"Standortmosaik Zürich" or the ecology of access

"STANDORTMOSAIK ZÜRICH" OR THE ECOLOGY OF ACCESS

Jane Jacobs once famously wrote that cities are as natural as "colonies of prairie dogs or beds of oysters"[1]. Cities thus are just the latest of evolution's transformation of the environment by natural organisms – us. And our most urgent need is access. **Markus Schaefer**

In cities we find jobs, meet people, enjoy culture, get in contact with ideas or purchase the things we need for daily life. Cities are catalysts for human interactions the sum of which we variously call economy, culture or public life. Cities are defined by an ecology of access.

We experience the degree of accessibility, the sense of mobility and ease with which we satisfy our needs, as quality of life. Borrowing a term from plant sociology we speak of a "Standortmosaik", the diverse mix of places formed by locational factors resulting in spatial diversity, mix of social milieus or synergy between different value chains which economists refer to as "quality of location".

Accessibility in cities is a function of proximity, functional diversity and infrastructure. Contemporary cities are formed by increasingly powerful infrastructures. City and countryside are merging into the urban landscape of the metropolitan region. Such a region is defined by function and the division of work of its constituent, coopetitive parts. As a whole it competes in the global market of locations.

Transcending administrative boundaries and individual agendas, metropolitan regions are difficult to plan. The "image of the region" which we developed for the "Metropolitankonferenz Zürich" aims to communicate the features of this region to a diverse group of stakeholders and give its planning a strategic base.

We describe the image as the combination of structure, Gestalt and form: The structure of the region is defined by the terrain, by zoning and most importantly infrastructure. Structure is controlled by the spatial and infrastructure planning of the cantons. Its Gestalt is based on the identities of the different villages, quarters or neighborhoods, and their potential for change. This potential we defined by reserves of building land and transport capacity, and by the elasticity of a local identity when changing. Form is in the domain of the architects or landscape architects and includes public spaces, parks, streets or landmark buildings.
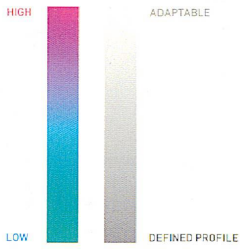
The metropolitan region thus is seen as an archipelago of form in a sea of Gestalt organized by the currents of structure.

[1] Jacobs, J. (1993 [1961]): The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York, p. 443.
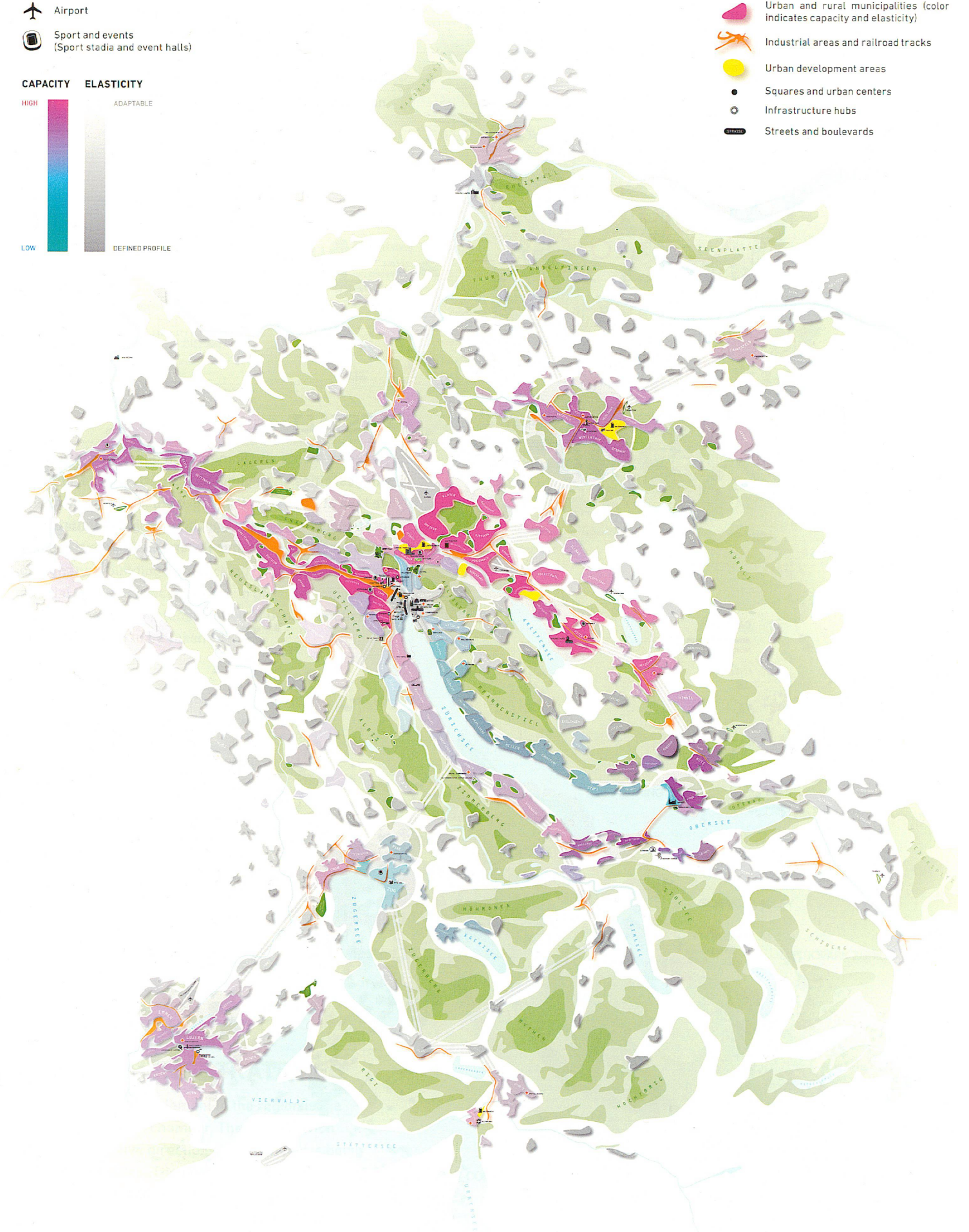
FORM (ATTRACTORS AND CATALYSTS)

