RECONNECTING ELDERLY
interventions for a just spatial and social environment
for the elderly in Budapest, Hungary

P5 presentation

Emese Nagy
6028187

First mentor: Luca Iuorio
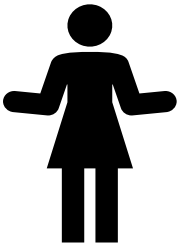Second mentor: Birgit Hausleitner
Delegate: Aart Oxenaar

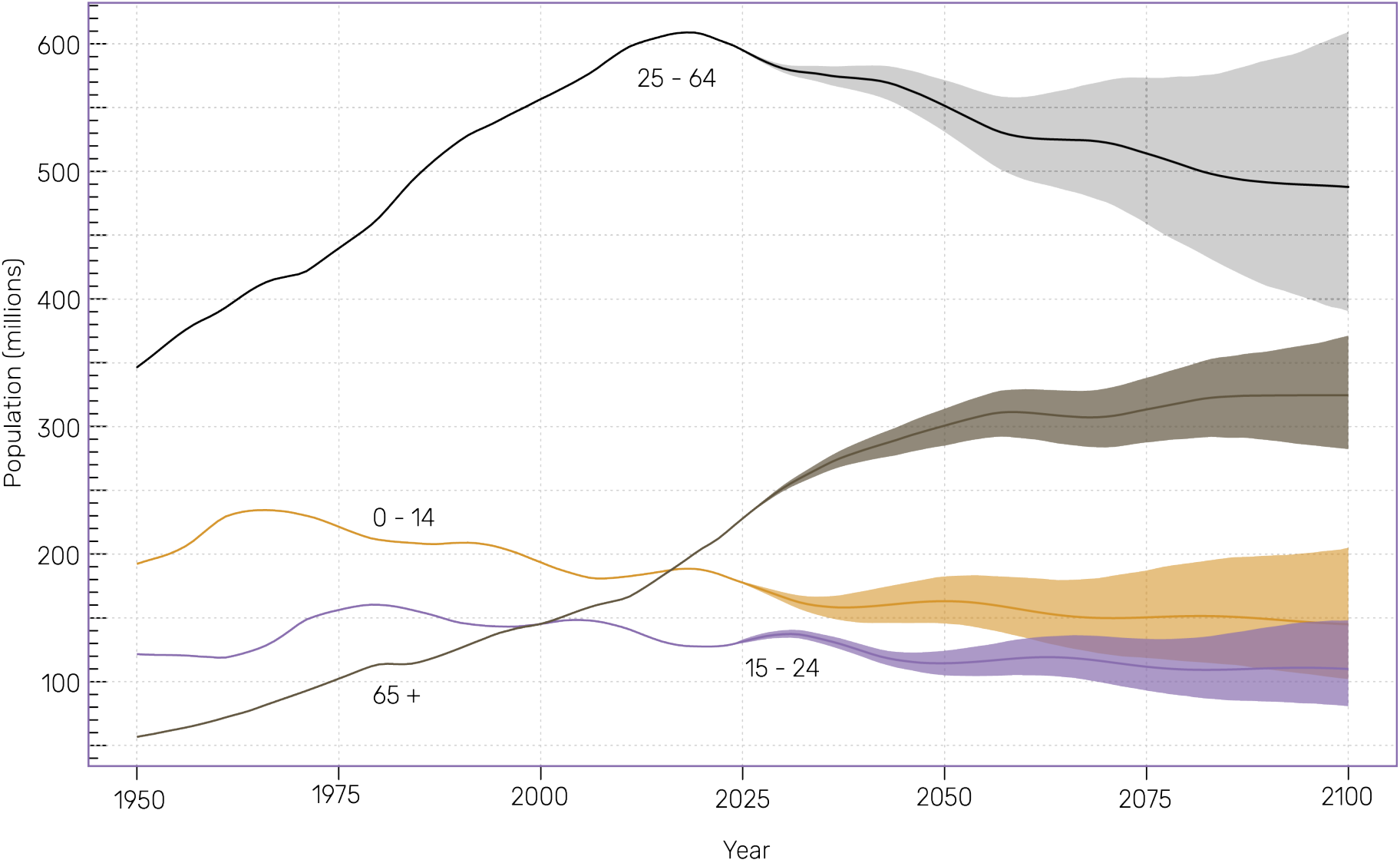June 18th, 2025

care crisis

care crisis

planet

people

photo: Los Angeles Times

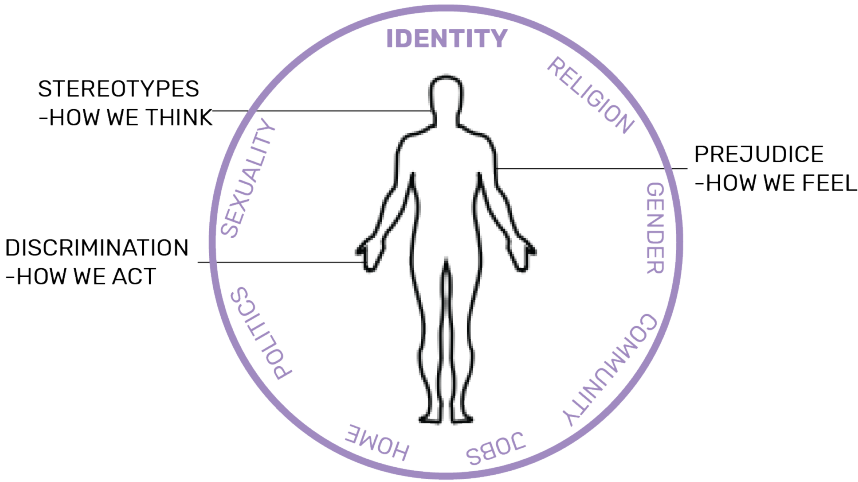
photo: A. Carrubba

aging society

Europe and Norhern America: Population by broad age groups

25 - 64

0 - 14

65 +

15 - 24

Population (millions)

600

500

400

300

200

100

1950   1975   2000   2025   2050   2075   2100

Year

United Nations, 2019

complexity of life events that lead a person to refer themselves as old, and to be percieved as old by those around them

Turai, 2009

IDENTITY

RELIGION

STEREOTYPES
–HOW WE THINK

SEXUALITY

PREJUDICE
–HOW WE FEEL

GENDER

DISCRIMINATION
–HOW WE ACT

POLITICS

COMMUNITY

HOME   JOBS

who cares about elderly?
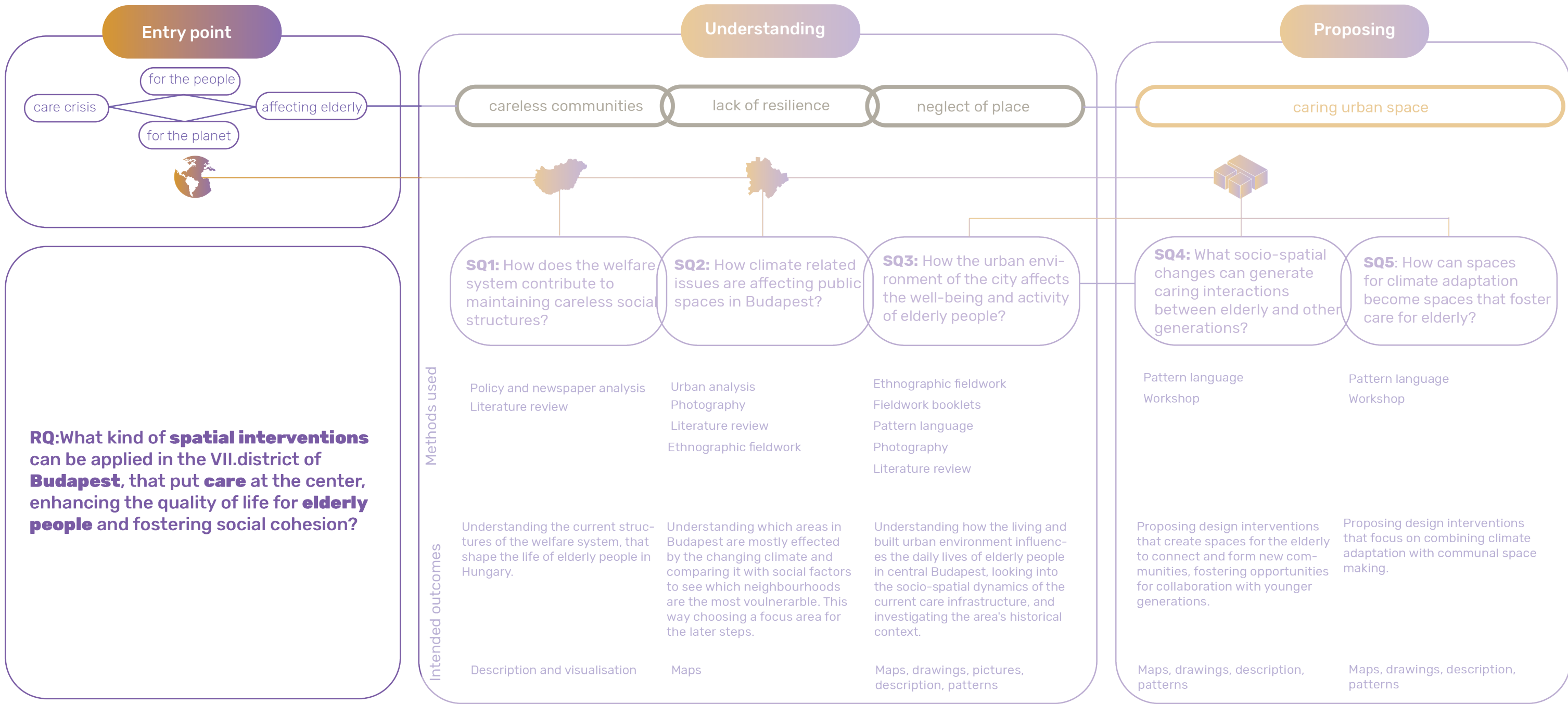
"DON'T BE CRUAL"

"FAMILY FRIENDL Y HUNGARY"
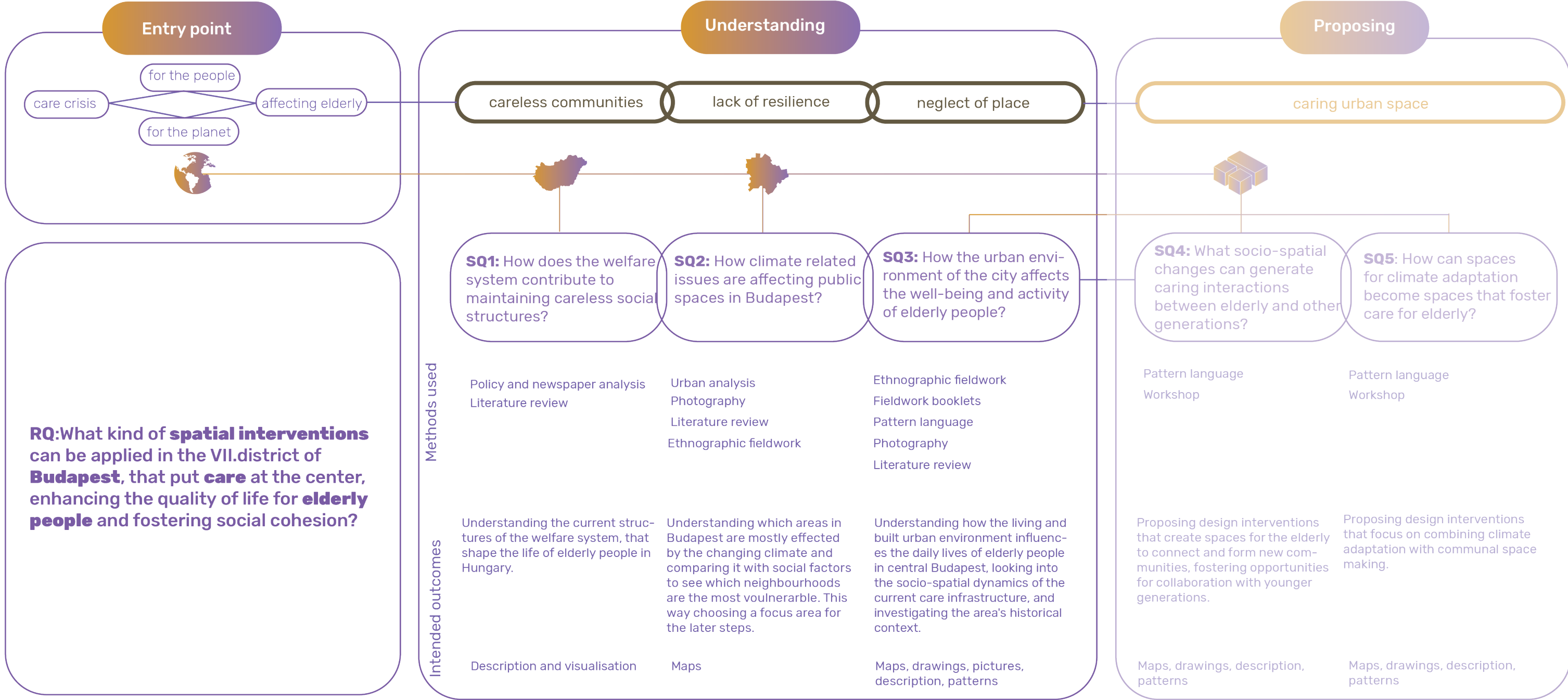
CSALÁDBARÁT
MAGYARORSZÁG

problem statement

The care crisis has a global impact on people and the planet. For people, neoliberal structures are not prioritising well-being, while our planet is under pressure from the growing effects of climate change. These problems particularly affect the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. In Hungary, the **well-being of older people is currently facing serious challenges** (Chen et al., 2018), compounded by a dismantled welfare system, the lack of strong communities and climate resilient places and the fact that our cities are not suitable for older people.
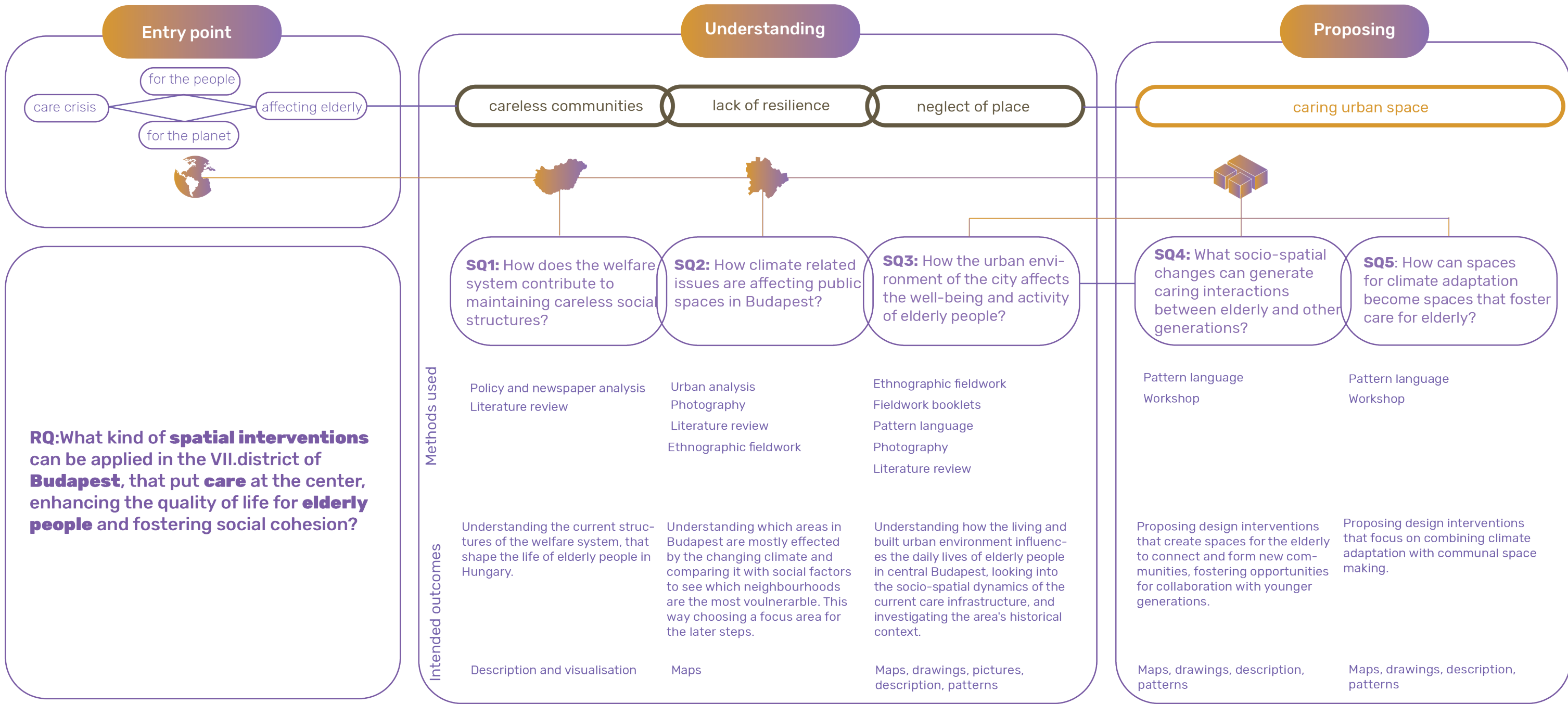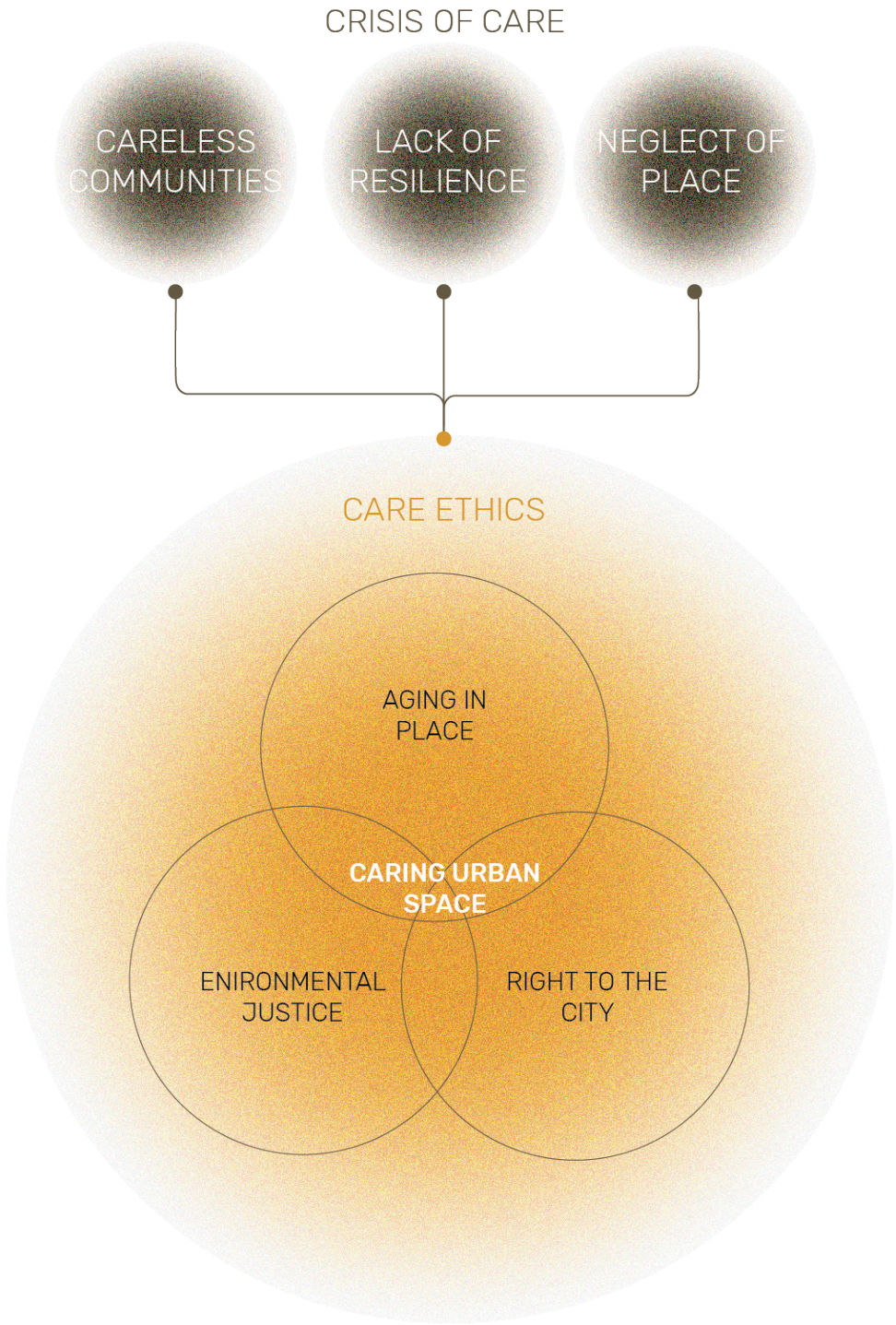
research questions & methodology

Entry point

for the people

care crisis — affecting elderly

for the planet

Understanding

careless communities | lack of resilience | neglect of place

Proposing

caring urban space

RQ: What kind of **spatial interventions** can be applied in the VII.district of **Budapest**, that put **care** at the center, enhancing the quality of life for **elderly people** and fostering social cohesion?

