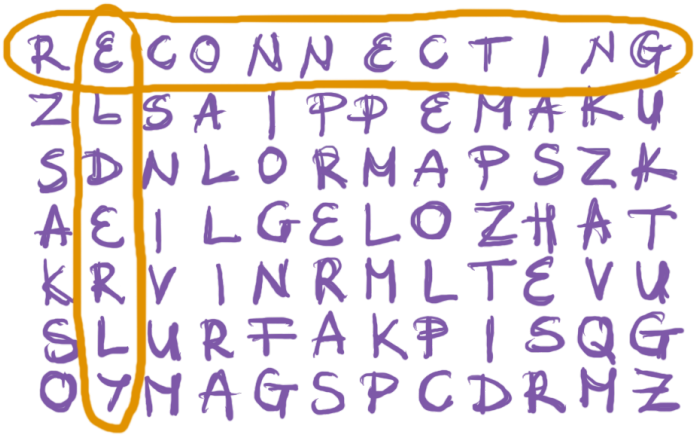

RECONNECTING ELDERLY

- interventions for a just spatial and social environment for the elderly in Budapest

Emese Nagy
2025

MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
Urbanism track
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Colophon

Masters Graduation Thesis 2024-25
P5 Report
June 2024

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RECONNECTING ELDERLY
Interventions for a just spatial and social environment for the elderly in Budapest

Emese Nagy

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Luca and Birgit, for their guidance, insightful feedback, and endless patience. Their expertise and mentorship have significantly shaped not only the direction of this project, but also my personal growth throughout this journey.

I am also thankful to my friends from Urbanism, who gave me a sense of belonging, inspired me, supported me through challenging times, and shared many joyful moments along the way.

Szeretném kifejezni hálámat a családomnak a támogatásukért – Anyának, Apának és Matyinak –, valamint Ágostonnak és az otthoni barátaimnak, akik, ha fizikailag nem is, de lélekben velem voltak az elmúlt időszakban.

Table of contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the current care crisis as a dual condition: a human crisis stemming from dismantled welfare systems and lack of social connectedness, and an environmental crisis reflected in the escalating effects of climate change.It highlights how the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, are disproportionately affected by these overlapping crises on a global scale. Additionally, it critically examines current perceptions of aging populations, particularly in the context of a world experiencing rapid urbanization and aging societies.

These issues are analyzed through spatial scales, starting with a regional focus on Hungary, narrowing down to the capital, Budapest, and further to the VII. district (Erzsébetváros). At country scale, the thesis investigates the structural shortcomings of the welfare system, examining how government policies fail to support elderly populations and how it is reflected in media narratives. It also assesses the spatial injustices caused by climate change, identifying the areas most vulnerable to its effects. On a more localized level, the everyday lives of elderly residents are studied at the neighborhood and street scales. Insights gathered from these phases are synthesized to create a pattern language.

Building on this analysis, the thesis proposes design interventions aimed at creating caring urban spaces that promote social connectivity and climate resilience. These interventions are intended not only to address the needs of the elderly but also to foster a more inclusive and adaptive environment for the entire community.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

1.1.Motivation

As urbanists, I believe our role goes beyond designing spaces - we have a responsibility to facilitate social change. We live in a time of overlapping crises, from the outbreaks of wars to the devastating effects of climate change. The social divide continues to widen, creating deep inequalities and divisions between people. In these challenging times, those in power are often in a position to exploit others rather than strengthen societal bonds, promoting polarised and fragmented communities.

My motivation for this project stems from the fact that, in my view, Hungary has become a striking example of the ongoing crisis of care. The deficiencies caused by this crisis are a recurring theme in the media, whether it's the disastrous state of education, the failing healthcare system or the recent scandals involving child welfare. Sadly, social services are also failing to meet the needs of the elderly. Moreover, this age group has become a frequent target of political rhetoric, making them particularly vulnerable. In my research, I am particularly interested in examining how the dysfunctionality of the care crisis manifests itself in urban spaces and communities, and exploring interventions that could address these issues.


Ne legyetek kegyetlenek!
/Don't be cruel/
CSALÁDBARÁT
MAGYARORSZÁG

1.2.Introduction

Care is our individual and common ability to provide 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.
- The Care Collective. (2020)

We are living in an age of crisis, both societal and environmental. While the consequences of these crises are increasingly visible, there remains a common attitude of carelessness, neglecting the fact that millions of people are already suffering from their effects. The exploitation of nature has disrupted ecological systems, leading to extreme climates and an unequal distribution of resources. These environmental imbalances ae creating larger social inequalities, making vulnerable populations even more at risk while privileged groups continue to benefit.

One of the most affected groups is the elderly, a rapidly growing demographic globally. At the same time, urbanization is accelerating, emphasizing the urgent need to create caring urban spaces that address the unique challenges faced by aging populations.

So the question arises: How can we make care the central focus?

This report aims to contribute to the paradigm of designing age-friendly, caring urban environments in the central districts of Budapest, Hungary. By examining the interconnected challenges of aging and climate vulnerability, the research seeks to propose alternative design ideas that foster resilience, inclusivity, and social care for both the elderly and the broader community.

CHAPTER 2.
PROBLEMATISATION

2.1.Context

2.1.1.Care crisis

With the spread of neoliberal economic growth, we got into a global crisis of care. Crises are everywhere, flooding our news feeds, dominating headlines, and filling conversations with worry. Wars rage on, political divisions deepen, propaganda spreads unchecked, and elections seem to spark more conflict than resolution. These events create an ever-present cloud of anxiety, leaving us to grapple with the uncertainty of what lies ahead. The constant exposure to these crises doesn't just inform us, it also overwhelms us. The weight of these global challenges often leaves us paralyzed, unable to process the sheer magnitude of it all. For many, this overload translates into a kind of apathy. Repeatedly hearing about wars, disasters, and injustices without a clear sense of how to make a difference can make us feel powerless. And experiencing these powerless emotions, many of us turn inward, growing indifferent to the struggles of others or the health of our planet.