🎭 Culture and leisure
(museums and theatres)

🏢 Area development
(Zürich West, SBB development areas)

✈ Airport

🎟 Sport and events
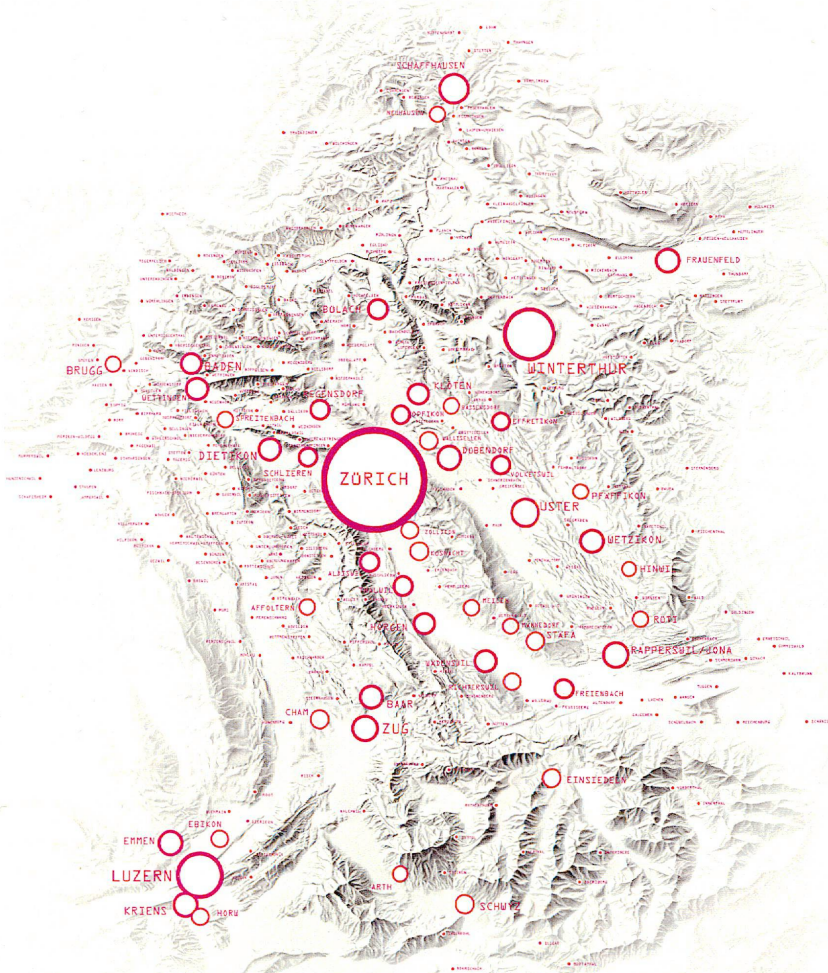(Sport stadia and event halls)