SQ1: How does the welfare system contribute to maintaining careless social structures?

SQ2: How climate related issues are affecting public spaces in Budapest?

SQ3: How the urban environment of the city affects the well-being and activity of elderly people?

SQ4: What socio-spatial changes can generate caring interactions between elderly and other generations?

SQ5: How can spaces for climate adaptation become spaces that foster care for elderly?

Methods used

Policy and newspaper analysis
Literature review

Urban analysis
Photography
Literature review
Ethnographic fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork
Fieldwork booklets
Pattern language
Photography
Literature review

Pattern language
Workshop

Pattern language
Workshop

Intended outcomes

Understanding the current structures of the welfare system, that shape the life of elderly people in Hungary.

Understanding which areas in Budapest are mostly effected by the changing climate and comparing it with social factors to see which neighbourhoods are the most voulnerarble. This way choosing a focus area for the later steps.

Understanding how the living and built urban environment influences the daily lives of elderly people in central Budapest, looking into the socio-spatial dynamics of the current care infrastructure, and investigating the area's historical context.

Proposing design interventions that create spaces for the elderly to connect and form new communities, fostering opportunities for collaboration with younger generations.

Proposing design interventions that focus on combining climate adaptation with communal space making.

Description and visualisation

Maps

Maps, drawings, pictures, description, patterns

Maps, drawings, description, patterns

Maps, drawings, description, patterns

research questions & methodology

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concepts & theories

CRISIS OF CARE

CARELESS COMMUNITIES

LACK OF RESILIENCE

NEGLECT OF PLACE

CARE ETHICS

AGING IN PLACE

CARING URBAN SPACE

ENIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

RIGHT TO THE CITY

"Care is our individual and common ability to pro-vide the political, social, material and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itselft."

- Chatzidakis et al., 2020

hungary's welfare system

RECONNECTING ELDERLY

men
women

1890
1910
1930
1950
1970
1990
2010
2024

1914–1918:
I. WW
660 000 dead

1939-1945:
II. WW
830–950 000 dead

1950 - 1956:
Ratkó-era
Due to the drastic abortion ban and the childlessness tax, the natural reproduction rate increased significantly.

1957 - 1989:
Socialist-era
Family policy measures supported the increase in the birth rate in the short term.

1989:
Change of regime
The transition to a market economy led to mass unemployment. Economic instability and growing insecurity reduced the desire to have children.

2004:
Hungary joined the EU

2010:
the **current government** began its operation under the leadership of Viktor Orbán

hungary's welfare system

Life expectancy at birth in Hungary

Eurostat, 2022

Country scores in the Aging Society Index

Chen et al., 2018

fieldwork - walk & talk interviews
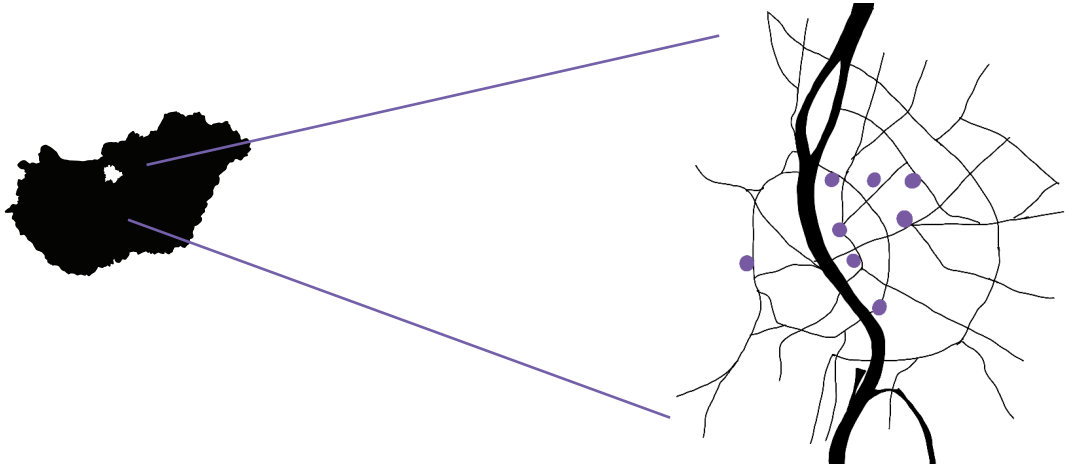
ERZSÉBET
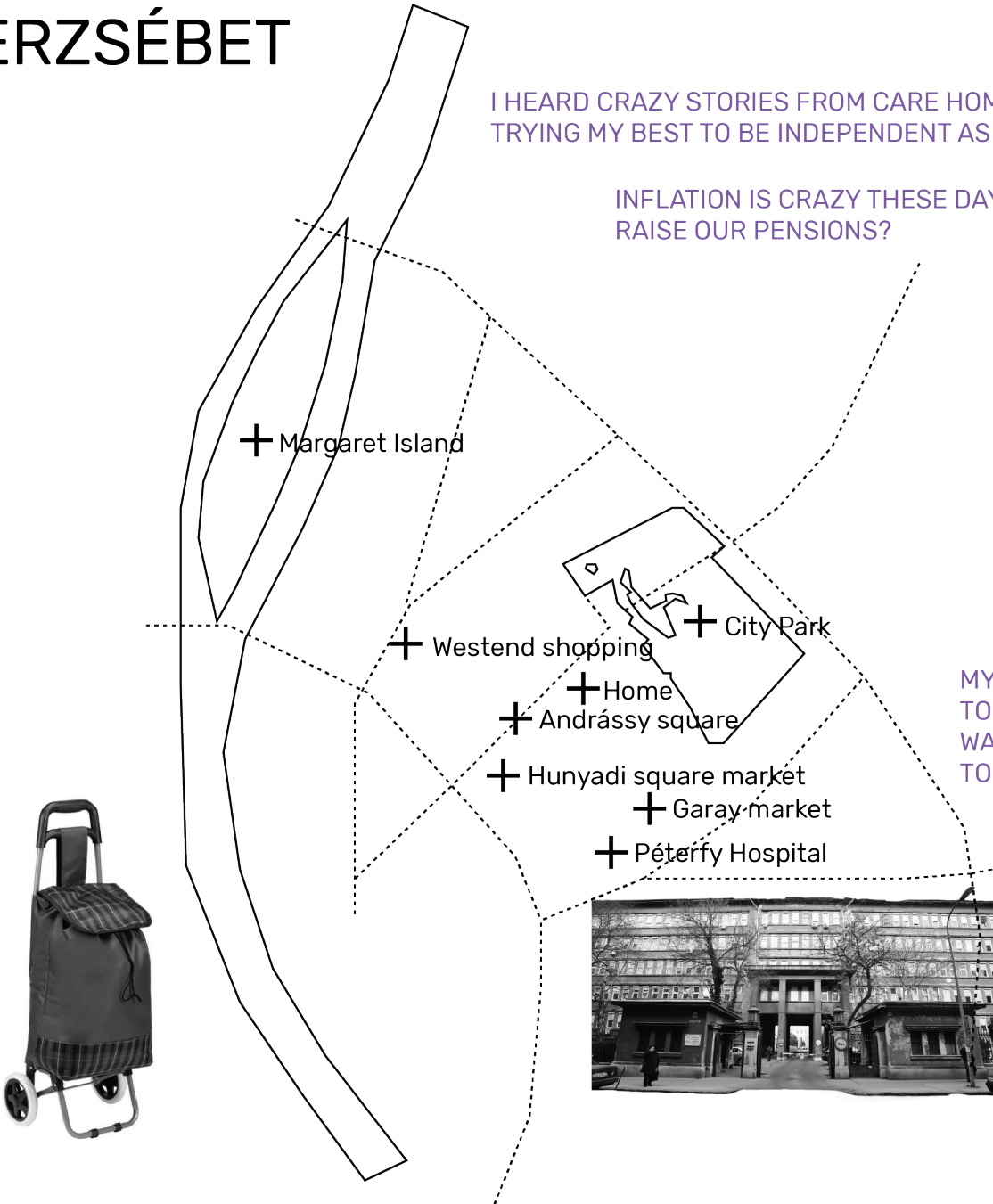
I HEARD CRAZY STORIES FROM CARE HOMES, SO I AM TRYING MY BEST TO BE INDEPENDENT AS LONG AS I CAN.

INFLATION IS CRAZY THESE DAYS, AND WHO'S GONNA RAISE OUR PENSIONS?

I WASN'T VERY SOCIAL BEFORE, BUT AFTER MY HUSBAND DIED I BECAME VERY LONELY, SO HAVING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME NOW

SOMETIMES STREETLIGHTS SWITH TO RED SO QUICKLY THAT I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

+ Margaret Island

+ Daughter's place

+ City Park

+ Westend shopping

+ Home
+ Andrássy square

+ Hunyadi square market
+ Garay market
+ Péterfy Hospital

MY LEGS HURT AND MY DOCTOR SAID I NEED TO HAVE A HIP REPLACEMENT, BUT THE WAITING LISTS ARE SO LONG... I THINK I HAVE TO WAIT 2 YEARS FOR THAT

DECADES AGO YOU COULD FIND PUBLIC TOILETS EVERYWHERE, BUT NOW THEY'RE ALL CLOSED. AT THIS AGE I HAVE TO USE THE BATHROOM MORE OFTEN, AND IT IS EMBARASSING, BUT I HAVE TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION IF THERE WILL BE A TOILET WHERE I AM GOING OR NOT

WEAKNESSES

USE OF PUBLIC SPACES | CLIMATE | SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

NAMES	AGE GROUP	GENDER	LACK OF ELEVATORS	LACK OF TOILETS	TRASH	STAIRS	DOG POOP	PARKING CARS	SAFETY ISSUES	DIFFICULTIES GETTING ON TRAMS	SCOOTERS ON SIDEWALK	TOO MUCH PAVEMENT	TRAFFIC JAMS	LACK OF BENCHES	LACK OF BINS	UNEVEN PAVEMENTS	STREETLIGHTS CHANGE TOO QUICKLY	AIR POLLUTION	NOT ENOUGH GREEN SPACE	DIFFICULTIES WITH EXTREME HEAT	STORMWATER ISSUES	PARTNER DIED	GENERATIONAL GAP	LACK OF CONNECTIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE	NOT CLOSE WITH FAMILY	DIFFICULTIES WITH THE ONLINE WORLD	NO CONNECTION WITH NEIGHBOURS
ERZSÉBET	75-80	F	●	●	●	●		●	●		●		●		●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	
ERIKA	75-80	F		●		●			●											●			●			●	
KÁLMÁN	80-85	M		●	●		●					●							●	●			●			●	
HELGA	70-75	F		●		●		●		●	●	●	●		●	●		●	●	●		●		●			●
MAGDOLNA	70-75	F		●					●				●	●				●	●							●	
ZSUZSA	75-80	F	●	●		●			●							●		●	●			●	●		●	●	
ILONA	85-90	F		●		●		●	●			●		●		●		●	●		●	●	●	●		●	
ISTVÁN	75-80	M			●		●	●	●				●	●								●	●	●		●	

Pattern ideas:

Budapest

climate factors

green spaces
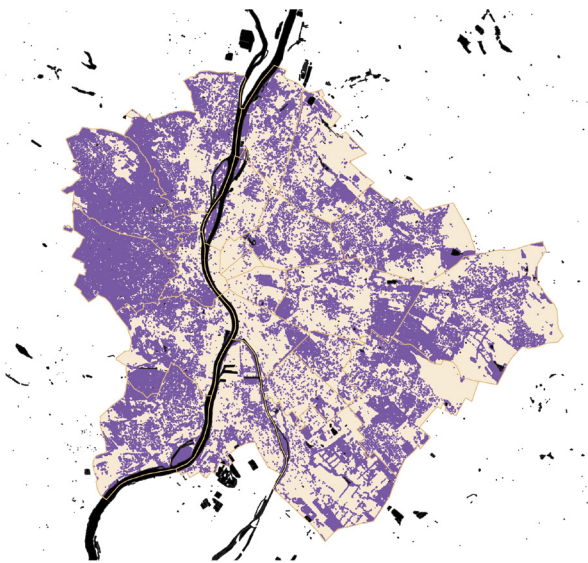
average temperature in summer
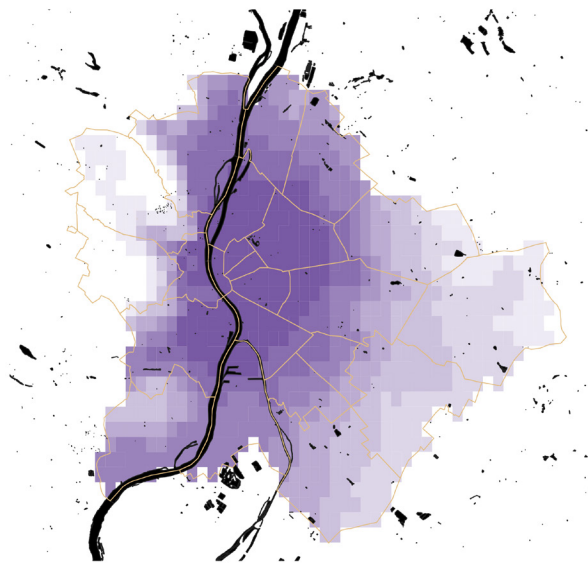
pericipation
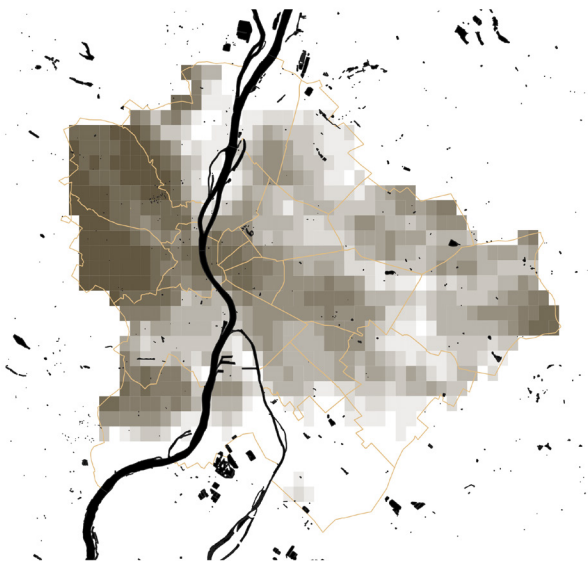
air pollution

social factors

concentration of elderly
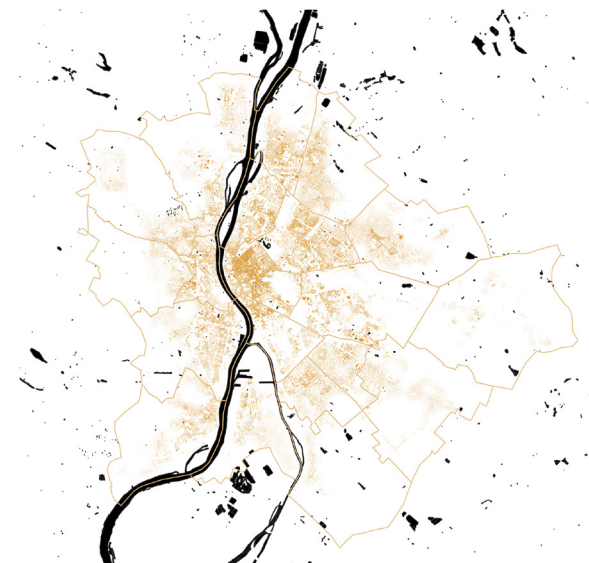
density

income

life expectancy

RECONNECTING ELDERLY

focus area

buildings
parks
water
cemetry

VI.

VII.

VIII.

history of the buildings

Zoning map of Budapest (Benkő, 2011.)

