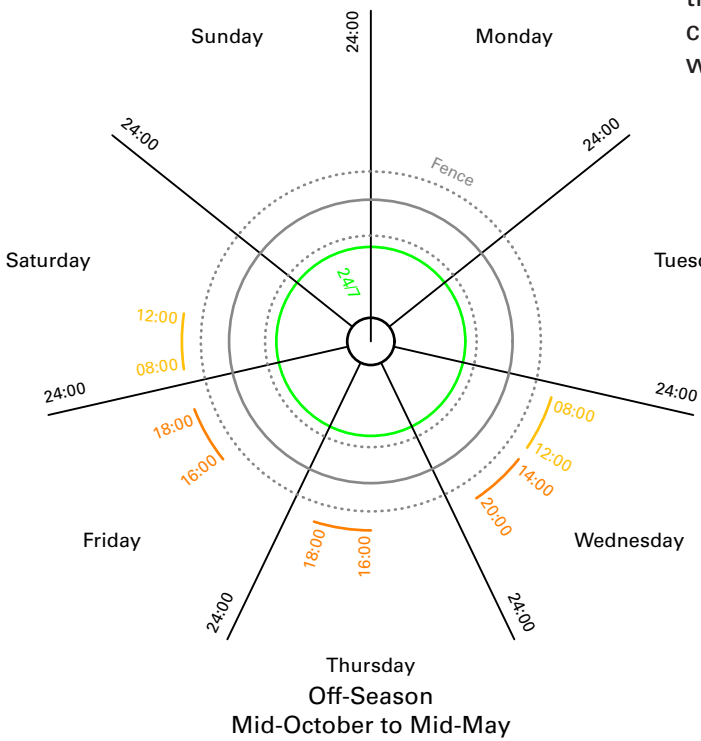
Mondays through Fridays the racetrack can be used by athletes for training activities flexibly.

On Wednesdays after the races, a group of volunteers meets at 09:30 to clean the entire area of waste that visitors left behind. This takes between 2 and 4 hours, depending on the number of spectators the night before.

On weekends, generally no activity takes place on the Offene Rennbahn.



- Used as parking lot
- Cleaning Action
- Restaurant
- Race days
- Training days
- OJA Jugendtreff
- School holidays
- Farmer's market / Oerliker Fest
- Eni gas station



During off-season, from the middle of October until the middle of May, the Offene Rennbahn remains closed to the public, except for a Christmas market, which has not taken place since 2018.

The season is ended by a thorough cleaning of the *Offene Rennbahn* premises, which also includes the cleaning of the racetrack with help of local firefighters, who hose down the racetrack with water.

During this time, the Offene Rennbahn lies mostly dormant.

Open Letter on the Future of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon



3063 Ittingen, 11. August 2011

Open Letter on the Future of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

At the moment you can read in the newspapers that the construction of a hall with an indoor cycling track is planned in Grenchen. The project is in the planning phase and, if all goes well, would be realized in the style of a multi-functional hall with complimentary functions. This means that other events (concerts, congresses, other sports) would also have their place. At the moment, there is talk of 170 events per year.

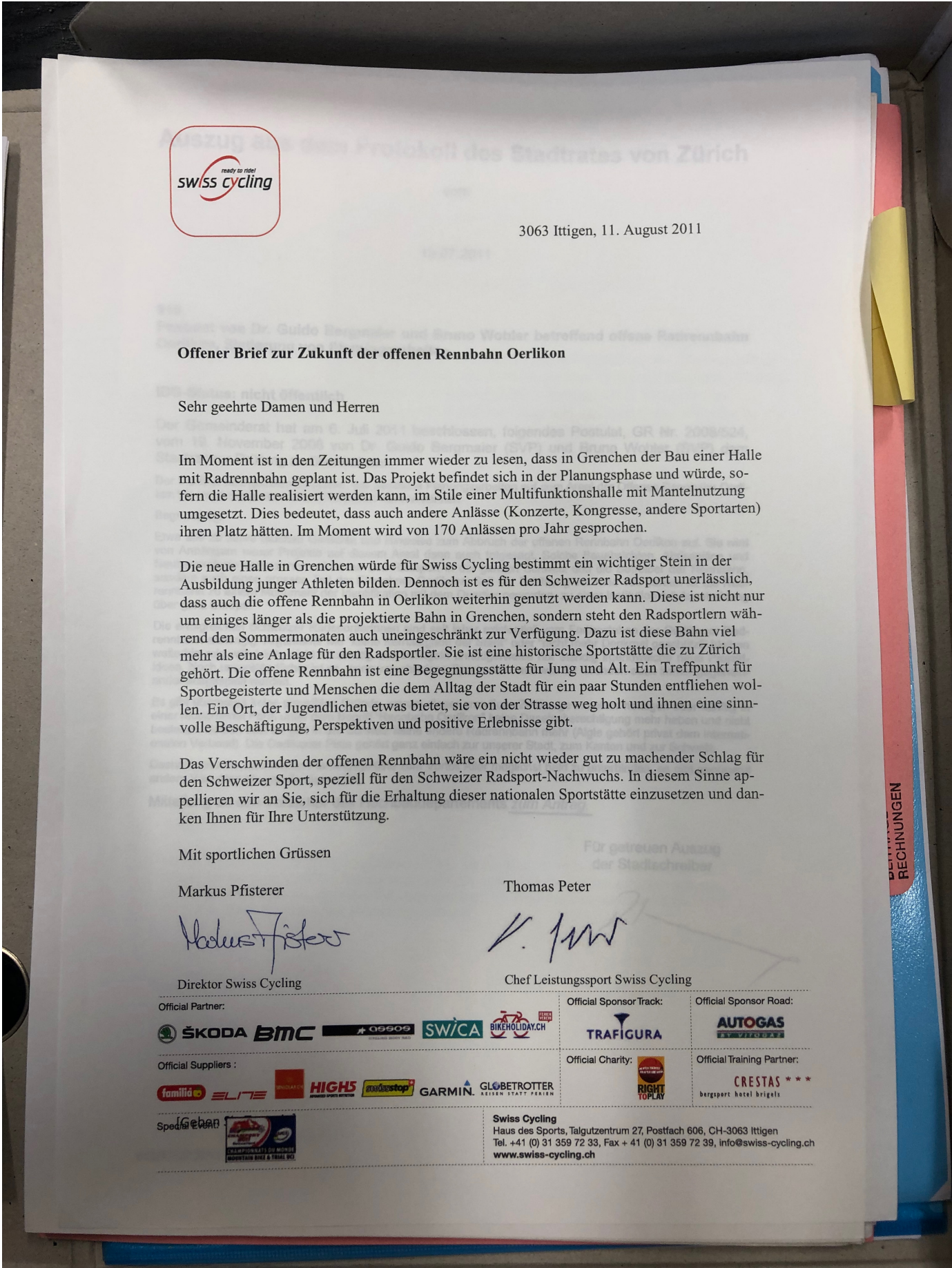
The new hall in Grenchen would certainly be an important step in the training of young athletes for Swiss Cycling. Nevertheless, it is essential for the Swiss cycling community that the Offene Rennbahn in Oerlikon can continue to operate. The Offene Rennbahn is not only longer than the planned track in Grenchen, but is also open to cyclists during the summer months without restriction. In addition, this track is much more than a facility for cyclists. It is a historic sports facility that belongs to Zurich. The open racecourse is a meeting place for young and old. A meeting place for sports enthusiasts and people who want to escape the everyday life of the city for a few hours. A place that offers something to young people, takes them away from the street and gives them a meaningful occupation, perspectives and positive experiences.

The disappearance of the open racetrack would be an irreparable blow for Swiss sport, especially for young Swiss cyclists. In this sense we appeal to you to support the preservation of this national sporting venue and thank you for your support.

With sporty greetings

Markus Pfisterer
Director Swiss Cycling

Thomas Peter
Director Competitive Sports Swiss Cycling



Interview with Alois 'Wisel' Iten, President of IGOR



15.09.2022

Ich treffe Alois Iten an einem regnerischen Donnerstag bei der Offenen Rennbahn in Oerlikon. Er hat eigentlich noch einige Sachen zum Erledigen, aber ich darf ihn begleiten und ihm Fragen stellen. Anfänglich ist ihm nicht ganz so klar was ich denn von ihm wissen will, aber wir kommen schnell in ein angenehmes Gespräch. Als Erstes frage ich ihn, wann er zum ersten Mal die Rennbahn betreten habe. Er muss kurz überlegen, schmunzelt dann, und meint, das war wohl 1952, er war damals 9 Jahre alt, sein älterer Bruder war Rennfahrer. Seither ist die Rennbahn ein fester Bestandteil seines Lebens geworden.

Seit 2003 ist Alois Iten Präsident der Interessengemeinschaft Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon (IGOR). In seinem Amt ist er verantwortlich für die Organisation der Trainings und der Rennen; nebenbei kümmert er sich aber auch um die Buchhaltung, die Getränke der Rennfahrer, die Koordination der Putzaktion am Mittwoch morgen nach den Rennen, und unzählige andere kleinere und grössere Sachen. Es ist wohl keine Übertreibung zu sagen, dass Alois Iten ein lebenswichtiger Teil der offenen Rennbahn ist, vielleicht das Herz. Aber dazu sagt er nur, wenn er es nicht gewesen wäre, dann hätte ein anderer seine Stelle eingenommen.

Alois Iten nimmt mich mit ins Rennbüro, wo er Belege für die Buchhaltung scannen muss. Während er sortiert, beginne ich ihm Fragen zu seiner Geschichte mit der offenen Rennbahn zu stellen.

LC: 1972 bis 1977 haben sie hier umgebaut, stimmt das? Sie haben Teile der Tribünen abgerissen und wieder aufgebaut.

Al: Ja, in den 70er Jahren ist sehr viel passiert.

LC: Sie waren da auch dabei?

Al: Da war ich bei den freiwilligen Helfern.

[Unser Gespräch wird kurz unterbrochen, weil Al beim Sortieren der Belege einen Fehler entdeckt]

LC: Sie machen eigentlich alles hier, nicht?

Al: Nein, eben nicht, aber wenn ich dann so Sachen sehe, dann muss ich sagen, muss ich das jetzt doch selber machen?

LC: In den 70er Jahren haben Sie dann auch die Umzäunung neu gemacht, also das ganze Areal abgezäunt. War das vorher offen?

Al: Nein nein, das war immer schon zu. Früher waren da Betonpfosten mit Eisen und Holzplatten dazwischen.

LC: Hatte es denn vorher manchmal Leute die hier eingedrungen sind?

Al: Ja, aber die kommen jetzt immer noch rein.

LC: Haben Sie da auch Probleme?

Al: Am meisten Probleme habe ich mit den Notausgängen die ich nicht abschliessen darf! Da klettert einer über den Zaun und macht den Anderen dann von Innen auf. Seit etwa zwei Jahren bin ich da am Kriegen, dass man da ein zusätzliches Schloss montieren kann. Da kam zurück, dass wenn einer reinkäme und etwas passiere, müsse der auch wieder rauskönnen...

LC: Die Überdachung welche von Jürg Vogel angedacht worden ist, wie sehen Sie das? Ist das nötig für die Zukunft?



Six-day race at the Hallenstadion Zurich-Oerlikon, 1966
ETH Bildarchiv, Com_LC0028-010

Al: Es ist einfach so, nehmen wir an es gibt eine Überdachung: Erstens wer zahlt das? Das ist das eine. Zweites werden von da hinten [zeigt in Richtung der Genossenschaftlichen Siedlungen] Einsprachen kommen, so dass sich das um Jahre verzögern würde. Das ist das zweite. Ich sage die Atmosphäre – das hören einige von Kollegen zwar nicht so gerne – ist viel schöner, wenn es offen ist. Es ist mir lieber, wenn es schön Wetter ist. Man hatte das Hallenstadion ja deswegen gebaut!



Image by author

LC: Und dann hat man die Bahn im Hallenstadion wieder abgerissen.

Al: Ja, die ist jetzt wieder weg. Am Anfang war da auch noch kein Eishockey, das kam erst etwa 1954. Aber man muss sich auch vorstellen, das waren damals Verluste, da hatte man noch 10'000 bis 12'000 Zuschauer. Da war jedes Rennen welches nicht durchgeführt werden konnte ein gewaltiger Verlust. Nein, wenn das Wetter gut ist, finde ich das viel schöner. Und ich glaube auch, wenn die Stadt das bewilligen würde und den Kredit spräche, dann hätte die Stadt auch Begehrlichkeiten für andere Veranstaltungen. Es ist ja dann auch ein Blödsinn, wenn man ein Dach hat, das niemand braucht. Wir können ja nicht jeden Tag ein Rennen machen. Und dann werden gewisse Anwohner auch wieder keine Freude haben. Mir hat mal jemand gesagt – der hat da hinten gewohnt, irgendein SP-Gemeinderat – wenn du ein Dach machst, werde ich alle Register ziehen um das hinauszuzügeln.

LC: Weil er nicht wollte, dass es mehr Rennen und mehr Aktivität gibt?

Al: Ja und das Dach kann ja auch noch sichtbar sein natürlich, das ist ja ein gewaltiges Ding so ein Dach. In Hannover gibt es ein solches Dach. Ich bin nicht so sehr für ein Dach. Wenn es käme, könnte ich aber schon damit leben.

LC: Zur Auslastung der Rennbahn: Sind sie zum Trainieren und für Rennen eigentlich die ganze Woche da, oder vor allem Dienstag bis Donnerstag?

Al: Wer, ich? Nein, wir organisieren das natürlich, es ist auch möglich, dass man einen Schlüssel bekommt oder so.

LC: Aber jetzt mehr auch in Bezug auf andere Nutzungen... Das Problem ist ja, sie sind verantwortlich für die Anlage und schauen das alles gut läuft. Aber die Stadt ist ja Hauptmieter und –

Al: Ja es gab ja mal die Idee das man hier drinnen einfach flanieren könnte. Das kann man von mir aus schon, dann braucht es einfach zwei vollamtliche Abwarte.

LC: Das müsste dann so ähnlich funktionieren wie in einer Badeanstalt, da schaut auch immer jemand.

Al: Ja, man muss das natürlich sehen, wir sind die einzige Anlage die nicht betreut ist, wo wir [IGOR] alles machen! Da hinten war eine Tür kaputt. Vor drei Wochen habe ich der Stadt geschrieben ob jemand vorbeikommt um zu schauen wegen einer neuen Türe. Ich habe drei Mal Anlauf genommen. Beim dritten Mal hat sich dann der Betriebsleiter der Eisbahn gemeldet, und hat gesagt er müsse

vorbeikommen um zu schauen was man machen müsse, er käme diese Woche. Ich habe dann gesagt, dass müsse sofort gemacht werden, er hat mir das vor zehn Tagen gesagt. Er ist jetzt diese Woche nicht gekommen und ich habe das am letzten Freitag dann einfach selber gemacht. Ich habe hinten und vorne ein Flacheisen mit durchgehender Schraube montiert, reingeleimt und einen Holzdübel reingemacht und – es hat sich immer noch niemand gemeldet, und wenn sie dann kommen, werden sie sagen es sei ja schon geflickt...

LC: Und wieso musste der Betriebsleiter der Eisenbahn vorbeikommen? Ist der verantwortlich für die Rennbahn?

Al: Nein, die schauen beim Sportamt wer in der Nähe ist, um zu entscheiden was für ein Handwerker kommen muss. Jetzt war eine WC-Schüssel gerissen, da habe ich gar nicht erst der Stadt angerufen, sondern gleich dem Sanitär. Das geht ja dann auch ein paar Tage bis die kommen...

LC: Aber theoretisch müssten Sie das der Stadt melden, und die müssten dann jemanden organisieren –

Al: Ja aber da passiert einfach nichts! Da hinten hat es Wurzeln die den Belag angehoben haben – wenn es dunkel ist und jemand nicht aufpasst kann er stürzen. Ich habe geschrieben, es sei gefährlich dort zu laufen. Ja, es käme dann jemand vom Tiefbauamt. Kommt dann jemand? Wann? Weiss ich nicht. Aber da gehe ich nicht zu einer Belagsfirma.

LC: Das ist ja auch nicht Ihre Verantwortung.

Al: Im Prinzip müssten die gleich einen vom Tiefbauamt vorbeischicken der sich das anschaut. Aber das ist eine Katastrophe.

LC: Sie als IGOR können nicht Hauptmieter sein, weil das finanziell nicht tragbar wäre.

Al: Für uns ist es ja sowieso nur tragbar, weil wir so viele Sponsoren haben.

LC: Sie zahlen dem Sportamt weniger Miete als dass das Sportamt der Stadt zahlt.

Al: Deshalb wollte das Sportamt ja auch immer, dass die Bahn wekommt! Wobei, Sie [das Sportamt] bekommen das Geld ja auch von der Stadt. Das ist ja wie Monopoly-Geld. Das war ja auch eine Absicht der Stadt. Man hat das umgezont in W5, und aus der Sportzone rausgenommen. Wenn das eine Sportanlage wäre, müsste es ja auch keine Rendite geben.

LC: In der Zwischenzeit ist es ja sogar in einer W6 Zone.

Al: Ja natürlich, mit dieser Verdichtung. Privat hatte ich da ja noch Einsprache erhoben gegen die Umzonung. Da kam dann einfach der Entscheid vom Stadtrat, ich müsse das halt weiterziehen [ans Gericht].

LC: Aber es ist ja schon ein wenig verrückt, man hat das Gefühl, dass dieser Ort der Stadt und der Denkmalpflege irgendwie doch auch wichtig ist, aber gleichzeitig –

Al: Auf der Führung von Pietro [Wallnöfer, Denkmalpflege Kanton], am Tag vom Denkmal, da war der ehemalige Denkmalpfleger von der Stadt Zürich hier. Der hat mir schon seinerzeit gesagt, er war nicht dafür die Rennbahn aus dem Inventar zu nehmen, aber wenn der Stadtrat ihm das befiehlt –

LC: Also das war 1990, und er hat die Rennbahn wieder aus dem Inventar entlassen?

Al: Ja, er hat gesagt es sei heute noch für ihn unverständlich, dass die Rennbahn aus dem Inventar genommen wurde. Aber der Stadtrat steht oben an der Denkmalpflege, die sind nicht eigenständig. Jetzt ist sie ja nur noch im kantonalen Inventar.

LC: Trotzdem ist die Rennbahn jetzt wieder für 5'000'000 saniert worden.

Al: Da zahlt wahrscheinlich der Kanton einen grossen Teil, und das Sportamt. Es ist ja auch im Bundesinventar, aber ich weiss nicht genau was das bedeutet [Al nimmt das Buch hervor, und sucht im Vorwort nach der genauen Bezeichnung. Er liest vor:] «Der Bund hat die Bedeutung der Rennbahn auch erkannt, und sie schon vor Jahren ins Inventar der Sportanlagen von nationaler Bedeutung aufgenommen.» Was auch immer das genau heisst. Das war ja auch so etwas: Das Vorwort hätte eigentlich Odermatt schreiben sollen. Er hat ein wunderbares Vorwort geschrieben, und im letzten Satz hat er geschrieben, dem Sinn nach, «wie man wisse, müsse die Rennbahn in ein bis zwei Jahren sowieso weichen» und dann haben wir ihm gesagt, diesen Satz müsse er rausnehmen, alles andere sei super. Da hat er gesagt alles oder nichts. Das kann er ja denken! Aber ich weiss ja nicht...

LC: Die ganzen Sanierungen und Umbauten sind ja immer ohne Sie passiert. Gibt es Sachen, die aus Ihrer Sicht anders sein müssten?

Al: Das Krasse war ja das mit dem Notausgang. Und was natürlich auch passierte, da waren so miserable Handwerker auf der Baustelle! Am ersten Renntag nach der Sanierung hat nur ein Leuchtmast funktioniert. Zum Glück waren fast keine Leute hier. So etwas ist natürlich eine Katastrophe. Das ist ja

auch so ein Witz: Kummeler+Matter macht hier seit vierzig Jahren den Service, der kennt jede Leitung – aber den nimmt man dann nicht für den Umbau. Aber das ist die Stadt! Oder letztens – wir haben hier hinten eine Starkstromsteckdose – wollten wir einen Kühlwagen einstecken – nichts. Bei den Sicherungen war alles in Ordnung, da haben wir Kummeler+Matter angerufen, der ist dann der Leitung entlang – im Kanal haben sie die Leitung einfach gekappt. Dann würde ich das bei den Sicherungen aber auch rausnehmen.

LC: Wer macht denn diese Entscheidungen? Es muss doch jemanden beim Hochbauamt geben, der/die verantwortlich ist.

Al: Das war ein privater Bauleiter und ein Bauleiter von der Stadt. Aber der Bauleiter von der Stadt stand über dem Privaten. Der private Bauleiter war immer auf dem Platz – also natürlich nicht jeden Tag – aber der von der Stadt war im Amtshaus unten. Wie will der das machen können? Aber ich höre auf...

LC: Aber so für den Rennbahnbetrieb, die Kabinen und die Gastronomie, das läuft eigentlich? Sind Sie da zufrieden?

Al: Ja ja, das nützt. Man sieht ja auch nicht viel vom Umbau. Ein behindertengerechtes WC ist gebaut worden, und eines für das Servierpersonal und die Küche wurde komplett saniert – das sind ja Aufwände die man von aussen nicht sieht. Aber man hatte zum Beispiel kein Geld mehr um beim Rennbahnrestaurant – das ist ja sehr laut, wenn Leute drin sind – eine Schallschutzdecke zu installieren.

[Al zeigt mir die Sammlung der Rennbahnkalender und gibt mir den Jubiläumskalender von 2013 mit historischen Aufnahmen. Danach gehen wir zusammen in Richtung seines Veloschuppens, und er erklärt mir die früheren Eingänge und Kassenstandorte.]

Al: Ja, das hat sich alles gewaltig verändert. Es ist eine sehr wechselhafte Geschichte.

[Er erklärt mir, dass die wechselnden Direktoren vom Hallenstadion immer wieder Material der Rennbahn vernichtet und weggegeben hätten]

Al: Da mit der Rennbahn haben sie [AG Hallenstadion] Grausames angerichtet – das Inventar gehört eigentlich der Stadt – und die uralte Glocke der Rennbahn hat das Hallenstadion einfach einem Museum verschenkt, und dann bin ich auf die Barrikade als wir [IGOR] die Rennbahn übernommen haben, und habe gesagt die Glocke müsse wieder her. Dann hat der gesagt die Glocke

gehöre dem Hallenstadion und ich habe gesagt, nein, das gehört der Rennbahn! Dann ist einer vom Sportamt gekommen und auch ein Jurist. Dann hat man schlussendlich gesagt – die Gussform ist immer noch bei der Giesserei Aarau – sie müssen eine nachgiessen mit IGOR drauf und dem Jahr 2003, und die gehöre dann uns. Mit der alten Glocke ist dann nochmal ein Krampf passiert. Einer hat sie nachgiessen lassen und hat den Nachguss dann ins Museum gegeben. Das Original ist jetzt bei einem Privaten zuhause. Das sind alles Sachen die ich nicht verstehe, das kann man so nicht machen.

[Al schweift ein wenig ab, und erzählt mir, wie er zu seiner Werkstatt gekommen ist]

Al: Der Mechaniker von Hugo Koblet hatte hier hinten seine Werkstatt, gleich die erste Kabine. Und ich habe dem dann seine Sachen abgekauft, und war dann in dieser Werkstatt. Ich habe dann die Stadt gefragt, ob ich hier vorne eine Baracke bauen dürfte, für Lager, das war einfach zu klein. Dann hatte ich aber das Gefühl, dass ich lieber hier nach vorne möchte, weil es mehr lebt. Dann habe ich für die Kabine tatsächlich ein halbes Jahr später eine Kündigung bekommen wegen dem Umbau. Ich hätte schon wieder reinkönnen, aber wäre dann ein Jahr draussen gewesen. Da habe ich gesagt ich brauche sie nicht mehr.

LC: Und die Baracke haben Sie selber gebaut, oder bauen lassen?

Al: Nein die habe ich von Hatt-Haller, von der Baustelle Irchel, abgekauft. Und eines Morgens als ich hierhin gekommen bin, war sie hier hingekippt, das sind ja alles 1 Meter Elemente.

LC: Also alles in Einzelstücken?