Figure 1.
War scene in Ukrain, 2024
A. Carrubba

2.1.2.Care for the people

Neoliberal structures dominate our daily lives, prioritising profit over care by design. These systems force us to see ourselves as commodities, and encourage us to invest in education and wellbeing not for personal growth, but to increase the marketability of our skills. This dynamic reduces us to buyers and sellers in a profit-driven world. Rather than prioritising people's emotional and physical well-being, creating robust welfare systems or fostering stronger democracies, many governments instead focus on empowering for-profit corporations that financialise essential sectors such as healthcare and social services. (Chatzidakis et al., 2020)

At the same time, the wellness industry promotes an individualistic notion of self-care that places the burden of responsibility on the individual. This narrative pressures people to solve systemic problems on their own, further isolating them. These profit-driven structures disproportionately benefit the wealthy, deepening inequality by pushing vulnerable groups into greater precarity and widening the social divide. (Chatzidakis et al., 2020) This systemic indifference perpetuates a dangerous cycle. When people feel disconnected and hopeless, they are more likely to prioritise convenience over care and consumption over conservation. These unsustainable choices, multiplied by billions of individuals, intensifying crises we are trying to solve. It becomes a self-reinforcing cycle of crisis and neglect, where one problem fuels another, making meaningful change increasingly elusive. By centering on the self, these systems undermine collective responsibility, turning us into careless, disconnected individuals. Yet, as human beings, we are inherently interdependent. Recognising this interdependence is crucial - not as commodities, but as human beings with emotional and social needs. We need meaningful connections, the ability to care for others and the ability to be cared for. (Tronto, 1998) Reclaiming this sense of collective care and responsibility is essential to breaking the cycle and building more sustainable communities.

2.1.3.Care for the planet

"Individual years pushing past the 1.5 degree limit do not mean the long-term goal is shot. It means we need to fight even harder to get on track. Blazing temperatures in 2024 require trail-blazing climate action in 2025. There's still time to avoid the worst of climate catastrophe. But leaders must act – now,"

- Antóno Guterres, UN Secretary-General, 10 January 2025 Statament

Another important aspect to consider is how we treat our planet. Climate change is one of the most pressing crises of our time because it is happening at a rate we cannot keep up with. Moreover, the climate crisis is no longer a distant or isolated problem - it is closely linked to societal issues. It is forcing millions of people to leave their homes in search of safety and opportunity. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events and resource scarcity continue to push communities to the breaking point, leading to severe social disruption.

It is not just about the environment, but also about people and their livelihoods. Environmental extremes are becoming more common: 90% of disasters are weather or climate-related, and 26 million people globally are forced into poverty every year (UN, 2025). We need to recognise that society needs to make fundamental changes. Changes that both mitigate the impacts of changing circumstances and support adaptation to create a more sustainable and equitable ecosystem.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has officially announced that 2024 has been the hottest year on record. Not only is this data striking in itself, but it also highlights a worrying trend: the last decade, starting in 2015, was the hottest since weather and climate data have been reliably recorded. (WMO, 2025) This climatic extreme is a clear reflection of the accelerating pace of global warming, which is already having a serious impact on our planet's ecosystem and on human living conditions.

In the face of these events, the United Nations (UN) has repeatedly called on the world's governments to take urgent action. The UN has stressed the need to develop ambitious new climate strategies to keep global temperature rise below the 2°C limit set by the Paris Climate Agreement. (WMO, 2025) However, this goal is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve on current emission trends, and it is therefore essential that governments take immediate action to reduce carbon emissions, promote the use of renewable energy sources, and introduce economic and social reforms that support sustainable development.(UN, 2025)

Figure 2.
Effects of climate change
UN

Figure 3
Los Angeles fires, 2025
Los Angeles Times

2.1.4.Aging society

Aging society

The main human victims of the care crisis, if we look at its effects on both the people and the planet, are vulnerable social groups, such as the elderly. Two defining trends of the 21st century are the aging population and urbanization. This means that more elderly people will live in cities. By 2050, it is projected that the population aged 65 and older will be twice as large as the population of children under five (UN, 2024). While this is a positive development for society, as people live longer now (UNICEF, 2012), it also brings many challenges. Societies must prepare for changes in public health, pensions, and social care systems to accommodate the growing elderly population.

Functional capacity improves during childhood, peaks in early adulthood, and declines with age. This decline, however, is influenced by lifestyle, as well as social, environmental, and economic factors.(WHO, 2007).Mental illnesses often increase the likelihood of developing physical illnesses, and the reverse is also true (WHO, 2015). Importantly, it can be slowed or even reversed at any age through individual actions and supportive public policies (WHO, 2007).

Defining Elderly

The definition of "elderly" is not so clear. The UN refers to those aged 60 and above as "older" and those aged 80 and above as the "oldest old" (UN, 2002). However, the term "elderly" is commonly used for individuals aged 65 and older. This categorization can be problematic, as it treats the elderly as a homogeneous group without considering other factors such as mental or physical well-being. For instance, someone aged 60 with poor physical or mental health may be in worse condition than a healthy 80-year-old. We can conclude that it is not worth linking old age to retirement or age, but to a complexity of life events that lead a person to refer to themselves as old and to be perceived as old by those around them. (Turai, 2009)

To make it clear, during my project I focused specifically on individuals aged 65 and above, when analyzing statistical data, as age groups are most often divided this way in demographic reporting.

Ageism

The media often portrays older adults as a source of danger, a "time bomb," or a burden that will eventually overwhelm social welfare systems. However, such ageist attitudes are incredibly harmful, with dangerous effects on older people's physical and mental health as well as their overall well-being. This perspective, which primarily reflects the viewpoint of young working people, adds negative connotations to the elderly, further stigmatizing them as a drain on society. (Zsinka, 2020) It's important to understand that aging is as much a part of our identity as other characteristics like gender or ethnicity (Hammond & Saunders, 2021). For this reason, it's essential to view aging as a natural part of the life cycle and focus on helping older individuals live longer, healthier lives.(WHO, 1997)