1 – histroic urban core
2 – Danube riverbanks
3 – transition belt
4 – hillside zone
5 – outskirts

0   10 km
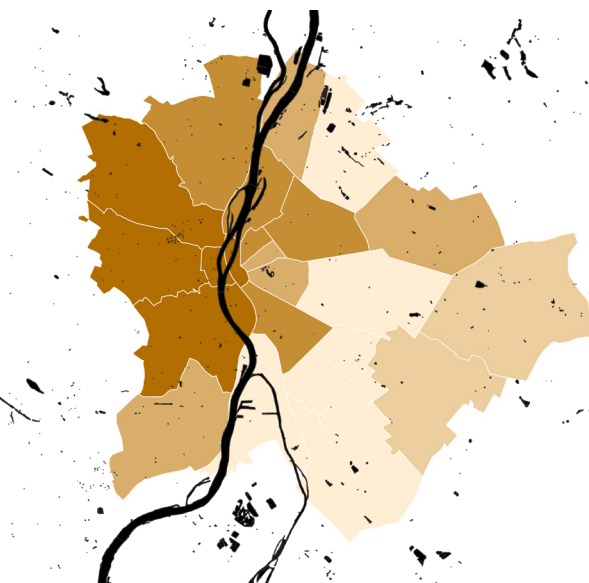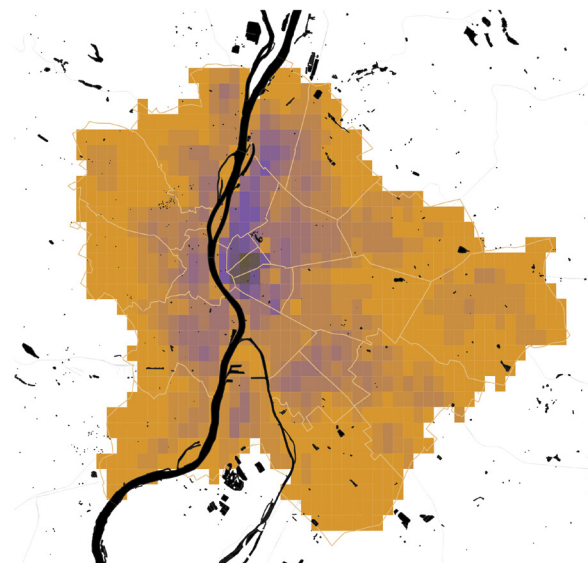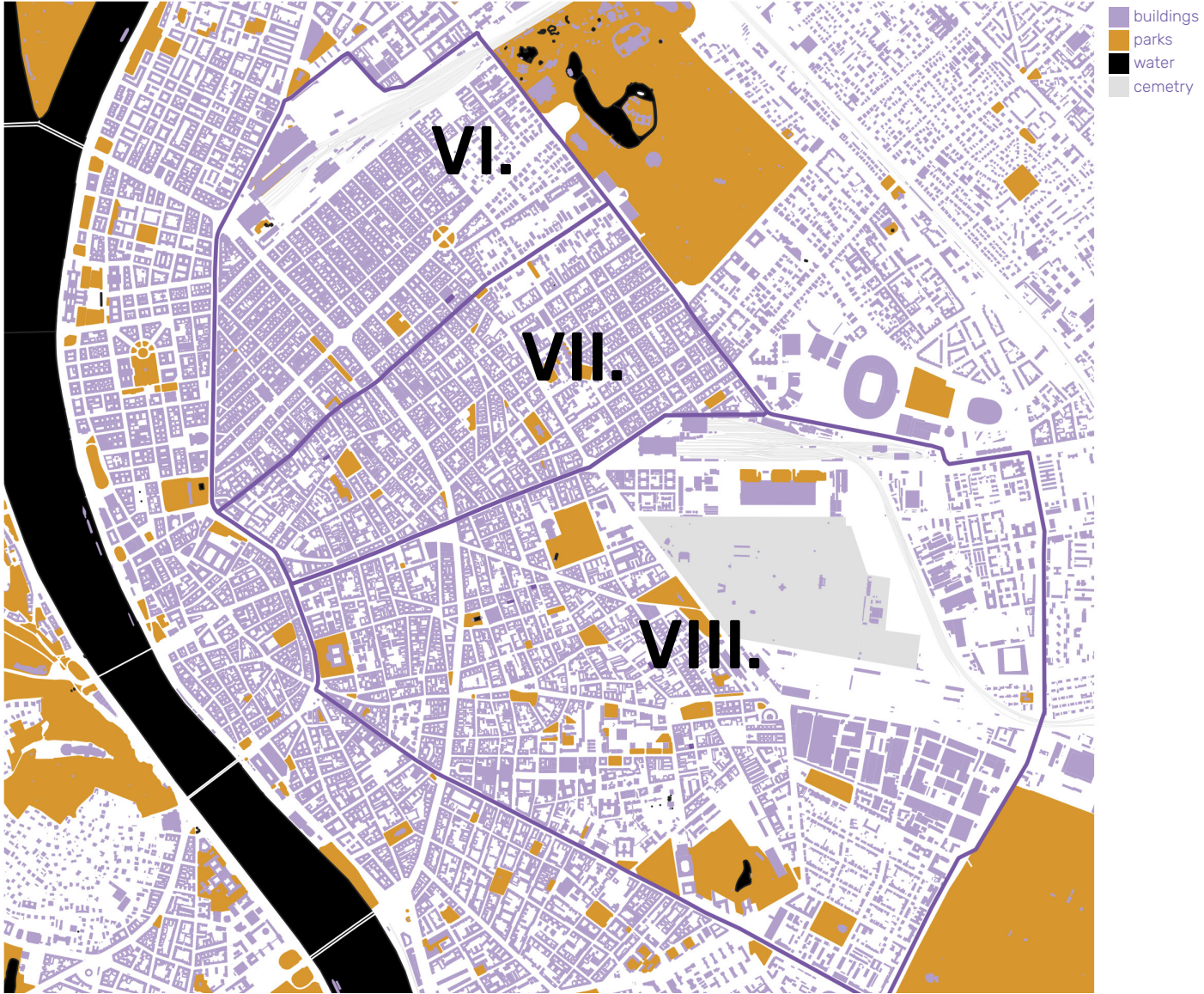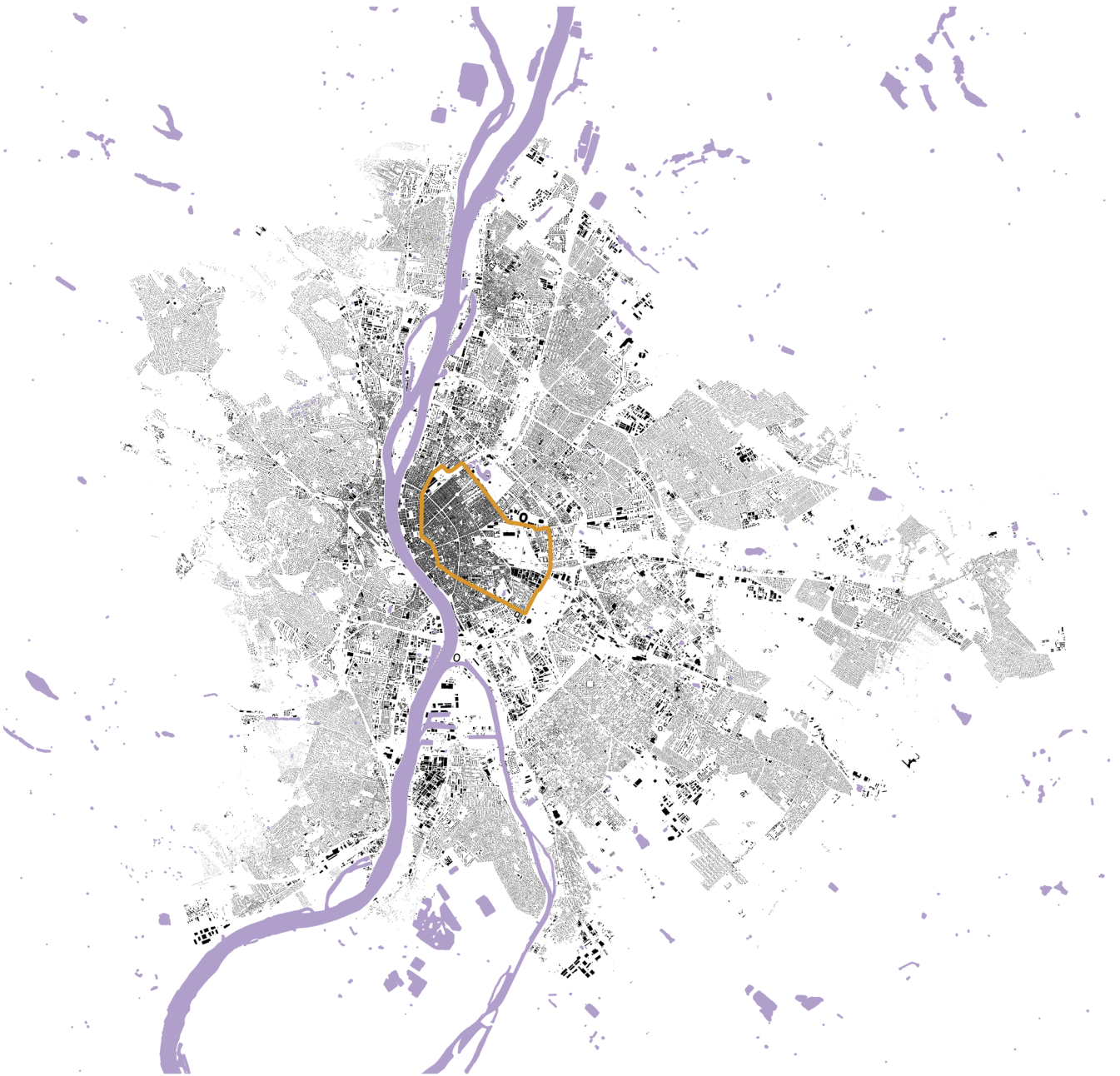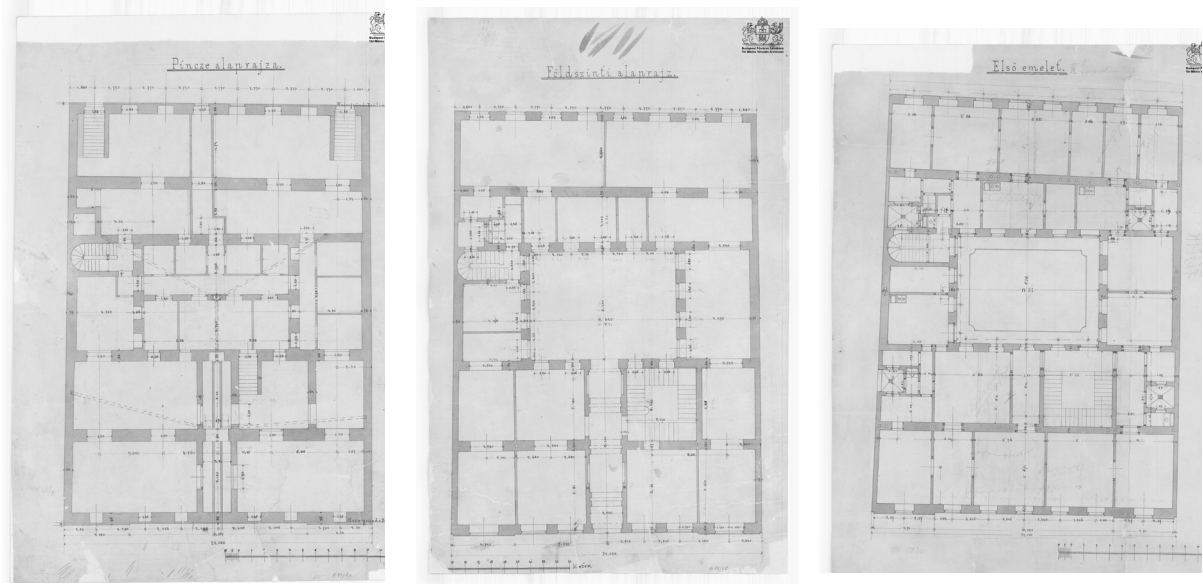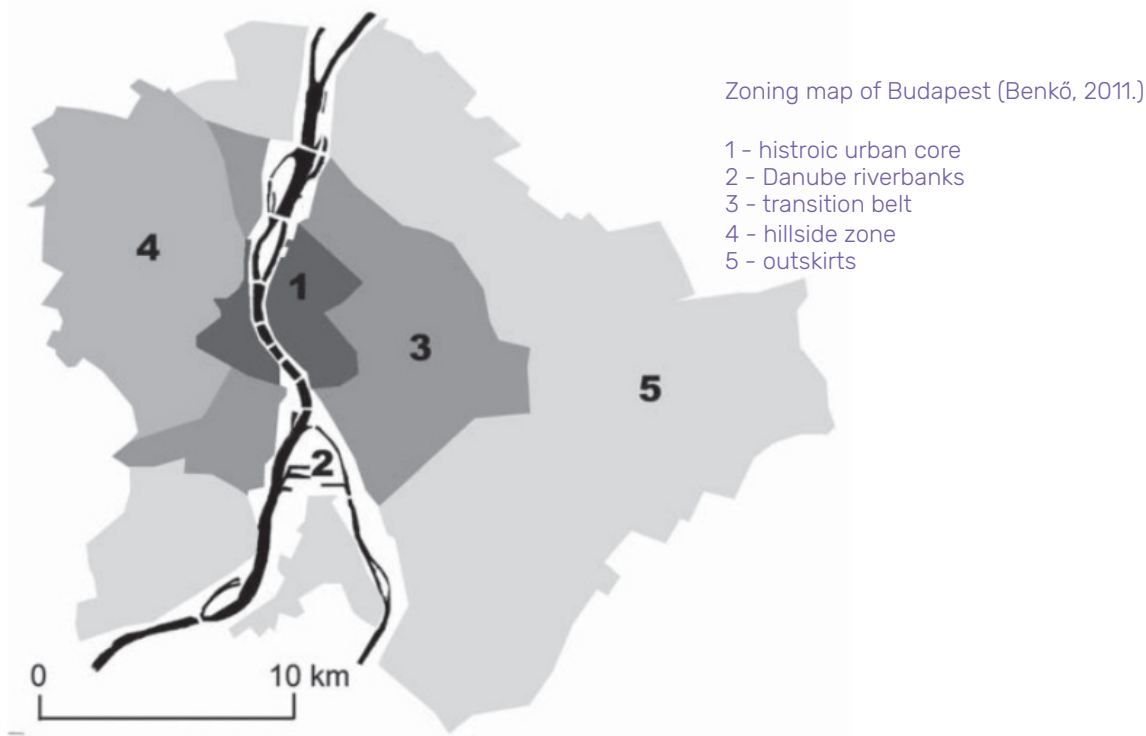
history of the buildings