Alois Iten's bicycle shack, 1981
ETH Bildarchiv, Dia_287-14114

Al: Ja, also die 1 Meter Elemente und irgendwo lagen die Fenster. Und dann habe ich das mit einem guten Freund von mir aufgestellt, das konnte ich ja nicht alleine. Dann haben wir von hinten angefangen, zuerst mit dem Boden, also ich habe die Fundamente betoniert, da hatte ich noch

eine Spezialauflage vom EWZ, weil da unten eine Hauptleitung fürs Hallenstadion durch geht, und ich durfte nichts belasten. Mit dem Kollegen habe ich das ausgegraben und mit Spanplatten eine Schalung gebaut. Und da unten beim Fernsehstudio war das Betonwerk, dann bin ich da mit einer Gelte und dem Auto runtergefahren und hab dort den Zement geholt und bin wieder rauf und habe gegossen und bin dann hin und her. Im Winter hatte ich ja Zeit, ich hatte da noch nichts zu tun mit der Rennbahn. Das Einzige was mir nicht so gepasst hat war die Dachabdeckung mit Dachpappe, da habe ich einen Kollegen mit einem Dachdeckergeschäft gefragt, was das so kosten würde mit Eternitplatten. Und jetzt bin ich immer noch da. 1977 habe ich die Baracke aufgestellt, 1967 war ich da hinten [in der ehemaligen Werkstatt von Koblets Mechaniker]. Das ist eine lange Zeit. Diesen Storen wollte ich noch flicken, aber ich weiss noch nicht ob ich das noch mache. Mal schauen was ich mir gönne.

[Al zeigt mir in seinem Veloschuppen noch seine Sammlung von verschiedenen Raritäten, unter anderem ein Fotoalbum mit Bildern von der alten Rennbahn Hardau]

Al: Ich habe viel Sachen so bekommen, von Leuten, die sagen, ich bin alt, und ich weiss nicht was mit dieser Ware sonst passiert. Und so bin ich an vieles gekommen. Aber eben, was passiert mit meiner Ware? Jetzt habe ich angefangen, doppelte Bücher, alte, auf Ricardo zu stellen. Aber was mache ich mit dieser Ware, am Schluss? Ich habe schon Sammlerkollegen, aber die sind gleich alt wie ich! Ich habe zum Beispiel einen sehr guten Kollegen, der hat auch eine Riesensammlung, und hat mir gesagt, er habe aufgeschrieben, wenn mir etwas passiert, sollen sie alles dir geben. Da habe ich gesagt, das habe ich auch aufgeschrieben!

LC: Eigentlich bräuchte es hier fast ein Museum.

Al: Ach, ich habe das Gefühl das wird nichts. Heute wird alles digitalisiert.

LC: Jetzt habe ich doch noch eine letzte Frage. Was ist Deine Prognose, in fünfzig Jahren, mit der Rennbahn, was denkst Du wird passieren?

Al: Die Stadt hat damals gesagt, das hundertjährige könnt ihr nicht feiern, die Rennbahn kommt vorher weg. Und nachher haben sie gesagt das hundertjährige könnt ihr noch, aber nachher ist fertig. 1941 gab es ja Plakate, «Rettet die Rennbahn vor dem Abbruch». Aber ich muss das andere sagen: Wenn es keine Rennfahrer mehr gibt, dann braucht es auch keine Rennbahn mehr. Ich werde den Abbruch ja wahrscheinlich nicht mehr erleben. Solange ich lebe, steht die Rennbahn noch. Davon bin ich überzeugt.



“Die Stadt hat damals gesagt, das hundertjährige könnt ihr nicht feiern, die Rennbahn kommt vorher weg. Und nachher haben sie gesagt das hundertjährige könnt ihr noch, aber nachher ist fertig. 1941 gab es ja schon Plakate, «Rettet die Rennbahn vor dem Abbruch». Aber ich muss das andere sagen: Wenn es keine Rennfahrer mehr gibt, dann braucht es auch keine Rennbahn mehr.”

Maintenance



Maintenance work at the Offene Rennbahn is done mostly by volunteers. According to a Betriebskonzept by the Sportamt Zürich, about 25 volunteers from IGOR organize the race activities and clean the premises and buildings each week.

Cleaning day is Wednesday, from 09:30 to approximately 11:30, depending on how many spectators came to visit the night before, and left their trash behind. Cleaning includes the collection of waste and the sorting of PET, glass and aluminium for recycling, as well as the cleaning of the toilets by hand.

On one occasion I joined the cleaning activity on Wednesday morning. I was the youngest among former athletes and enthusiasts in their 70s and 80s, still very active and not at all shy to make crude jokes all throughout. They knew each other well, and followed the instructions of Alois ‘Wisel’ Iten closely; he would make the rounds after the work was done, and would be sure to comment on any tasks poorly completed. But the atmosphere was collegial and relaxed. The race evening had only been moderately well visited, due to low temperatures, and so not too much trash had accumulated. My task consisted in wheeling the non-recyclable trash to the disposal station at the back of the racetrack, a distance of around 120 meters. I went back and forth about four or five times. The smell of old beer and uneaten Bratwurst was rather memorable. After the work was completed, we all sat down for softdrinks and a *Birreweggli*; from what I could gather, this ritual would be repeated in exactly the same manner and order the next week. And the week after that.



The Stadt Zürich (Immo) is responsible for the more substantial maintenance works that need to be done every year. This includes cosmetic work on the concrete of the racetrack, but also renovation of the sanitary facilities and ensuring the hygienic standards of the kitchen. For the maintenance of the greenery, and the cutting of grass, Grün Stadt Zürich is employed on a regular basis.

25 volunteers

~1700 hours
sports operation / year

~1200 hours
maintenance / year

Sportamt ZH, Betriebs-/ Nutzungskonzept Offene Rennbahn, 2018

for reference:
100 % regular working hours for 1 person / year

2184 hours



Mulde for the disposal of non-recyclable waste



Neatly organized workshop with tools for smaller repairs

[...]

The decisive factor for the inclusion of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon in the inventory of protected objects was primarily its significance as an outstanding example of an early concrete building. In addition, it represents an important witness of Zurich sports architecture of the early 20th century, which together with the machine factory and the Hallenstadion contributed to Oerlikon's international reputation. The racecourse oval built in 1912, including the tribunes and the motorcycle ramp, is worthy of protection. All other additions and fixtures are of more recent date and partially impair the appearance of the parts worthy of protection. Due to doubling and additional static elements from earlier renovations, the racecourse worthy of protection has lost some of its original transparency.

The urban integration of this facility is of great importance. Of the closed rows of trees that surrounded the racing oval, only a few remaining specimens remain. The overall renovation now planned will involve the removal of significant parts of the facility worthy of protection as a result of demonstrably irreparable damage: The grandstands with access stairs, the motorcycle ramp and the original track slab in the curves, which still exists under the doubled track, will have to be demolished.

Of the racetrack facilities worthy of protection, only the rudimentary supports in the track curves would be substantially preserved, but largely covered by tenant fixtures and static reinforcements. With this remaining substance, it is regrettably no longer possible to justify a protection worthy of monument preservation. Accordingly, the object is to be released from the inventory of protected objects.

[...]

11/16470 VII
AKTEN BID

EINGEGANGEN 31. Jan. 1990

KE ZK
W

Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Stadtrates von Zürich

vom 24. Januar 1990

295. Denkmalschutz, Offene Rennbahn Zürich-Oerlikon, Entlassung aus dem Inventar der kunst- und kulturhistorischen Schutzobjekte von kommunaler Bedeutung. Mit Baueingabe vom 14. Dezember 1989 ersucht das Hochbauinspektorat um Erteilung der Bewilligung für einen Umbau und eine Gesamtanierung der Offenen Rennbahn Zürich-Oerlikon, Thurgauerstrasse/Dörflistrasse bei 90. Die bestehende Sportanlage ist im Inventar der kunst- und kulturhistorischen Schutzobjekte von kommunaler Bedeutung aufgeführt. Aufgrund der beabsichtigten baulichen Massnahmen ist die Schutzwürdigkeit des in Frage stehenden Objektes definitiv abzuklären.

Die Offene Rennbahn Zürich-Oerlikon wurde 1912 von der Sportplatzgesellschaft Oerlikon erstellt. Mit den fahrtechnischen Belangen wurde Architekt R. Ludwig in Leipzig betraut, die Disposition der Gesamtanlage stammt vom bauleitenden Gemeindeingenieur H. Scheifele in Oerlikon. Die ovalförmige offene Rennbahn weist in der Fahrlinie eine Länge von 333 1/2 m auf, ihre Breite beträgt 9 m. In der ursprünglichen Anlage fanden insgesamt 4500 Zuschauer Platz. Die ehemalige Haupttribüne bestand aus einem Holzfachwerk und ist heute nur noch rudimentär erhalten. Sie umfasste 500 gedeckte Sitzplätze und die für den Bahnbetrieb notwendigen Nebenräume. In den beiden Kurventribünen, die konstruktiv mit der Bahn zusammenhängen, befinden sich weitere Sitzplätze. Entlang der geraden Bahnstrecken und der Übergangskurven waren Stehplätze angeordnet. Die Rennfahrerkabinen wurden unter der Westkurve eingebaut.

Ausschlaggebend für die Aufnahme der Offenen Rennbahn Oerlikon in das Inventar der Schutzobjekte war in erster Linie ihre Bedeutung als hervorragendes Beispiel eines frühen Betonbaus. Zudem stellt es einen wichtigen Zeugen zürcherischer Sportarchitektur des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts dar, welche zusammen mit Maschinenfabrik und Hallenstadion zum internationalen Ruf Oerlikons beitrug. Als schutzwürdig gilt das 1912 erstellte Rennbahnoval mitsamt den Kurventribünen sowie die Motorradrampe. Sämtliche übrigen An- und Einbauten sind jüngeren Datums und beeinträchtigen teilweise das Erscheinungsbild der schutzwürdigen Teile. Durch Aufdoppelungen und zusätzliche statische Elemente aus früheren Sanierungen hat die schutzwürdige Rennbahn von ihrer ursprünglichen Transparenz verloren.

Sehr grosse Bedeutung kommt der städtebaulichen Einbindung dieser Anlage zu. Von den geschlossenen Baumreihen, welche das Rennoval umfassten, sind nur noch einige Restexemplare erhalten.

Die nun vorgesehene Gesamtanierung sieht infolge nachweislich irreparabler Schäden die Entfernung wesentlicher Teile der schutzwürdigen Anlage vor: Die Kurventribünen samt Zugangstrepfen, die Motorradrampe sowie die unter der aufgedoppelten Fahrbahn noch bestehende, ursprüngliche Fahrbahnplatte in den Kurven müssen abgebrochen werden.

das Büro für Denkmalpflege



[...]

PROTECTION PURPOSE

To be preserved are:
The original racetrack slabs (on all sides).
The northwest tribune including access steps and support systems from 1912.
All original iron pipe railings on the northwest tribune and its access steps.
The ramp with supports and railings from 1912.
The preserved floor of the southwest tribune building.
The underpass with railings in the round.

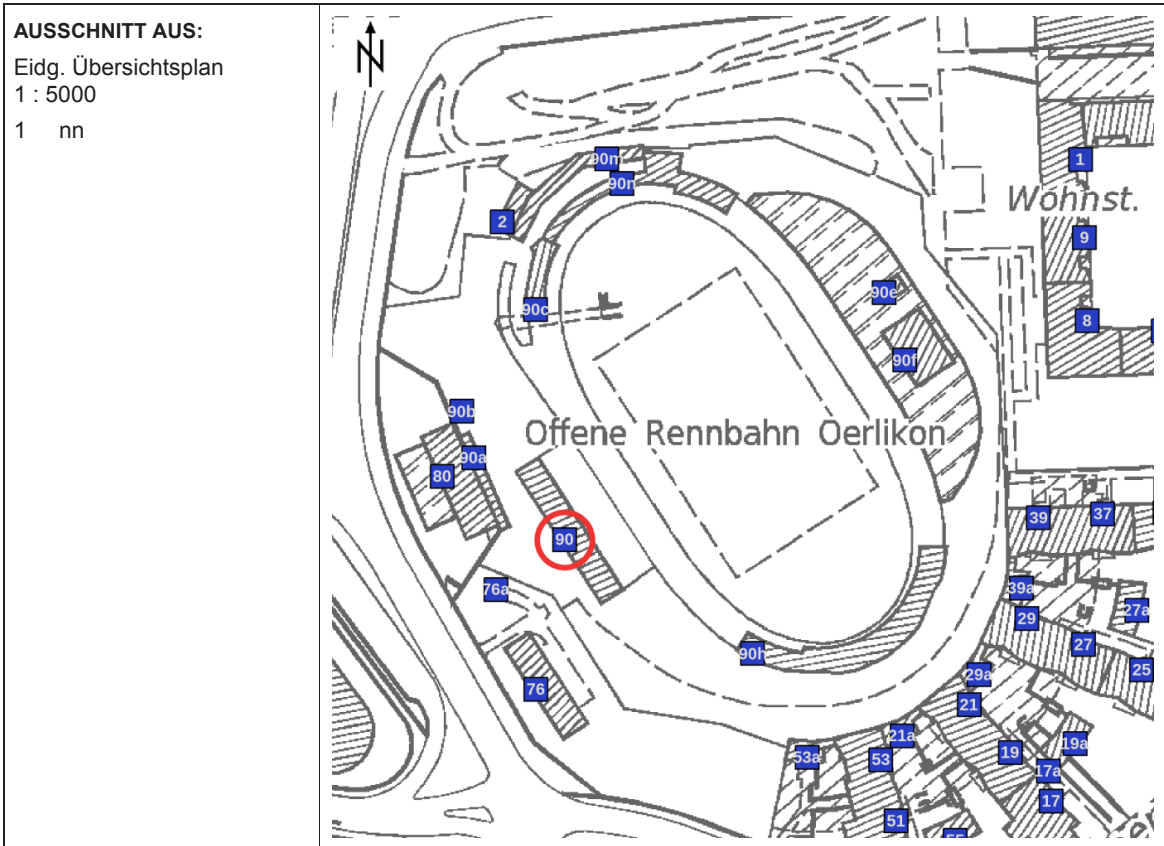
Desirable changes:
Freeing the original structure from some of the 1977-1980 interventions:
Concrete reinforcements of the northwest tribune.
Sheet metal supports on the benches of the Northwest tribune.
Steel reinforcements of the truss structure in the Northwest curve.
Corrugated Eternit cladding at the north staircase of the Northwest curve.
Removing the in-built structures at the Southeast curve, as here the original construction would probably be visible.
Improvements to the exterior of the old Southwest tribune building, including “making understandable” the truss structure by making appropriate openings and possibly removing the plaster.

It would also be desirable to preserve the following parts that were built later, but their worthiness of protection can only be justified in relation to the entire structure:
Supporting structure of the Southwest tribune, which was probably built for the 1946 World Cup.
Supporting structure of the Northeast tribune, built in 1952 for the 1953 World Cup.
Freestanding dressing room buildings in the Northwest of the racecourse, as they trace the original dressing room courtyard.

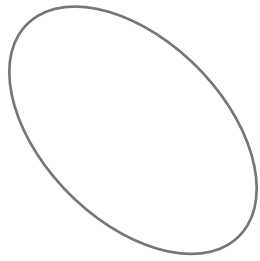
[...]

GEMEINDE	BEZIRK	EINSTUFUNG	RRB	
Zürich-Oerlikon	Zürich	kantonal	Verf. BD	
OBJEKT	Offene Rennbahn Zürich-Oerlikon, Garderoben- und Tribünengebäude mit Restaurant Rennbahnstübli		Inv. Nr.	
ORTSLAGE	Oerlikon Ost		Vers. Nr.	27200792, 27200802
STRASSE	Dörflistrasse 90 (a-m)			
EIGENTÜMER	Stadt Zürich		WR Nr.	
DATIERUNG	1912			
ARCHITEKT	Sander & Cie. bzw. Ing. Jaro Polivka (1886—1960); Richard Ludwig (*1886), Dresden u. a. (vgl. Baugeschichte)		inv.	Aug. 2015 / R. M.
BAUTYP	Sportgebäude; Velorennbahn		rev.	
Andere Inventare -				
ISOS ORTSBILD	BAND -	EINSTUFUNG -	KGS	-
ISOS EINZELOBJEKT	-		BF	
ISOS SIEDL. TYP	-		INSA	ZH, S. 208, 209, 289
SCHUTZ	-		KDM	-

Situation



Interview with the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon



28.09.22

LC: What is your story?

OR: My story hardly matters. I was built more than one hundred ago years by some innovators, or maybe just investors. But they have been wanting to tear me back down ever since.

LC: How so?

OR: It is simple, really. The land I am standing on is worth much more than I will ever be. Although some might argue that it is me they should thank for that. Nowadays, not that many people come to visit me. I remain closed on 343 days of the year. In the early days, more than 10'000 people ventured out from the city just to see my races! But in recent decades, the numbers are lower, much lower... When I was built, I was standing on an open field. But soon after that, some official people started drafting plans for roads, for building plots, for infrastructure. What followed is a story of urbanization often told. Nowadays you can hardly notice me among my neighbors. But maybe having kept in hiding is what kept me safe all these years.

LC: So that is how you survived, for 120 years now?

OR: Well not only by hiding! I did have some friends over the years, but in the end they all abandoned me, either out of profit or because they died. Concrete is sturdier than bone after all.

LC: But time cracks even concrete.

OR: Yes, that is true. And were it not for some of my more reliable friends and caretakers, I would have turned to dust long ago. They kept mending my wounds, sometimes going almost to far. My original skin has not seen the sun in almost 50 years. But maybe it does not make sense to talk about originality, I am still myself after all. A facelift is common practice nowadays, is it not?

LC: Well yes, but I think that is a bit beside the point... What is your true, inner self?

OR: My true self? Sometimes I feel that my essence

is void. I am just a vessel; I have had countless uses. Do you know how many bicycle tires I have worn down over the years? How much triumph, despair, joy, community I have been witness to? I have hosted world championships, even horse-riding competitions, a mini golf course, Christmas markets, birthday celebrations...

LC: And you have also been used as a parking lot, no?

OR: ...

LC: Sorry. So, you are a vessel for community? I like that very much.

OR: Yes, I also like to see it that way. It makes me proud to think that I have brought people closer together. But not everyone sees it that way. Did you know that I belong to the city? They acquired the land on which I stand in 1951, as a land reserve. But at some point, they realized that my concrete was still too young, not brittle enough, so they decided to let time wear me down.

LC: Actually, time is something that I would like to talk about with you. Your life, or maybe the life that can take place within you, is very closely linked to the changing of the seasons, is it not?

OR: Yes, that is true. I am most beautiful on warm summer evenings. I am not very attractive when it rains. And the Winters I spend mostly alone, under blankets of snow. What exactly is your point about time?

LC: I am not sure. But you do spend quite a lot of time on your own.

OR: I would not necessarily say so. Someone or other is always close by. Be it my friends, or a vagrant that snuck in, or a group of youngsters that have climbed over my fences. Over the decades, I have been visited by a great number of people, enough for many more lifetimes. But I will not deny it, recent years have been lonelier than most before that. But change is constant, and perhaps more people will find their way in the coming years.

LC: Yes, they might, but they also might not. And then you could die a final death, you could be erased.

OR: Then so be it! I would rather be torn down than turned into something that I am not. I am an arena made for cycling, an ideal streamlined form. I do not want to become anything else. I only want to open myself up to the world...



Image by author



Historical Overview

This chapter will focus on the historical developments and actors that led to the creation of the Offene Rennbahn and its continued existence until today.

Main sources for this research include: Archival photographic material from the Baugeschichtliches Archiv Zürich and the ETH Bildarchiv; For archival plans, the Kantonale Denkmalpflege (courtesy of Pietro Wallnöfer) was kind enough to share their collected materials with me; Factual information included in the timeline and the visual chronology are mainly from Peter Schnyder's book *Rennbahn Oerlikon* from 2012, the only printed book on the history of the Offene Rennbahn, currently no longer available for sale, but luckily available for loan in the library system of the ETH.

The historical research relies heavily on these archival documents to reconstruct the complex interplay of actors and exterior and interior forces that have shaped the Offene Rennbahn into what we can find today. Although much of the physical structure has been replaced or demolished over the years, we can still find these traces if we know where to look. In this way, the Offene Rennbahn can be read as an urban palimpsest, a layering of histories on top of one another. By way of the past, might we find a better path to the future? This is the hope and aspiration of this historical overview.

Timeline

continues for
25 centimeters

Other events

28.07.1914
WWI breaks out

11.11.1918
WWI ends

01.09.1939
WWII breaks out

01.01.1934
Eingemeindung of
Zürich-Oerlikon

02.09.1945
WWII ends

1953
13 race days
6000 tickets per event

16.07.1970
Volksmotion for the conservation
of the Offene Rennbahn is
submitted with 10'261 signatures
against the decision of the
Gemeinderat (48 to 16) to
demolish

12.12.1979
Motion by Karl Graf to move the
property to the non-realizable
assets (sports facilities)

09.01.2003
IGOR ("Interessengemeinschaft
offene Rennbahn Oerlikon")
is founded

Directors

Fritz Schleuss

Paul Suter

Heinrich Hächler

Schweizerischer Rennfahrer Verband (SRV)
President – Hans Maag
Wednesday evening races

– Rolf Castelnuovo – Hans Maag

Sepp Vögeli

Werner Benz

Urs Freuler

Alois Iten (IGOR)

Races

06.11.1913
6-Day Americaine
(only race of the season)

25.08.1912
Swiss Track Championships,
races every Sunday

1923
UCI Track Cycling
World Championships

1921
22 races
races and wrestling matches
take place

1922
races and wrestling matches
take place

1936
UCI Track Cycling
World Championships

1942
? races

1943
? races, speedway,
boxing and wrestling matches

1946
UCI Track Cycling
World Championships

1948
Wednesday evening races
are introduced

1953
13 race days
6000 tickets per event

1961
? races
5250 tickets/event

1968
8 races
1500 tickets/event

Tuesday evening races
are introduced

1965
? races
3100 tickets/event

1967
? races
1000 tickets/event

1972
19 races
? tickets/event

1982
up to 22
races/season

1990
up to 25
races/season

1998-2002
84 races

2003-today

Building
activity

December 1911
First draft by the Architect
Ludwig (Leipzig)

1912
Construction of the racetrack
and tribunes by Sander & Cie

11.03. 25.08.
1912

Spring 1926
Planting of poplars and
red fir trees around the track

1927
Proposal for a covered
racetrack (Arch. J. Geiger),
not realized

01.11.1939
Opening of the Hallenstadion
(Arch. K. Egender)

1943
Installation of a
speedway racetrack
(15'000 CHF)

05.06.1971
Cleaning initiative
by SRV

1972-1975: Tribune
1975 Fall: Kabinenhof
1976/77: Umzäunung

No races due to poor
concrete work!

1979
Renovation works
for 1'450'000 CHF

1986-1990
Offene Rennbahn is
inventarised (Inventar
der kunst- und
kulturhistorischen
Schutzobjekte von
kommunaler Bedeutung)

1983
Renovation works
for 3'750'000 CHF
(South tribune and minigolf
are demolished, new
canalisation and dressing
rooms)

1990
Emergency renovation
works for 980'000 CHF

2018-2020
Renovation works
for 4'900'000 CHF

Tenants

AG Hallenstadion
1939-1941

1948

AG Hallenstadion
15'000 CHF rent
per year

31.12.1971

Hans Maag

Irma Maag

1982-1983

AG Hallenstadion

2002

2003

IGOR

Owners

Sportplatz-
gesellschaft
Oerlikon

John Lemm

1920-1922

Olympia AG /
AG für sportliche
Unternehmen

Theo Hotz

1942-1943

Fritz Maurer

1951

Stadt Zürich

Land value

1912
262'211.45 CHF (including construction)

1942
200'000 CHF

1943
300'000 CHF

1951
940'000 CHF

1979
5'850'000 CHF

2012
50'000'000 CHF

1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010

Building Biographies

Commissioners & Owners

1912-1920 Sportplatzgesellschaft Oerlikon

Guido Meyer (1875-1932)
President of the Sportplatzgesellschaft
Born in Aargau, Guido Meyer soon began working in the railway business after quitting high-school. Beginning his career at the Nordostbahn, Meyer migrated to Zürich and began working for the Strassenbahn Zürich-Oerlikon in 1897, when it was still under construction. He ultimately went on to become its director, and was a founding member of the Sportplatzgesellschaft Oerlikon, which was responsible for the construction of the Offene Rennbahn. He would later also own the *Zugerbergbahn*, the *elektrische Strassenbahnen Zug*, the *Uetlibergbahn*, the *Wetzikon-Meilen-Bahn*, the *Dampfschiffgesellschaft auf dem Zugersee*, the *Uster-Oetwil-Bahn* and the *Süd-Ost-Bahn*, as well as the *Limmattal-Strassenbahn*. His necrologue does not mention his involvement in the creation of the Offene Rennbahn, and it would seem that this was just one of countless enterpreneurial ventures taken by the industrious Guido Meyer.

– , “Eine bekannte Persönlichkeit des Eisenbahnwesens gestorben,” *Neue Zürcher Nachrichten*, 27.10.1932.
Walter Aeberli, *Tram und Bus in Affoltern, 1903–2018, Projekte und Realitäten*, 2018, p. 24.