CAPACITY   ELASTICITY

HIGH   ADAPTABLE

LOW   DEFINED PROFILE

GESTALT (NEIGHBORHOODS AND LANDSCAPES)

Recreational areas and forests

Parks and urban greens

Urban and rural municipalities (color
indicates capacity and elasticity)

Industrial areas and railroad tracks

Urban development areas

Squares and urban centers

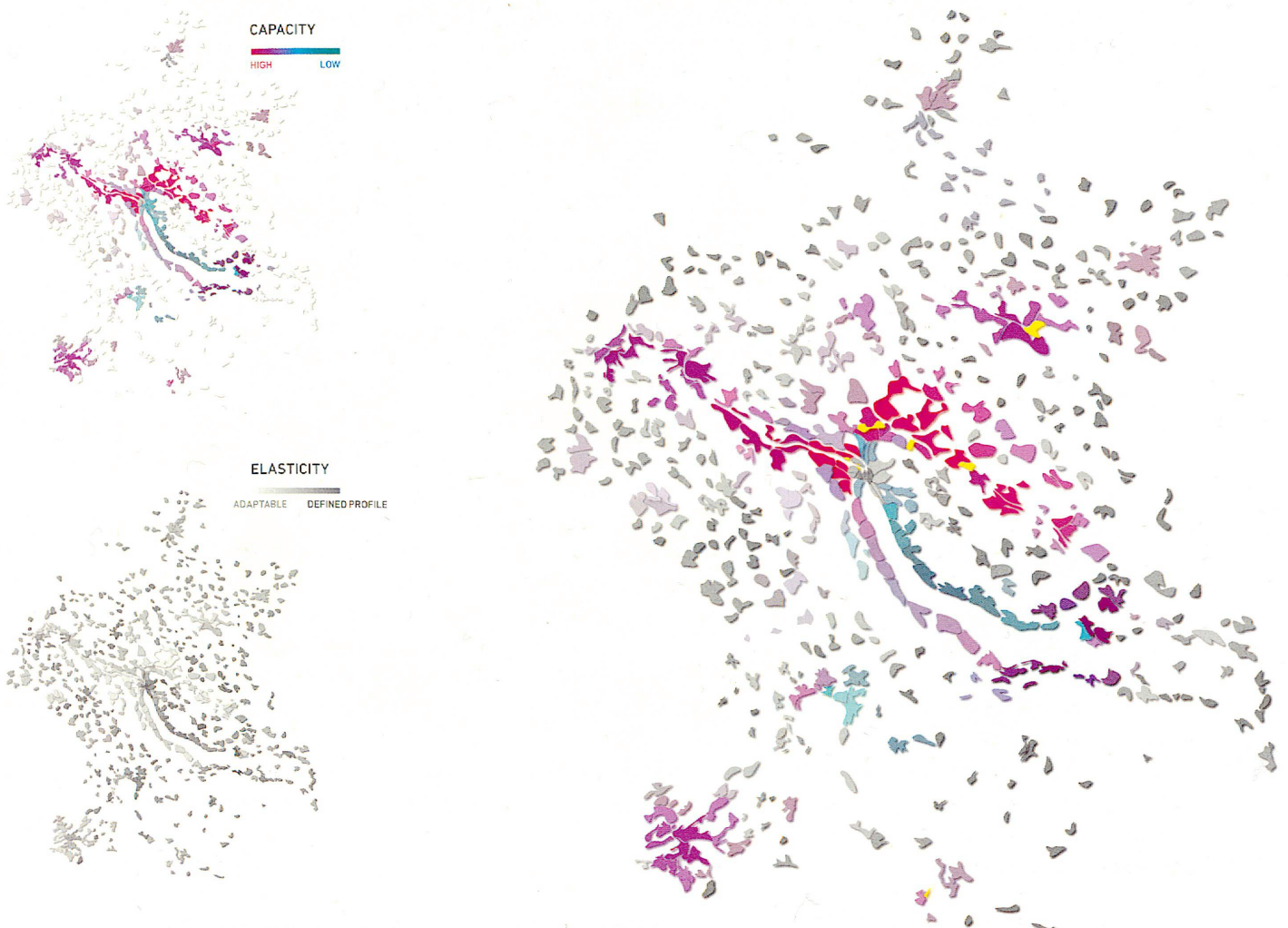Infrastructure hubs

Streets and boulevards

SETTLEMENTS

The metropolitan region of Zurich is located in the hills of the Swiss midlands. It is characterized by many small settlements