door & hallway

courtyard

stairs

open hanging corrirdors

caretaker of the building

everyday life

current challenges

- Privatization

- Rehabilitation projects

- Shifts in community

- Short-term rental platforms

- Common areas are underutilized

pictures: Fortepan, National Photo Gallery

urban space analysis

Cafés, restaurants
- café
- restaurant

Toilets, benches
- toilet
- bench

Recreational spaces
- park
- dog park
- playground

Culture
- theater
- museum
- art gallery
- library

Shopping
- market
- pharmacy
- supermarket

Religion
- churches

Schools, universities
- school
- university

Places of care
- park
- elderly club
- community center
- care home
- soup kitchen
- hospital
- community garden
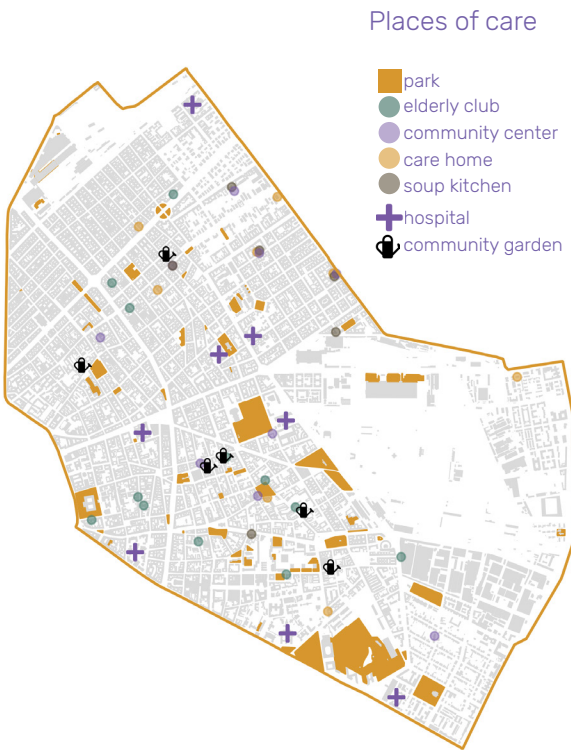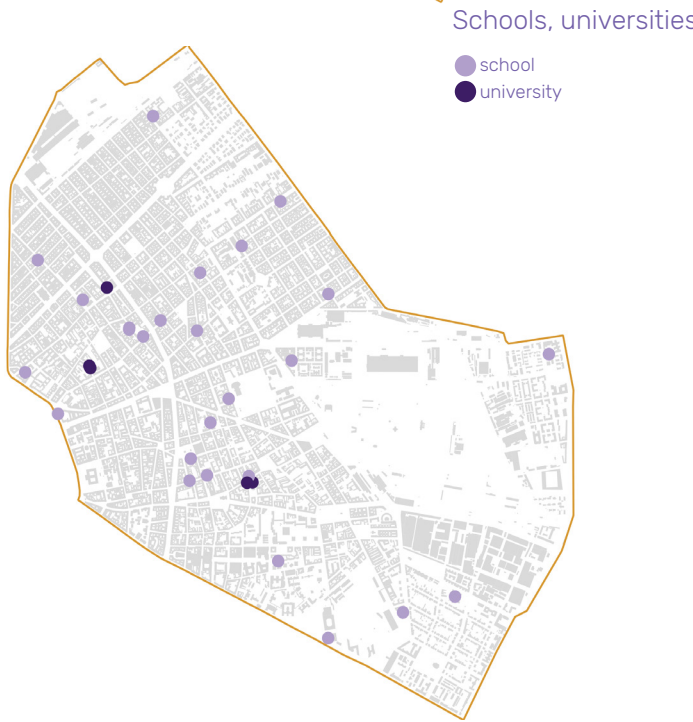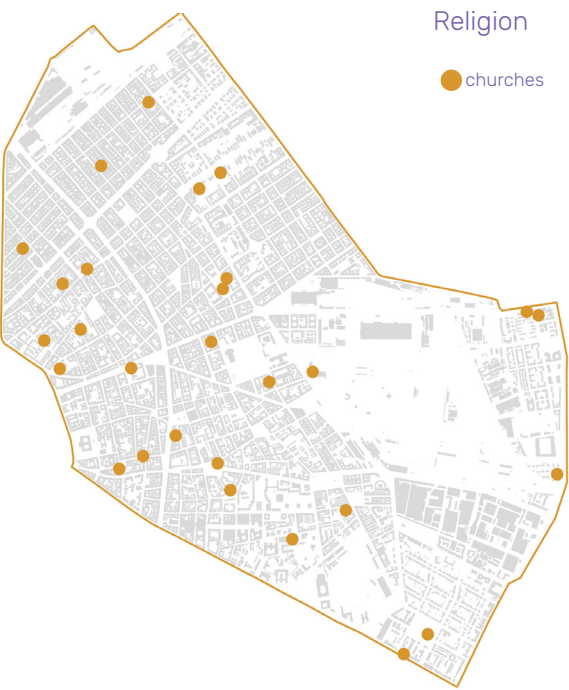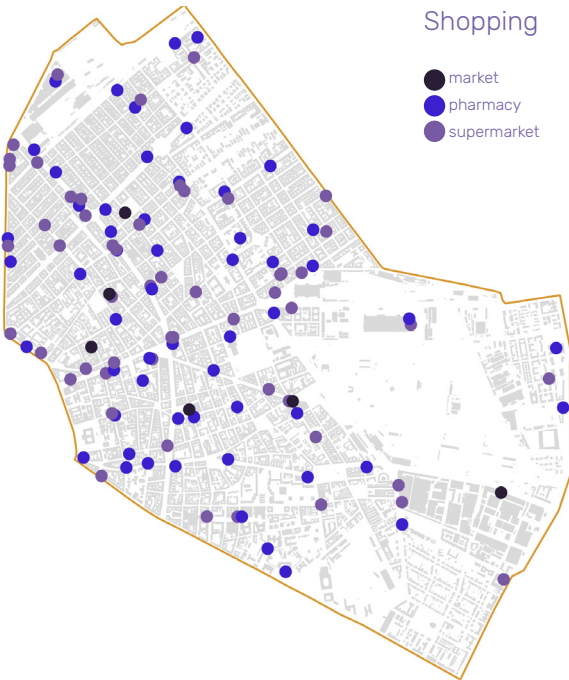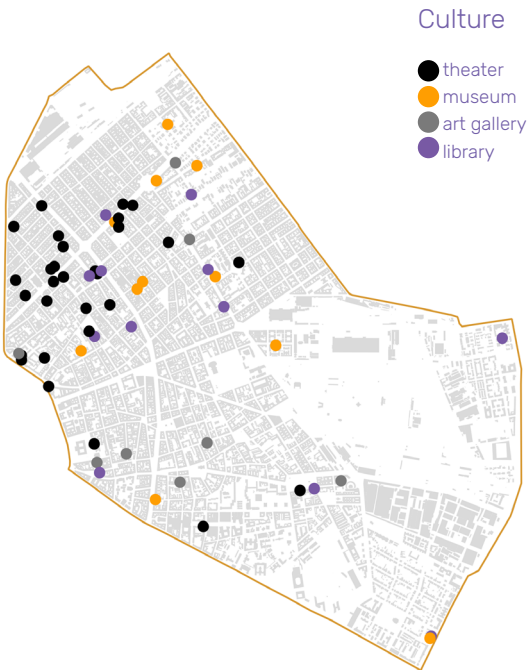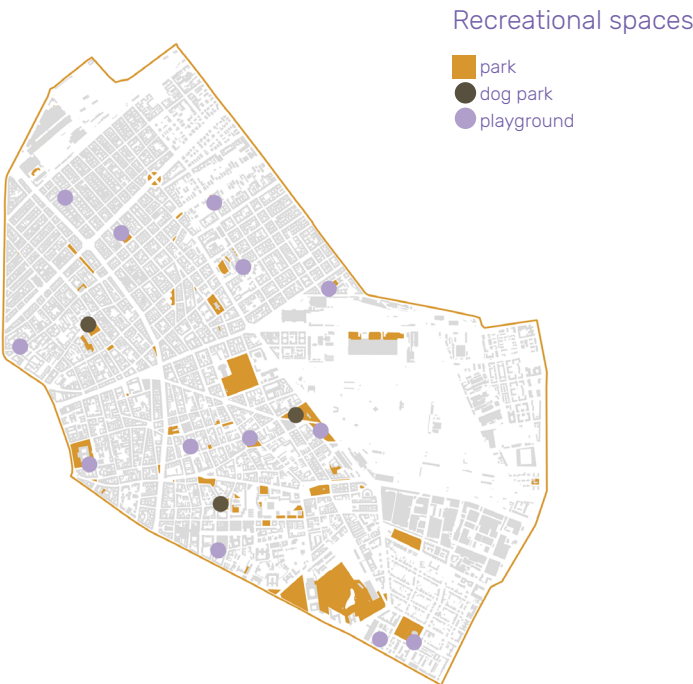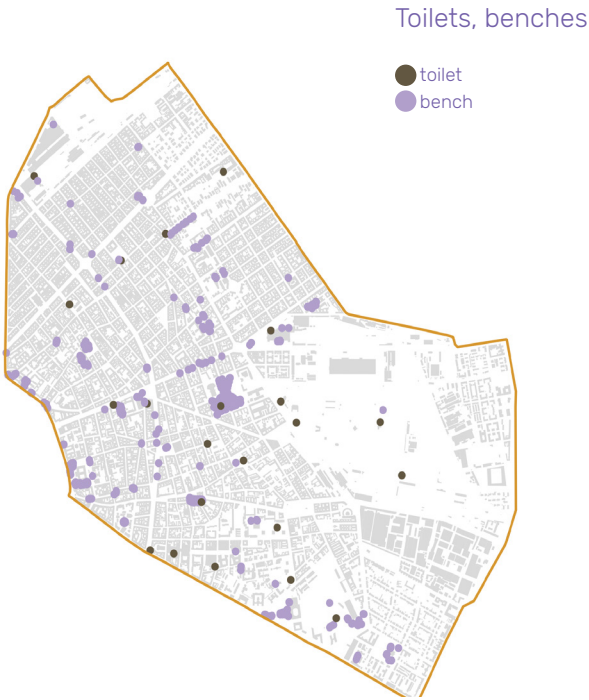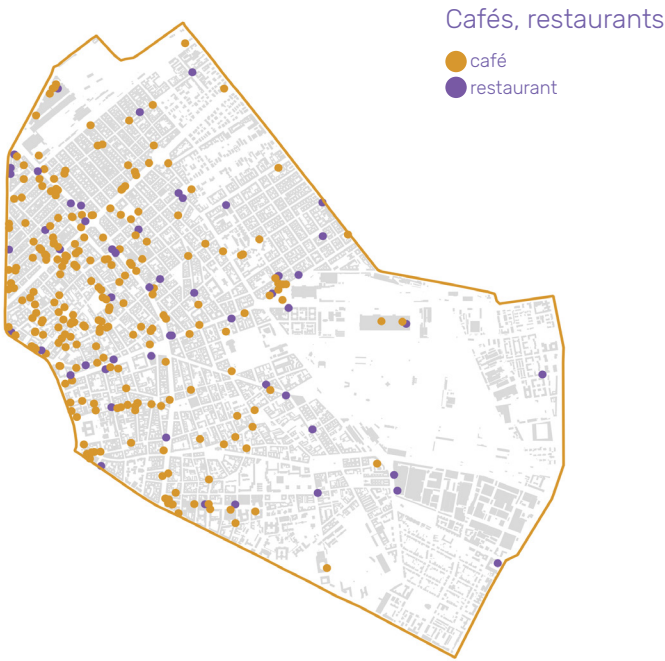
public space analysis
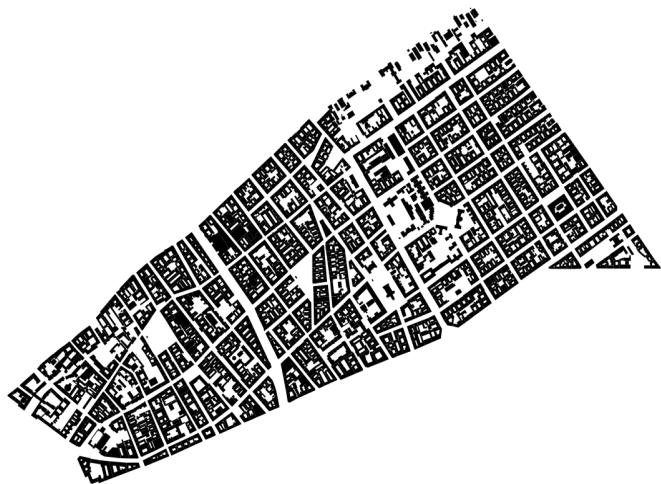
1 GARAY SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

square in front of a shopping center

2 RÓZSÁK SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

square around the church

3 ALMÁSSY SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park with playground and dog park

4 BETHLEN GÁBOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement, place to stay

Function:

square at an intersection

5 SZENES HANNA SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

small park

6 LÖVÖLDE SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park

7 HEVESI SÁNDOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement, place to stay

Function:

square in front of the theater

8 IZABELLA - ALSÓ ERDŐSOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

square in an intersection

9 SZÁZHÁZ PARK

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park with playground

street analysis

MAIN STREET

Type of space:

place to stay/place for movement

Function:

mobility, economic, social, residential

Qualities:
- active ground floor
- outside seating
- public transport
- green spaces/trees
- place to interact
- connectivity
- eyes on the street

Challenges:
- loud
- busy

MIXED-USE STREET

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

mobility, economic, residential

Qualities:
- public transport
- connectivity
- many ground floor function
- eyes on the street

Challenges:
- too many parking cars
- no green space
- no outside seating
- no places to interact

LIVING STREET

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

residential

Qualities:
- quiet

Challenges:
- no outside seating
- no places to interact
- no public transportation
- no ground function
- parking cars
- no eyes on the street

Király street

Erzsébet boulevard
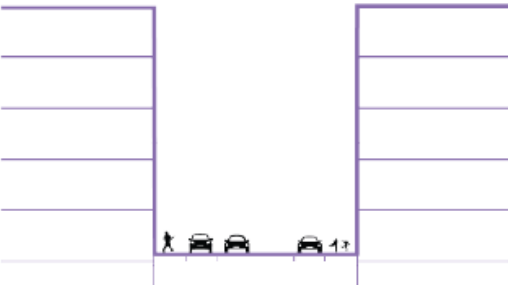
István street

Wesselényi street
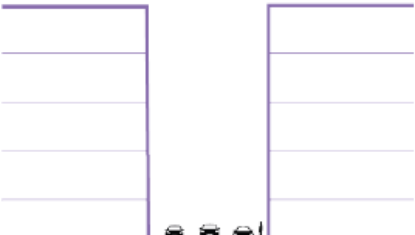
Szinva street

Vörösmarty street

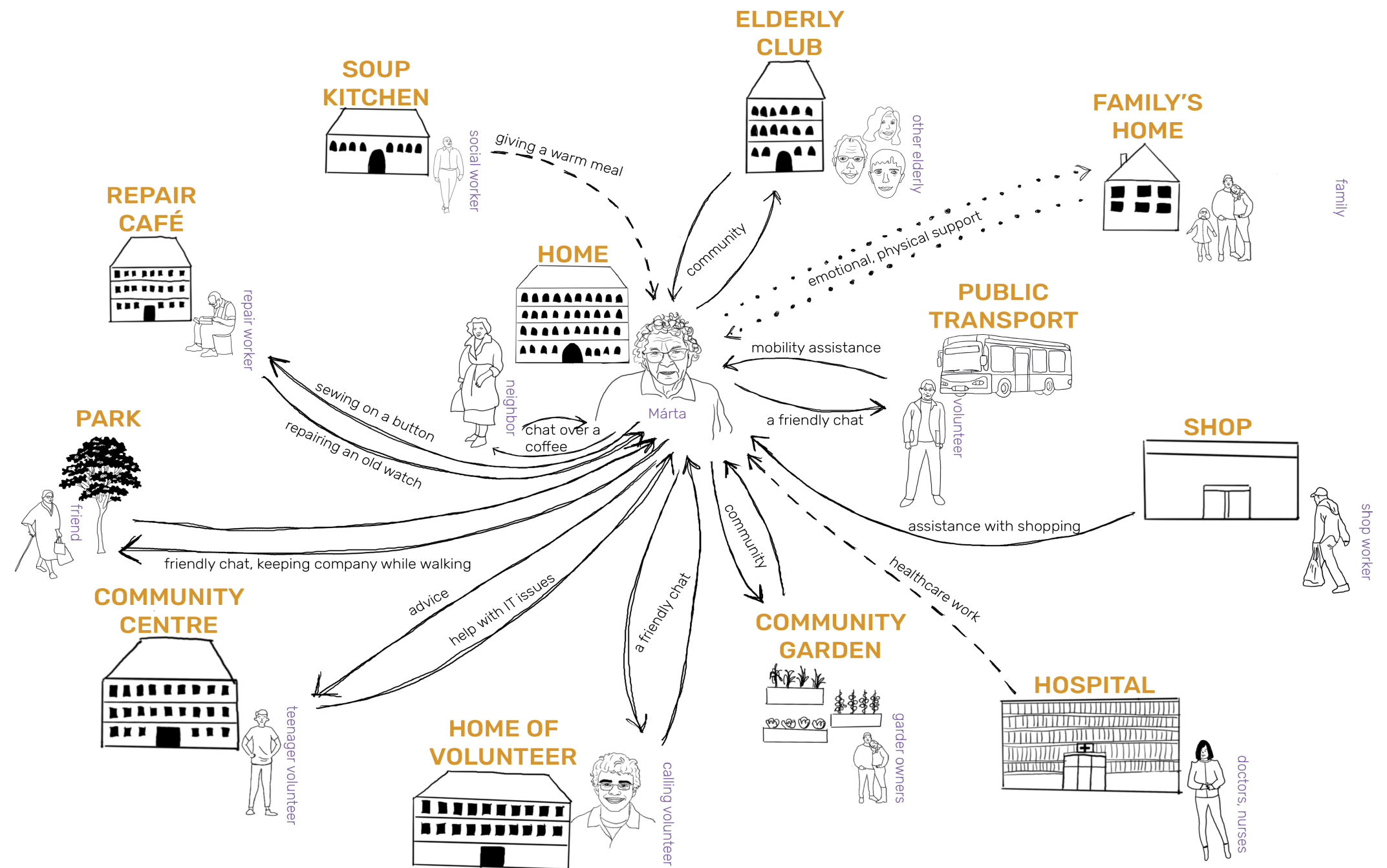# conclusions from the analysis
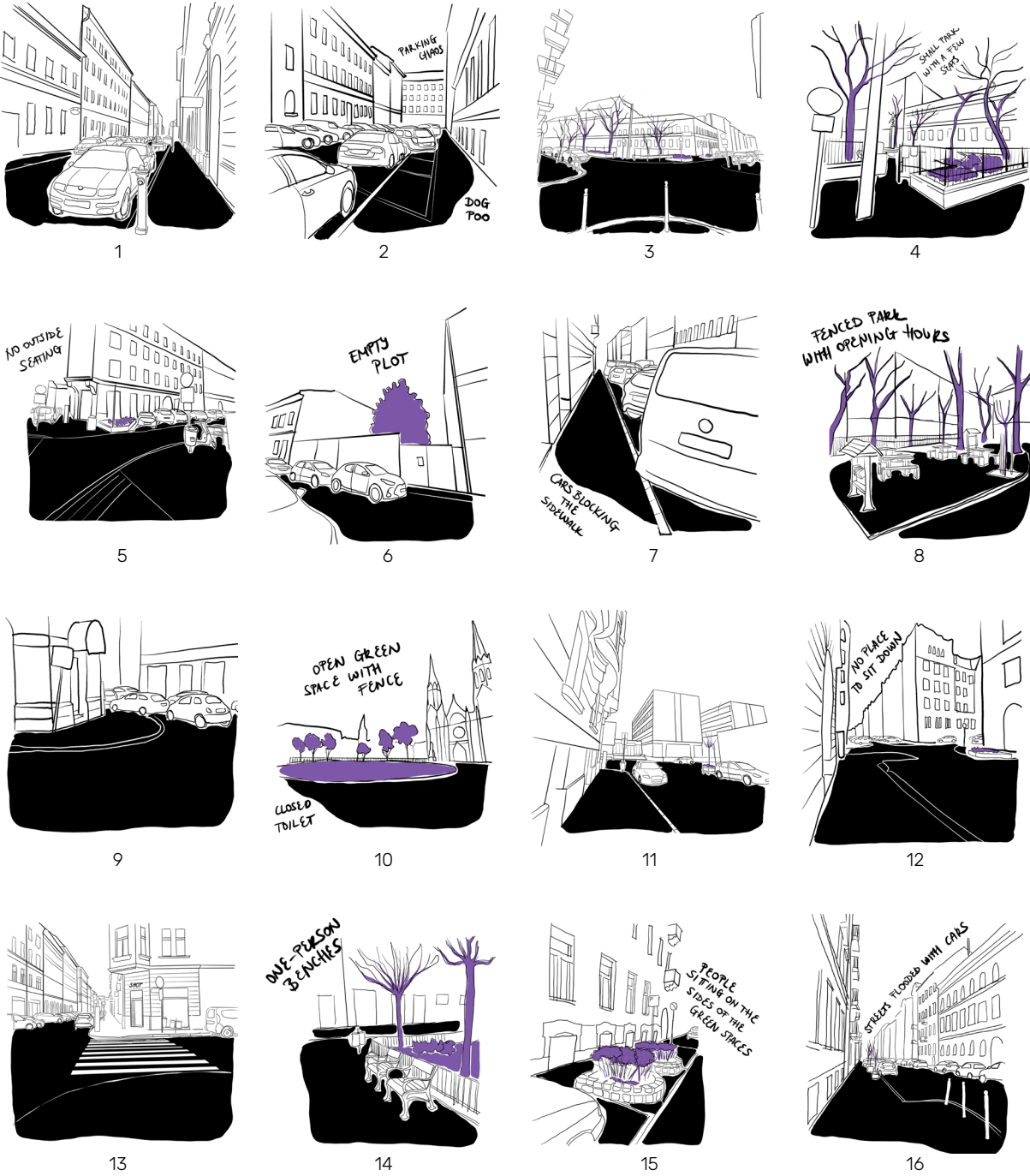
proposal

care, a tool to reshape the boundaries of publicness

4 guide lines:

- Promoting the ability to age in place

- Creating spatial conditions where older adults feel empowered

- Providing equal access to healthy, inclusive environments

- Promoting care as an integral part of everyday life

SOUP
KITCHEN

social worker

giving a warm meal

ELDERLY
CLUB

other elderly

FAMILY'S
HOME

family

REPAIR
CAFÉ

repair worker

HOME

community

emotional, physical support

PUBLIC
TRANSPORT

volunteer

sewing on a button

repairing an old watch

neighbor

chat over a coffee

Márta

mobility assistance

a friendly chat

SHOP

shop worker

PARK

friend

friendly chat, keeping company while walking

advice

help with IT issues

a friendly chat

community

assistance with shopping

COMMUNITY
CENTRE

teenager volunteer

HOME OF
VOLUNTEER

calling volunteer

COMMUNITY
GARDEN

garden owners

healthcare work

HOSPITAL

doctors, nurses

pattern language

Christopher Alexander (1977)

Pattern code
Pattern name

hypothesis

theoretical or empirical back-up

practical implication

scale
A S B P U O
top-down — bottom-up (power to implement)

dimensions of caring urbanism

pattern derived from
L I A D

relation with other patterns

sources

scale

A S B P U O

A – across scales
S – street
B – block
P – plot
U – unit
O – object

pattern derived from

L literature

I interviews

A analysis

D design process

dimensions of caring urbanism

Placing care
– creating urban sapces that are supporting formal and informal care practices

Accessibility as caring
– ensuring physical and social access
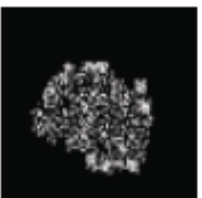
Sensory experiences
– considering environmental factors and sensory experiences

Openness and unfolding of care
– encouraging social and physical adaptibility
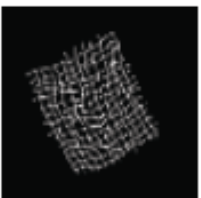
Caring for attachment
– considering continuity and place attachment
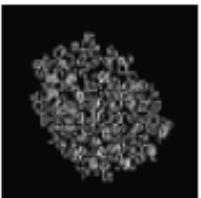
Caring for the future
– creating responsible and sustainable urban sapces

Based on the dimensions of caring urbanism from Juliet Davis' The caring city book.