Albert Rathgeb (1855-1923)
Vice president of the Sportplatzgesellschaft
Rathgeb was Kantonsrat ZH from 1902-1908, and Gemeinderatspräsident from 1911-1920. He was a founding member of the Strassenbahn Zürich-Oerlikon-Seebach and acted as vice president of the board of directors and as vice president of the direction. From 1914-1923 he was also president of the Equine Insurance cooperative (*Pferdeversicherungsgenossenschaft*) Zürich.

NZZ, 29.01.1923, Obituaries

Willy Wichmann (1879-1950)
Sports director of the Sportplatzgesellschaft
Wichmann was president of the Swiss Cycling Federation (SRB) from 1910 to 1934. He was well-known for his extensive knowledge in the field of sports cycling, but also for his personal engagement in the question of road safety for cyclists, and was among others an important proponent for the introduction of designated cycling sections on the road (*Radfahrerstreifen*).

NZZ, 31.10.1950, Obituaries

1920-1922 John Lemm (1884-1961)

“Lemm, who was born on August 17th 1884 in Davos, started his unusual career at the turn of the century. Already at the age of 19 he won the wreath at the Federal Wrestling Competition in Zurich and in 1908 he reached the sixth place of this event. He then turned completely to wrestling, in which he acquired a legendary reputation. Twice he was proclaimed freestyle world champion in London, just before the First World War. In his first appearance he landed 21 victories [...]. In 1909, he also managed a successful test of strength against Olympic champion O’Kelly. After a series of important fights in the USA, John Lemm settled in Zürich, where he managed the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon in the twenties and led it to great prosperity with excellent programs. Later he took over the post of hut keeper on Weißfluhgipfel, and he spent the evening of his life in the old people’s home in Davos.”

DieTat, 29.06.1961, Nr.175, p. 6

1922-1942 Olympia AG / AG für sportliche Unternehmen

Led by the Zürich-based jeweler Billians, and later by book-print Jacques Bollman in collaboration with the Swiss Cycling federation, the Olympia AG (later: AG für sportliche Unternehmen) managed to bring the Offene Rennbahn to the international stage, when the UCI Track Cycling World Championships of 1923 were held in Oerlikon. This was the first time that the World Championships were held in a small town such as Oerlikon, as the prior events had all been hosted in metropolises such as Paris and Chicago. Almost two decades of successful and lucrative race activities were abruptly halted by the arrival of the second World War, which led the AG into financial ruin.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 26-31

1942-1943 Theo Hotz (senior)

Not much is known about Theo Hotz (senior), other than that he was a real estate dealer in Zürich, and the father of Theo Hotz (junior), who would go on to become an important figure in the architectural scene of Zürich and Switzerland. While Hotz (senior) was originally planning to demolish the Offene Rennbahn to further develop the area, the difficult

war years turned the unlikely candidate into a race organiser with no prior experience. But low numbers of spectators soon made it impossible for Hotz to finance the upkeep of the Offene Rennbahn, and he resold the racetrack to Fritz Maurer in 1943.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 31-32

1943-1951 Fritz Maurer (1913-?)

Fritz Maurer was a businessman first and foremost. Under his leadership, so-called *Reklame-Renntage* were organized, where companies could hold the patronage of a race-day for 5’000 CHF. He also had a speedway racetrack installed, and organized motorcycle races, boxing and wrestling matches in addition to the cycling races. Maurer’s highly speculative leadership led the Offene Rennbahn into financial ruin, which would ultimately prompt the sale of the property to the city of Zürich in 1951. In later years, after his involvement with Offene Rennbahn was long over, Maurer was sentenced to three and a half years in prison due to more than a hundred instances of fraud and financial misconduct.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 32-33
–, “Strafreudktion für Fritz Maurer,” *Die Tat*, 26.01.1974, p. 7

1951-today Stadt Zürich

In 1951, the Gemeinderat of Zürich agreed to a motion by the Stadtrat to purchase the land of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon for 940’000 CHF from Fritz Maurer. At this point in time, the racetrack was located in the “Grünzone” and it was the city’s declared intention from the very beginning to purchase the plot as a land reserve, with no interest in a long-term operation of the racetrack.

–, “Ankauf der Rennbahn Oerlikon durch die Stadt Zürich,” *Bieler Tagblatt*, 16.07.1951, p. 7
–, “Das Schicksal der offenen Radrennbahn Zürich-Oerlikon,” NZZ, 17.02.1952, p. 6

The story of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon is one of repeatedly speculative practices, and the main motivation would seem to have always been financial gain through the attraction of spectators. But the relationship with the sport was and is symbiotic; the athletes and the sport itself were able to profit at least as much as the investors. And in the hands of the city, the Rennbahn is no longer obliged to make a profit.



Members of the Sportplatzgesellschaft Oerlikon?
Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_168602



Tramdirektor Guido Meyer
Neue Zürcher Nachrichten, 27.10.1932



Wrestling Champion John Lemm
Tribune de Genève, 28.04.1913, p. 8

A Visual Chronology

1892-1911

Until 1911, Carl Bockhorn operates an open racetrack in the city of Zürich at Hardau. The expansion of the adjacent gravel pit results in the closure and demolition of the racetrack. This development prompts the initiative to open a new racetrack in Oerlikon.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 16



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_018565

1912

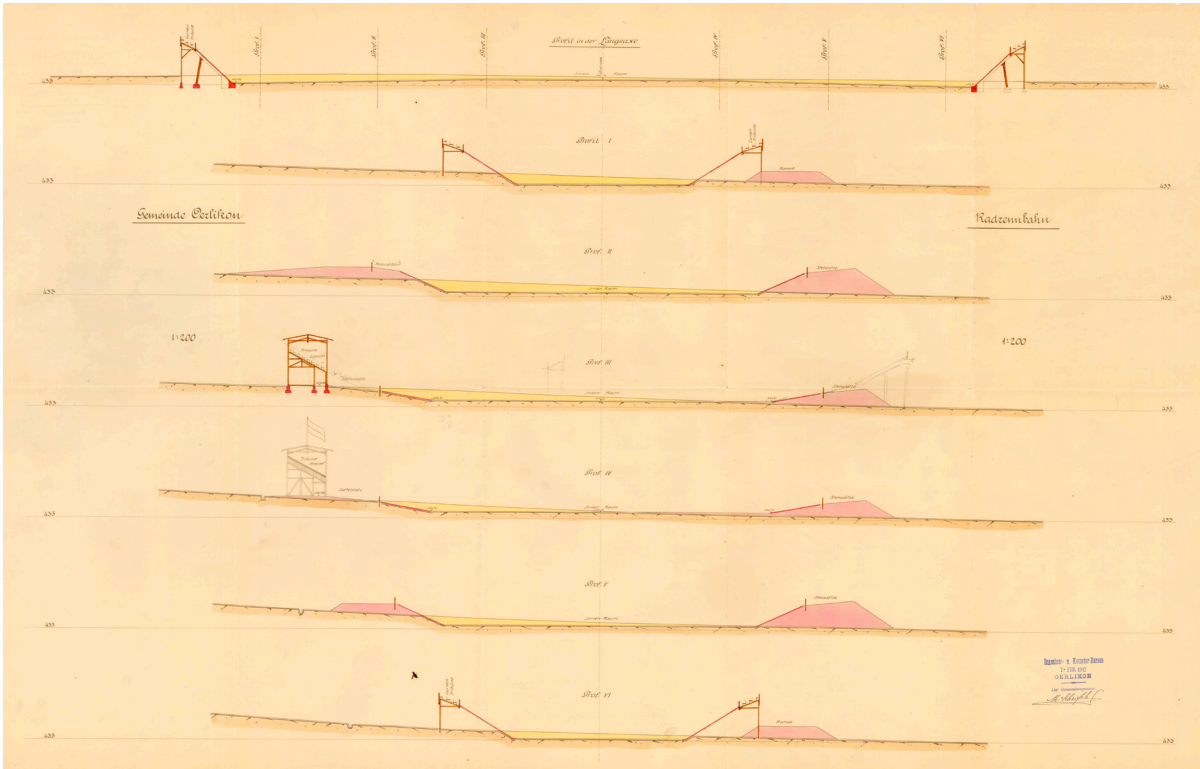
The Offene Rennbahn is constructed in 1912, under the initiative of Strassenbahndirektor Guido Meyer and Gemeindepräsident Alfred Rathgeb together with the president of the Swiss cycling federation Willy Wichmann. The racetrack is built by the company Sander & Cie, according to the plans of the German architect Richard Ludwig.

The opening ceremony of the Offene Rennbahn takes place on 25th August 1912 attracting thousands of spectators from Zürich but also across the country.

SBZ, 59/60 (1912), p. 336



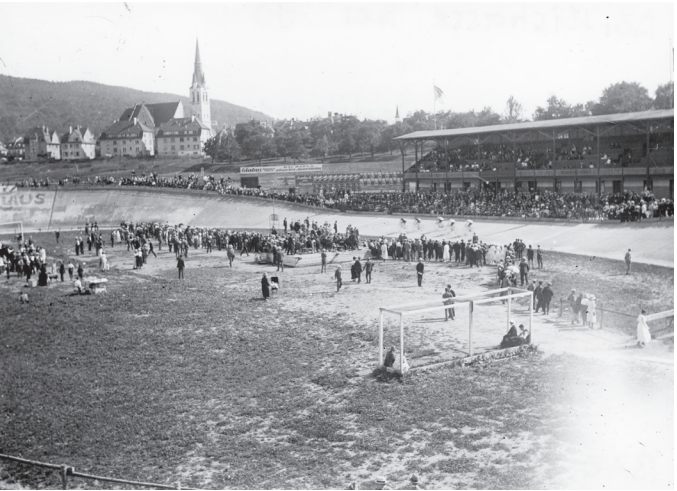
Site plan, 1912.
Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Section profiles, by architect Richard Ludwig, 1912.
Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Construction of the racetrack, 1912.
Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_168601



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_122941

1913

Due to consistently poor weather, only a single race takes place in 1913 (Drei-Stunden-Americaine, 6th November).

Schnyder, 2012, p. 22

1914-1918

World War I leads to strongly reduced race activities (no international athletes can attend the races).

Schnyder, 2012, p. 22



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, PK_0770



Aerial view of the racetrack, 1922.
ETH Bildarchiv, LBS_MH01-002777

1922

Due to financial problem, the *Offene Rennbahn* changes hands several times, first John Lemm (1920-1922) and then Olympia AG, which later becomes "AG für sportliche Unternehmen" (1923-1942) purchase the land and racetrack.

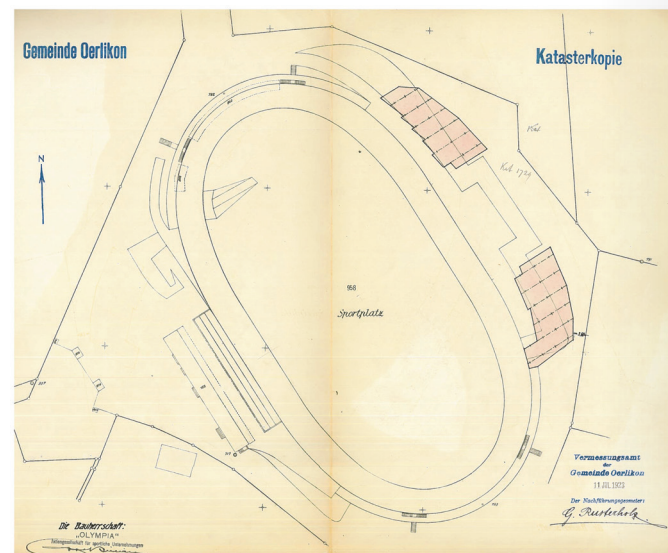
Schnyder, 2012, p. 23

1923

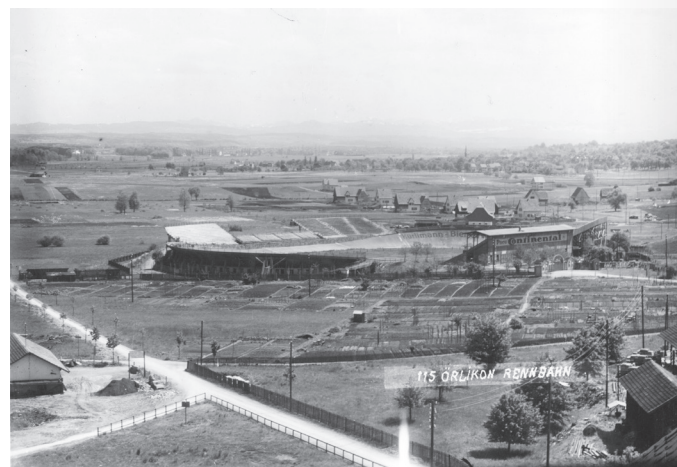
Additional tribunes made of concrete are built according to the plans of engineer Rathgeb. These tribunes would remain standing until 1981.

The historic images reveal the radicality of the building project. In 1926, the *Heimatschutz* journal laments the 'mighty' and 'ugly' nature of the racetrack, going as far as calling it a '*Landschaftsverschandelung*.' The planting of trees around the racetrack to shield the surrounding village character is received positively.

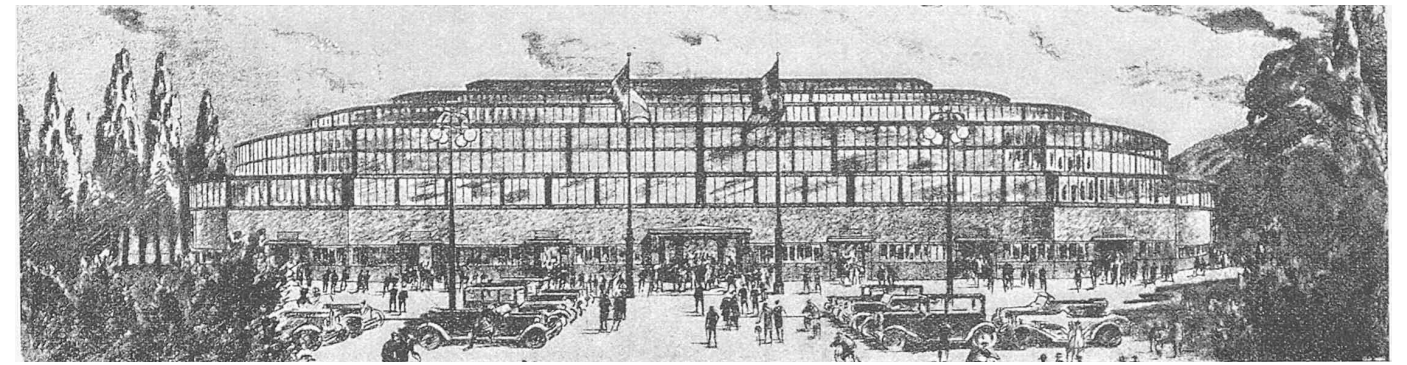
Heimatschutz, 21 (1926), p. 111-112



Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_122942



SBZ, 89/90 (1927), p. 351

1927

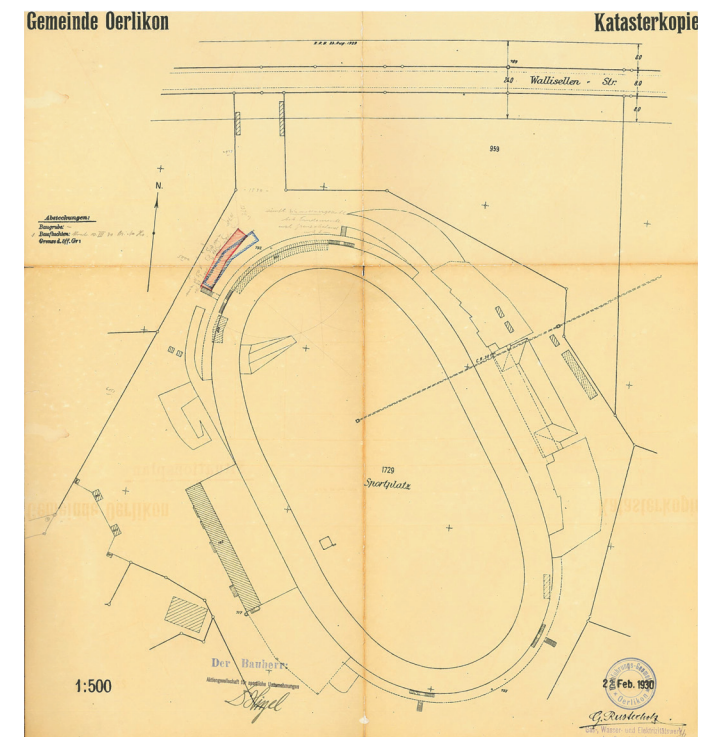
Architect J. Geiger, on behalf of the Olympia AG, creates a project for a covered exhibition and sports hall on the site of the Offene Rennbahn which would cover the existing track. The project is not realised.

1930

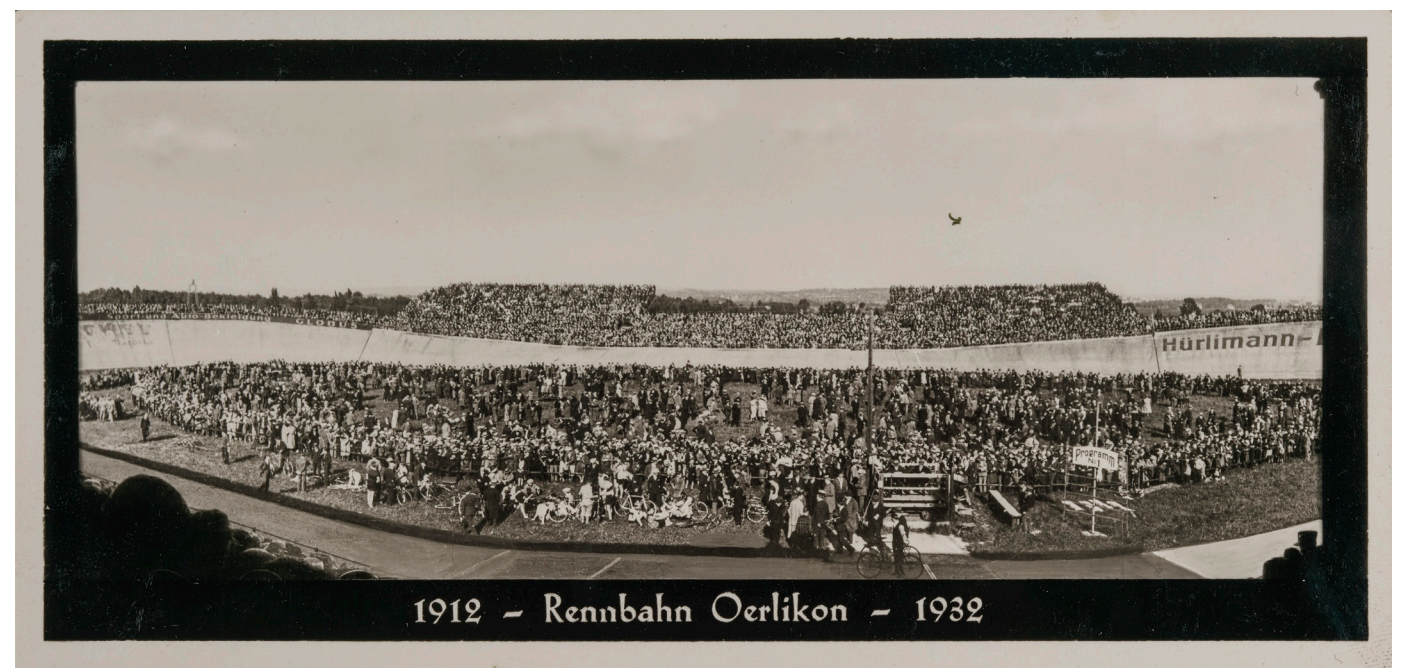
Seven additional dressing rooms for the athletes are built (architect unknown).

1932

Twenty year anniversary of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon.



Kantonale Denkmalpflege



1934

1. January, Oerlikon officially becomes part of the city of Zürich.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 22

Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_164201

1939

The Hallenstadion with indoor cycle track (250m length) opens in 1939 (architect Karl Egender).

SBZ 110, 1937, S. 210



s.n., SBZ,, 125/126 (1945),Tafel 7

1942

“AG für sportliche Unternehmen” capitulates and sells the property of 22’367,4 m2 to Theo Hotz (father of architect Theo Hotz) for 200’000 CHF. Hotz intends to demolish the racetrack, but ultimately does not, and organizes races under the management of Paul Suter (formerly at “AG für sportliche Unternehmen”).

Schnyder, 2012, p. 31-32

1943

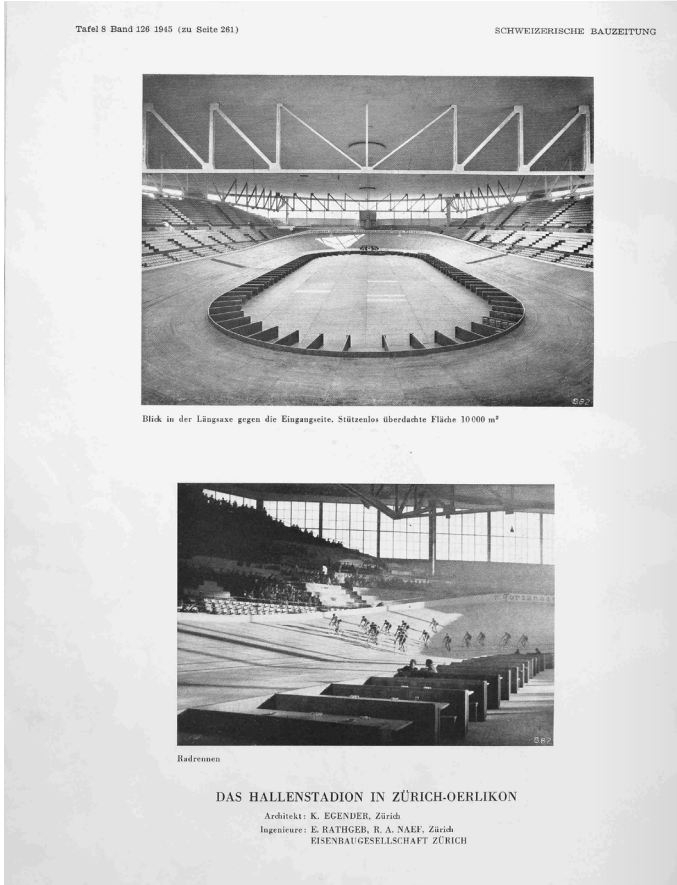
Theo Hotz capitulates and sells the property to Litography printer Fritz Maurer (Aargau) for 300’000 CHF. Races were organized under the management of Daniel Dobler. Under Maurer, races are commercialized; Firms could buy patronage of a race for 5000 CHF. For 15’000 CHF, Maurer had a Speedway-racetrack installed, and he organized motorcycle races, boxing and wrestling matches.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 33

1951

The city of Zürich buys the property (22’367.4 m2) from Fritz Maurer for 940’000 CHF. “AG Hallenstadion” remained tenants until the early 1970s, paying 15’000 CHF per year.

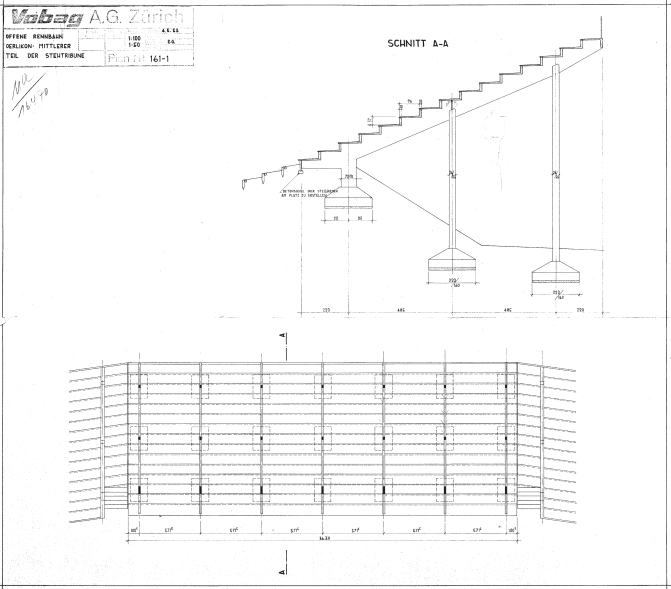
Schnyder, 2012, p. 36



s.n., SBZ,, 125/126 (1945),Tafel 8

The original tribune construction by engineer Rathgeb from 1923 is visible in the background. This structure would be torn down only in 1981. The Offene Rennbahn is an ongoing project involving countless planers and builders. Why should we tear it down now?

1953



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

In 1953, the North-West tribunes are extended, according to the plans of the architect Oscar Urech.