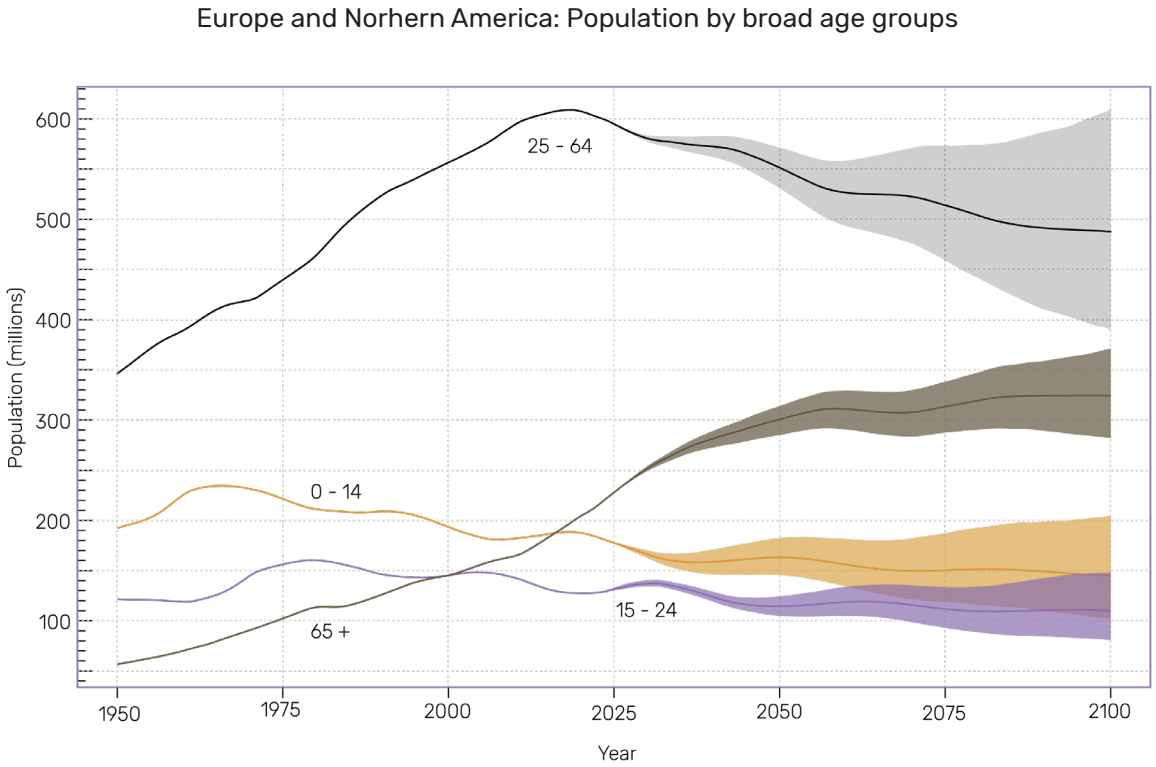


Figure 4
Population changes
UN

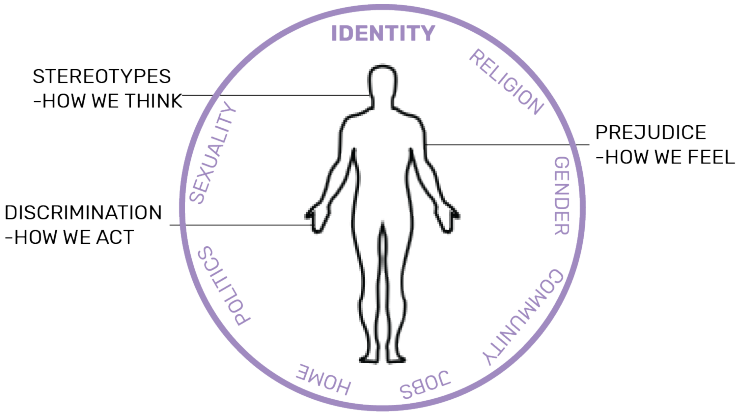


Figure 5
Three aspect of ageism
WHO

Care Work

An enormous challenge is that in many countries, welfare systems are not equipped well enough to handle the growing pressures of an aging society, leaving many parts of the care work unsupported. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2013, there was already a global shortage of 7.2 million skilled health professionals, and this gap is projected to rise to 12.9 million by 2035 due to population growth (WHO, 2013).

There are also not enough caregivers for the elderly. Studies show that most older adults prefer aging in place rather than receiving institutional care. For example, 80% of individuals over the age of 50 express a preference to stay in their homes as they age (OECD, 2020). However, staying home often means relying on family members for care, which places significant emotional, financial, and time-management pressure on families. This has created the phenomenon of the "sandwich generation", which means all adults who are responsible for caring for both their children and aging parents. These caregivers face immense challenges, often with little or no financial or institutional support (Hernandez, 2019).

Gender Inequality in Care

Caregiving responsibilities disproportionately fall on women, showing significant gender inequalities. According to WHO, 67% of paid care work and 76% of unpaid care work globally is carried out by women (WHO, 2024). For many women, caregiving at home means balancing paid work, domestic responsibilities, and the care of relatives without any financial compensation. This unpaid labor often goes unrecognized, further deepening existing gender inequalities in both professional and domestic environments.

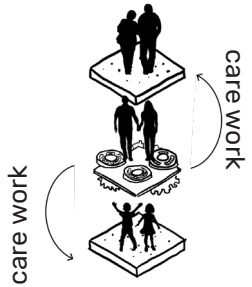


Figure 6
"Sandwich generation"