(Davis, J. (2022). The caring city: Ethics of urban design. Bristol University Press)

pattern language

Social connectivity

S1. Activate the courtyards	**S2.** Activate the empty plots	**S3.** Utilising municipal buildings	**S4.** Intergener- ational play- ground	**S5.** Community garden	**S6.** Community kitchen	**S7.** Quiet zone	**S8.** Elderly club
S9. Repair center	**S10.** Community hub	**S11.** Activate the groundfloor	**S12.** Shared tools	**S13.** Adopt the green	**S14.** Community kiosk	**S15.** Add shade	

Climate adaptation

C1. Connect the green	**C2.** Airflow	**C3.** Permeable pavements	**C4.** Plant the street	**C5.** Remove tiles	**C6.** Cooling water	**C7.** Green walls	**C8.** Pocket park
C9. Rain garden	**C10.** Compost spot	**C11.** Put out a pot	**C12.** Add shade				

Urban infrastructure

U1. A short walk away	**U2.** Clear streets	**U3.** Connect the courtyards	**U4.** Multi-level parking	**U5.** Ground floor for the old	**U6.** Home modifica- tion	**U7.** Parking for special needs	**U8.** Entryway help
U9. Removing parking spaces	**U10.** Free toilet	**U11.** Transform the intersection	**U12.** Transform the street	**U13.** Remove fences			

Agency

A1. Animal com- panions	**A2.** Let's learn	**A3.** Tech help	**A4.** Volunteering part-time	**A5.** Multigenera- tional mingle	**A6.** Friendly call	**A7.** Time banking	**A8.** Everyday assistance
A9. Voices of the block	**A10.** Street safety	**A11.** Together in motion	**A12.** Know you neighbour	**A13.** Intergenera- tional housing	**A14.** Let's move in together	**A15.** Open / close	

temporal evolution of space:

RECONNECTING ELDERLY

level of engagement

time

urban space

activation / transformation

enabling spatial infrastructure

supporting social infrastructure

appropriation

caring urban space

1.   2.   3.   4.   5.

pattern field

RECONNECTING ELDERLY
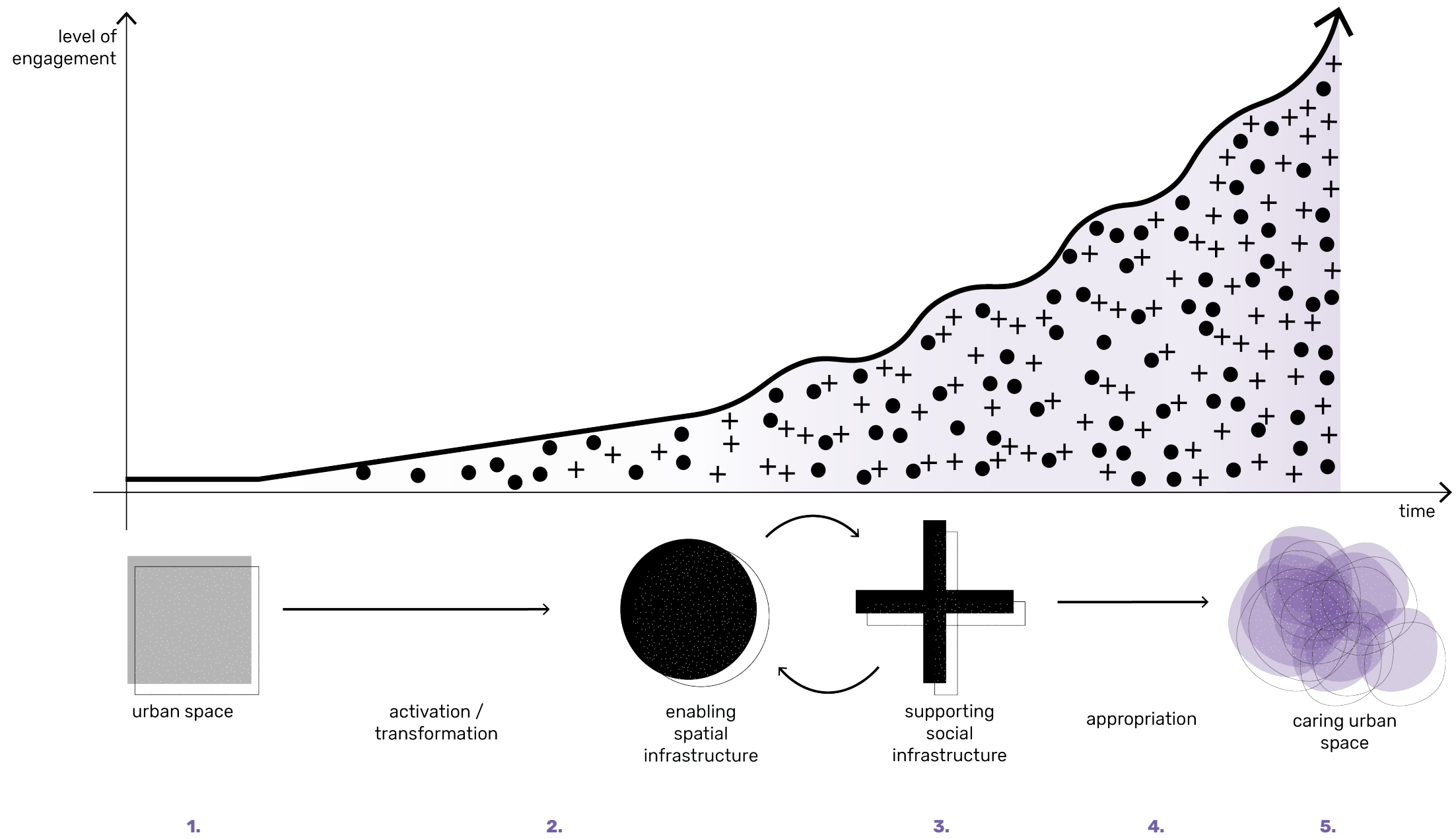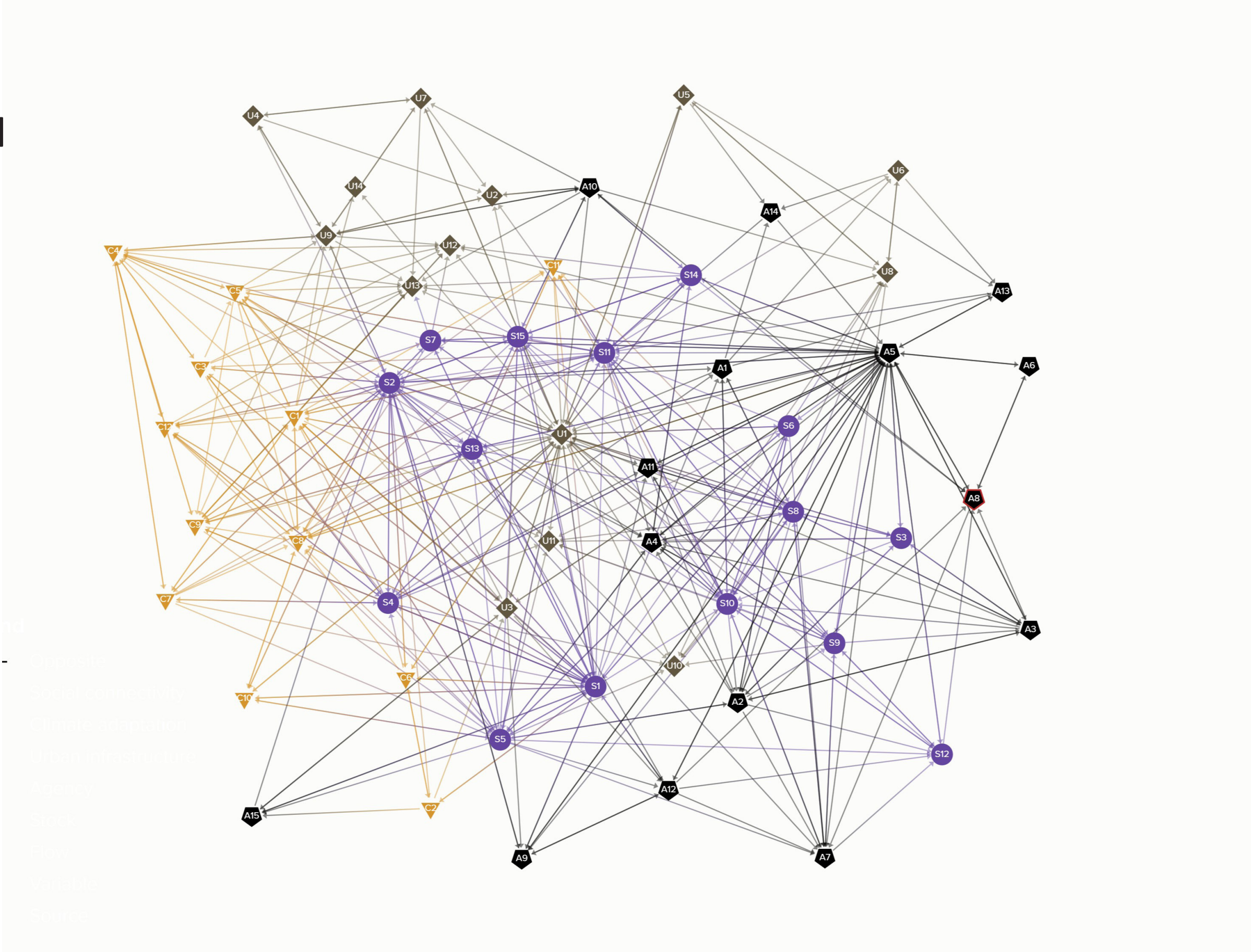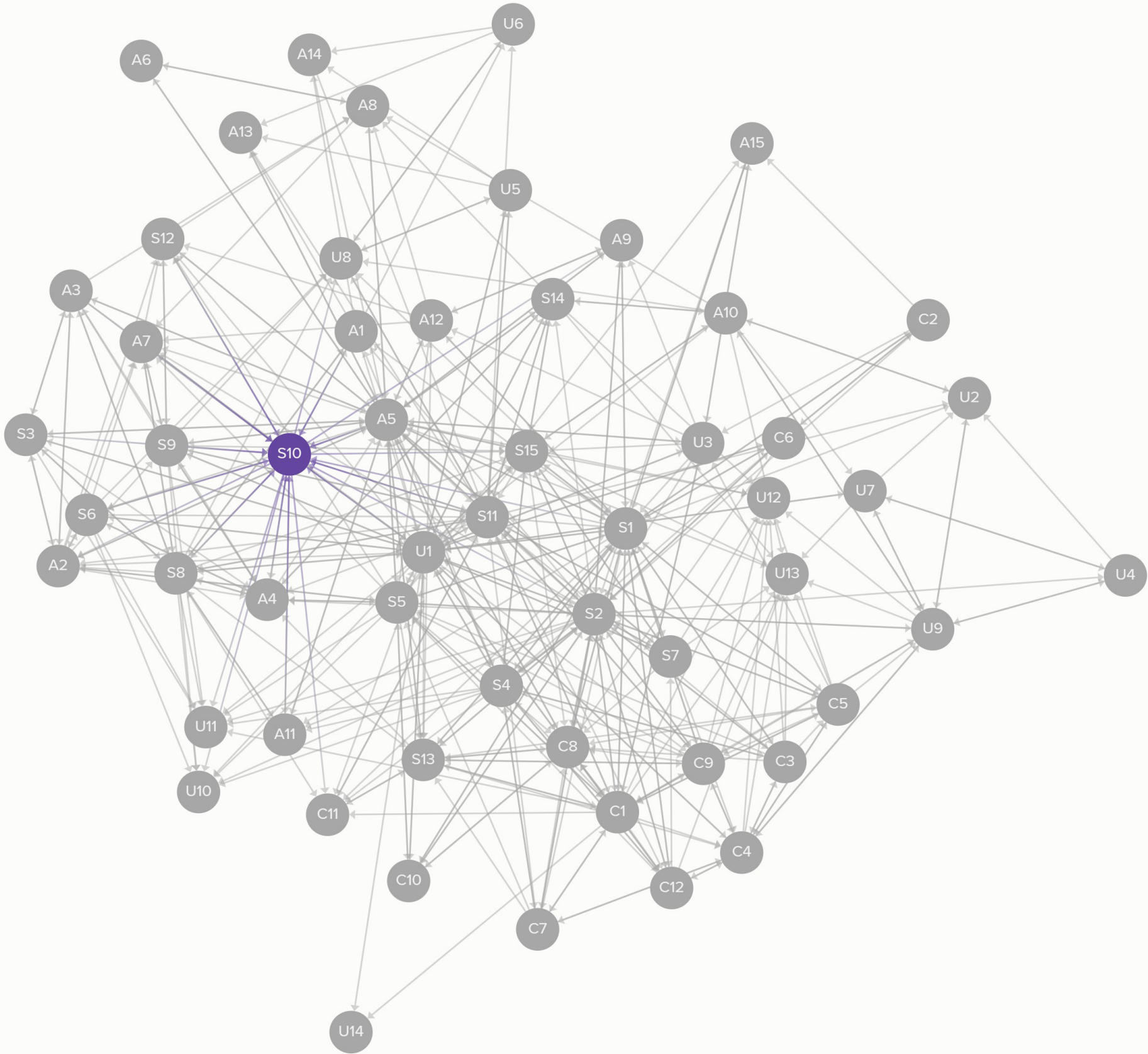
S10.
Community hub

hypothesis
Communal spaces where everyone from the neighbour-hood can meet and interact.

theoretical or empirical back-up
Many elderly people don't move around the city as much as they used to, but it's important for them to avoid isolation by leaving their homes occasionally. Getting out helps them stay active and socialize, which is why community hubs can play such an important role in their well-being and overall health. (Tomaka et al. 2006.)

scale

power to implement

top-down

bottom-up

practical implication
Creating community hubs every few blocks that are easily accessible to all, offering workshops or simply a welcoming space to relax, give elderly residents valuable opportunities to engage and socialize.
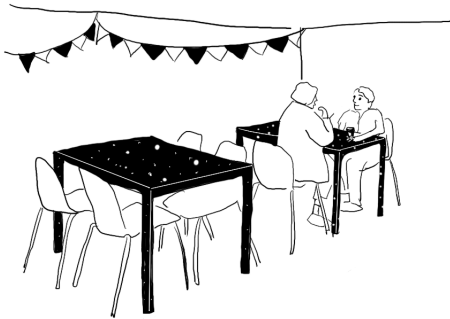
relation with other patterns
S6; S8; S11; S12; S15; C11; U1; U8; U10; U11; A1; A2; A3; A4; A5; A7; A9; A11

sources
Tomaka, J., Thompson, S. C., & Palacios, R. (2006). The relation of social isolation, loneliness, and social support to disease outcomes among the elderly. Journal of Health Psychology, 11(3), 409-421.