Chilbi next to the racetrack, 1953. ETH Bildarchiv, LBS_H1-015499



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_122951

1961

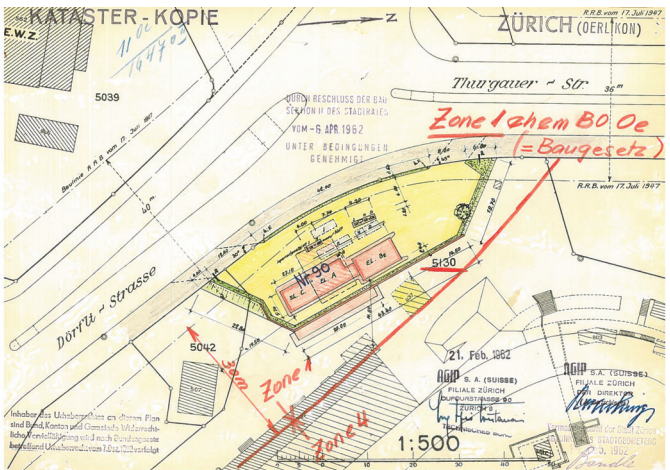
Extension of the dressing rooms for the athletes, resulting in a closed courtyard (architect unknown).

The entrance situation has been adapted several times over the past century, and has changed from ceremonial to functional to barely functional.

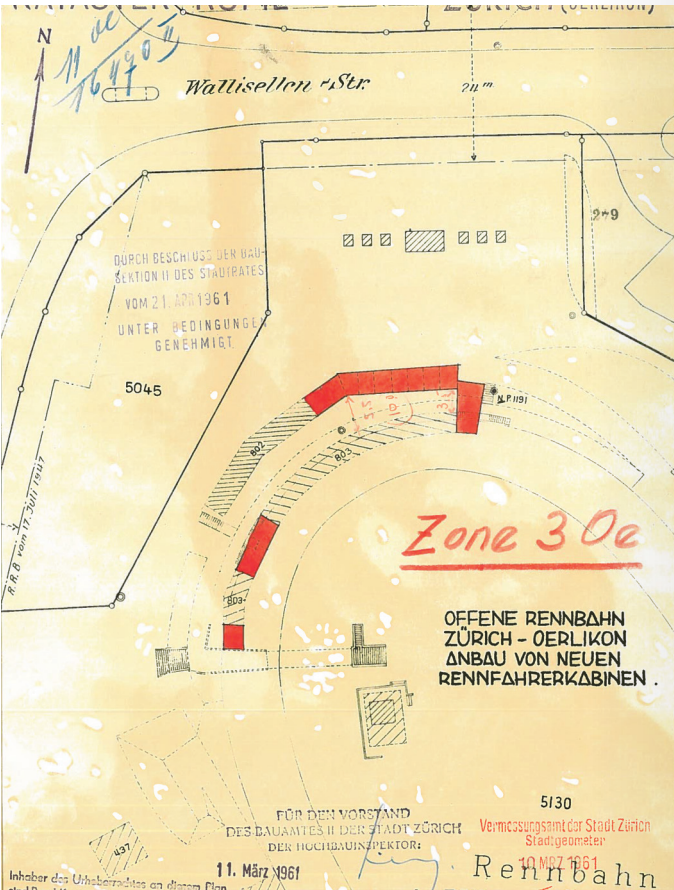


ETH Bildarchiv, Com_LC0010-184-001

1962



Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

A part of the plot is cut off, and a petrol station (Agip) is constructed. At the same time, a beer-bar is constructed for the Offene Rennbahn.

Kantonale Denkmalpflege

1963



ETH Bildarchiv, Com_L12-0072-0006-0015

1969

A first provisional exhibition hall for the Züspa is constructed adjacent to the Offene Rennbahn.

The second and even third provisional exhibiton hall would follow soon after.



NZZ, 21.09.1995, Nr. 219, p. 69

16. July. The “Radfahrer-Verband der Stadt Zürich” submits a Volksmotion with 10’261 signatures for the conservation of the open racetrack. The text of the motion read: “The city council is instructed to submit a proposal to the municipal council [...] of the city of Zurich regarding the preservation of the Oerlikon open racecourse and its expansion into a multi-purpose sports facility. The project should include the existing racetrack, an ice rink, a tribune building with an indoor sports hall and an indoor swimming pool.”

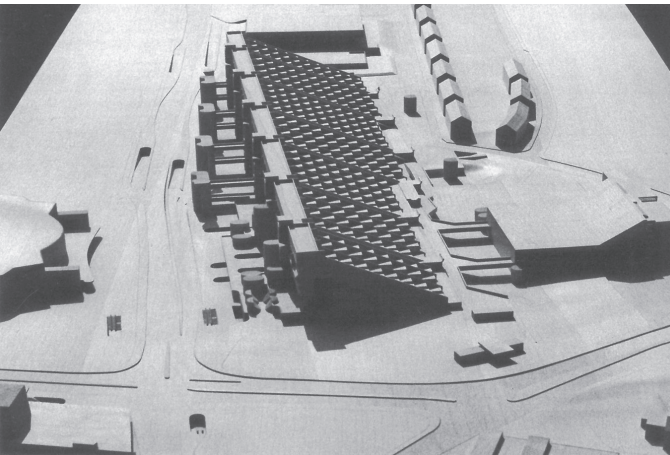
Schnyder, 2012, p. 36



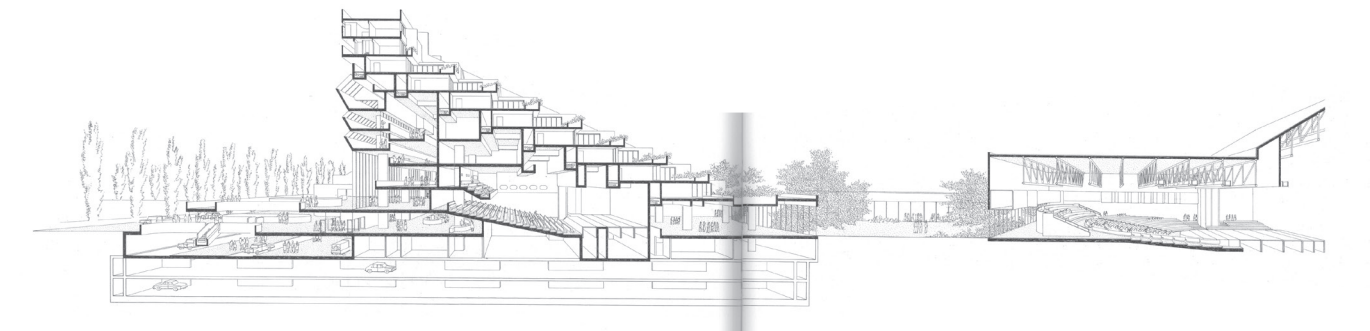
Baugeschichtliches Archiv, Com_F69-15485

1972

The city of Zürich organizes a competition for a new fair center. The competition is won by Ernst Gisel and collaborators, who propose an enormous structure that would combine exhibition halls on the ground floor and terrace housing on the roofscape of the structure. This project would have required the destruction of the Offene Rennbahn, and was never carried out due to unclear reason.

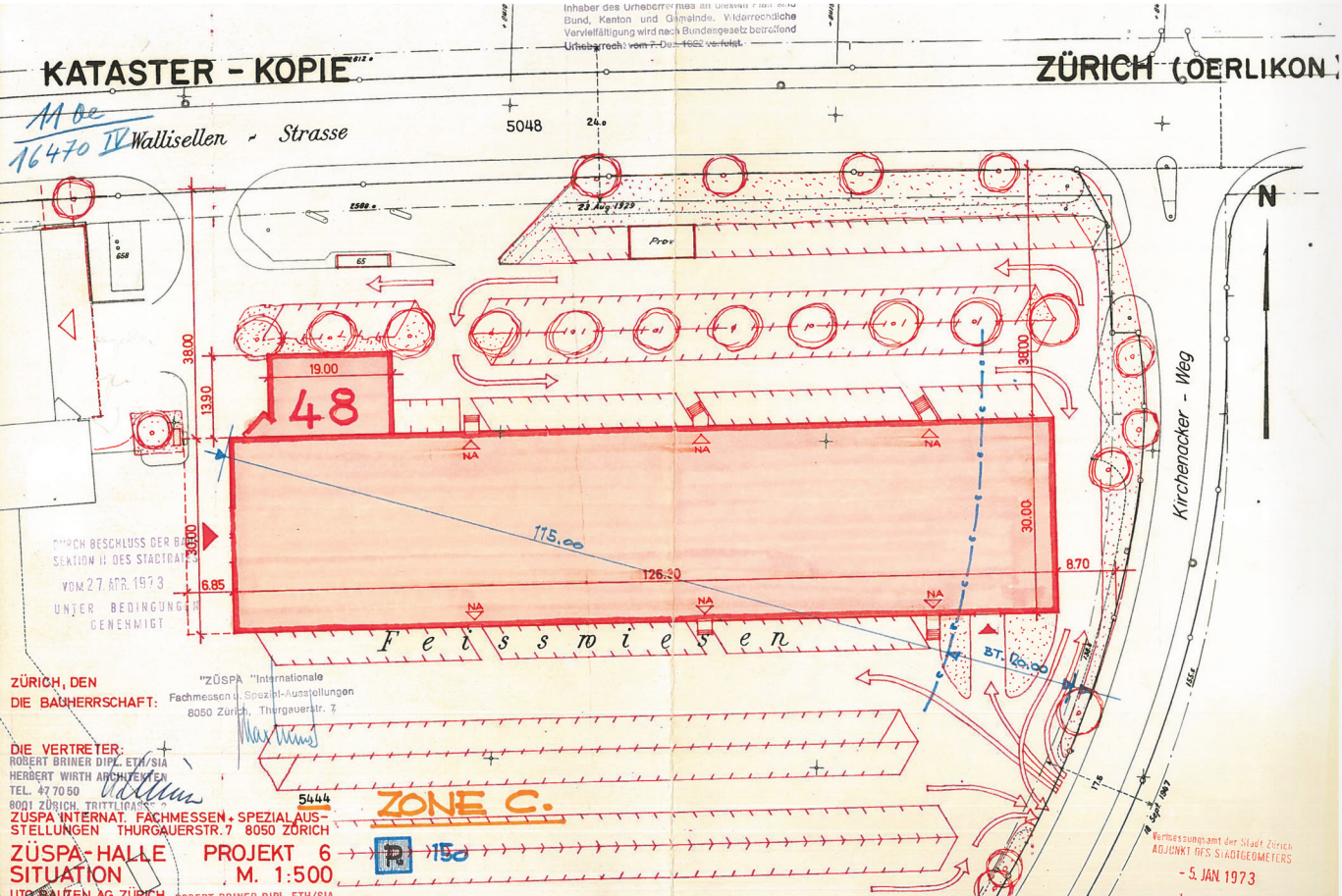


Gisel, Oechslin, Maurer. Ernst Gisel Architekt. gta-Verlag, 1993. p. 396



Gisel, Oechslin, Maurer. Ernst Gisel Architekt. gta-Verlag, 1993. p. 396-397

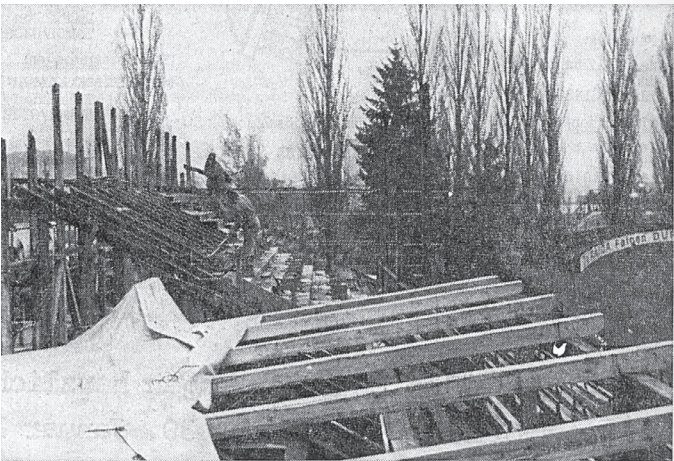
1973



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

1974

The roof of the tribune building from 1912 is torn down due to structural insufficiencies, and small renovation works are made to the toilets and offices in the ground floor of the building. This costs the city roughly 100'000 CHF.



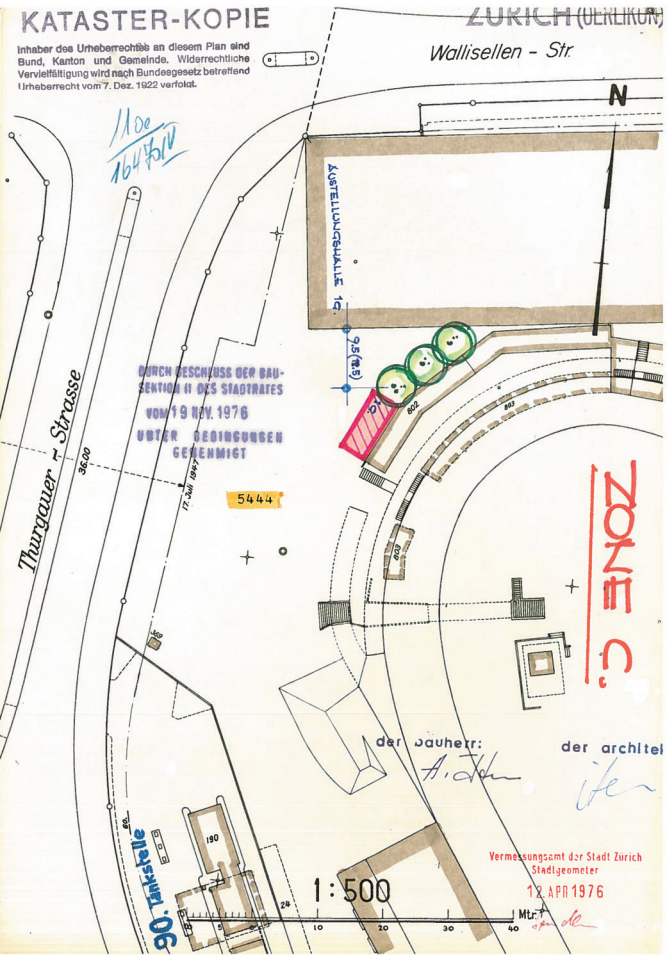
NZZ, 28.01.1974, Nr. 44, p. 25



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_122935

1976

Alois 'Wisel' Iten, who would later become the president of IGOR, receives permission to build his bicycle shack next to the *Offene Rennbahn*, where it remains until today.



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

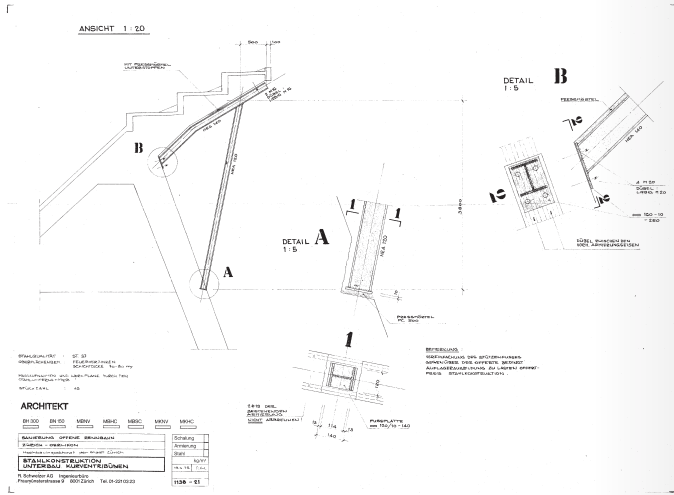


ETH Bildarchiv, Dia_287-14114

1979

The structure is renovated for 1'450'000 CHF. The city council proposes to the municipal council to transfer the property of the open racecourse from the realizable to the non-realizable assets (sports facilities). This results in an increase in value of the property of 5'850'000 CHF.

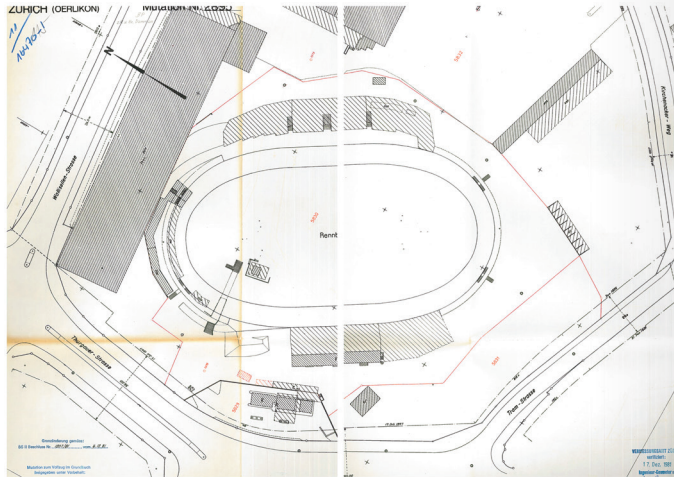
Schnyder, 2012, p. 38



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

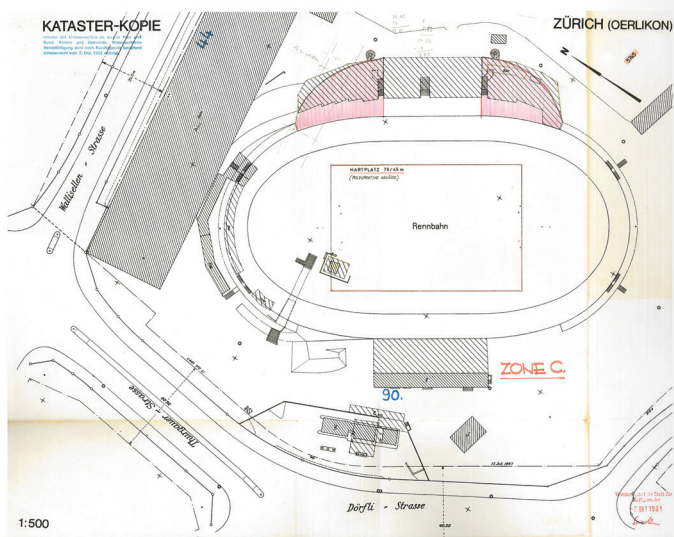
1981

In 1981, the plot is divided into four parts, as it remains until today. The four new sectors contain: 1. Offene Rennbahn, with tribunes and dressing rooms, provisional exhibition halls, the petrol station, and a barn with allotment gardens (which would later become the site for the OJA barrack).



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

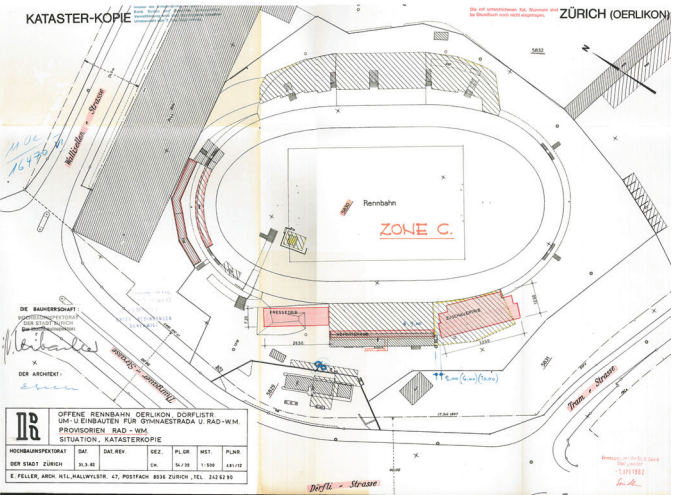
In the same year, permission is granted to replace the original tribunes by engineer Rathgeb from 1923 by new concrete tribunes, planned by the architect E. Feller.



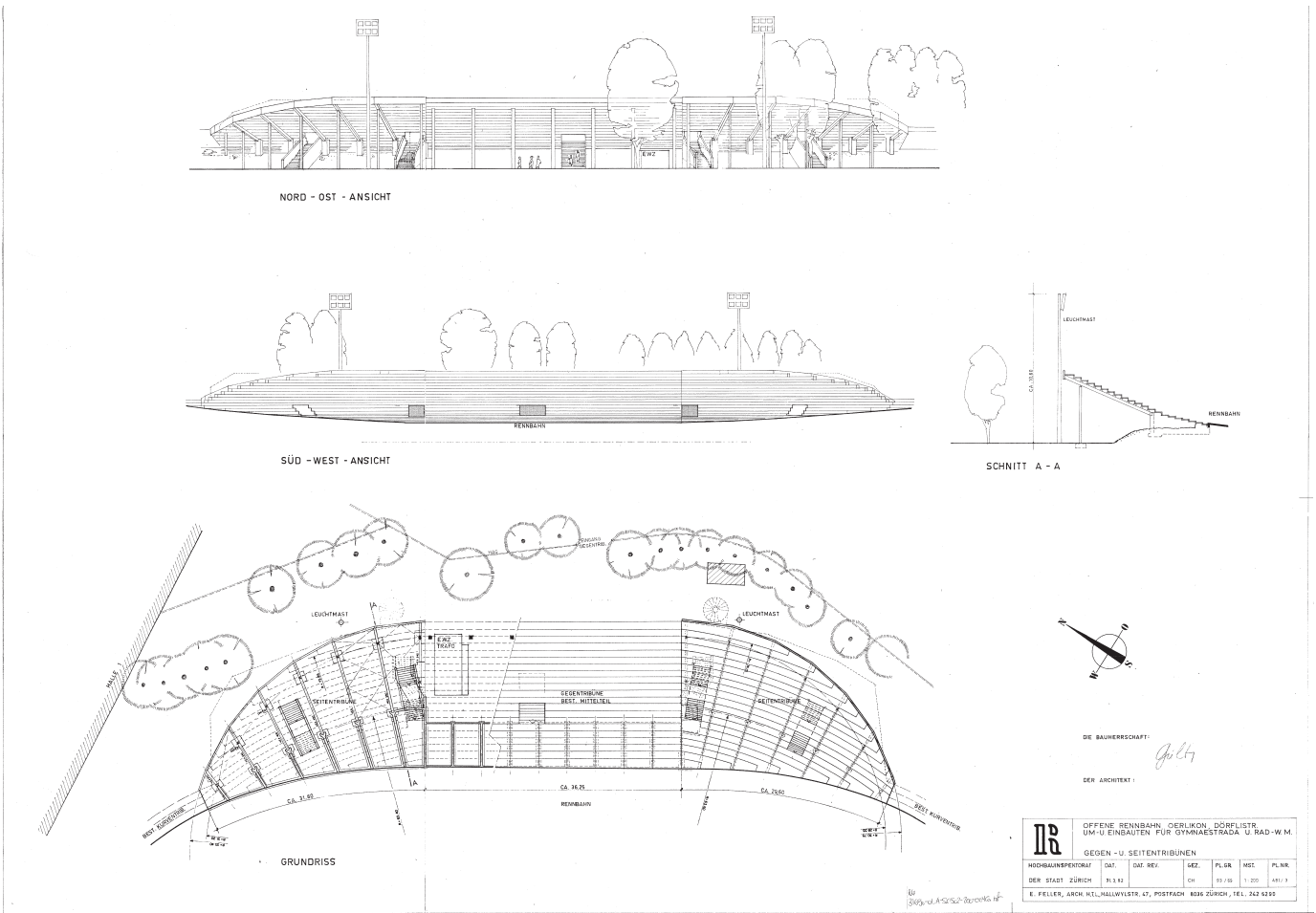
Kantonale Denkmalpflege

1982

Several modifications are made and provisional structures are built for the Gymnaestrada and Cycling World Championship, planned by the architect E. Feller.



Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

1983

The "AG Hallenstadion" becomes the tenant once more, Sepp Voegeli remains as director. Under his lead, 22 races were organized per season. The national Championships take place, 40'000 visitors come, earning AG Hallenstadion a quarter million CHF.

Schnyder, 2012, p. 39



ETH Bildarchiv, Com_LC1998-002-017

1988

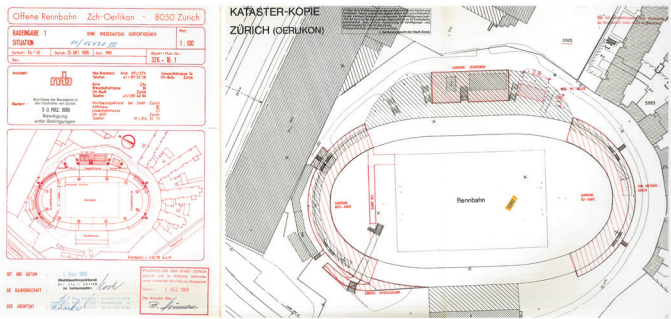


ETH Bildarchiv, Com_M37-0103-0004

1990

The Offene Rennbahn is released from the inventory of the *Kommunale Denkmalpflege*. The reason given is the poor state of the structure, which would require the destruction and replacement of the entire slope. As it would later become evident, this was not the case!

Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

1990

The OJA (Offene Jugendarbeit) youth centre is constructed on a plot adjacent to the Offene Rennbahn.



ETH Bildarchiv, Com_FC24-8011-0080

The close proximity of the Züscha exhibition halls over ten years with ongoing race activities proves that densification is a possible way forward.

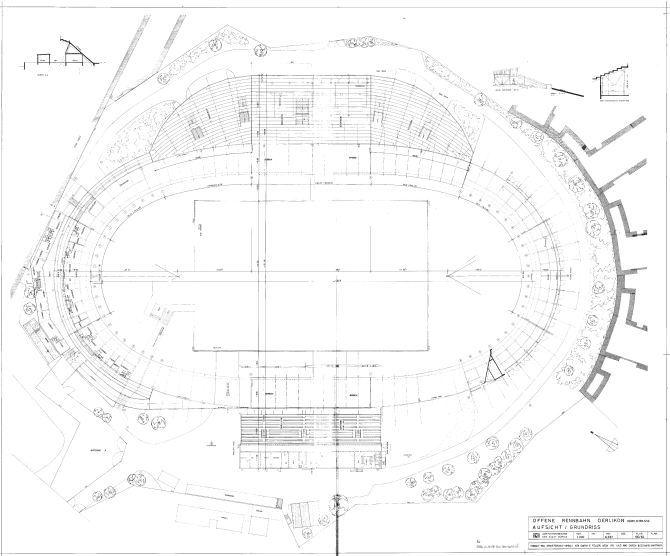
1994



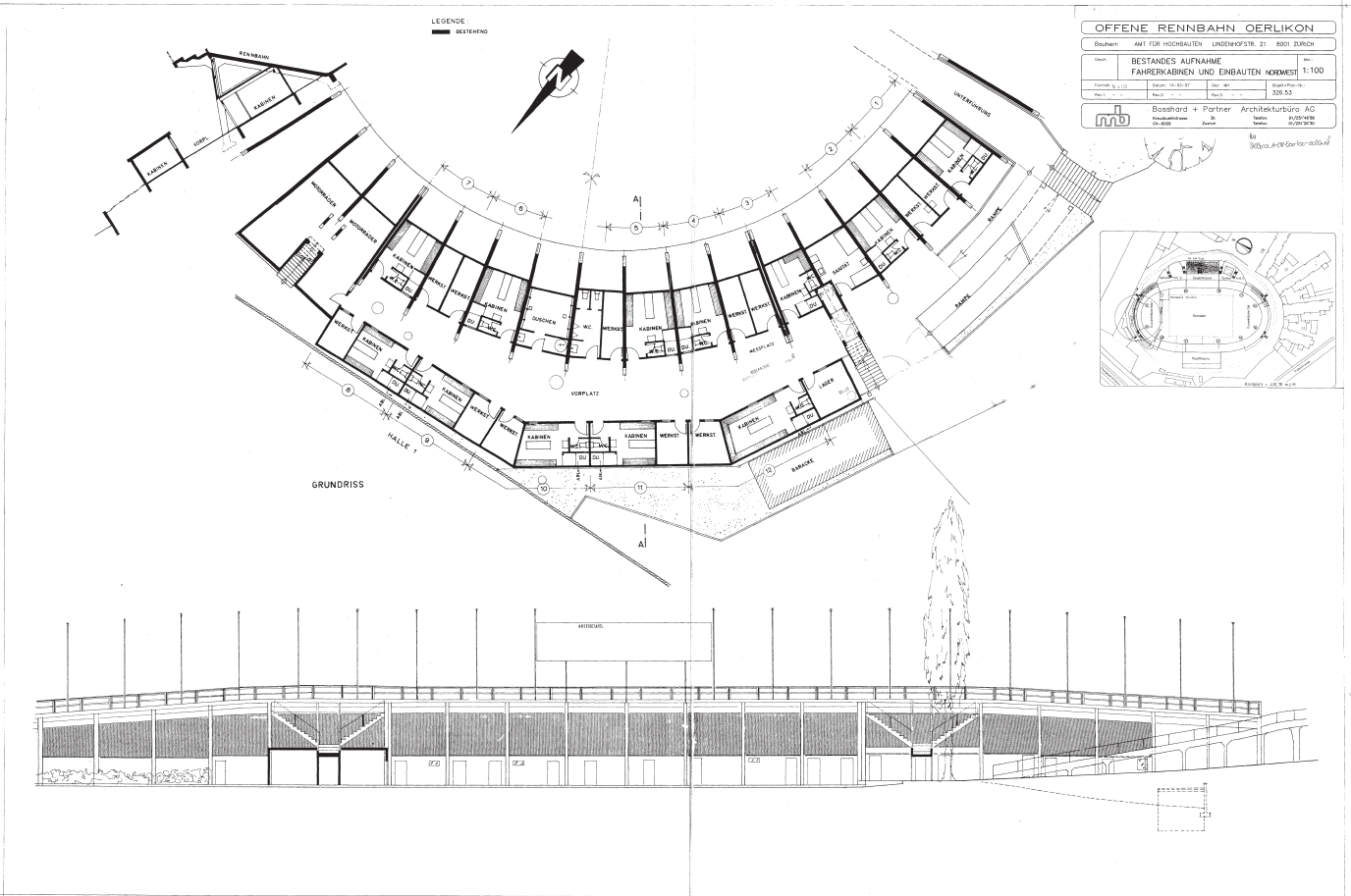
ETH Bildarchiv, LBS_L1-940584

1997

The architectural firm Bosshard + Partner create overview plans of the racetrack on behalf of the city, which are later used as a basis for the renovation of the waste water systems.



Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

2003

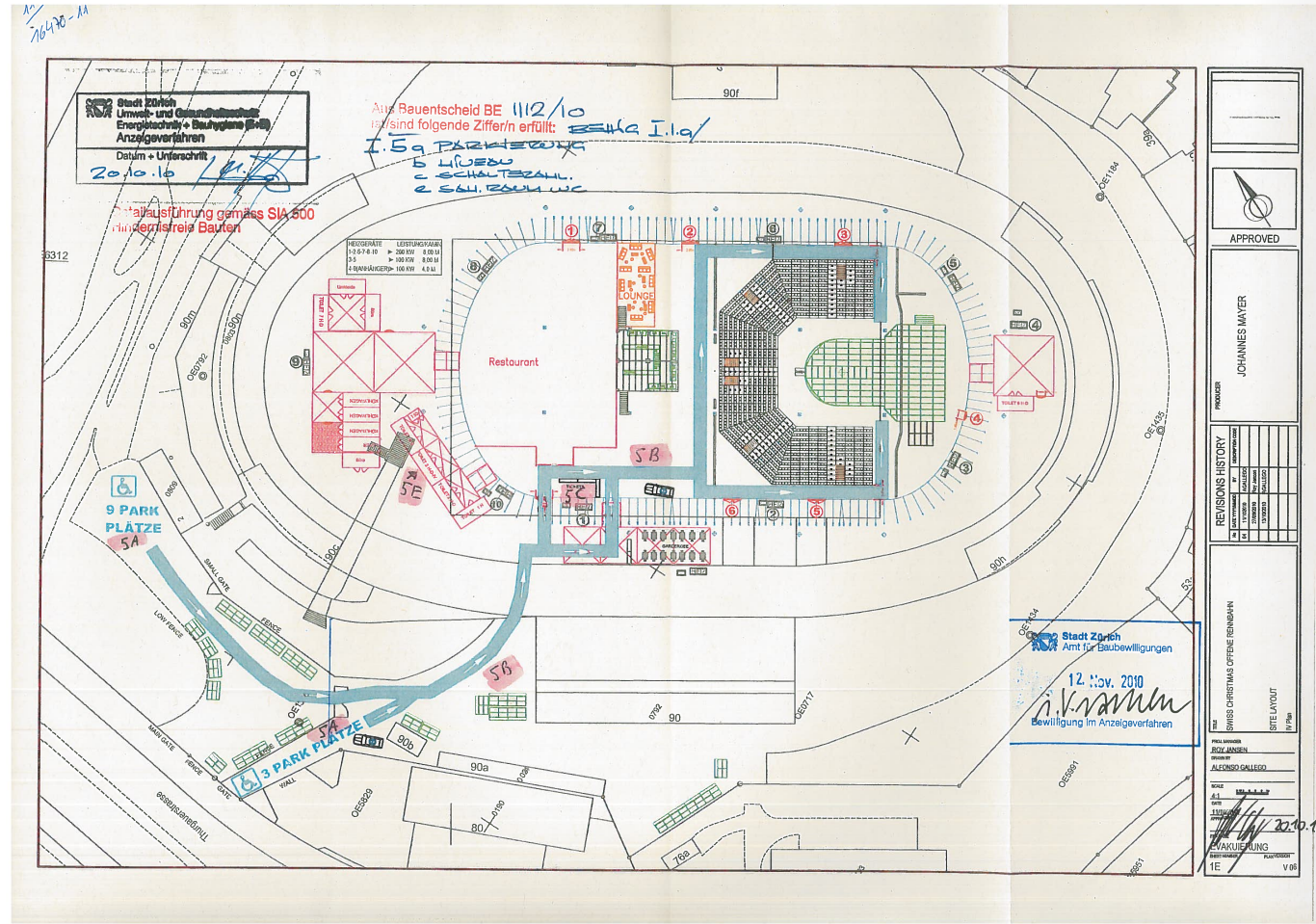
IGOR (*Interessengemeinschaft Offene Rennbahn*) takes over the organization of races and becomes the tenant. Their contract allows only activities related to sports.

Kantonale Denkmalpflege



Baugeschichtliches Archiv, BAZ_122943

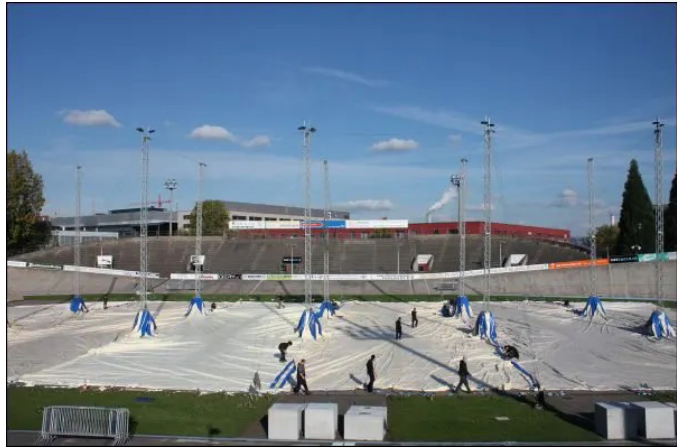
2010



Kantonale Denkmalpflege

The city gives permission to Swiss Christmas Productions AG for a Christmas circus to take place in the racetrack interior from mid-November until mid-January. As of 2018, Swiss Christmas Productions AG went bankrupt. No replacement events have been planned.

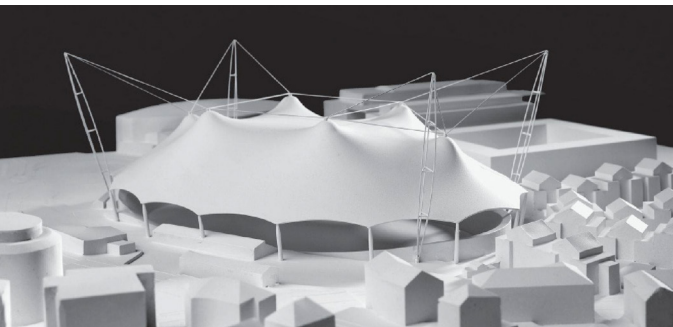
Kantonale Denkmalpflege



20 Minuten

2012

Architect Jürg Vogel develops a proposal for a roof structure that would cover the Offene Rennbahn together with engineer Ewald Bubner, who worked with Frei Otto. This would allow for a year-round use of the racetrack for cycling activities. The costs for the roof structure are estimated around 12'000'000 to 15'000'000 CHF.

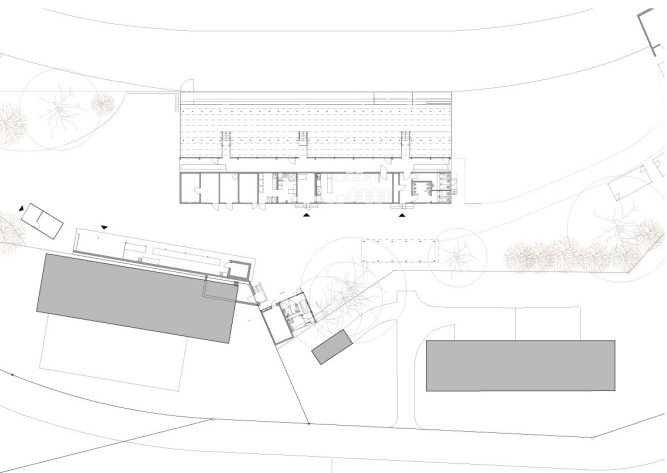


Tec21, 21 (2012), p.27

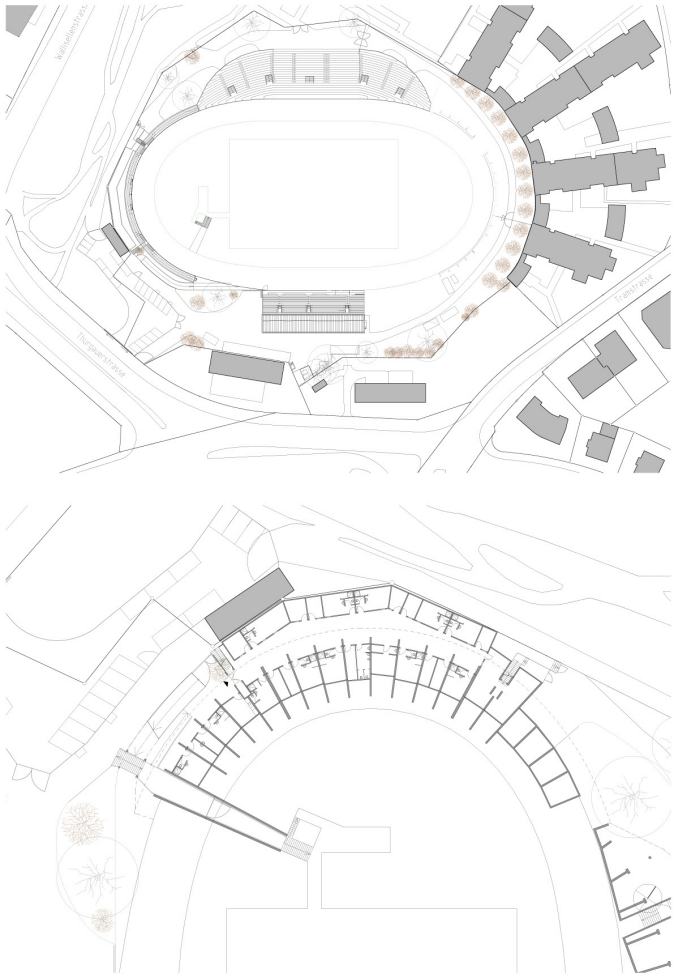
2019-2020

The City of Zürich tasks the architectural office weberbrunner architekten with the maintenance of the Offene Rennbahn. The project description reads: "The raw construction elements will be maintained with regard to safety and serviceability. All other elements (building shell, building services, finishing and surroundings) will be maintained to such an extent that they can be used until 2030 without extensive maintenance work."

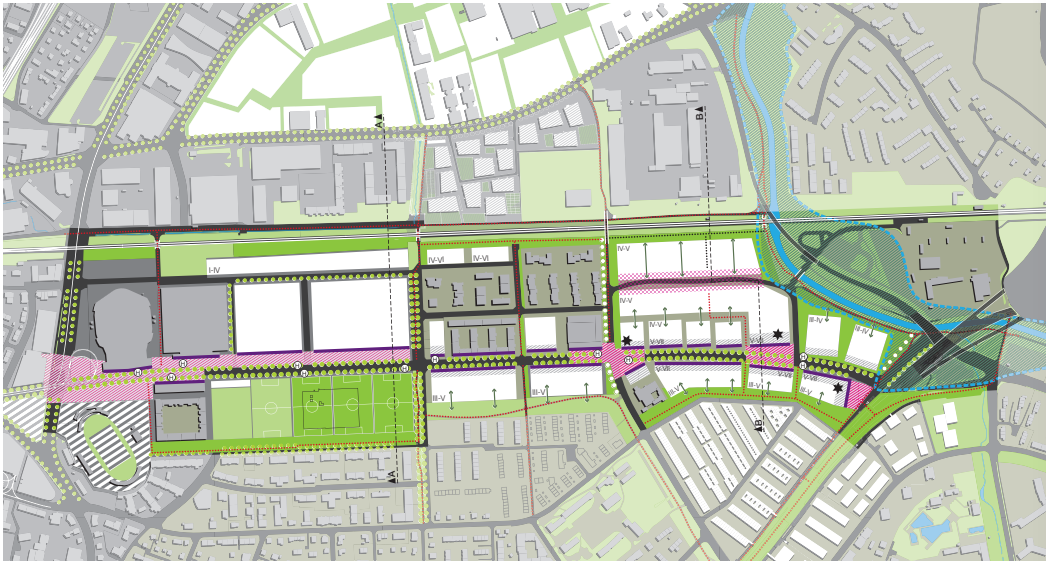
weberbrunner architekten



weberbrunner architekten



The fate of the Offene Rennbahn after 2030 is unclear. The city has designated the area as a zone for potential development, and wishes to build more than seven storeys on this plot in the coming years. However, the question of the Offene Rennbahn is an unsolved 'Politikum.' The masterplan for the Wallisellenstrasse only touches lightly upon the potential of the site, without providing a clear vision.



Städtebauliche Prinzipien und Entwicklungsziele

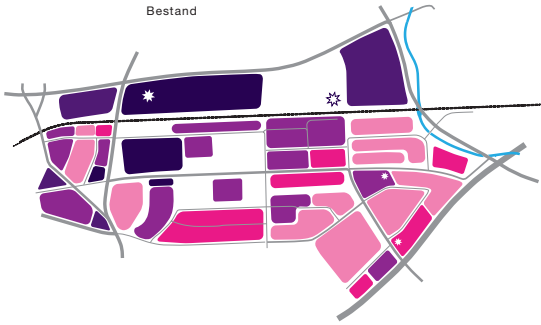
- Bebauung**
 - Neue Baufelder/Projektierte Gebäude (in Planung, Studie)
 - Entwicklungspotenzial
- Freiraum**
 - Öffentliche Freiräume Bestand
 - Neue Öffentliche Freiräume
 - Alleen bestehend
 - Alleen geplant (Alleenkonzept GSZ)
- Langsamverkehr**
 - Wichtige Fusswegeverbindungen
 - Fusswegeverbindungen optional
- Städtebauliche Prinzipien, Entwicklungsziele**
 - Bauliche Definition der Wallisellenstrasse (Besetzen der Baulinie)
 - WV Richtwerte Geschossigkeit
 - Mögliche Standorte bauliche Akzente
 - Binnen- und Erschliessungsraum; Aufenthaltsqualität autofrei, keine Parkierung, Begrünung
 - Schwerpunkte öffentlicher Raum (Fussgängerfreundlichkeit, Gestaltung)
 - Nutzungsflexible Erdgeschosszone
 - Flächen und Funktionsbereich für Grün- und Freiraumsystem Glatt
 - Verzahnung/Durchlässigkeit Bebauung-Freiraum

Nutzung
Die heute bestehende Nutzungsverteilung soll sich mit der Erneuerung und baulichen Veränderung der Quartiere südlich der Bahnlinie nicht grundsätzlich ändern. Jedoch sollen auch östlich des Riedgrabens an der Wallisellenstrasse Möglichkeiten entstehen für die Ansiedlung gewerblicher, siedlungsorientierter, allenfalls öffentlicher Nutzungen sowie Nutzungen, die der Quartiersversorgung dienen. Publikumsorientierte Nutzungen sollen im Bereich der Kreuzung Saatlenstrasse/Wallisellenstrasse konzentriert werden, wo am ehesten ein kleines Quartierzentrum entstehen könnte. Hier gibt es bereits ein grösseres Detailhandelsgeschäft. Die Erdgeschosszone entlang der Wallisellenstrasse sollte nutzungsflexibel sein (Grundriss, Raumhöhe). Ziel ist eine Belebung und urbanere Ausprägung der Wallisellenstrasse sowie eine Nutzungsergänzung und -mischung in den Wohnquartieren.

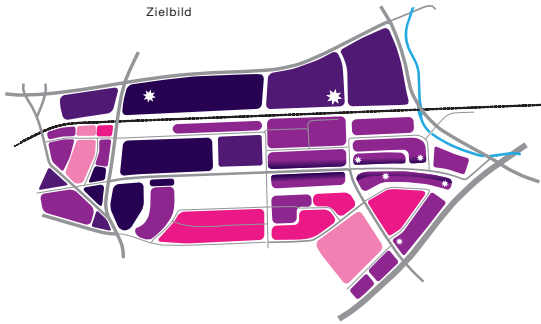
Mögliche baulich-räumliche Vision für das neue Stadtquartier



- Erdgeschossnutzung**
 - Wohnen
 - Publikumsorientierte Nutzungen, Verkauf, Quartierzentrum
 - Nutzungsflexible Erdgeschosszone
 - Übergeordnete öffentliche Sondernutzungen
 - Potenzial übergeordnete Sondernutzungen
 - Dienstleistung, Verwaltung, Büro
 - Gewerbe, Industrie, Infrastruktur
 - Schulen und Kirchen



- Durchschnittliche Geschossigkeit**
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4-5
 - 5-7
 - >7
 - Hochhaus/Akzent



Stadt Zürich, Amt für Städtebau

The historic research on and around the Offene Rennbahn in Zürich Oerlikon reveals a long and continous histroy, of a built structure always teetering on the brink of destruction, but saved time and time again by private and political initiatives. The city of Zürich bought the land in 1951 as a land reserve. But until now, no convincing visions for its future have been put forward.

Historic documents reveal the various states and proposals, both realised and unrealised that existed throughout the century. These states can be taken almost as different design proposals.

Historic Mapping

By looking at historic maps and cadastre plans, the development of Oerlikon in relation to the Offene Rennbahn can be clearly observed. It served as the starting point for Oerlikon's growth eastward from 1920 onward. Alongside the development of Oerlikon, the gradual population of the neighboring plots of the Offene Rennbahn can also be observed, explaining why some things are the way they are today. The Offene Rennbahn, urbanistically speaking, has remained largely unchanged for over 100 years, an active participant and witness in Oerlikon's evolution from a village on the outskirts of Zürich to a vital part of the city's cultural and financial identity.

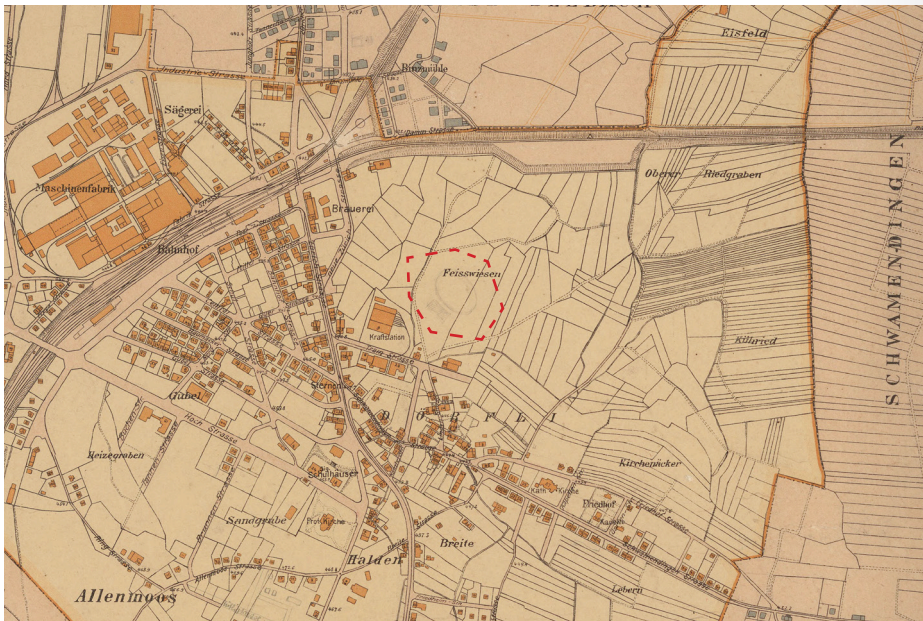
ETH Bildarchiv, LBS_SR01-02407-27



1910

While the outline of the Offene Rennbahn is already indicated lightly in pencil on this map (right next to the Tramdepot!), Oerlikon is still very much a village in character. Agricultural fields with few pathways stretch eastward, where the Offene Rennbahn would later be built. At this point in time, the Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon (MFO) must be considered the driving factor for the development of Oerlikon.