which developed mostly along the valleys. Due to locational factors, political and historical reasons different areas of gravity formed which combined to create a polycentric urban network.
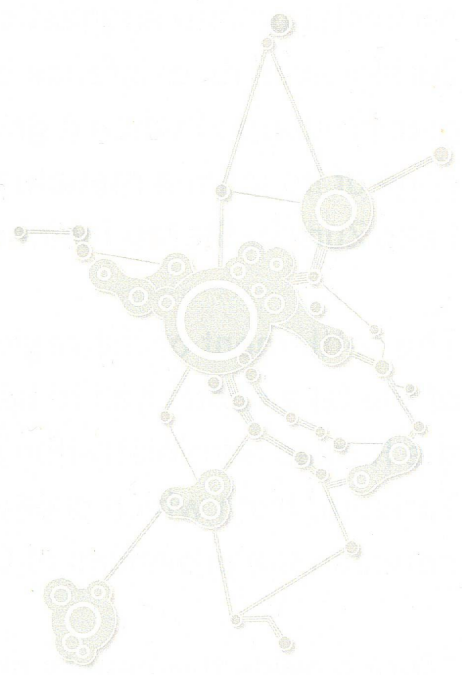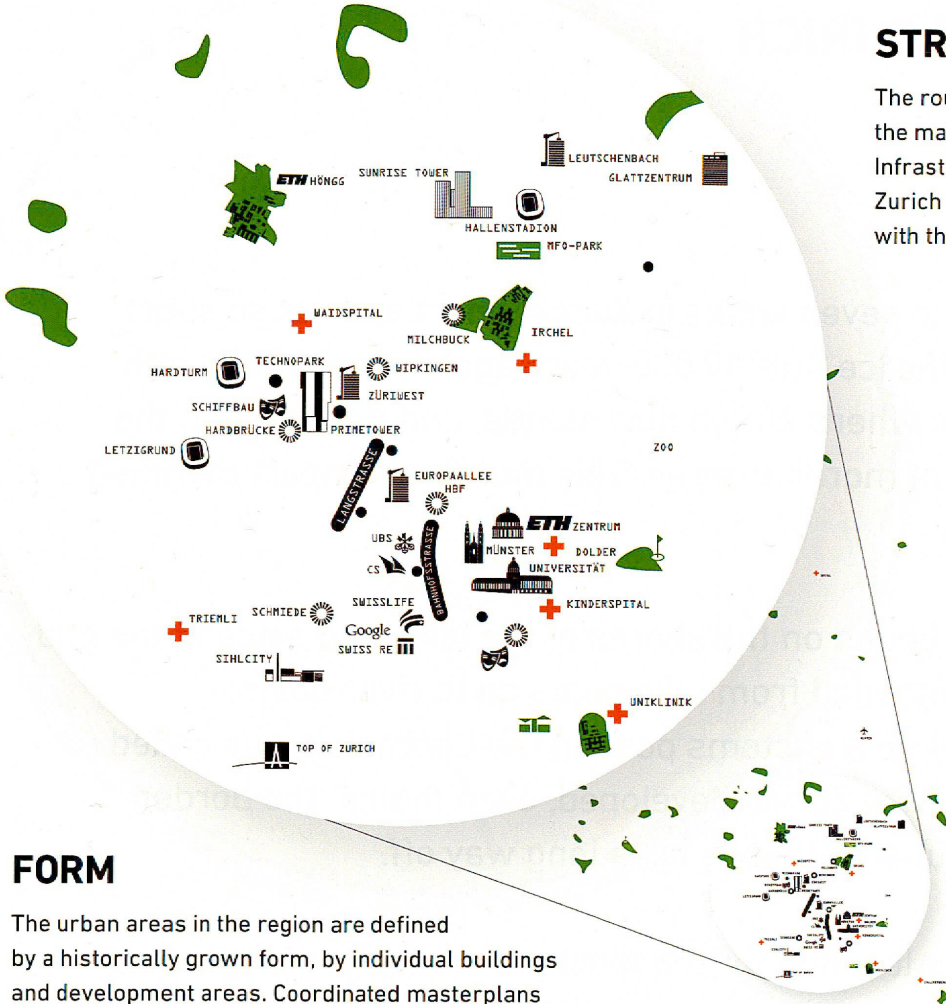
GESTALT

The settlements and homesteads developed into villages, cities or neighborhoods in cities. Therefore, we look at Gestalt on the level of resolution of these locations which have a morphological and historical identity and are economically and socially fairly homogeneous.