RECONNECTING ELDERLY
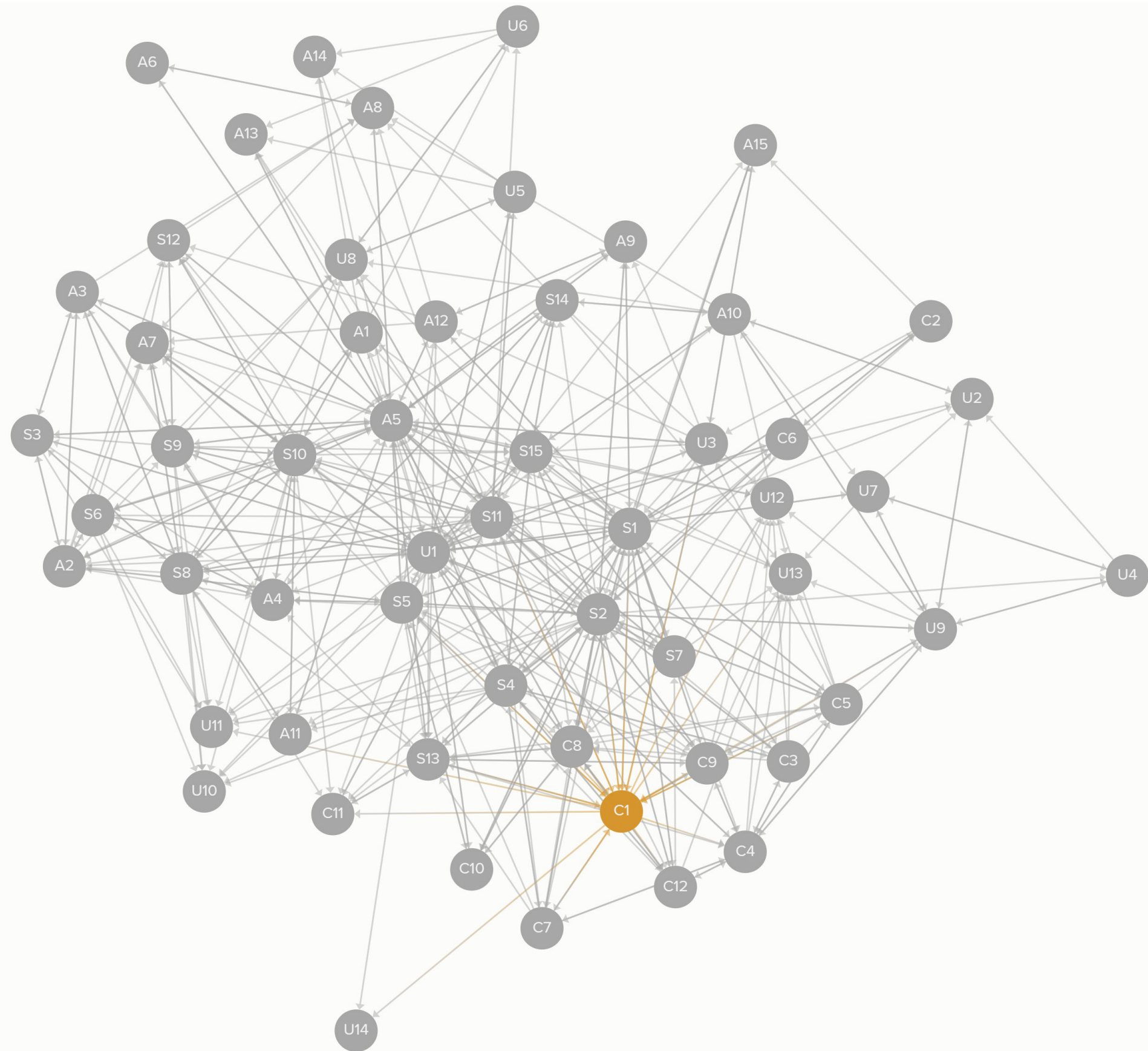

C1.
Connect the green

hypothesis
Connecting green spaces to increase biodiversity and foster community spaces.

theoretical or empirical back-up
Creating a continuous network of green spaces within the neighbourhood supports ecological connectivity, enhances urban heat mitigation, and provides inviting environments for community use and enjoyment.

scale   **power to implement**
A   top-   bottom
                             down   - up

A

practical implication
Connecting parks, green courtyards, green streets, rain gardens, and plant pots helps form a continuous ecological and social network.
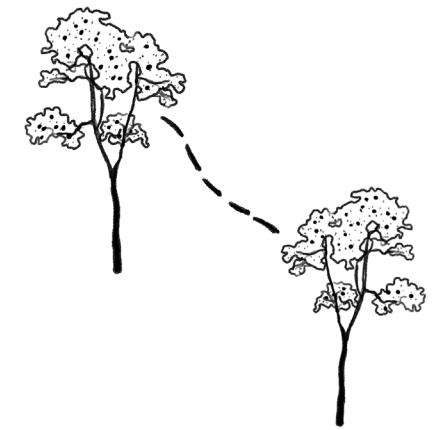
relation with other patterns
S1; S2; S5; S11; S13; C4; C5; C7; C8; C9; C11; C12; U3; U9; U11; U12; U13; U14

sources
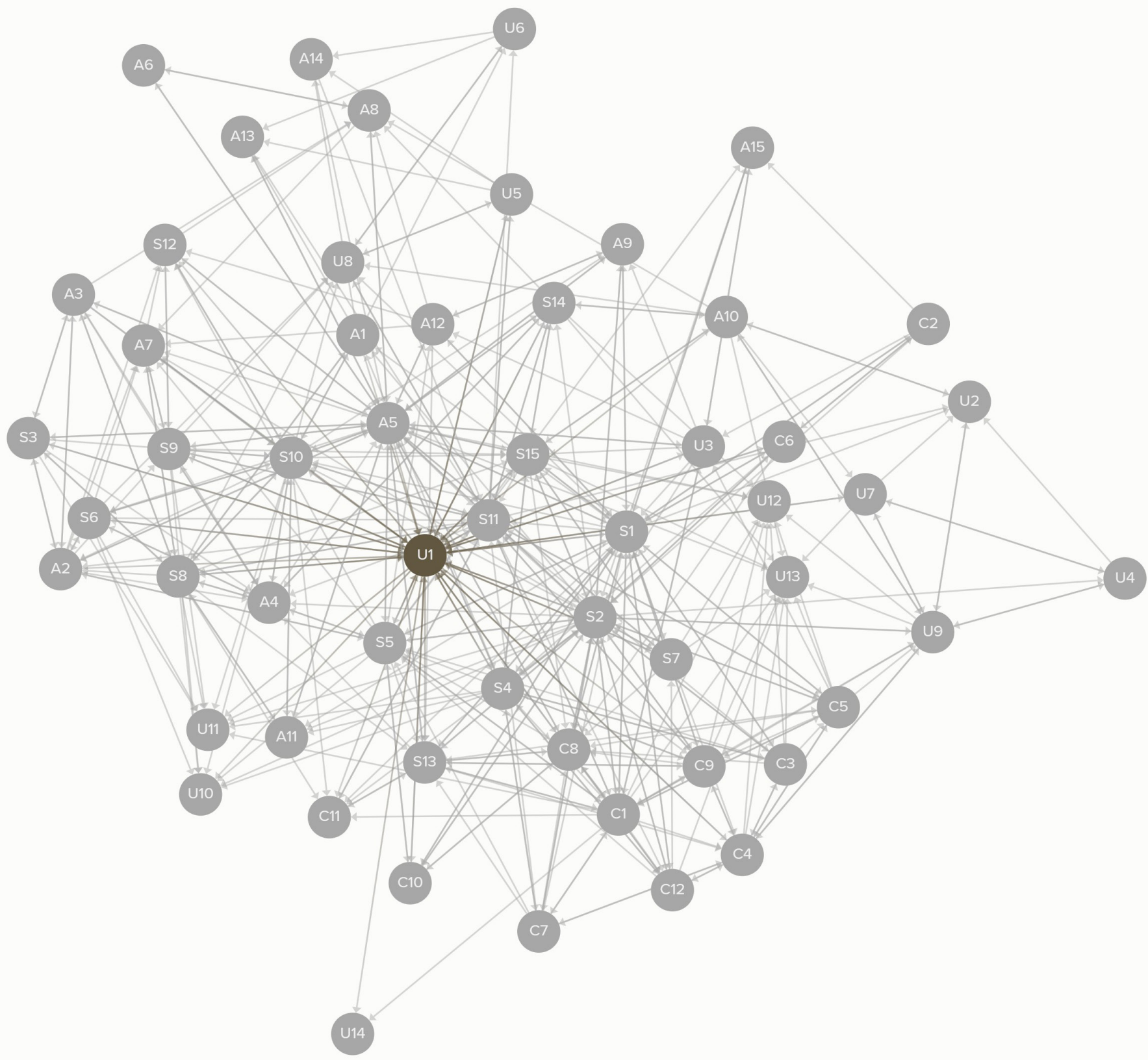
U1. A short walk away

U1.
A short walk away

hypothesis
Everyday functions and communal spaces are at a walkable distance.

theoretical or empirical back-up
With aging, many older adults gradually lose the ability to move around as freely as they once did, resulting in a shrinking daily environment. Their immediate neighborhood becomes their primary living space. (Wieringa, 2012). This makes it especially important to design neighborhoods with spaces that support the formation of social bonds and to ensure that essential services and amenities are located nearby and are easily accessible.

practical implication
Establishing community hubs, elderly clubs, and inclusive public or shared spaces within each block allows older adults to connect with peers and interact with other generations. In parallel, ensuring that essential services and amenities, such as shops, pharmacies, and healthcare facilities are located within a 10-minute walking distance.

scale
A

power to implement
top-down   bottom - up
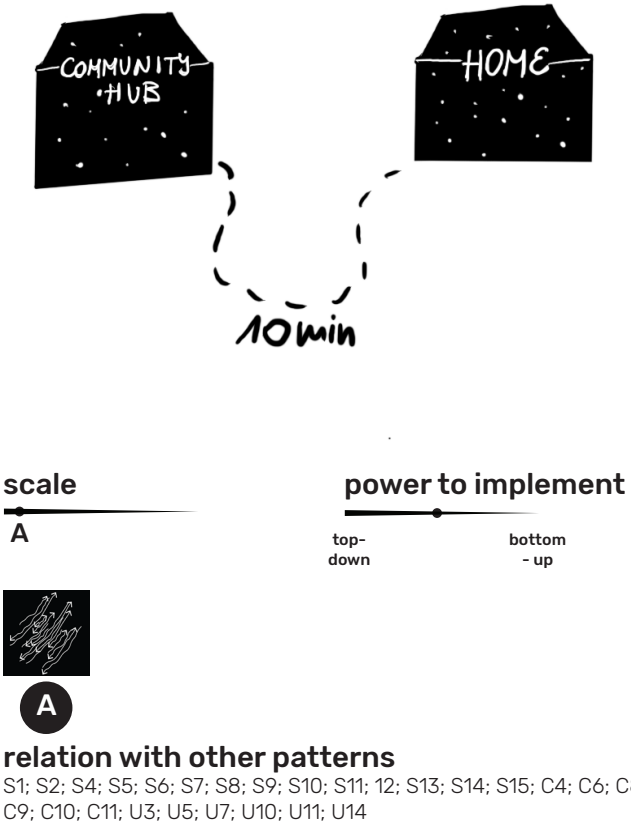
relation with other patterns
S1; S2; S4; S5; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; 12; S13; S14; S15; C4; C6; C8; C9; C10; C11; U3; U5; U7; U10; U11; U14

sources
Wieringa, J. (2012). Better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away? A qualitative study of the relation between loneliness and the social capital of elder elderly in their neighborhood (Master's thesis). Utrecht University.
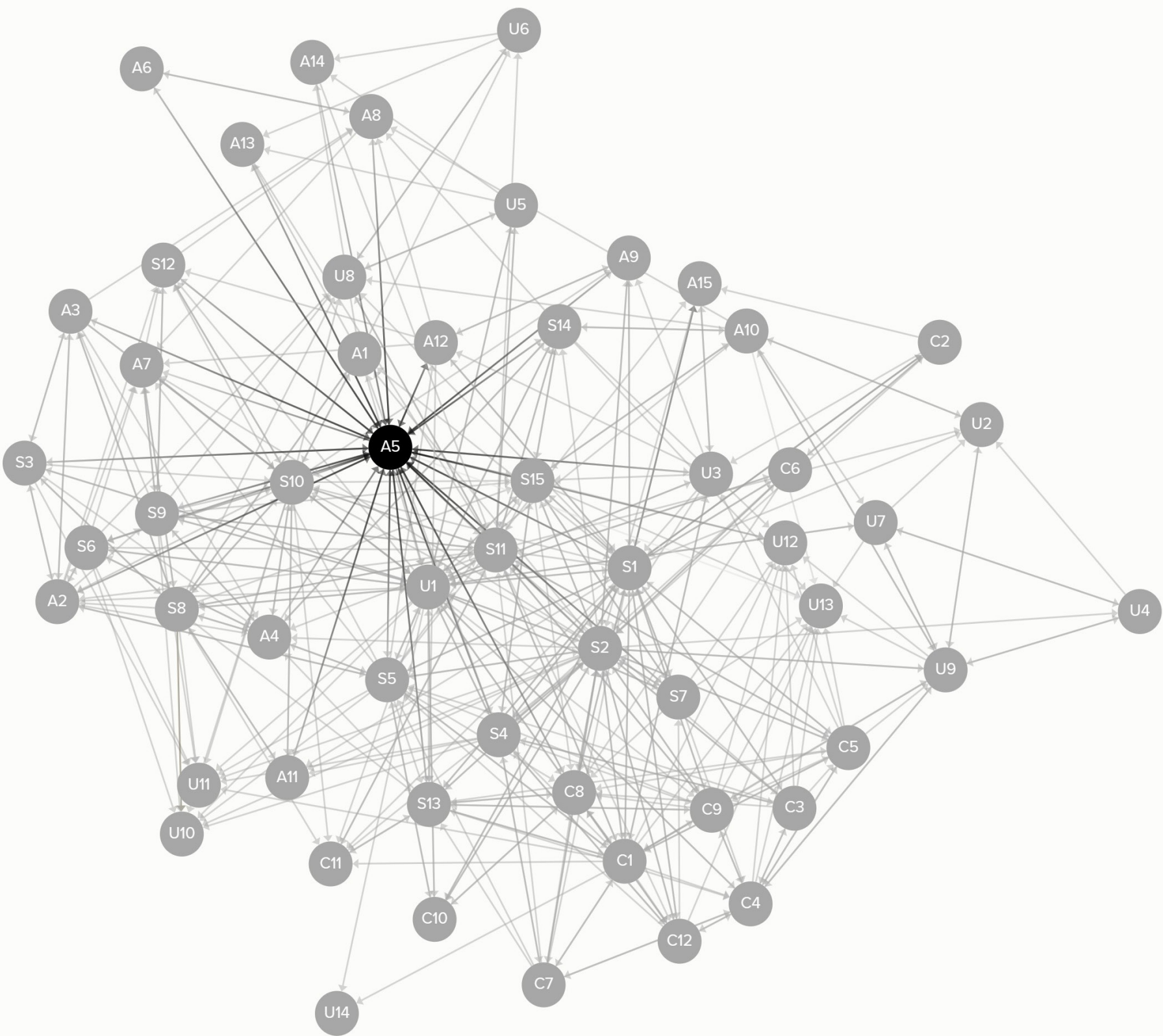
A5.
Multigenerational mingle

hypothesis
Creating spaces where different generations can meet and interact.

theoretical or empirical back-up
After retireing many elderly loose their daily purpose as well as many of their social connections, and with physical and mental health declining many of them experience isolaton and mental issues, like depression. (Han et al., 2022) A lot of elderly experience a difficulty in connecting with younger generations, because of the lack of opportunities to connect with each other. By creating public and communal spaces, different generations can meet and interact, which has a positive effect on all age groips. Encouraging informal interactions and foster intergenerational relations.

**scale**
A

power to implement
top-down   bottom-up

relation with other patterns
S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S6; S7; S9; S10; S11; S12; S13; S14; S15; C8; U1; U3; U12; U13; A2; A3; A6; A7; A8; A9; A11; A12; A13

practical implication
Creating public, semi-public, and communal spaces in courtyards, empty plots and empty ground floors, that foster informal interactions across different age groups.

sources
Han, Y., He, Y., Lyu, J., Yu, C., & Bian, M. (2022). Effectiveness of social support for community-dwelling elderly with depression: A systematic review and me-ta-analysis. Healthcare, 10(10), 1964.
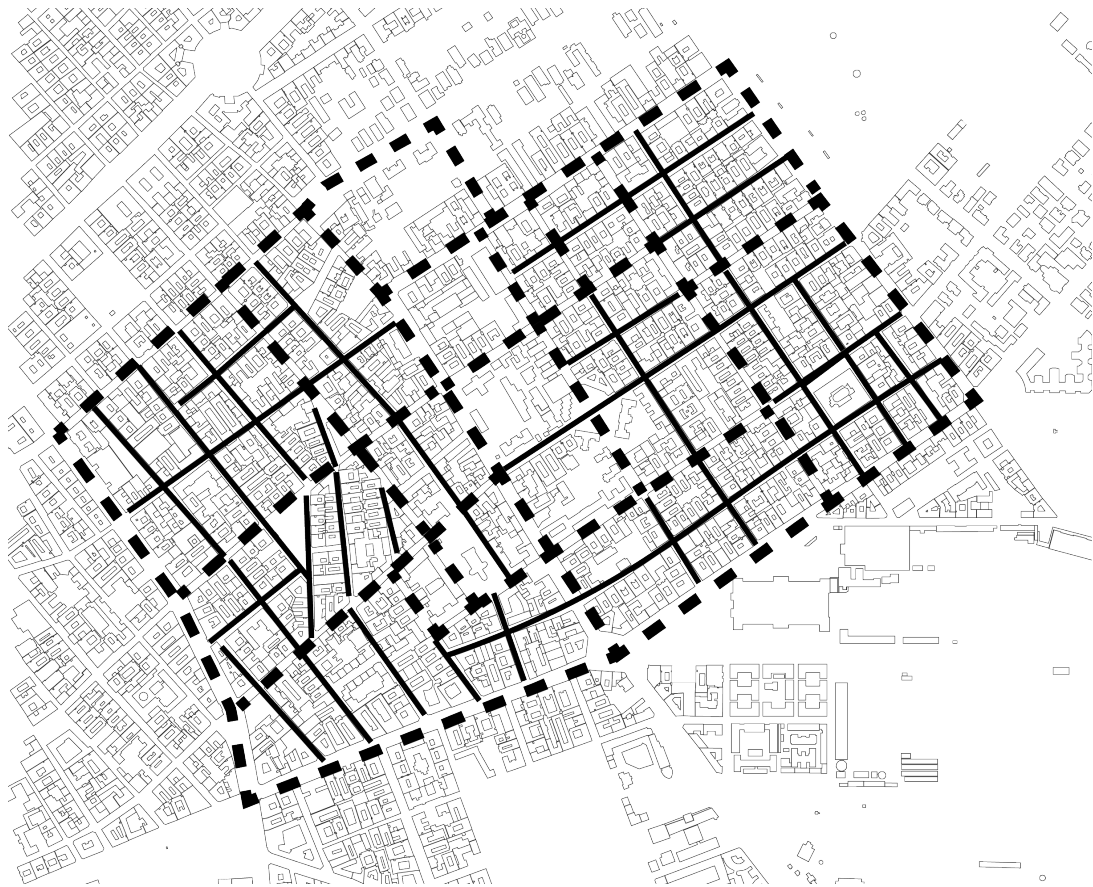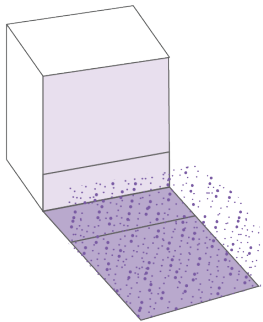
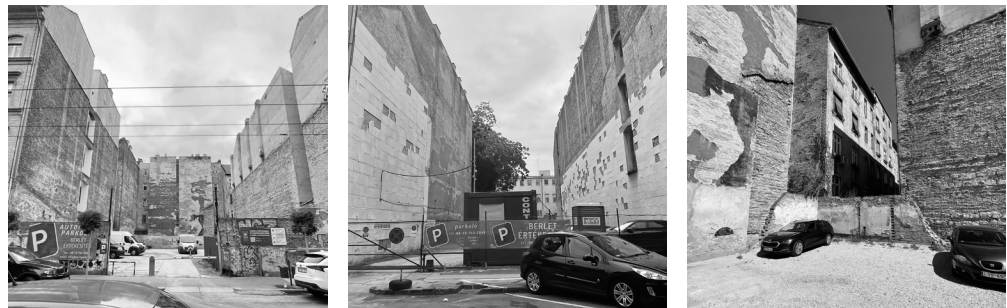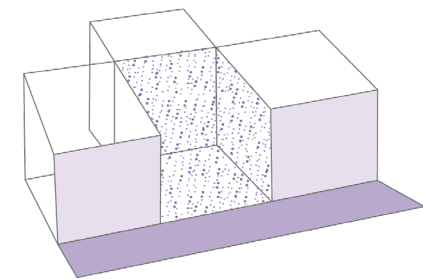# spatial catalogue