Hidden care labour

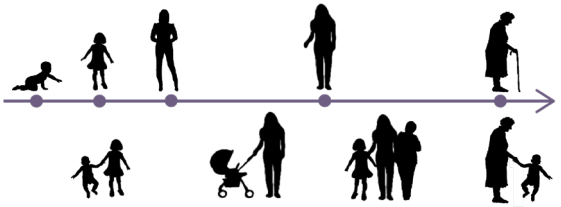


Figure 7
Hidden care labour

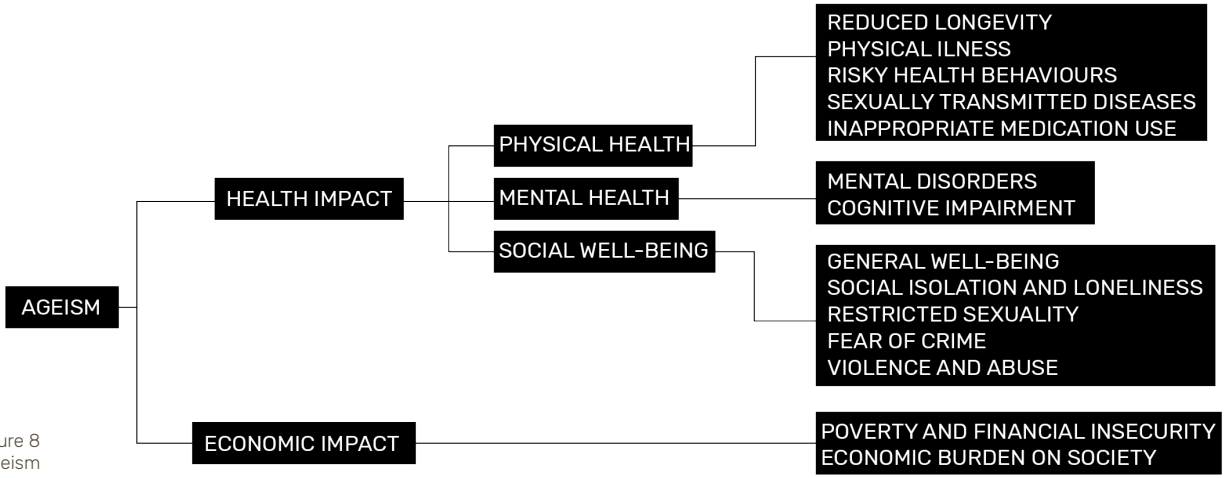


Figure 8
Effects of ageism
WHO

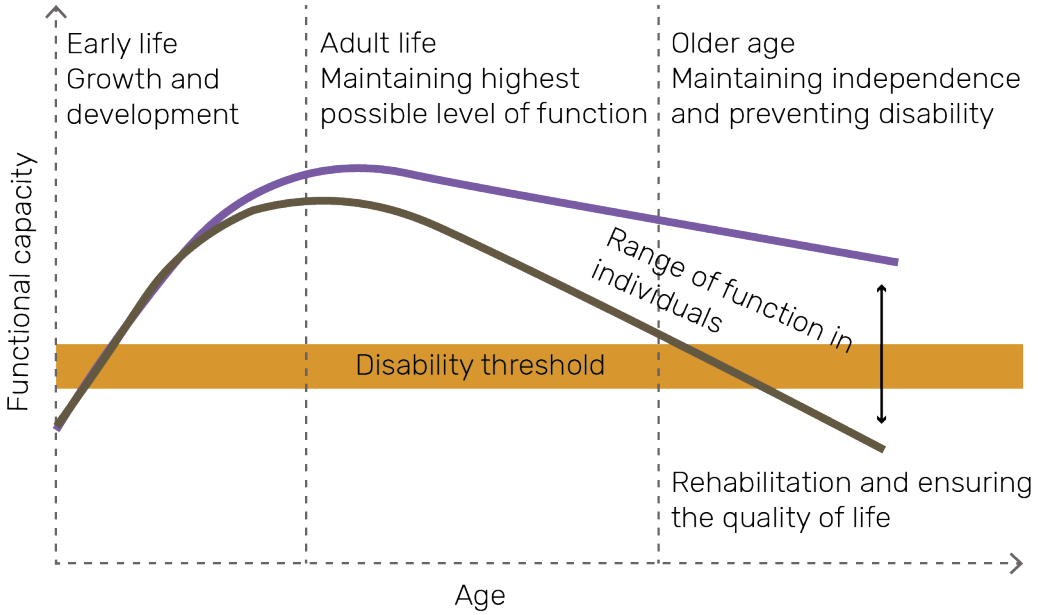


Figure 9
Maintaining functional capacity over the life course
Kalache & Kickbusch

Institutionalisation of Care

For many centuries, intergenerational living, where multiple generations of a family lived together, shared responsibilities, and supported one another, was the norm. This arrangement fostered strong familial ties and mutual caregiving across age groups. However, as societies underwent significant social, economic, and demographic changes, this model began to decline. Increased life expectancy, urbanisation, the weakening of extended family networks, and a shift toward individualism contributed to the gradual erosion of kinship-based care.

By the 19th century, with the availability of family support diminishing, institutional forms of care began to emerge. Initially, these institutions served as basic housing arrangements for those in need, particularly the elderly. In the aftermath of the two World Wars, many nations developed formal welfare systems, which laid the foundation for state-funded, organised care. As these welfare systems expanded in the latter half of the 20th century, residential care homes became a common solution for aging populations.While these institutions provided essential services, they also led to the physical and social separation of older adults from the broader community. This segregation often contributed to feelings of isolation among the elderly and reinforced age-based divisions in society. Moreover, the institutional care model has increasingly been criticised as both emotionally detrimental and financially unsustainable in the long term, placing significant strain on private and public resources. (Grove, 2018)

In contemporary Western societies, intergenerational living continues to decline, influenced by cultural norms that prioritise individual autonomy and mobility. This trend raises important questions about how to maintain intergenerational connections in an increasingly individualistic world.

2.2.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 fragmented welfare system, the lack of strong communities, the scarcity of climate resilient places and the fact that our cities are not suitable for older people.

2.3.Project aim

The aim of this study is to investigate design interventions that can improve the lives of elderly people, with a particular emphasis on enhancing climate resilience and fostering social connectivity. The research seeks to identify strategies that create urban environments where older adults can thrive, while also benefiting the broader community. By prioritizing intergenerational relationships and sustainable design, the study aims to offer practical solutions that support the well-being of both elderly individuals and the wider society, helping to build stronger, more resilient communities.

2.4.Scientific relevance

While much research has focused on aging societies and climate change separately, the intersection of these two issues, particularly in terms of care and community, remains underexplored. This project proposes a socio-ecological approach to address these challenges together.
Current age-friendly design often treats the elderly as a homogeneous group, neglecting important factors such as gender, occupation, religion, and community ties (Hammond & Saunders, 2021). This project aims to address this gap by considering the diversity of elderly individuals in designing inclusive spaces. In Hungary, the concept of an “elderly-friendly city” is not widely discussed in urbanism, with most conversations limited to architecture. This research seeks to expand the conversation by integrating urban planning, social care, and climate resilience, offering a more holistic approach to aging in a changing environment.

Age-friendly initiatives frequently concentrate on formal care environments, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or medical institutions, while largely neglecting informal forms of care that take place in everyday public life. By prioritizing institutional care, such approaches risk reinforcing spatial and social segregation, often relocating older adults to peripheral areas of cities, removed from their familiar surroundings and support networks. These facilities are typically accessible only to wealthier individuals, leaving those with fewer resources increasingly isolated in their homes.

This growing inequality underscores the importance of promoting the aging in place paradigm in design and planning. Rather than removing elderly individuals from their communities, we should be focusing on how to adapt public spaces to support their inclusion, autonomy, and social connection. This thesis explores how shared urban environments can be reimagined to combat isolation and foster a stronger sense of belonging for older adults within their neighborhoods.

2.5.Social relevance

The societal relevance of this project lies in its capacity to address urgent challenges at the intersection of aging populations, climate change, and the care crisis, issues that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). These pressures are particularly pronounced in Hungary, where the aging population is growing rapidly and existing social safety nets are increasingly strained. In moments of political and economic instability, spatial designers have a critical role to play: while broader systems are eroding, spatial design can act as a catalyst for change by shaping environments that support resilience, equity, and care.