CAPACITY

HIGH   LOW

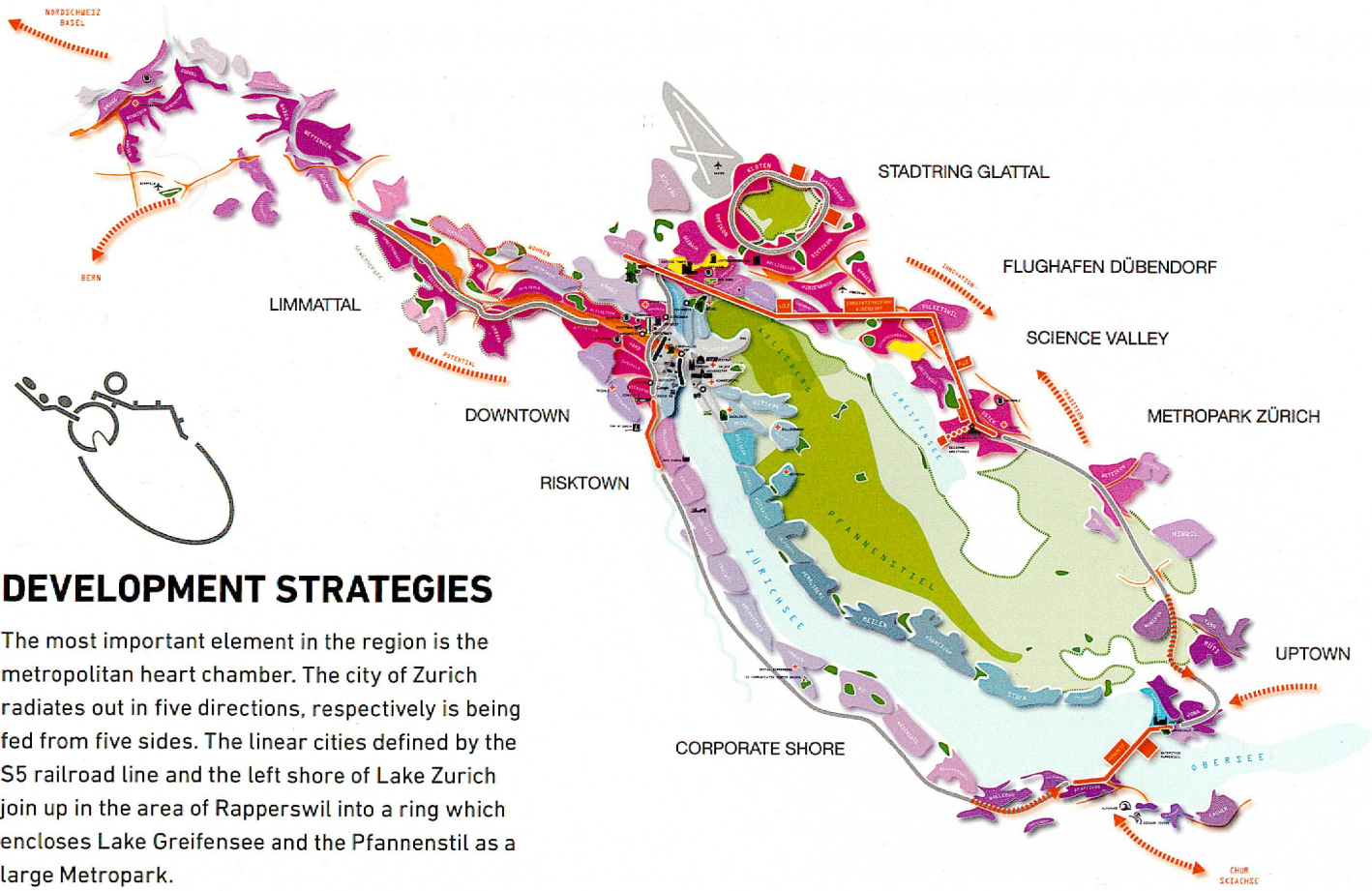ELASTICITY

ADAPTABLE   DEFINED PROFILE

STRUCTURE

The routes to Bern, Basel, St. Gallen and Chur define the main axes in this polycentric urban network. Infrastructure, mainly the S-Bahn, holds it together. Zurich is the center of the region and the location with the most numerous global connections.

FORM

The urban areas in the region are defined by a historically grown form, by individual buildings and development areas. Coordinated masterplans or signature buildings are lacking despite the substantial growth of recent years. In order to achieve a higher density and intensification of urban functions, new paths need to be taken.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The most important element in the region is the metropolitan heart chamber. The city of Zurich radiates out in five directions, respectively is being fed from five sides. The linear cities defined by the S5 railroad line and the left shore of Lake Zurich join up in the area of Rapperswil into a ring which encloses Lake Greifensee and the Pfannenstil as a large Metropark.