1. ground floors
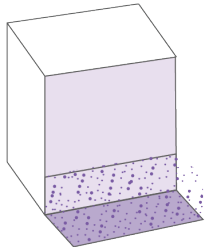
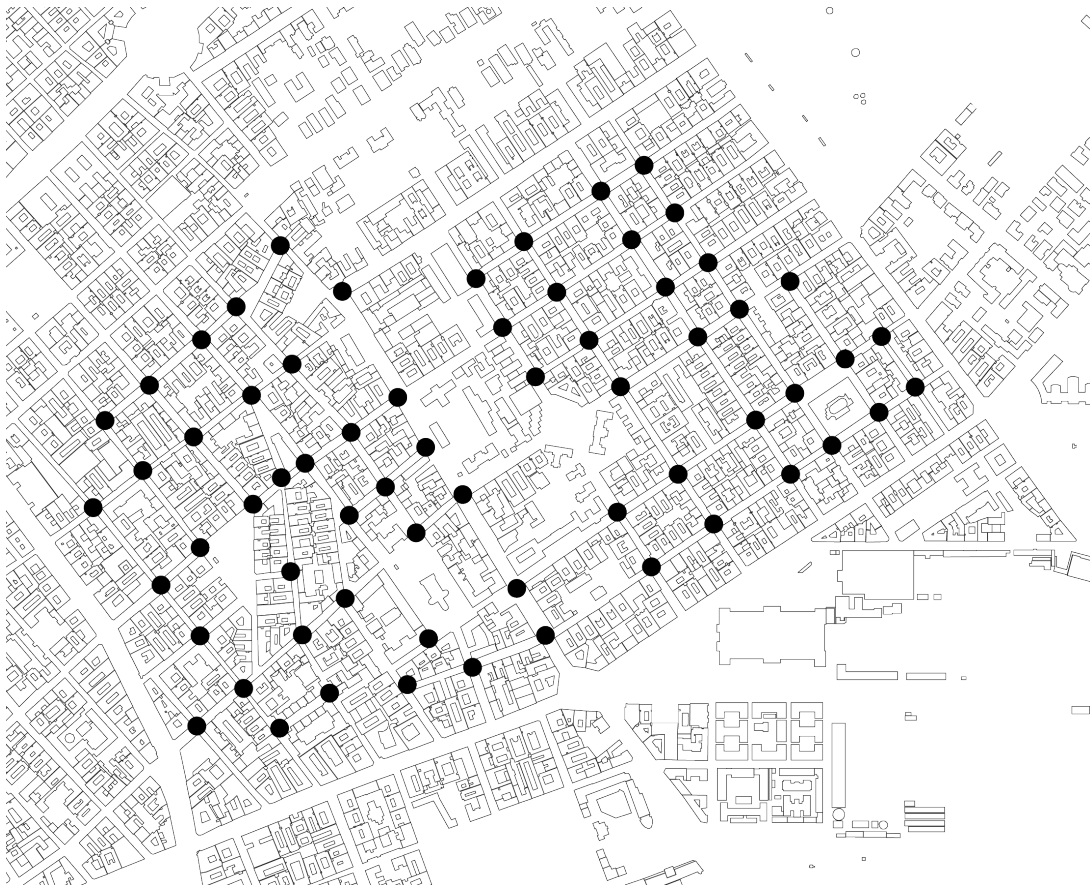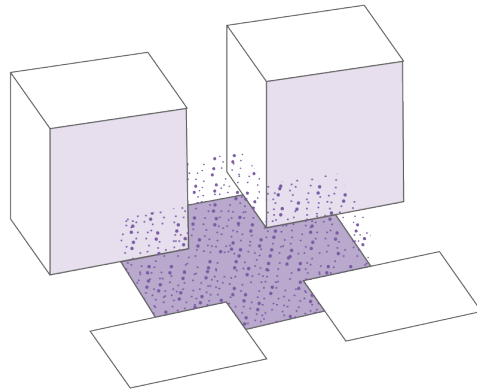# spatial catalouge

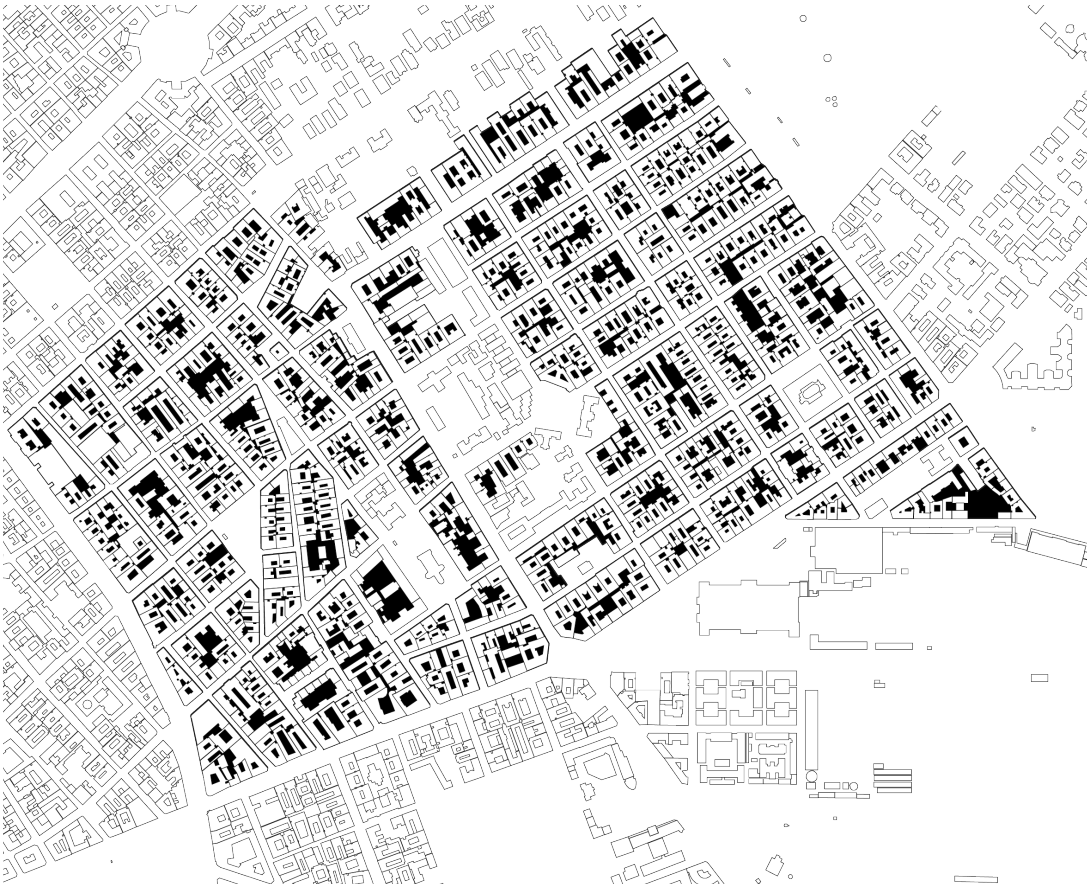2. streets

spatial catalouge

3.empty plots
and parking lots

spatial catalouge

4.intersections

spatial catalouge

5. courtyards
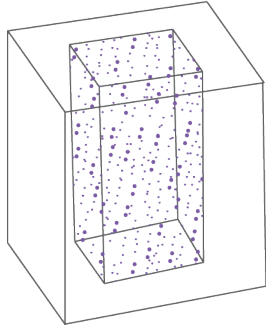
neighbourhood strategy

city park
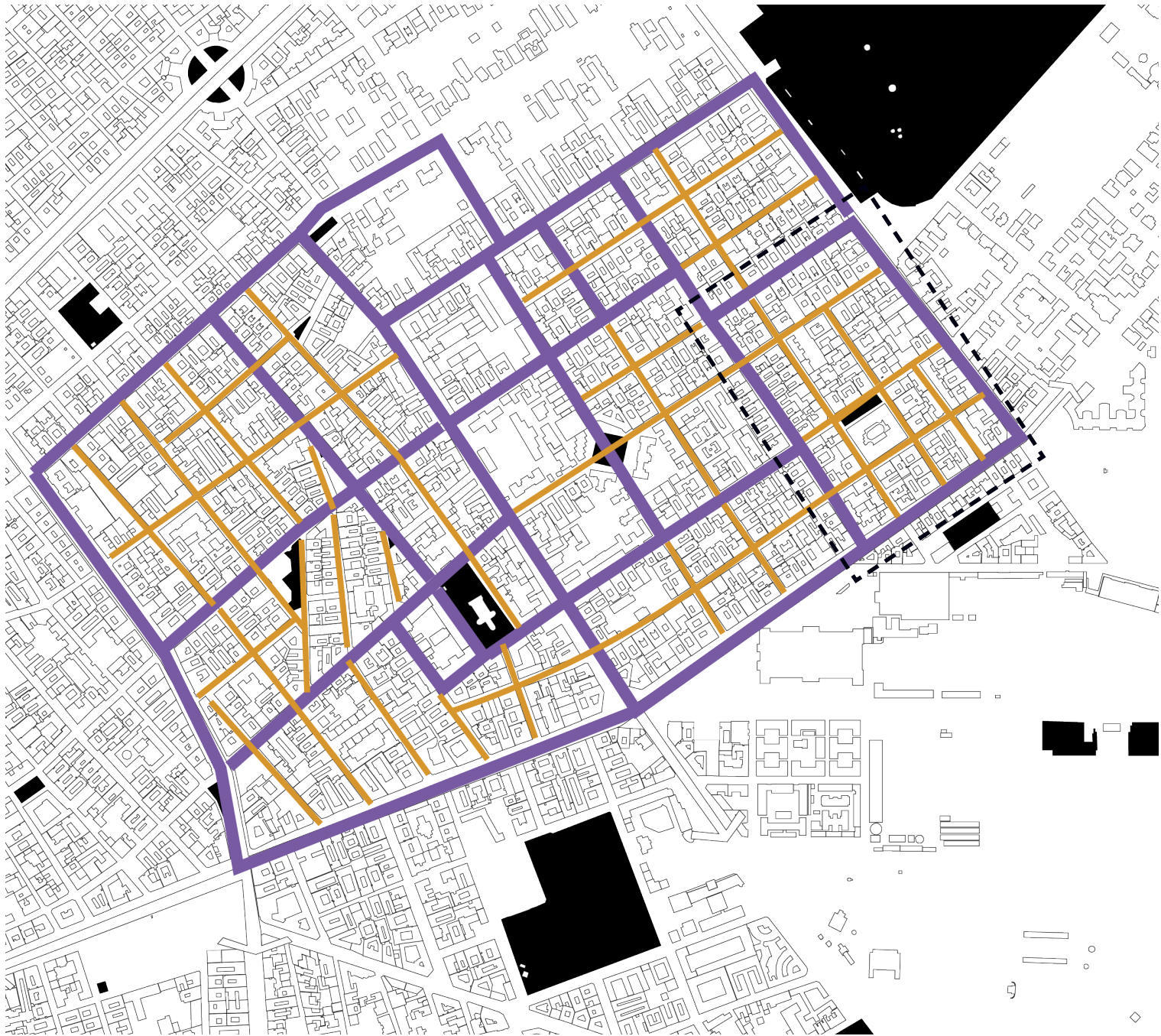
multi-block unit
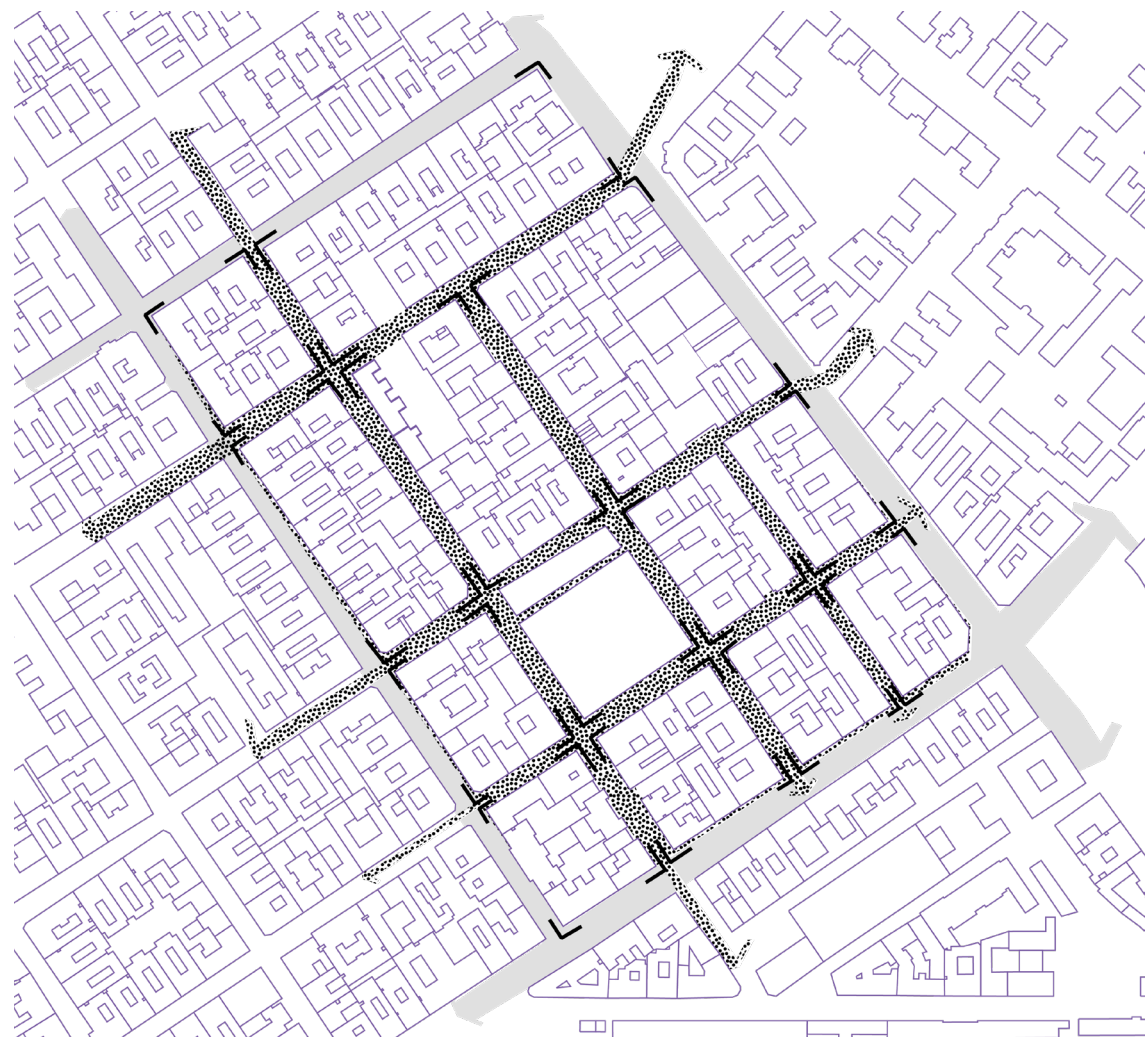
1. **pedestrian streets** connecting green spaces
2. **traffic streets** outside of the block unit, offering public transport
3. activated **intersections** acting as small centers
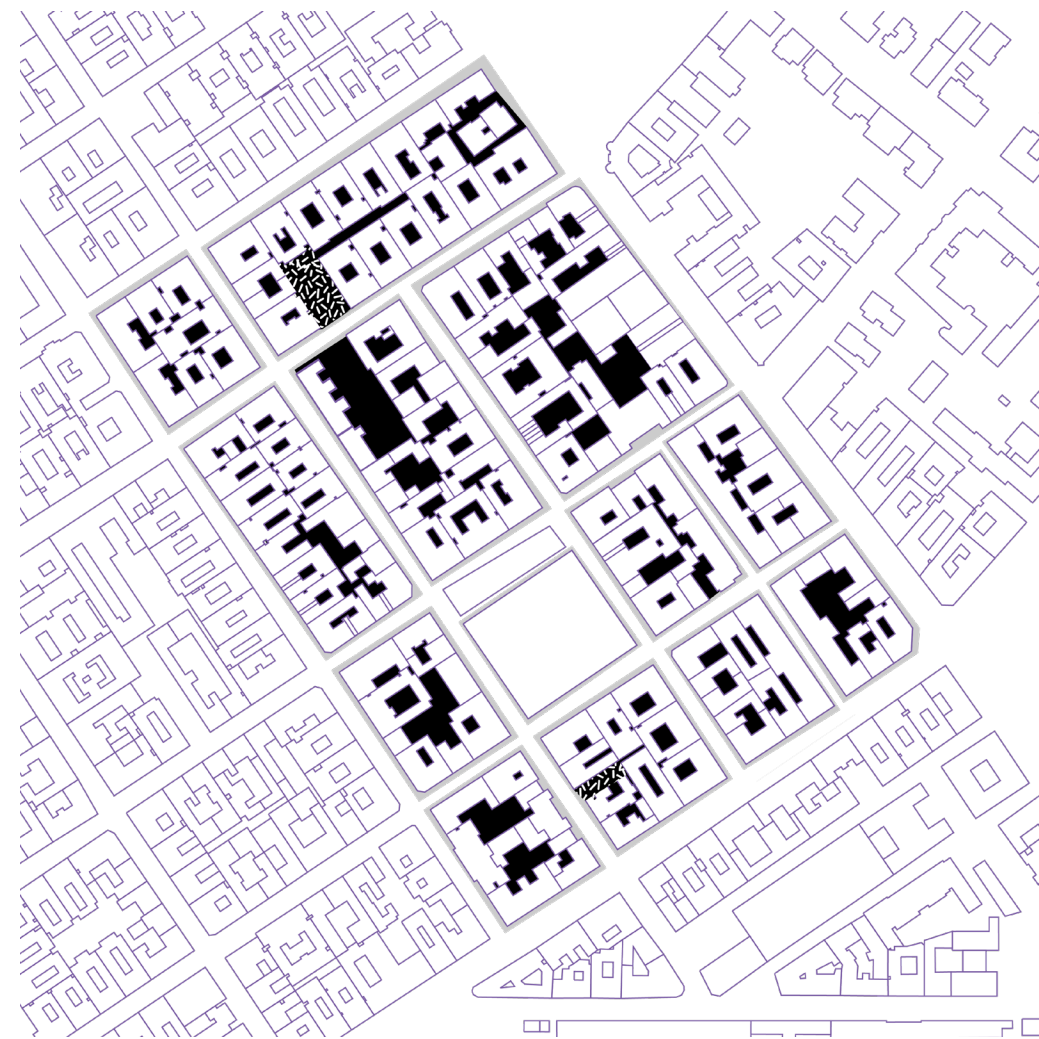
4. activated **empty plots** with diverse programming
5. activated **courtyards** with diverse programming
6. active **ground-floors** creating transitional spaces between private and public

7. opening up the **buildings** to reshape boundaries
8. and create **public and semi-public courtyards**, that are open during the day and clossed for the night

design exploration

S2 — Activate the empty plots

S3 — Utilising municipal buildings

U5 — Cconnect the courtyards

U5
closed passage way

S2
empty plot
used for
parking

S3
nursery

Public

Public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Public

Semi-public

focus 01.

focus 02.

focus 03.