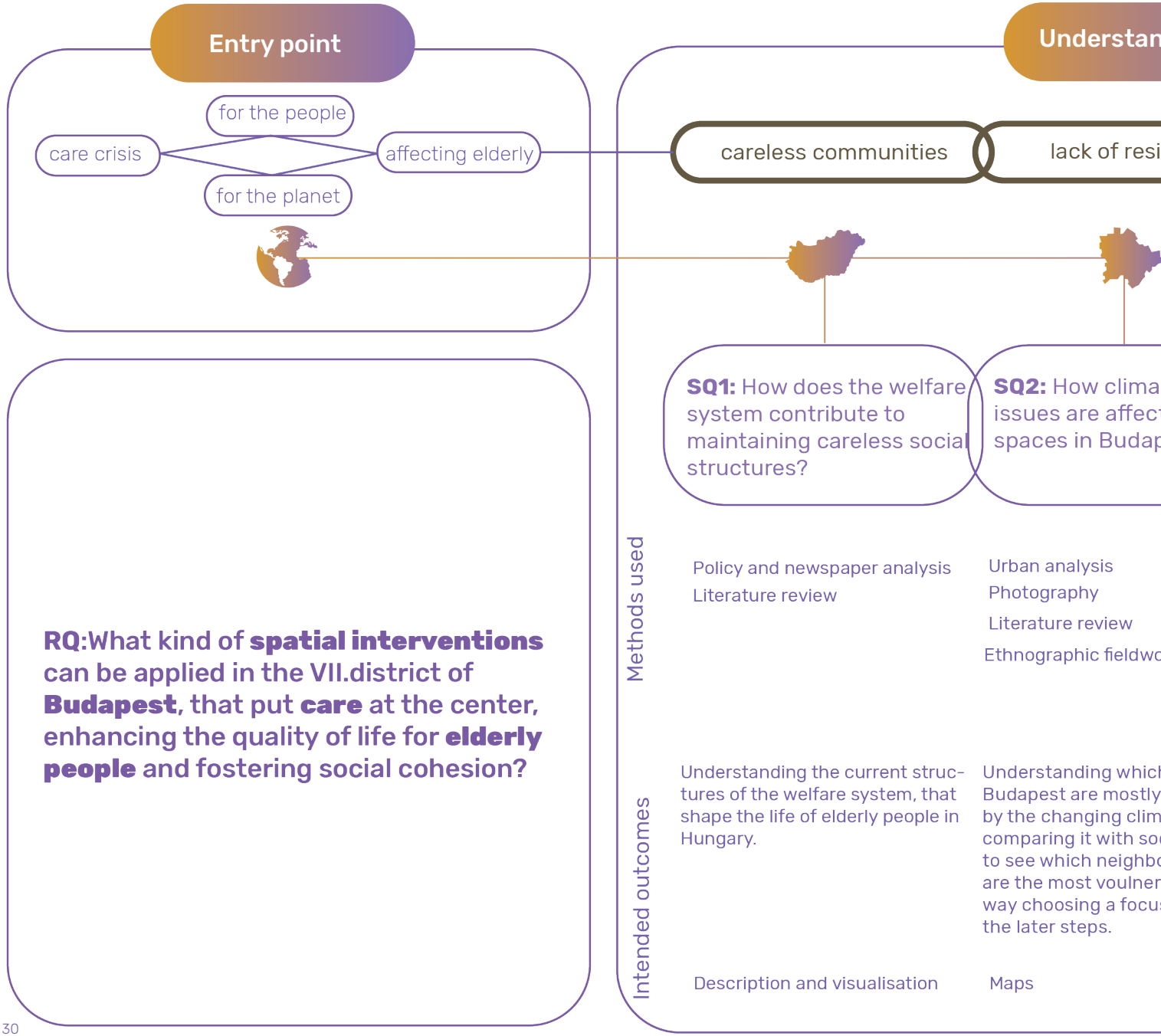
At a time when care work remains undervalued, underpaid, and understaffed, it is especially important to promote support structures for older generations while also upholding their autonomy. This project aims to influence policy by advocating for strategies that strengthen social connections, encourage community-driven responses, and promote civic engagement.

In Hungary, there is an urgent need for innovative interventions that can bridge the gaps in the current welfare system, which is increasingly inadequate in addressing the needs of elderly individuals, especially in rural and marginalized areas. The project seeks to highlight how fostering a sense of community, resilience, and intergenerational solidarity can provide meaningful solutions to both the care crisis and the impacts of climate change.

By creating sustainable, climate-resilient environments, the project proposes a shift towards community-centered models that not only tackle the immediate challenges of aging and care but also contribute to long-term climate adaptation. These models prioritize intergenerational connections, fostering a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, skills, and care. This, in turn, strengthens community ties and builds social capital, allowing individuals of all ages to contribute to each other's well-being.

CHAPTER 3.
RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1.Research questions and methodology



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Proposing

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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?

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Ethnographic fieldwork
Fieldwork booklets
Pattern language
Photography
Literature review

Pattern language
Workshop

Pattern language
Workshop

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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.

Maps, drawings, pictures, description, patterns

Maps, drawings, description, patterns

Maps, drawings, description, patterns

3.2.Methods

Pattern language

From the start of the project, the pattern language was developed using the structure of Christopher Alexander's method. Initially, this approach proved to be a valuable tool for creating a structured framework to organize and connect ideas. As the project continues, the same method will be applied to translate insights from literature and fieldwork into patterns. The expected final outcome is a comprehensive set of patterns and an interconnected pattern field.

Policy and newspaper analysis

Policy analysis will be conducted to examine Hungary's current dismantled welfare system, exploring the policies that contributed to this situation. Additionally, an analysis of online news sites, both independent and government-aligned, will be undertaken to understand how they portray the situation differently.

Literature review

Reading books, essays, reports and articles on the topic, then summarizing the findings in order to gain a deeper understanding of the context and the problem. That includes international scientific sources as well as Hungary specific literature.

Walk & talk interviews

The walk & talk interviews were pre-arranged and designed to allow participants to lead both the route and the conversation. This approach encouraged them to share their likes and dislikes about urban space, using the meeting location as a starting point to discuss the topics. Additionally, unstructured interviews were carried out spontaneously with people I encountered on the street.
These interactions and conversations were invaluable in the early stages of the research process, providing insight into previously unfamiliar elements of urban spaces and highlighting what elderly people prefer or dislike in such environments.

Photography

Photography is used as a method to understand, capture, and represent the spatial, environmental, and social dynamics of neighborhoods, with a particular focus on the small-scale realities and lived experiences within urban spaces.

Etnographic fieldwork

A series of ethnographic fieldworks were conducted, each with a distinct focus, to explore different sides of the neighborhood. These site visits enabled direct observation and immersion, capturing the spatial, functional, and atmospheric qualities of the environments. This multi-layered approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the neighborhoods' physical form, social dynamics, and everyday urban experiences.

Urban analysis

Different kinds of socio-spatial analysis will be used to understand to understand the climate related issues in Budapest, and to compare it with social factors to identifying the most vulnerable. Additionally, mapping is used to see which neighborhoods are lacking functions and infrastructures of care.

Workshop

Organizing a workshop with fellow Urbanism students to test the patterns and to integrate their ideas into the design process.

3.3.Theories

Right to the city

Henri Lefebvre, 1968.
The Right to the City

Right to the City is setting the goal of creating places of inclusion, democracy, and collective creation. It emphasizes the right to participation, where all citizens, not just the privileged, have a say in shaping urban policies and decisions. It also emphasizes the right to appropriation, empowering people to reshape and use urban spaces according to their needs and aspirations, rather than being excluded by privatization and commodification. Lefevbre critiques capitalist urbanization for prioritizing profit over people, resulting in marginalization of vulnerable groups, like elderly. Urban space should be seen as a collective work, shaped by the everyday practices and interactions of its inhabitants, not only designed for market forces.

Role in the thesis:

Lefebvre shows a transformative and utopian vision of urban life, prioritizing equity and justice. It challenges us to question exclusionary systems and imagine cities as spaces of care and sharing.