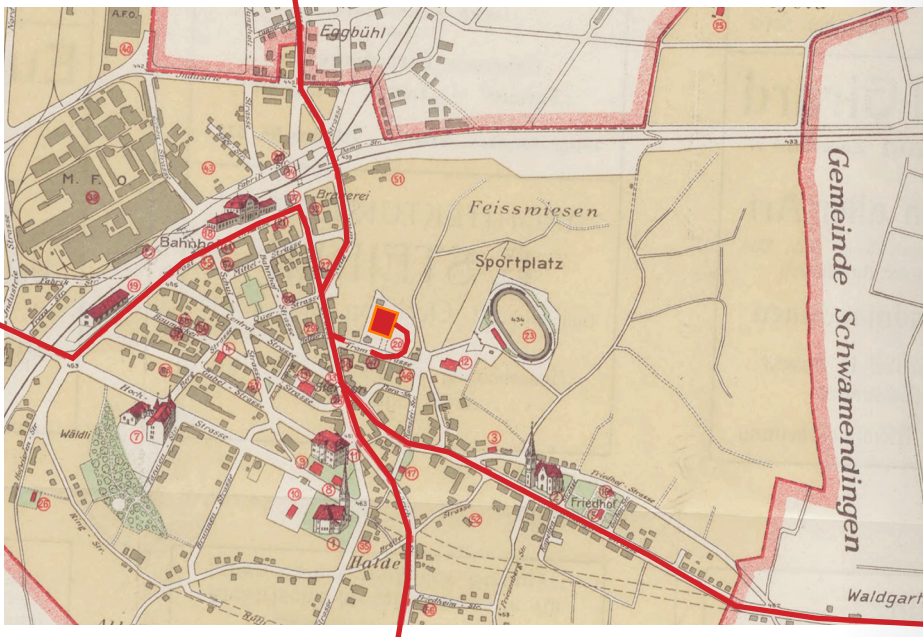
Staatsarchiv Zürich



1914

This map shows the situation shortly after the Rennbahn was constructed. The connection to the Tram-depot (the red square to the left of the Rennbahn) highlights how well Oerlikon was already connected to Zürich by transport infrastructure. The Offene Rennbahn attracted many visitors that paid for transport by tram, much to the profit of the director of the tram company, G. Meyer, who was one of the initiants of the Offene Rennbahn enterprise.

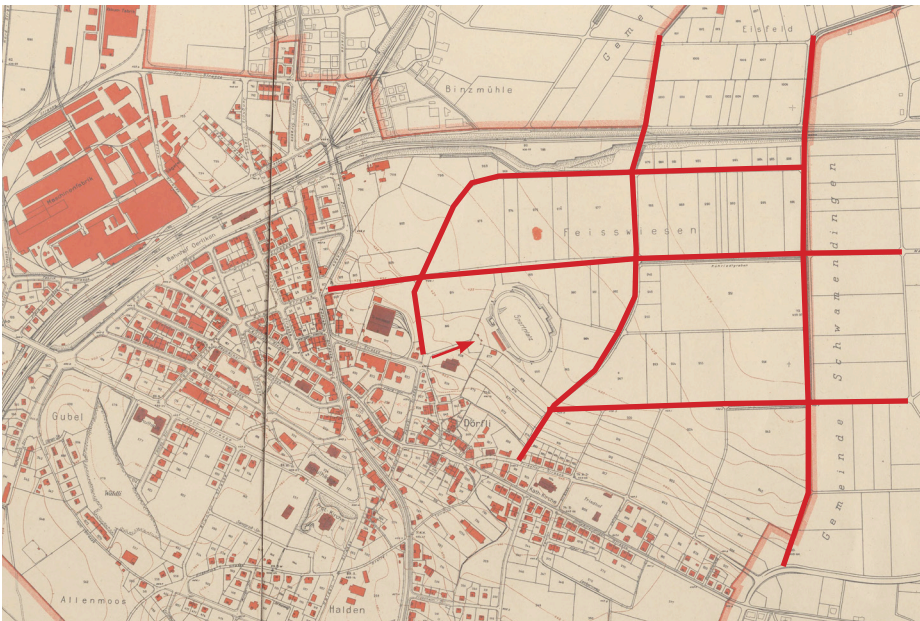
Staatsarchiv Zürich, PLAN B 65



1921

A few years after the opening of the Offene Rennbahn, Oerlikon begins its expansion eastward. New road infrastructure is drawn and built, former agricultural fields become plots for future development. Both tram and train lines experience a growth in size, enhancing the connection of Oerlikon to Zürich and other neighboring villages, such as Wallisellen and Schwamendingen.

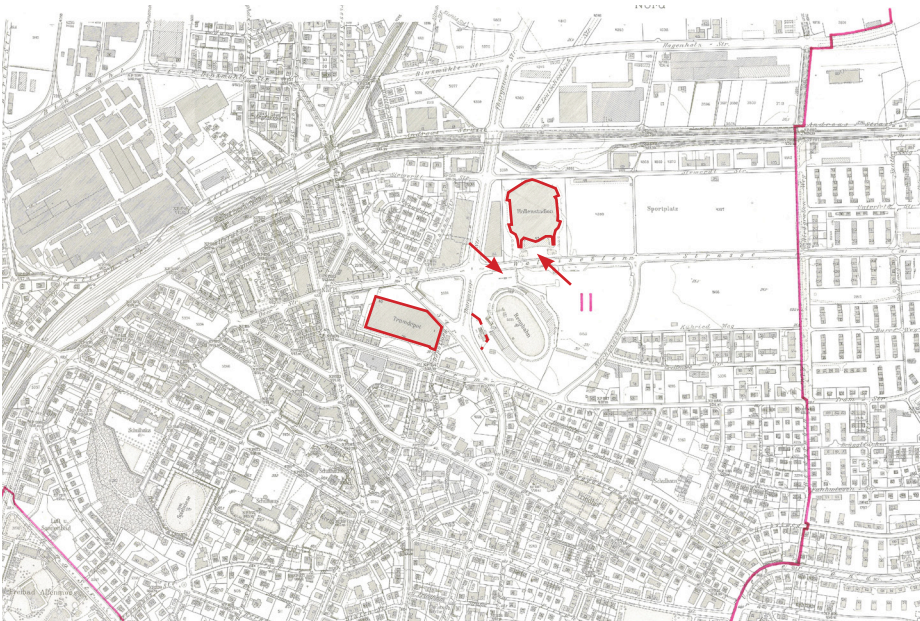
Staatsarchiv Zürich, PLAN B 740



1938

Seventeen years later, Oerlikon has grown exponentially. The built fabric consists mainly of detached single-family houses, with still a lot of green spaces, a garden city in the making. The Hallenstadion is constructed as a bad weather alternative to the Offene Rennbahn, hosting races on its 250m indoor racetrack all-year round. This also results in a change of orientation for the Offene Rennbahn, its main entrance now facing the Hallenstadion.

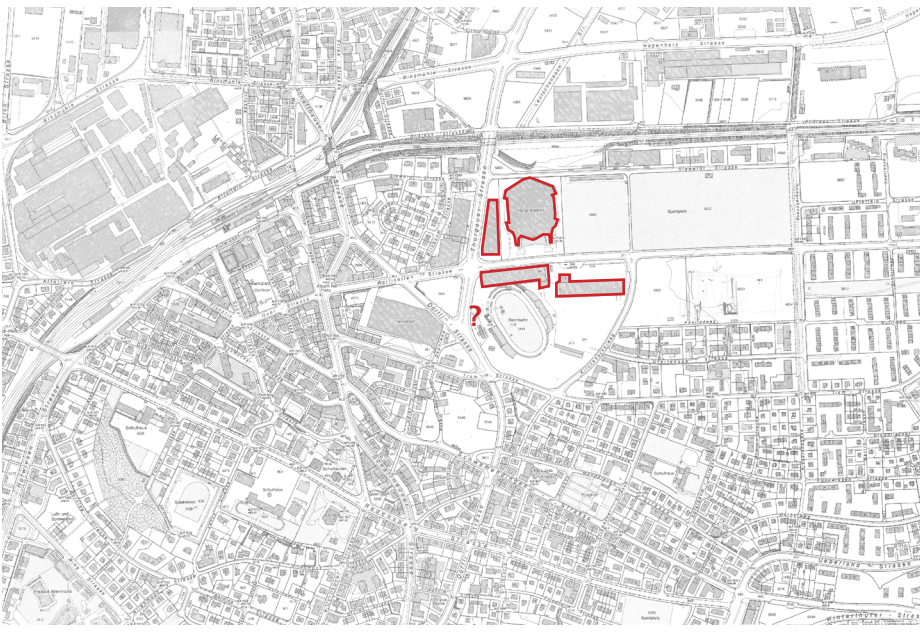
Stadt Zürich



1978

Comparatively little changes over the next forty years. Notable is the growing need for space by the yearly Züsba trade fair (Zürcher Spezialitätenmesse) resulting in the construction of several provisional exhibition halls, directly neighboring the Offene Rennbahn, separating it from the Hallenstadion. A shift in priorities from sports to fair activities can be observed.

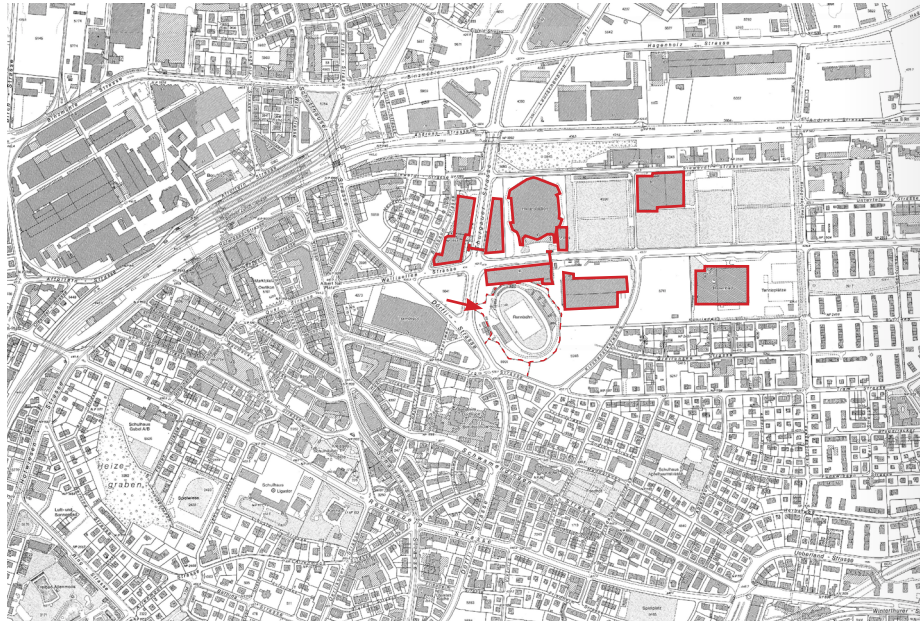
Stadt Zürich



1984

In the following years, the demand for additional exhibition spaces results in the construction of another provisional exhibition hall. Around this time, the Hallenbad Oerlikon is built, reinforcing the presence of sport activities in the vicinity of the Offene Rennbahn. This use for sport centres remains an important aspect of the area around Wallisellenstrasse until today.

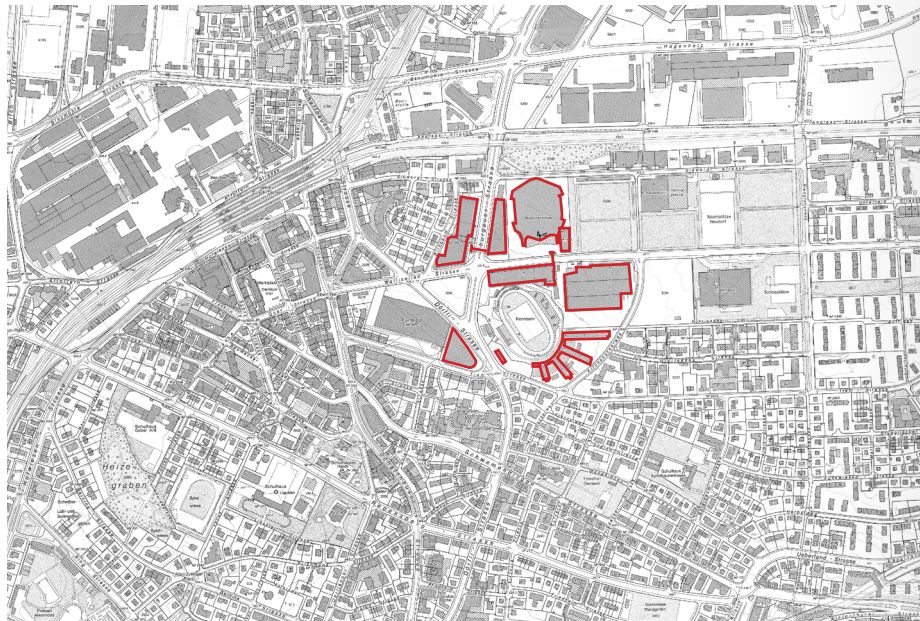
Stadt Zürich



1991

Around 1991, the peak of trade fair activities in provisional exhibition halls can be observed. The housing cooperative GISA also built the forth stage of their Siedlung Oerlikon on the neighboring plot to the South-East of the Offene Rennbahn, taking up the rounded shape of the racetrack in the urban form of the settlement.

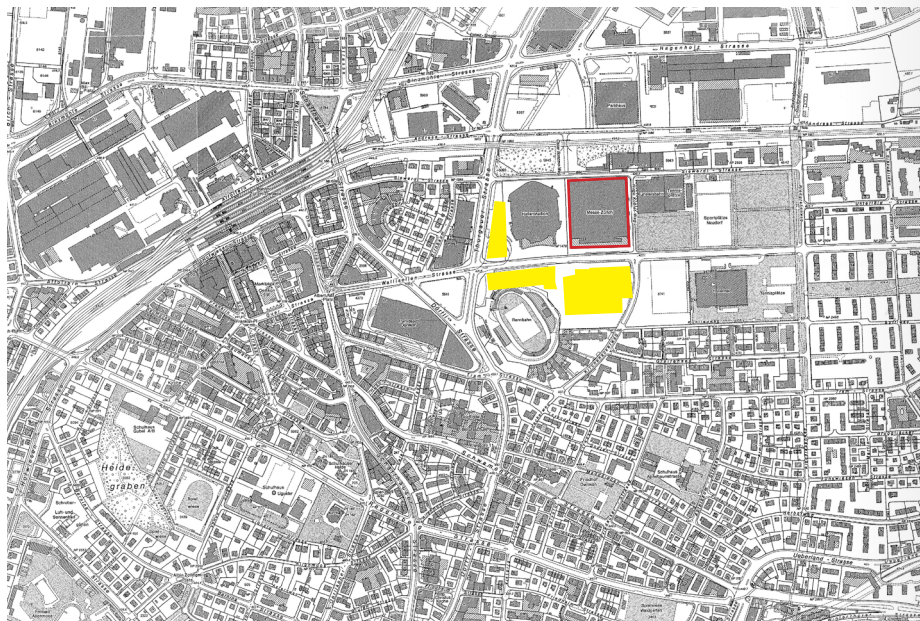
Stadt Zürich



1999

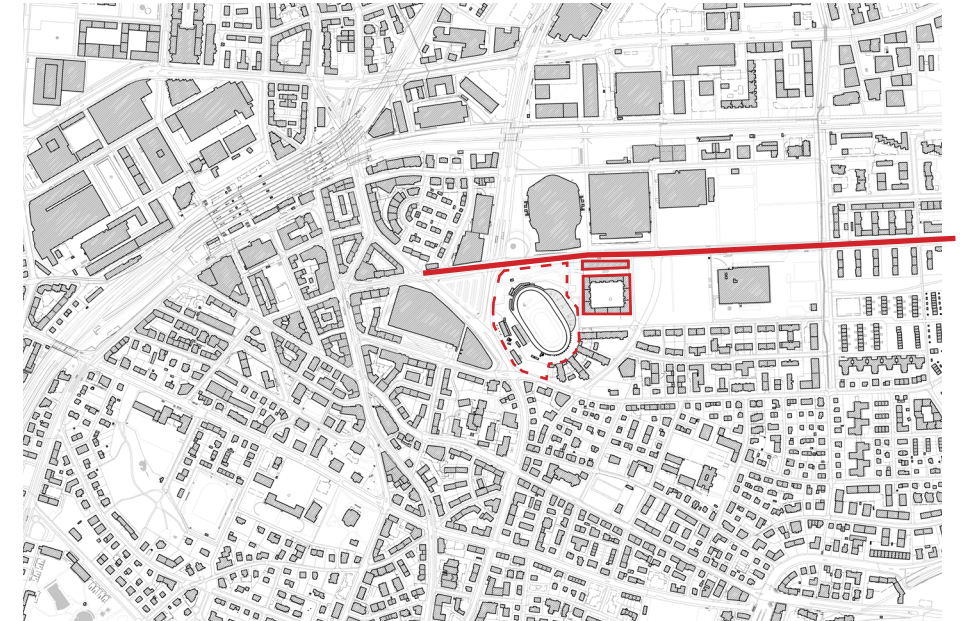
With the construction of the Messezentrum Zürich by atelier ww in 1998 (to the right of the Hallenstadion), the provisional Züscha exhibitions halls were no longer needed and were subsequently torn down. The land to the North-East would remain empty until 2003, whereas the land directly to the North of the Offene Rennbahn has remained vacant until today.

Stadt Zürich



2022

The state of today. The city of Zürich is planning to develop the area of Wallisellenstrasse according to their "Leitbild Wallisellenstrasse," which would see the replacement of the "old" Hallenbad Oerlikon with a multifunctional sports complex. The area of the Offene Rennbahn is designated as an area for potential development and densification, but no clear indication as to the function is provided.



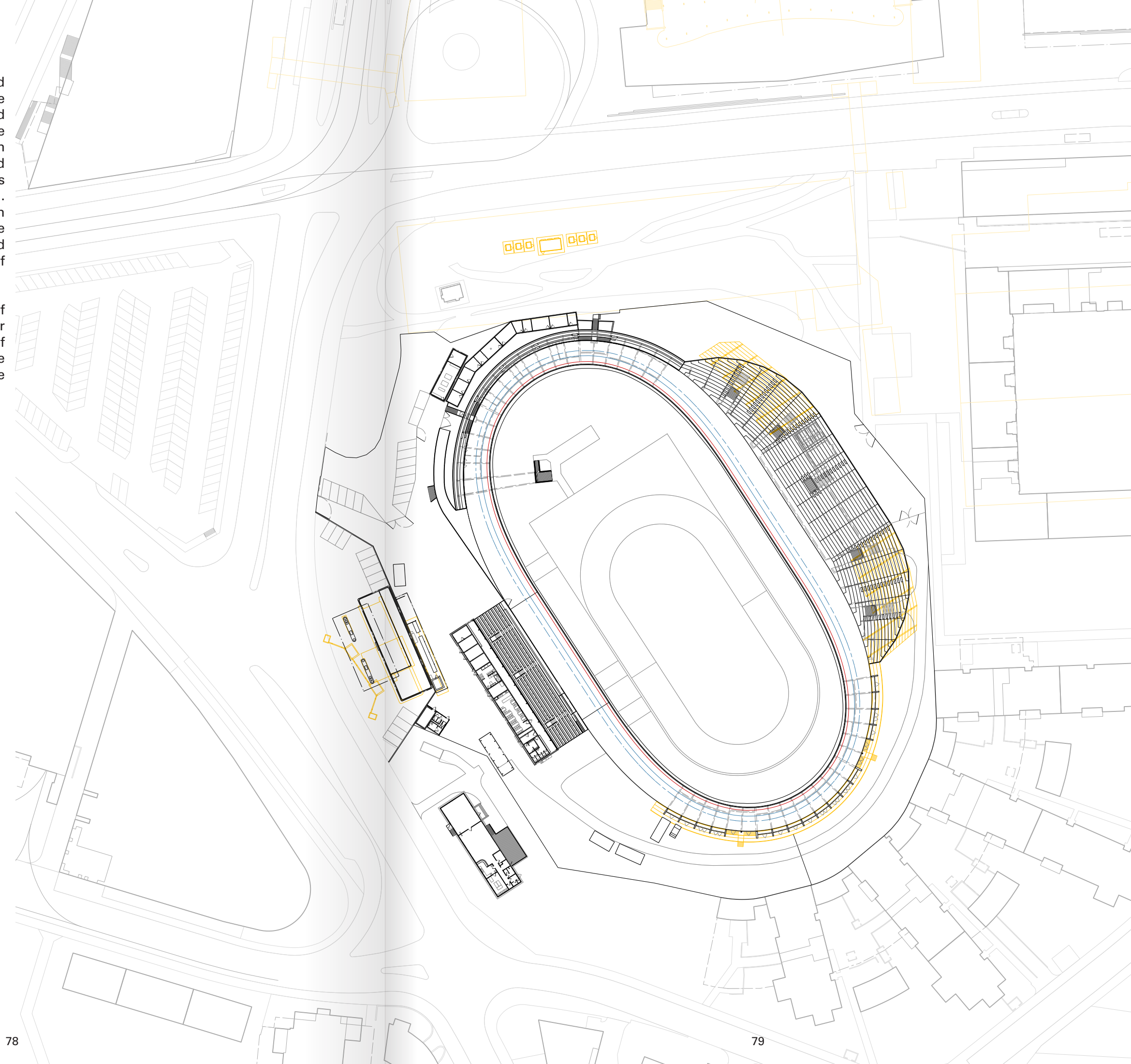
Acting as witness to the growth of Oerlikon, the Offene Rennbahn has played an important role in terms of the urban layout of Oerlikon's Eastward expansion. Located at the intersection between Oerlikon's urban center, rapidly densifying residential areas and the large-scale plots of Wallisellenstrasse, the area of the Offene Rennbahn can and should take a mediating role between these different urban realities. As more and more of the land surrounding the Offene Rennbahn is built up, open space will become rarer, and therefore more valuable.



Urban Palimpsest 1910-2022

The site of the Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon can be read as an urban palimpsest. Layers from more than one hundred years of urban development have formed and been formed by the structure and layout of the Offene Rennbahn. Not all of these structures remain physically until today. But they can still be found in the building permits and archival documents stored in various archives, official and personal. Also more ephemeral, personal memories remain stored in the structure of the Offene Rennbahn. The tradition and ritual of the race evening is reenacted every Tuesday, binding together generations of citizens, old and young.

We can only come to an understanding of the present by looking at the past, even if our understanding can never be complete. The study of the past in relation to the present can reveal the forces that have shaped and will continue to shape the form of the city.



Brief

The Offene Rennbahn Oerlikon is a singular structure, with regional and national importance as a living monument of Swiss cycling sport and culture. It is the last remaining open racetrack in all of Switzerland, and one of the last in all of Europe. It also represents one of the earliest uses of reinforced concrete in a non-infrastructure project in Switzerland. While it was judged at the time as ugly and as a visual pest, it has stood the test of time thanks to its avantguard and functional character. It has resisted destruction countless times thanks to a long line of supporters and protectors. Now is the time to finally list the Offene Rennbahn as protected, to ensure its continued existence for the next one hundred years. Not all elements of the structure have been judged worthy of protection, to enable the adaptation of the existing structure to contemporary needs, which will include the opening of the Offene Rennbahn for use by the public. At the same time, all necessary measures will need to be taken to ensure the continuation of race activities. Without cyclists and those engaged in the sport, the Offene Rennbahn would have long perished, or never existed at all. Therefore, the activity will need to be protected as much as the structure itself. Protecting only the structure without protecting race activities and training opportunities would be unethical and exploitative.

LISTING THE OFFENE RENNBAHN

With the construction of the Offene Rennbahn, Oerlikon unknowingly began a century-long endeavour in search of an identity for the post-MFO era. The Offene Rennbahn, the Hallenstadion, the Messe Zürich and the Hallenbad Oerlikon form part of the cultural, competitive and financial backbone of Zürich. The Offene Rennbahn was the first step, and should be protected, among other reasons, to preserve the memory of where it all began.