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

Semi-public

RECONNECTING ELDERLY

focus 01.
streets

Shop
displaying
products ouside

Shop

Shop

Café
where different
generations work
together

Repair café
transformed empty shop

Green spaces
adopted by residents

Shop

Home
transformed
empty shop

Shop

Restaurant
with outside seating

Shop

Shop

Raingardens
collecting water from the
roofs

Pedestrian street

Intersection
in same level as sidewalk

Bycicle racks

Home
transformed empty shop

Repair café
transformed
empty shop

Restaurant
with outside seating

Community hub
with outside seating

Shop

Shop

Community kitchen
shared cooking place

Community kiosk
providing local
information and help

Nursery
hosting events for both
elderly and children

Tables and chairs
resting spot

Traffic street

44/54

focus 02.
empty plot

Passage
connecting
semi-public courtyards

Café
extending to the plot

Parking spaces
for residents

Raingarden
collecting water from
the roof

Compost spot
for the
neighbourhood

Outside seating
connecting the
building with the
street

Chairs
for the outdoor cinema

Entry
for the community hub

Natural stone pavement
creating a sooth surface

Stairs
for a quick rout

Pétanque court
for the elderly

Sandbox
for children

Connected smooth pavement
connecting the plot
with the nursery

Fountain with trees
providing a cool spot

Top terrace
providing an open
quiet zone

Benches
to sit and have a rest

Benches
units placed closely
to spark interaction

Market hall

focus 02.
empty plot

Passage
connecting
semi-public courtyards

Raingarden
collecting water from
the roof

Compost spot
for the
neighbourhood

Café
extending to the plot

Outside seating
connecting the
building with the
street

Parking spaces
for residents

Chairs
for the outdoor cinema

Entry
for the community hub

Natural stone pavement
creating a sooth surface

**Main communal
space**

Pétanque court
for the elderly

Sandbox
for children

Meeting rooms

**Connected smooth
pavement**
connecting the plot
with the nursery

Fountain with trees
providing a cool spot

Dining area

Bathrooms

Benches
units placed closely
to spark interaction

Market hall

focus 03.
passage way

Private

rivate

Private

Private

Semi-public

Community garden
managed by the residents

Private

Public

Plants
that like being in shade

Raingardens
collecting water from the roofs

Public

community kitchen

Benches
units placed closely to spark interaction

Fence
open for the day / closed for the night

Toilet
free to access

Semi-public

Fountains with seating
semi-public cool spot

Semi-public

Private

Private

Private

Private

Café
extending to the semi-public courtyrad

section

public
street

public empty
plot

private
courtyard

semi-public
courtyard

private
courtyard
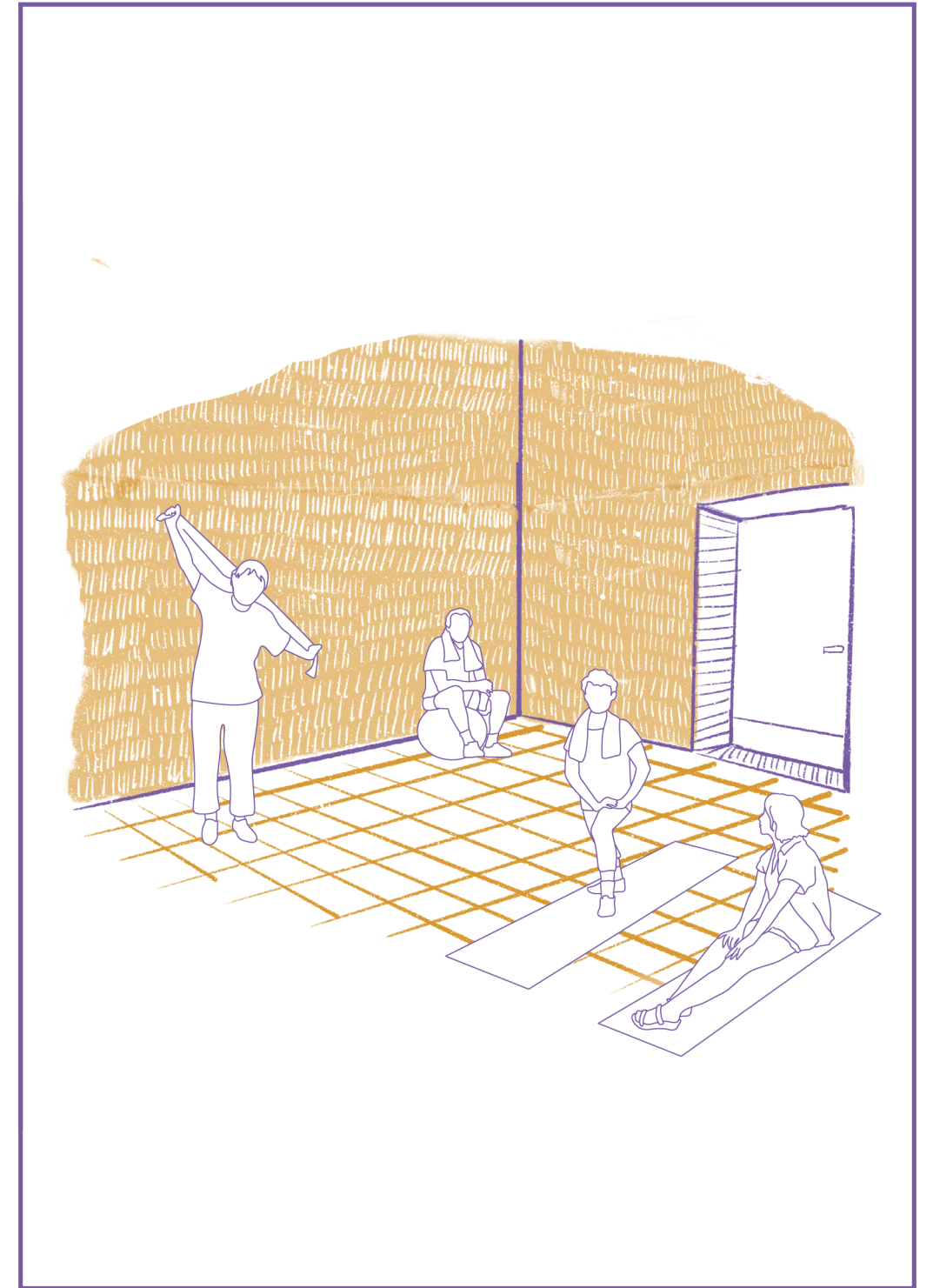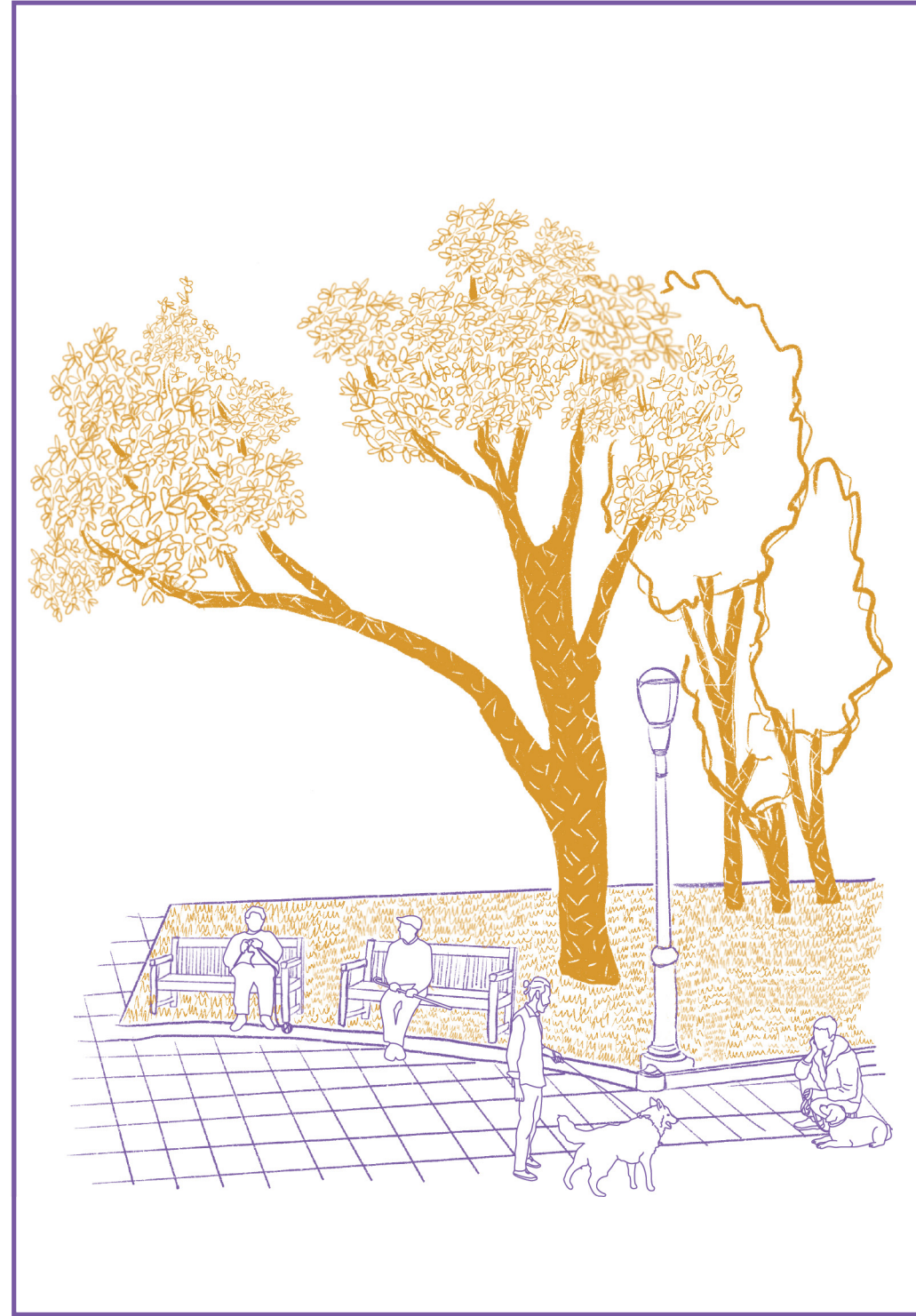
semi-public
courtyard

final design

vision of the neighbourhood through Márta's

Hello, I'm Márta, 82 years old. I used to live with my husband, but he passed away 11 years ago. After that, I felt very lonely and had to make some changes in my life to cope with the solitude. My children and grandchildren have all moved abroad, so I spend most of my time on my own. Since an accident, my leg hasn't been the same, which makes it hard for me to go far from home, so I mostly stay within the neighborhood.
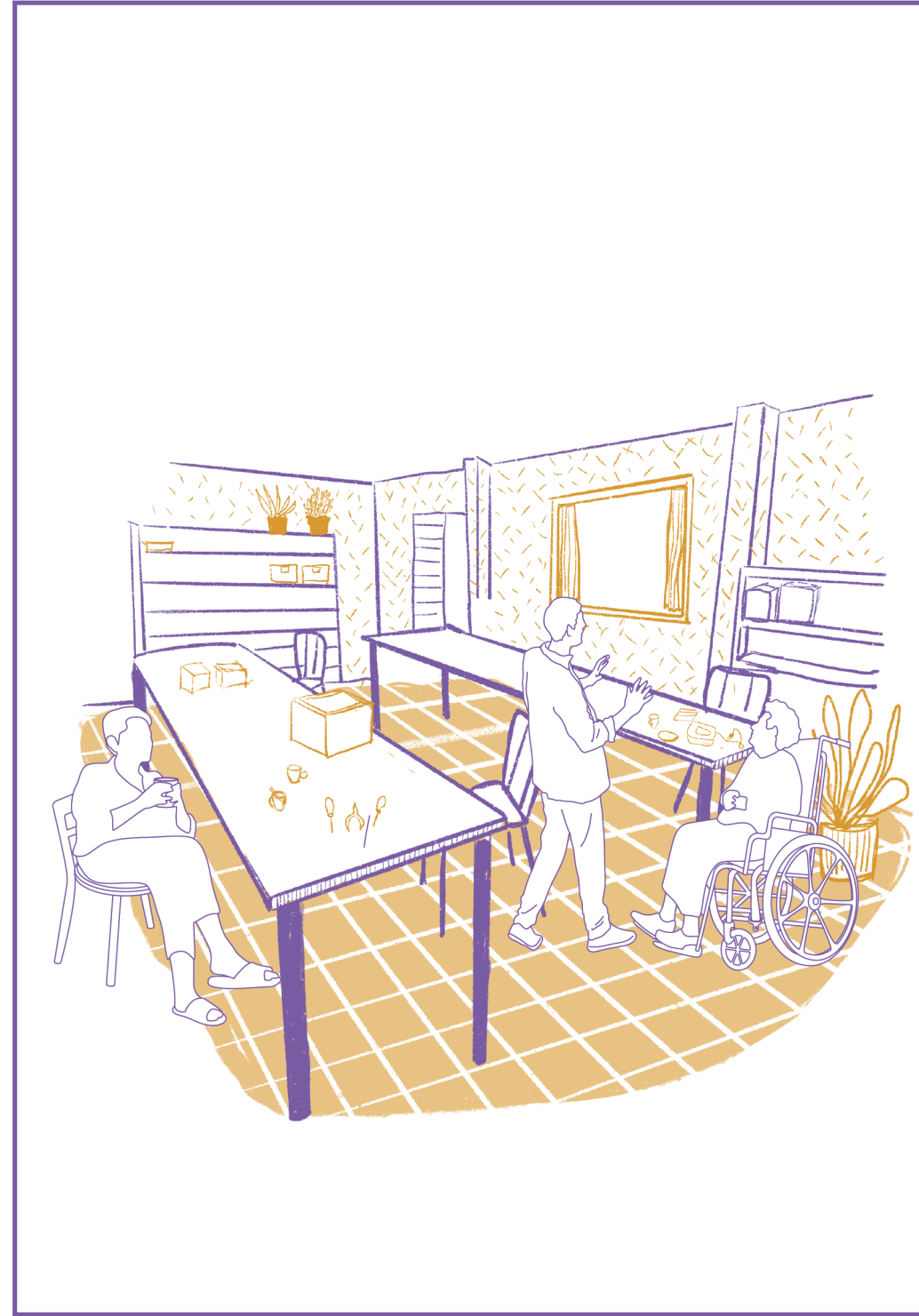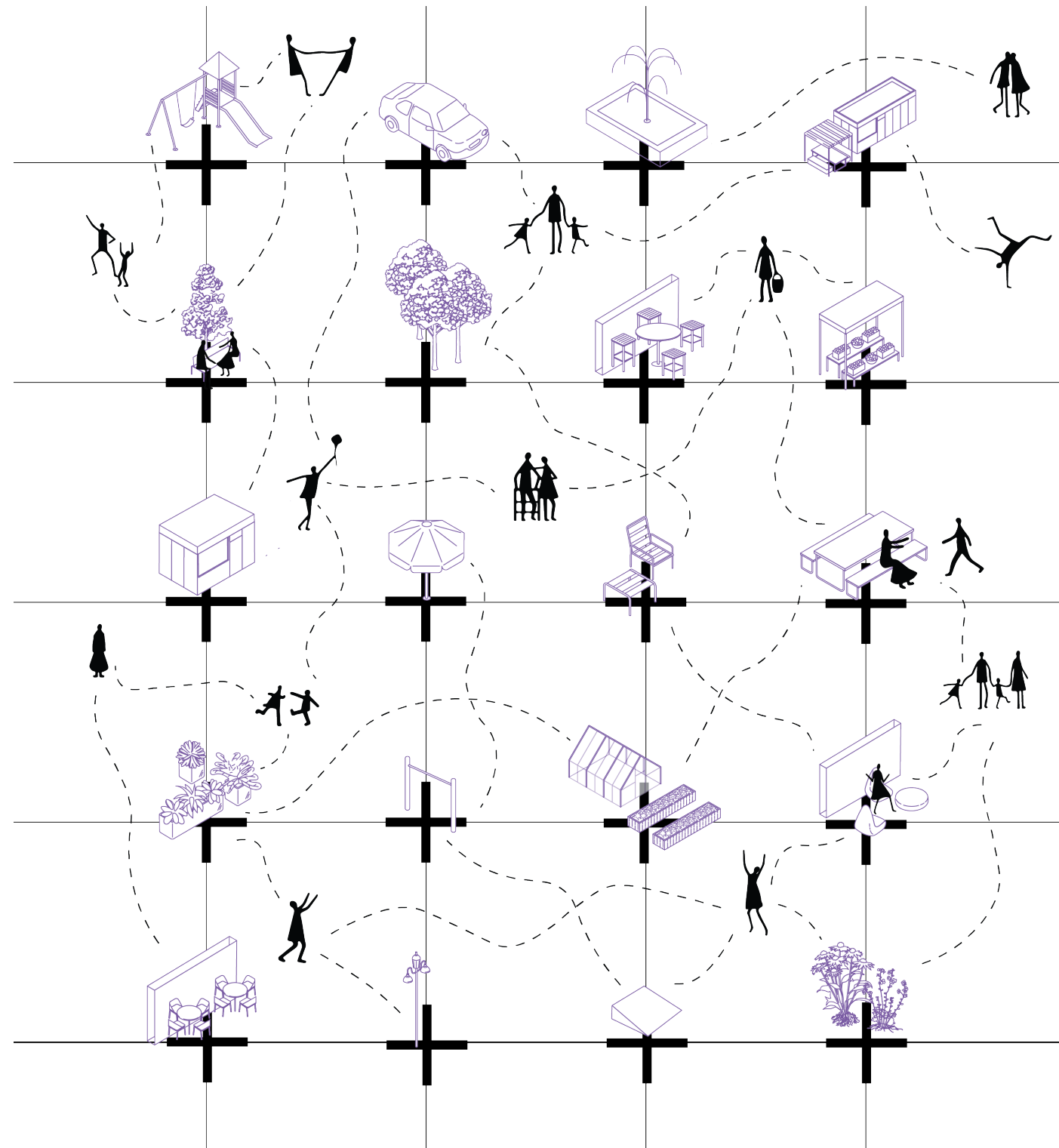
conclusions

- transitional zones and semi-public spaces

- supporting more than physical needs

- rejecting segregated models of care

- care as a process unfolding over time

- diversity of aging

thank you

historical center of Budapest