Environmental justice

Daivd Harvey , 1996.
Justice Nature and the Geography of Difference

Justice Nature and the Geography of Difference's main message is that the distribution of resources and opportunities across space is the main reason to issues of justice. He introduces the concept of spatial justice, which involves ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities across geographical spaces, challenging the unequal effects of capitalism. Harvey emphasizes the relationship between nature and society, showing how human activities shape the environment while the environment influences human societies. He critiques capitalism for intensifying spatial inequalities by commodifying land and resources, which leads to environmental degradation and social exclusion. Harvey also suggests a more detailed understanding of differences, like class, race, and gender in the discussion of justice, highlighting how these differences are geographically structured.

Role in the thesis:

Harvey suggests the radical rethinking of justice, arguing that it's not only about redistributing wealth but also about transforming the systems that create inequality. Also through environmental justice, emphasizing that the marginalized groups have to suffer from environmental harm, so equitable and sustainable solutions are needed to manage natural resources.

Aging in place

Irwin Altman & Setha M. Low, 1992.
Place Attachment Theory

Lawton & Nahemow, 1973
Ecological Theory of Aging

Rogers et al., 2020.
Defining Aging in Place: The Intersectionality of Space, Person, and Time

The aging in place theory focuses on enabling the elderly to live independently and maintain autonomy within their own homes and communities as they age. It involves adapting both the home and public spaces to meet the evolving needs of older generations, with modifications like accessible features in the home and supportive services in the community. A key part of this concept also includes making neighborhoods more elderly-friendly, ensuring that public areas are accessible, safe, and accommodating for older adults. Strong social support networks, including family, friends, and local services, are crucial to prevent isolation and provide assistance with daily activities and health support.

Role in thesis:

The theory suggests adapting elderly's homes and also the urban spaces in a way, that they can continue to living in familiar environments within the communities they have already been part of.

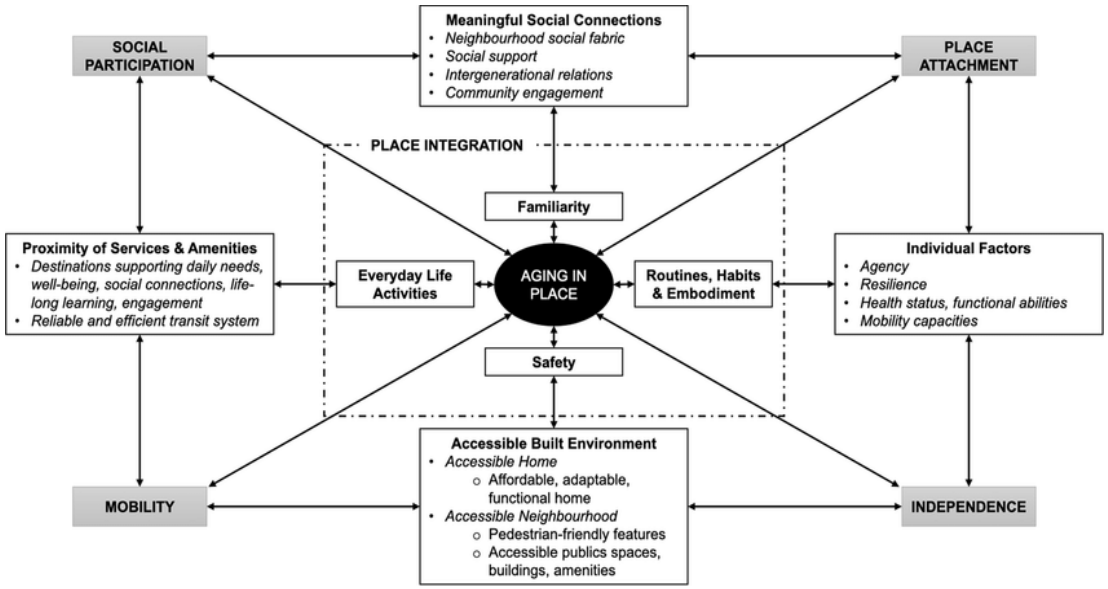


Figure 10
Aging in place framework
Bigonesse and Chaudhury

Care ethics

Berenice Fisher & Joan C. Tronto
1990.
Towards a Feminist Theory of Care

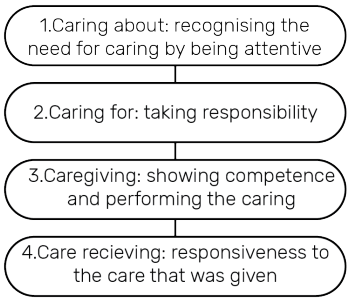
Joan C. Tronto
1998.
An Ethic of Care

Care thics is part of feminist moral theory, that suggests that care is a fundamental human activity that is essential to individual and collective well-being. Tronto emphasizes that care work is gendered, historically feminized, and undervalued, which leads to gender and power imbalances in society. Tronto introduces four stages of care: caring about, taking care of, caregiving, and care receiving, all of which are interconnected and reciprocal. She advocates for a feminist ethics of care that prioritizes relationality, responsibility, and interdependence, opposite to traditional ethics that emphasize individualism and autonomy. Care should be recognized as a social and political issue, requiring institutional support to ensure caregiving is not just a private, gendered responsibility. Tronto calls for social justice and inclusivity in care, ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, age, race, or social status, has access to care and can participate in caregiving.

Role in the thesis
Care ethics emphasizes that we humans, are in need of care, so doesn't matter how good are we in taking care of ourselves, at several points in our lives, we are in need of care. That is why we should not think of elderly as a vulnerable group who are always in need, but rather think of life as conitnous cycle of giving and recieving care.

"On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species acitivity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web."
- Fisher & Tronto, 1991

The 4 phases of good care:



Caring city

Juliet Davis
2022.
The caring city: Ethics of urban design

Juliet Davis presents a strong case for embedding care ethics into the core of urban design and planning. In contrast to dominant neoliberal frameworks, she argues for cities that center inclusivity, mutual support, and the well-being of all residents.

Role in the thesis
Through case studies of varied urban settings, including streets, cafés, museums, green spaces, and allotments, Davis demonstrates how everyday environments can nurture caring relationships. She highlights the need for urban spaces to evolve with the shifting care needs of communities, emphasizing principles of accessibility, continuity, and emotional connection.

In her book she looks into the 6 dimensions of caring urbanism, that is used as a form of evaluating the patterns in the Pattern book.