TO BE LISTED (RED)

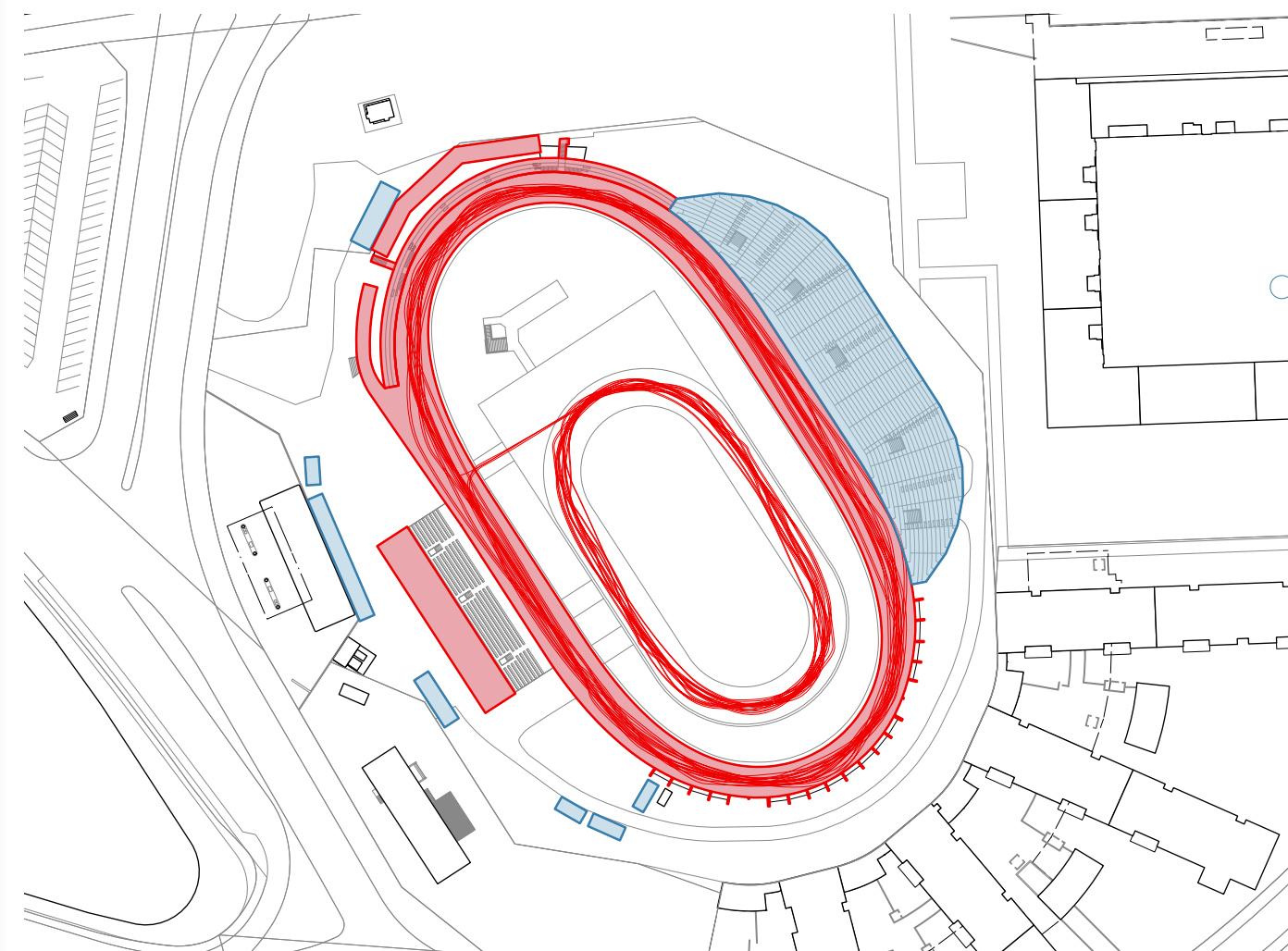
1. Slope and trusses of the racetrack with access ramp from 1912
2. Northwest tribune with access from 1912
3. Tribune building from 1912 (to be restored)
4. The athlete's courtyard from 1930 / 1961

NOT INCLUDED (BLUE)

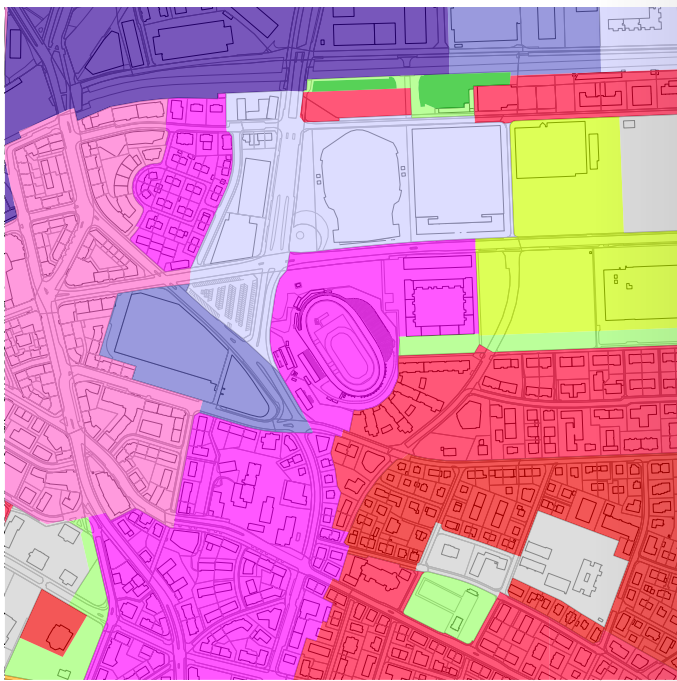
1. Northeast tribune from 1982 / 2020
2. Alois Iten's bicycle shack from 1977
3. Gastronomy-related structures and accessories from different time periods

OTHER MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

1. Improve public image and entrance situation
2. Enable public access all-year-round, improve permeability to the surrounding residential areas
3. Enable alternative functions (both commercial and non-commercial)

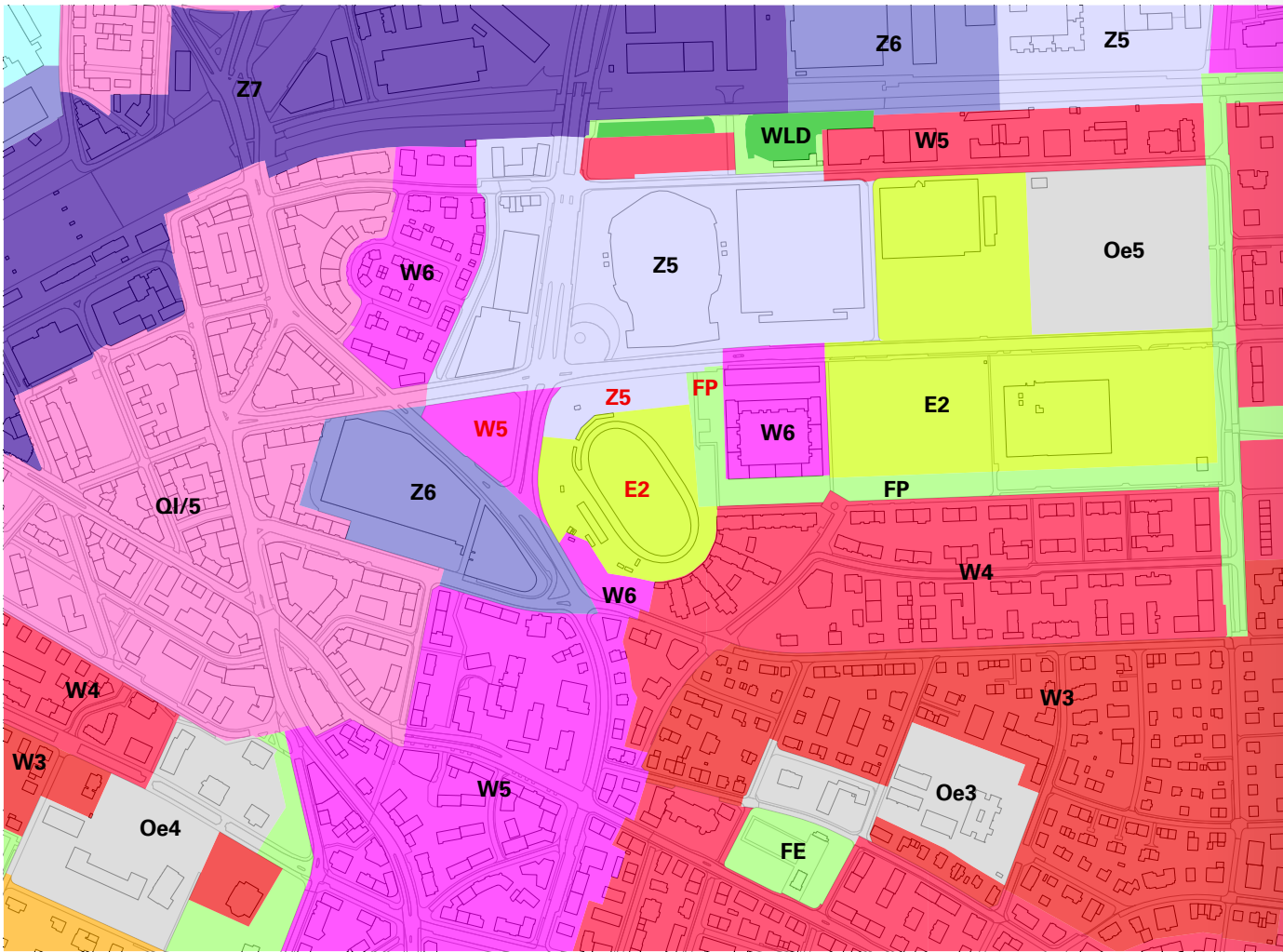


In order to ensure the long-term protection of the Offene Rennbahn area as a public space with sports activities, a re-zoning from W6 residential to E2 (Erholungszone) is proposed. This would help relieve the self-imposed financial pressure on the site of the Offene Rennbahn that was caused by the revision of the zoning plan (Zonenplanrevision) of 1999, which caused the land value to rise to an estimated 50'000'000 CHF. Furthermore, the Eastern part of the plot is to be re-zoned (also from W6) to FP (Freihaltezone Parkanlagen) in order to continue the green avenue connecting Oerlikon to Wallisellen. Additionally, the Northernmost part of the site is to be assigned to Z5 (Zentrumszone 5-storeys) in order to enable public functions along the Wallisellenstrasse that will help to protect the open green spaces and residential areas to the East of the Rennbahn from the traffic of Wallisellenstrasse. The Southernmost part of the plot could remain a W6 residential zone and be densified accordingly. Optionally, the triangular parking lot to the West of the Rennbahn could be changed from Z5 W5, to offset the loss of total residential area in possession of the city caused by the re-zoning of the area of the Offene Rennbahn.



Current state of the zoning plan, 1:10'000

RE-ZONING THE OFFENE RENNBAHN



With the protection and re-zoning of the Offene Rennbahn, a collaborative project spanning more than one hundred years can finally be continued. The current situation of under-use is still pressing, and will need to be addressed. Several built interventions are to take place over the next few years, some bigger than others. The goal of all these interventions will be to further legitimize the continued existence of the Offene Rennbahn as an active racetrack used for cycling competitions trainings. Race evenings will continue to take place every Tuesday, but the Offene Rennbahn area is to be opened to the greater population as a public park with accompanying functions, such as a cafe and restaurant, a bike repair shop. The youth center OJA Oerlikon will continue its operation as per usual, but will receive direct access to the Rennbahn premises for its guided and unguided activities. Access to the racetrack interior will need to be restricted on race days and during bicycle trainings. For this partial separation, an appropriate architectural solution will need to be found.

SHORTTERM

A1 Entrance building on Dörflistrasse with gastronomy (inward) and bike-shop (outward), possible event space. The new public face of the Offene Rennbahn.

A2 Opening the Offene Rennbahn towards the OJA youth centre. This will include landscaping work and the installation of a gate that can be locked. Could serve as a test run of public access to the area.

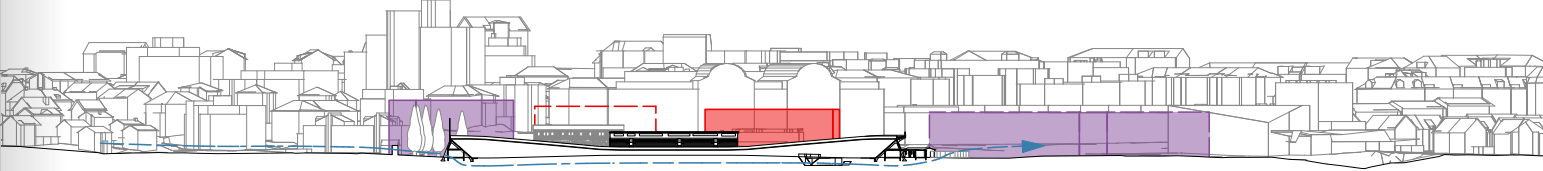
MEDIUM TERM

B1 Public building towards Wallisellenstrasse, shielding the green spaces West of the Offene Rennbahn.

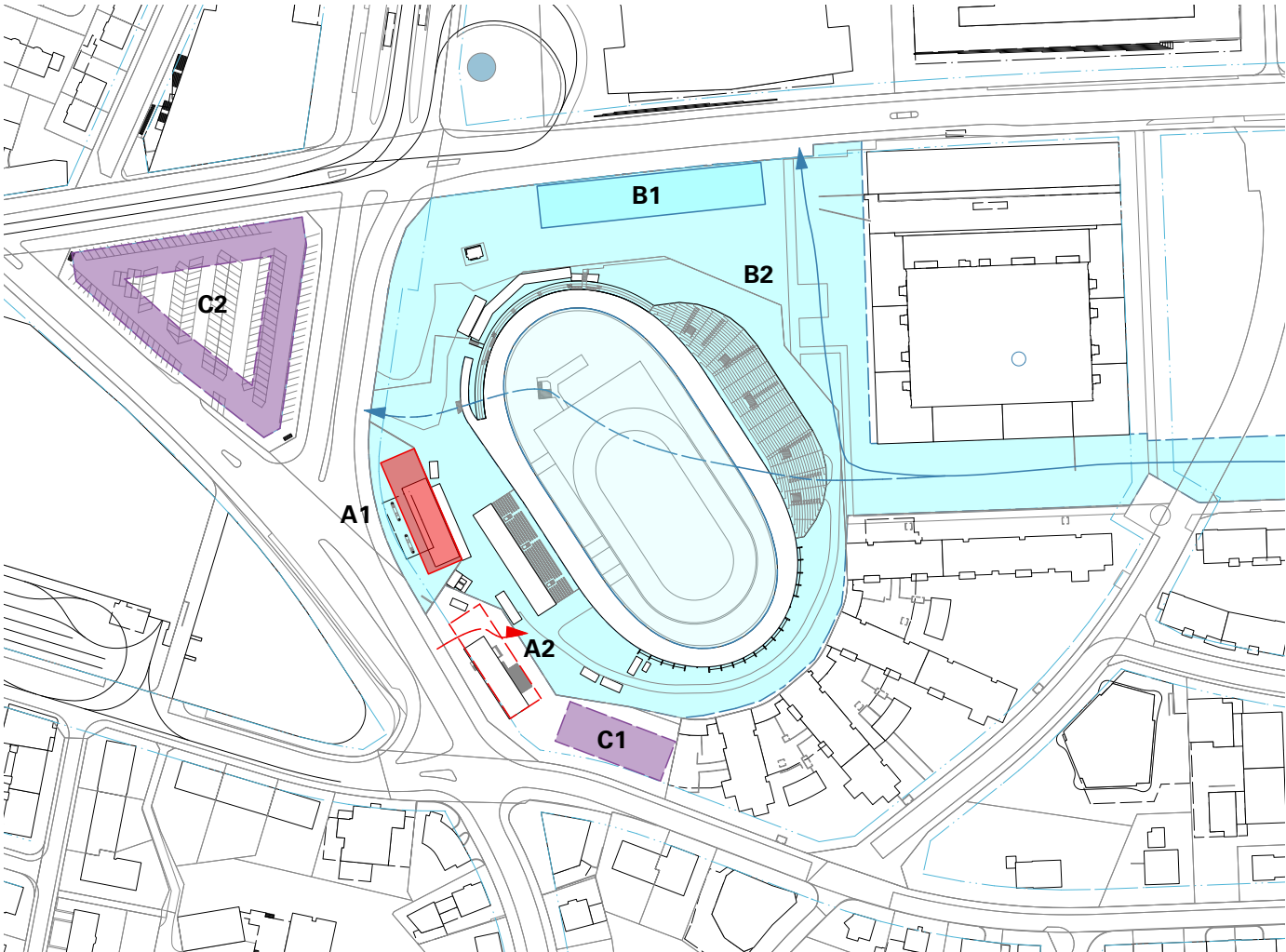
B2 The opening of the Offene Rennbahn to the public. This will include the removal of all fences and security measures to control access to the racetrack itself. An underground passage for connection might be favorable.

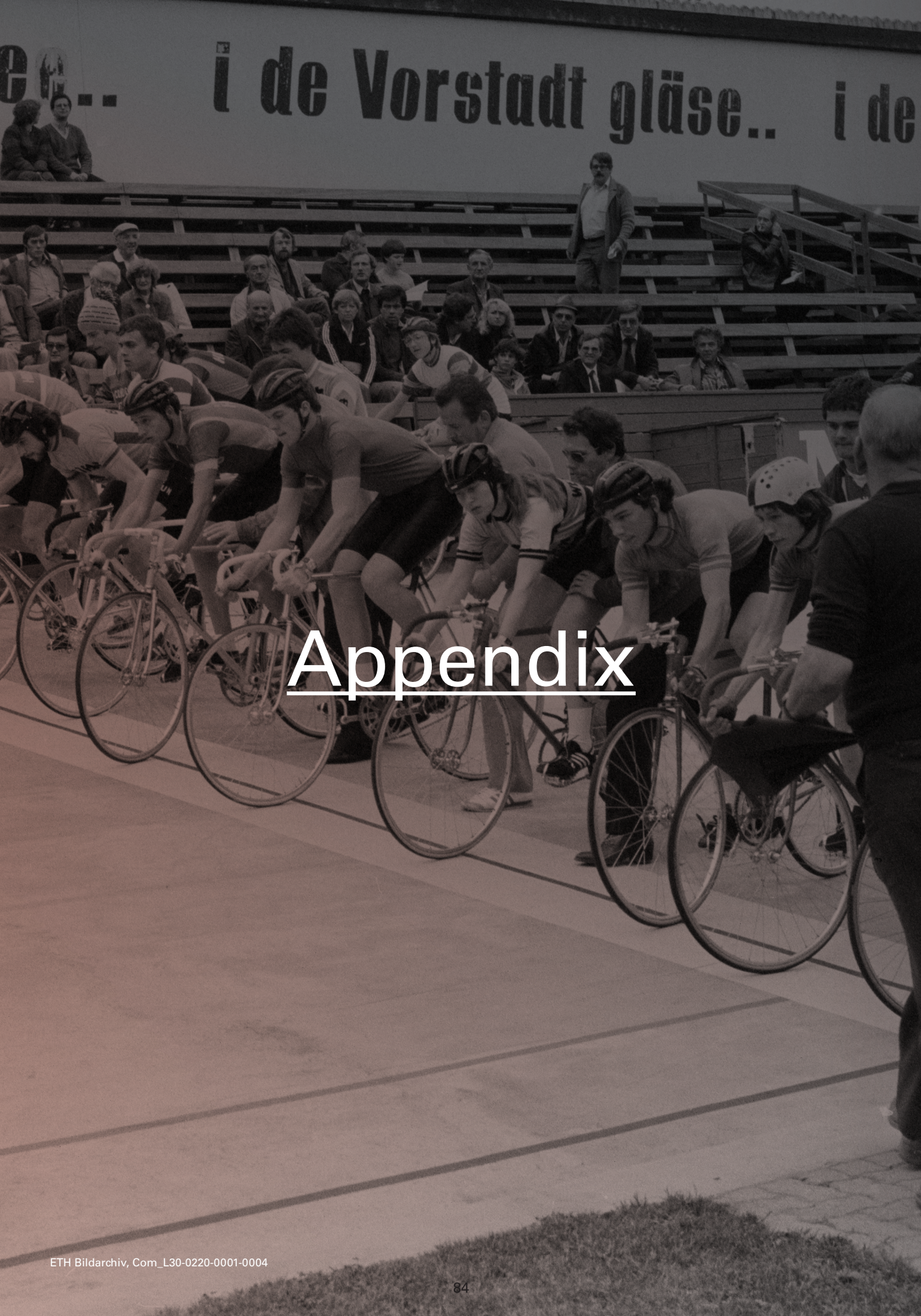
OPTIONAL

C1 Housing on the South of the Rennbahn
C2 Bigger cooperative residential development on the former parking lot (Triangle)



DENSIFYING THE OFFENE RENNBAHN



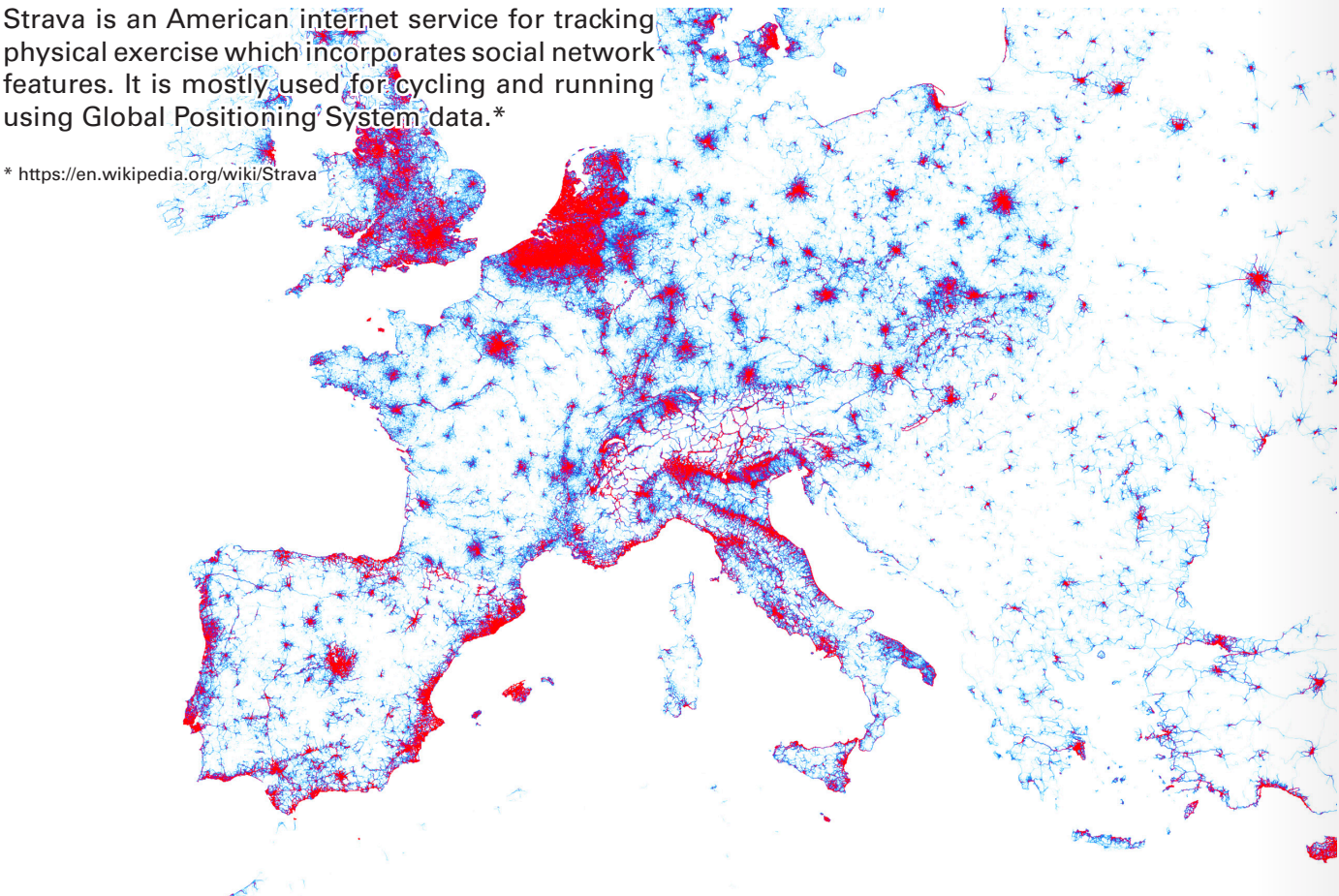


This appendix contains an incomplete collection of references and data that did not yet fit into the bigger framework of the research.