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

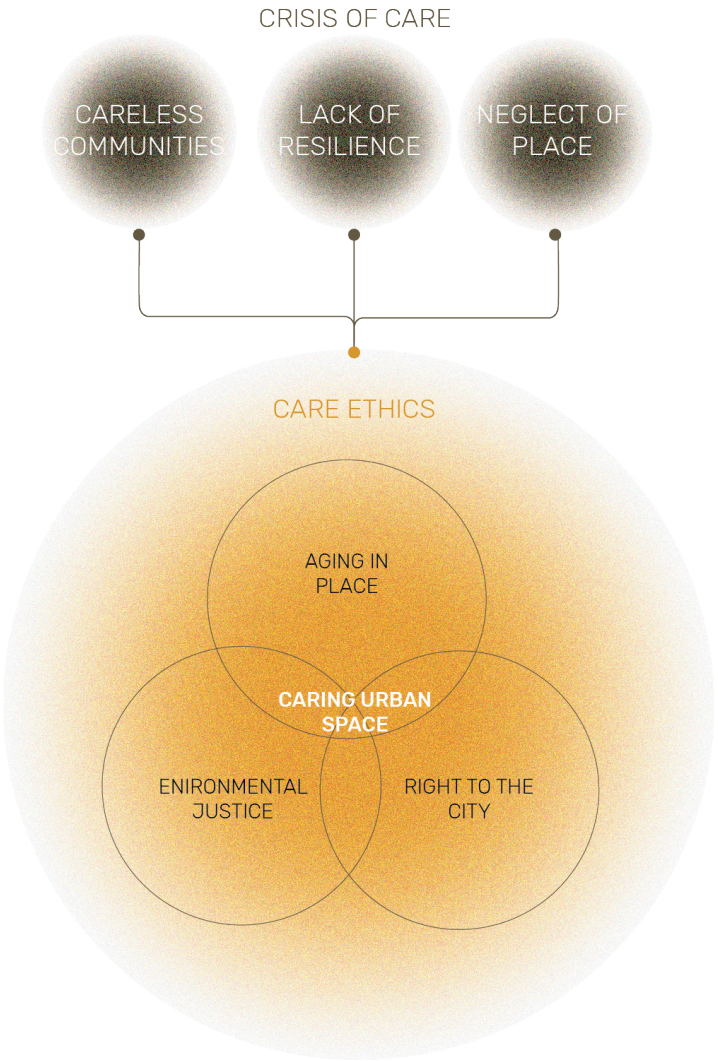
Caring urban atmospheres
- considering environmental factors and sensory experiences

Openness and unfolding of care
- encouraging social and physical adaptibility

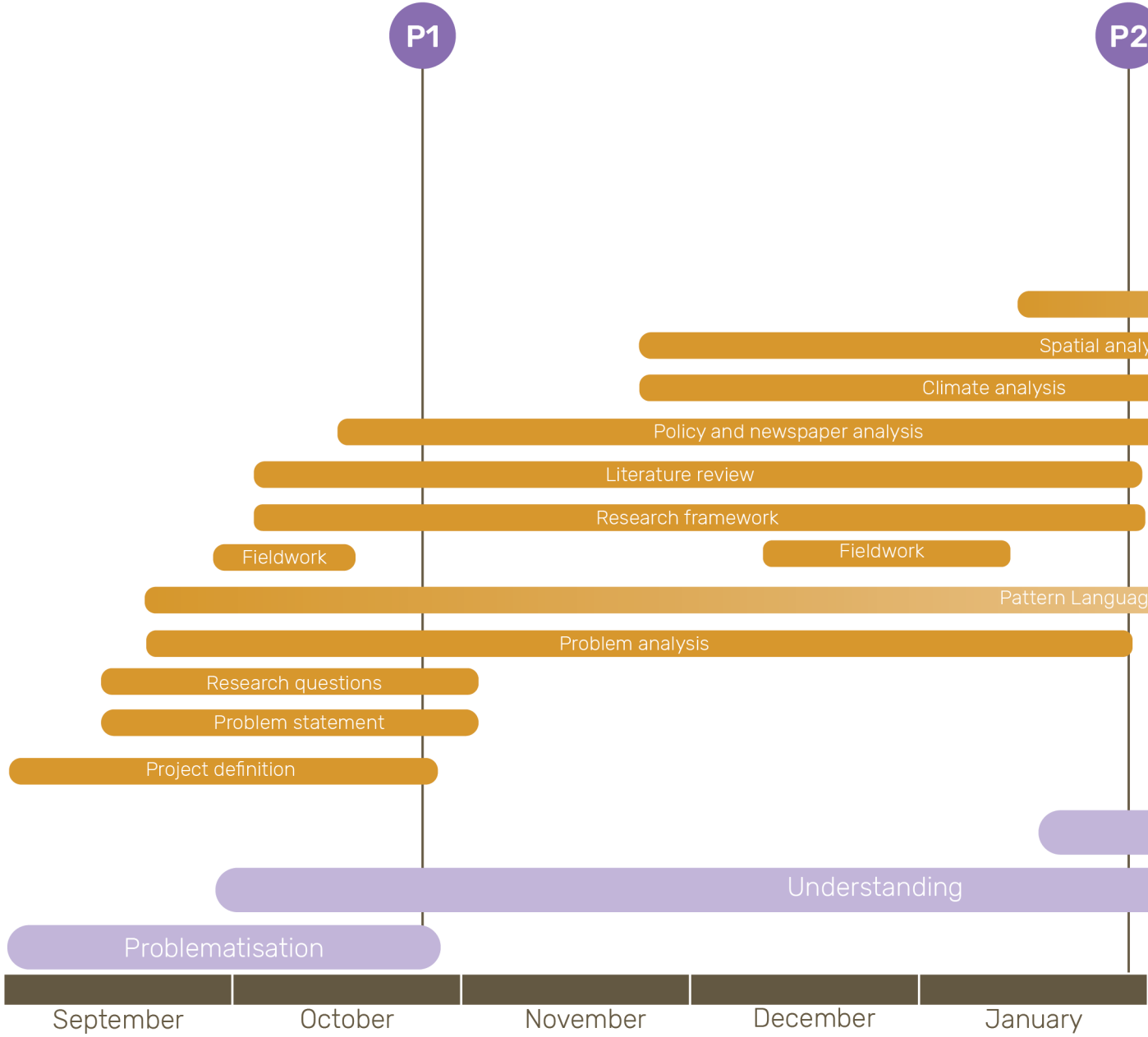
Caring for attachment
- considering continuity and place attachment