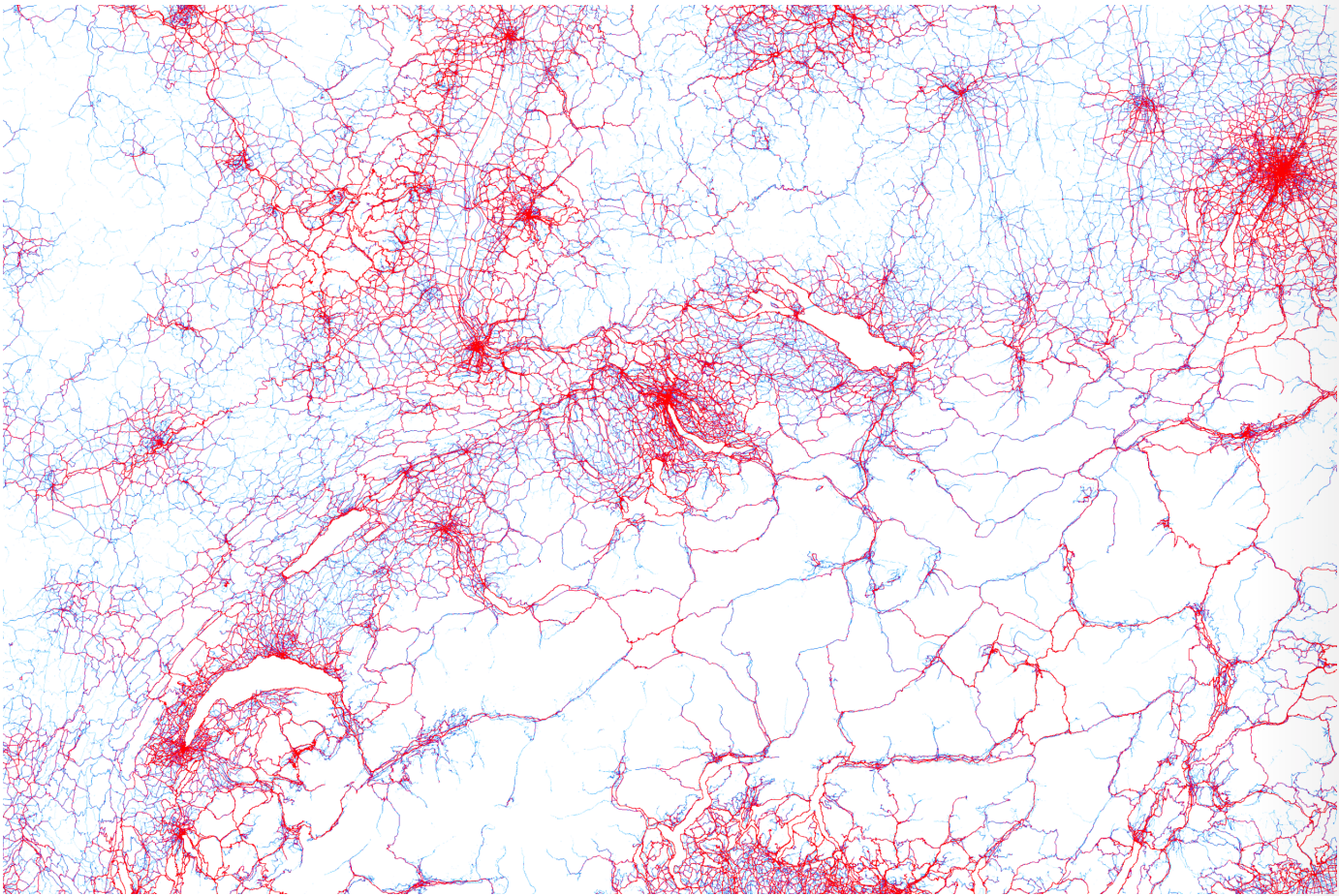
Strava Global Heatmap

Strava is an American internet service for tracking physical exercise which incorporates social network features. It is mostly used for cycling and running using Global Positioning System data.*

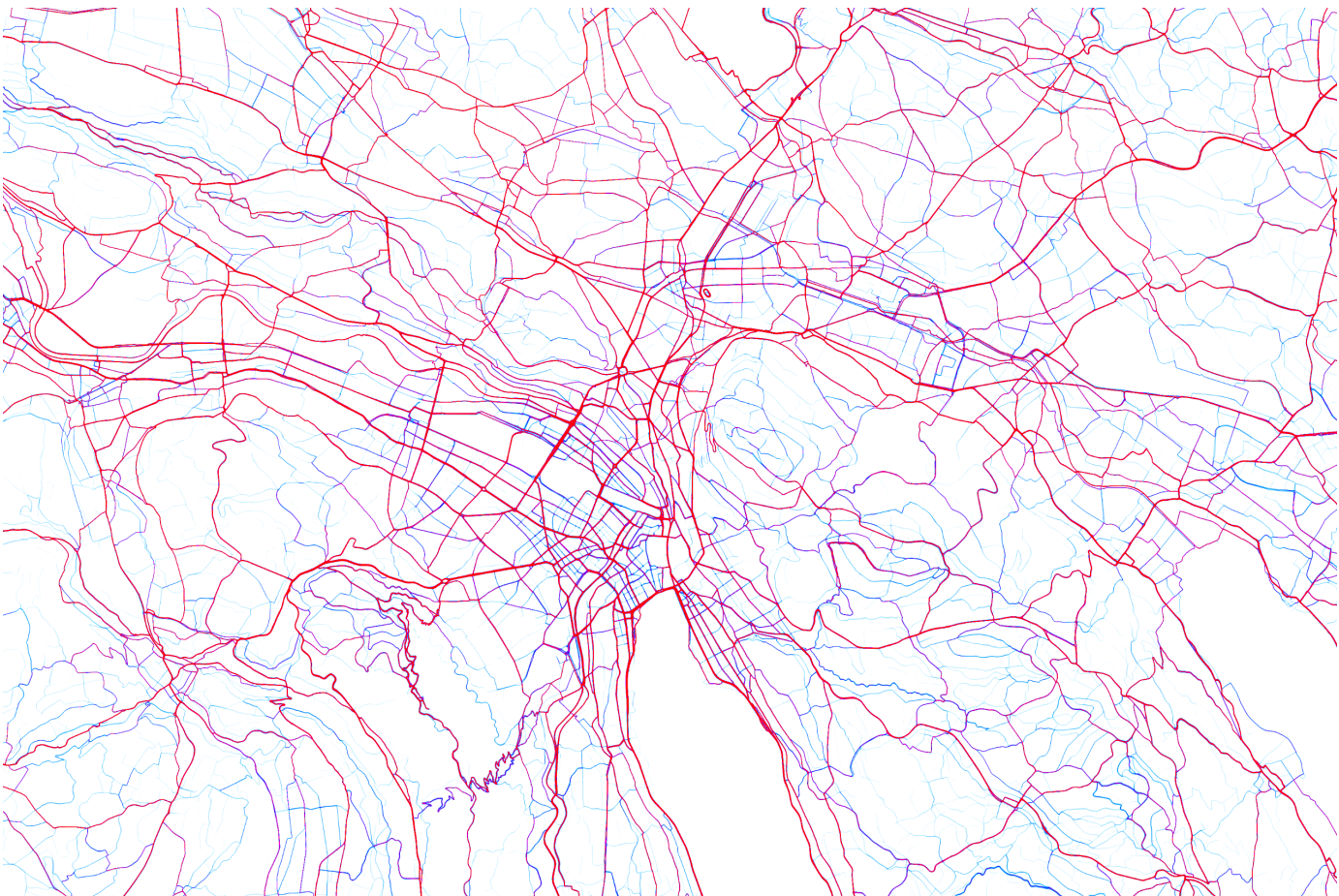
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strava>



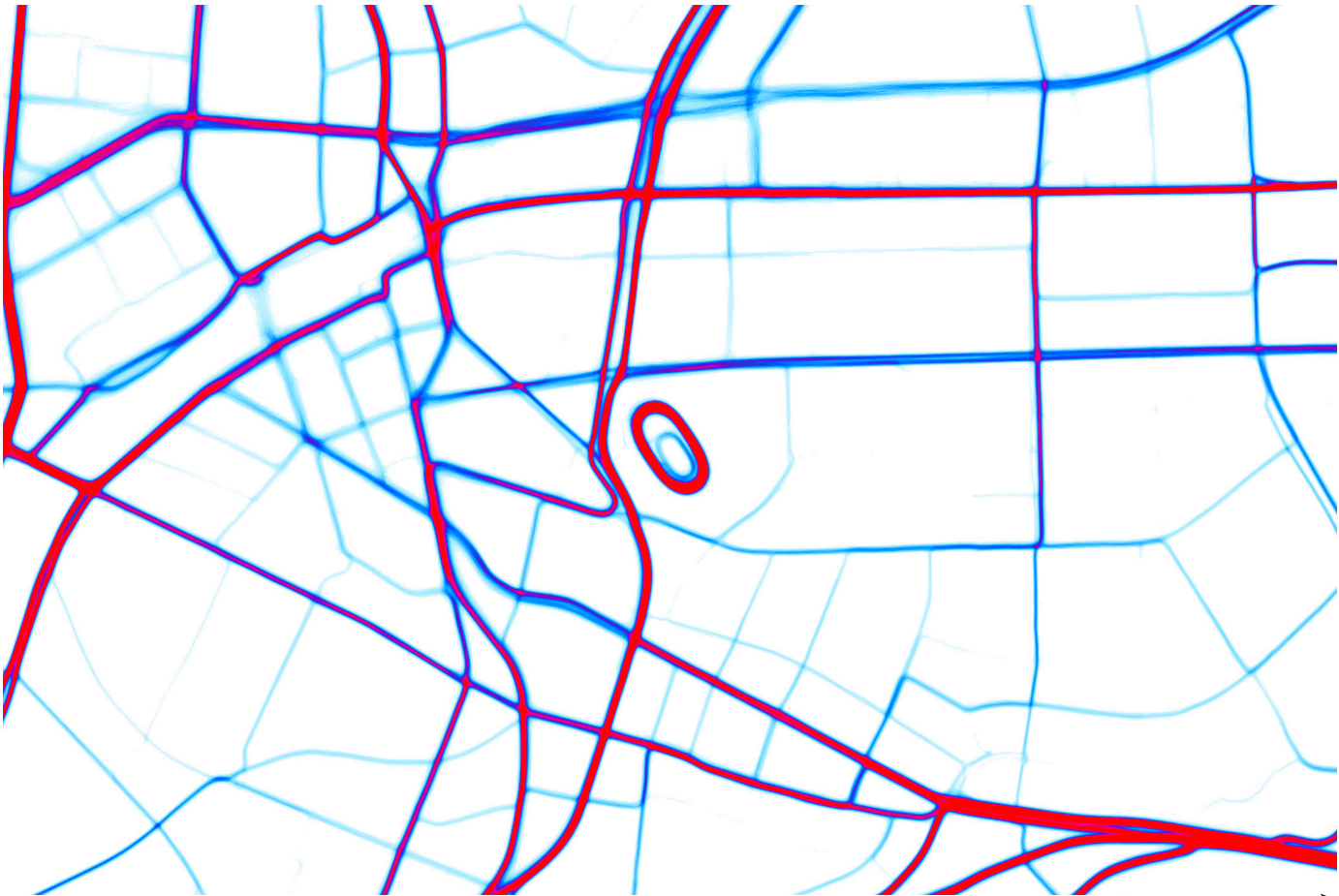
Europe, a delineation by cycling activity
Data: © 2022 Strava



Switzerland, a network of cycling infrastructure?
Data: © 2022 Strava

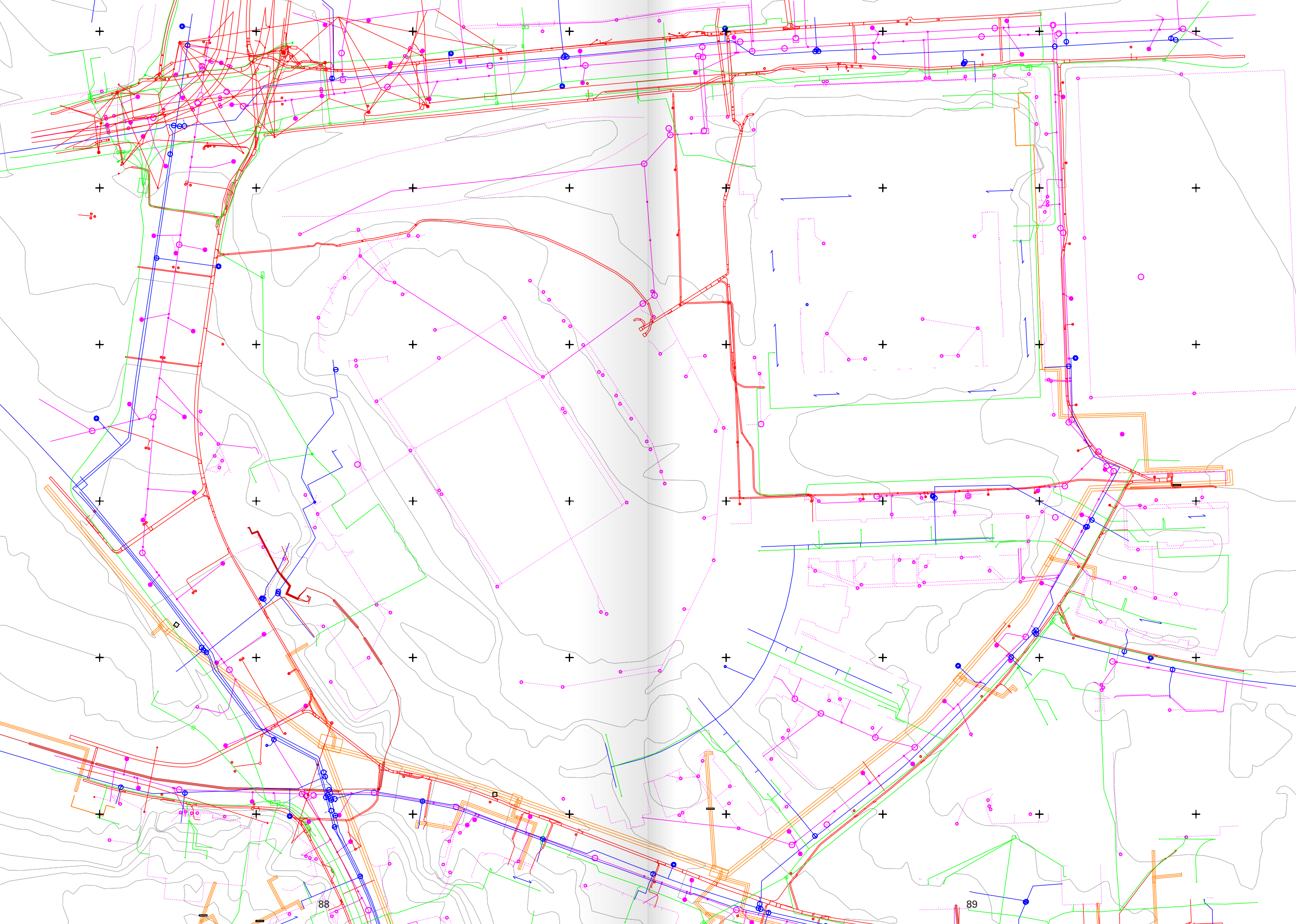


Zürich, Velostadt
Data: © 2022 Strava



Zürich-Oerlikon, Offene Rennbahn
Data: © 2022 Strava

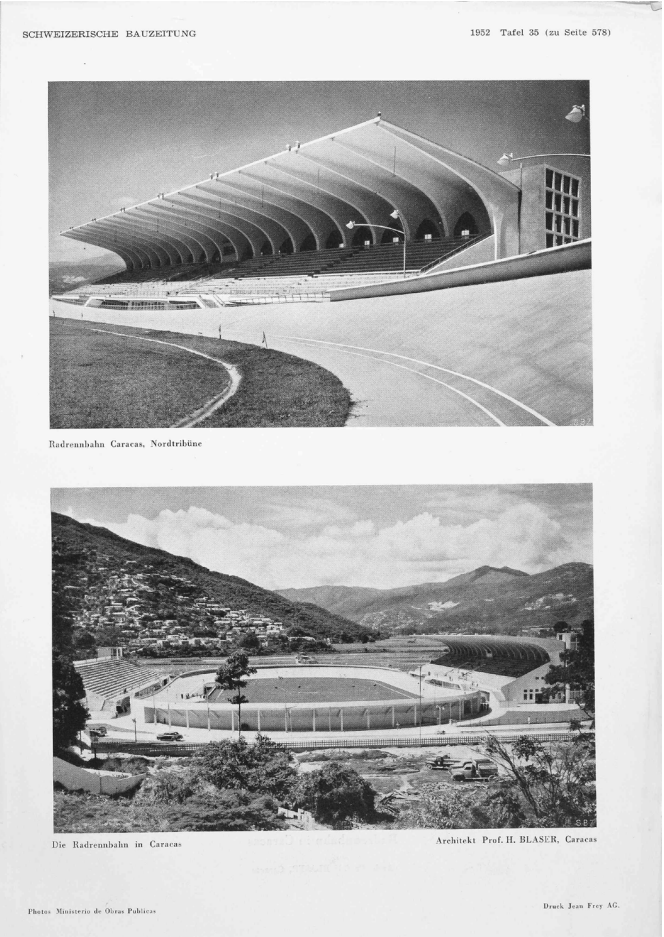
Site underground, 1:1'000



References

Velodromo Teo Capriles, Caracas

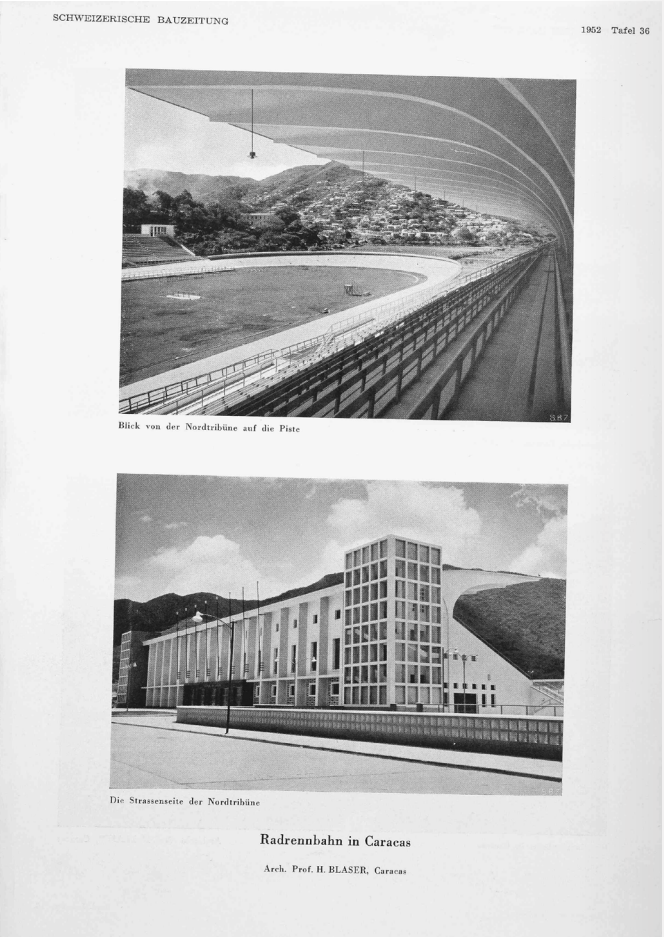
Architect Prof. Hermann Blaser, 1952



SBZ, 70 (1952), p. 578



Flickr, Simon May, 2008



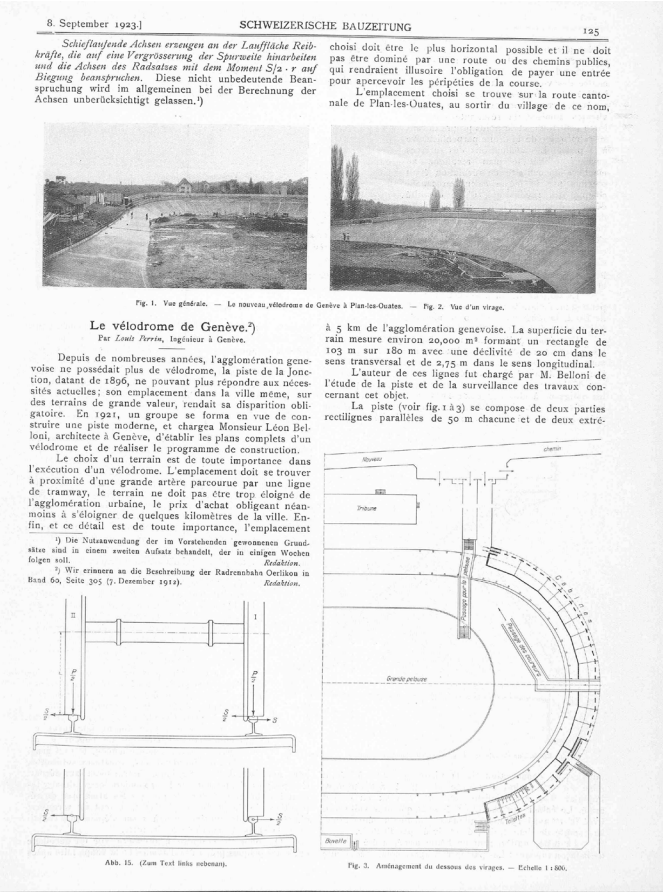
SBZ, 70 (1952), p. 579



rjankovsky / Alamy Stock Foto, 2022

Velodrome de Genève (destroyed)

Engineer Louis Perrin, 1923-1968



SBZ, 81/82 (1923), p. 125

Radstadion Cottbus

Architect unknown, 1987



Wikimedia Commons, Nicola



Bibliothèque de Genève, vg p 2759



Bibliothèque de Genève, ig 2000 005 03 01



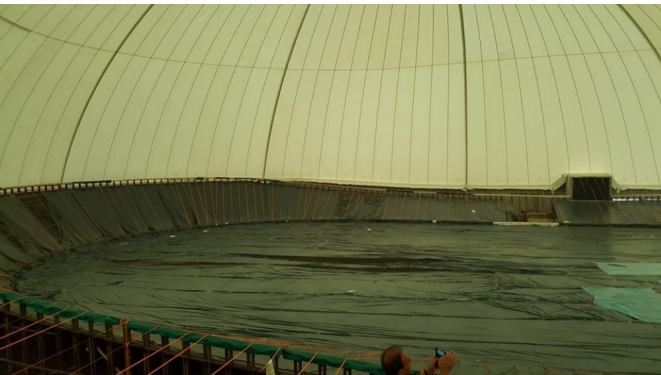
Wikimedia Commons, Nicola

Olimpijski Center Novo mesto, Slovenia

Marjan Zupanc, Špela Kuhar, Aleš Bizjak (building); Ralph Schürmann (track), 1996 / 2019



Wikimedia Commons, DUOL



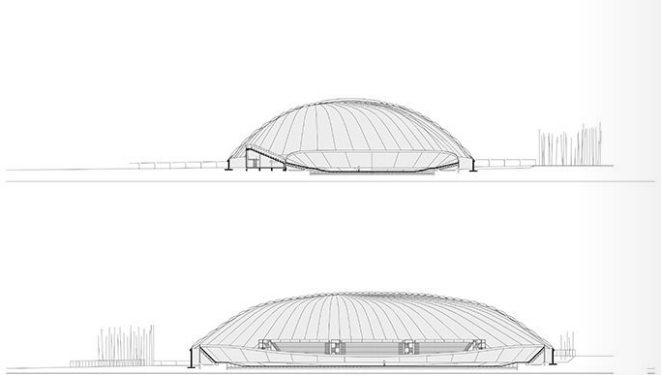
Dušan Olaj, Duol

Radstadion Köln

Architects Herbert und Ralph Schürmann, 1990-1996



Wikimedia Commons, © Raimond Speking



Open House Slovenia



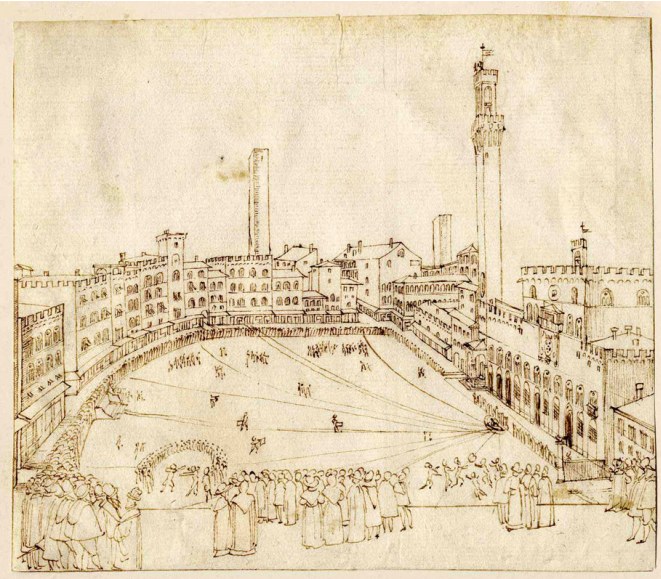
Dušan Olaj, Duol



Wikimedia Commons, © Raimond Speking

Piazza del Campo, Siena

Architects unknown, 1169-



Universitätsbibliothek Salzburg, Handzeichnung H 21, 1578



Wikimedia Commons, Francesco Nenci, 1818

,



Wikimedia Commons, I, Manfred Heyde, 2006



Wikimedia Commons, Luca Casartelli, 2013