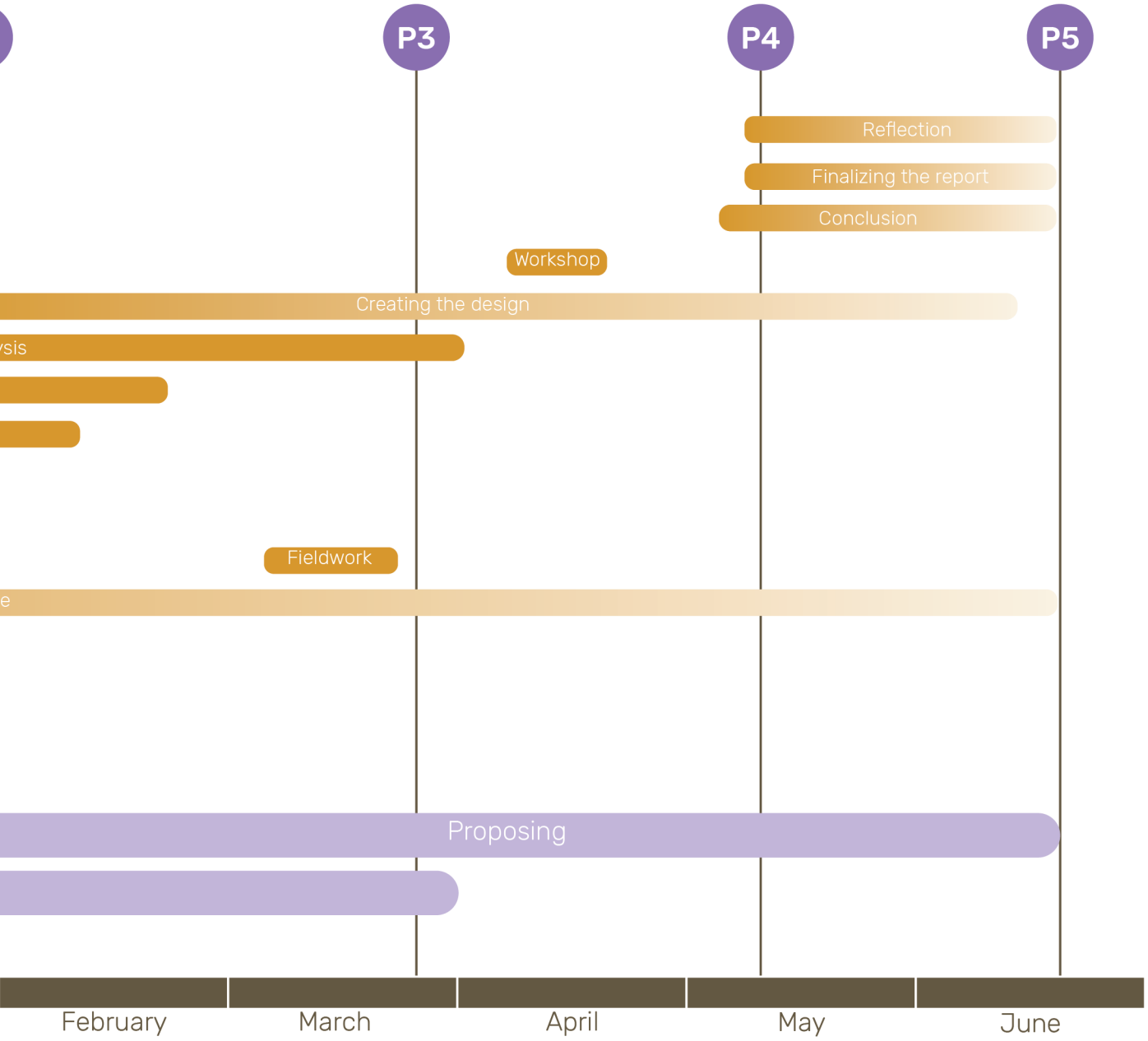
Caring for the future
- creating responsible and sustainable urban spaces

3.4.Conceptual framework



3.5.Thesis timeline




P3
P4
P5
Reflection
Finalizing the report
Conclusion
Workshop
Creating the design
ysis
Fieldwork
e
Proposing
February
March
April
May
June

CHAPTER 4. UNDERSTANDING

4.1.Welfare system in Hungary

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

Hungary is one of the countries facing an aging society. According to predictions, by 2050 Hungary's dependency ratio will reach 50%, meaning there will be an equal number of active workers and elderly individuals (Obádovics, 2018). This indicates the rapid pace at which Hungary's population is aging.

A 2018 study using the Aging Society Index revealed that Hungary ranked last among 18 OECD countries. The index evaluates factors such as productivity and engagement, well-being, equity, cohesion, and security. While Hungary performed relatively well in equity and security, it scored a total of 23 points, placing it at the bottom of the list. It received a score of zero in the categories of well-being and productivity and engagement (Chen et al., 2018).

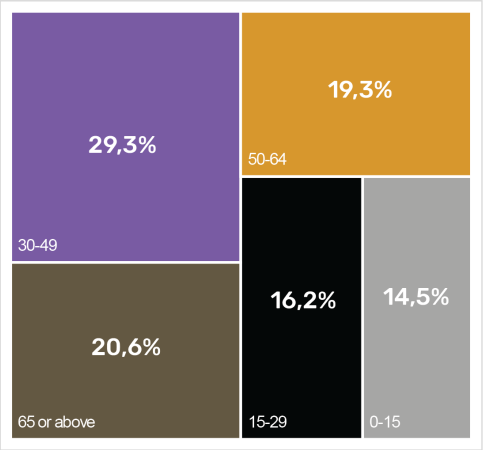


Figure 11
Age groups in Hungary

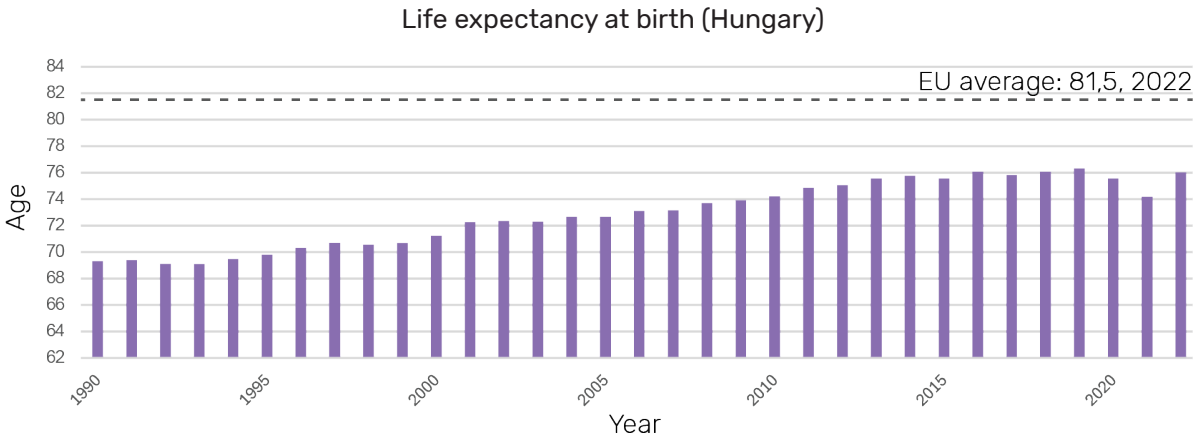


Figure 12
Life expectancy

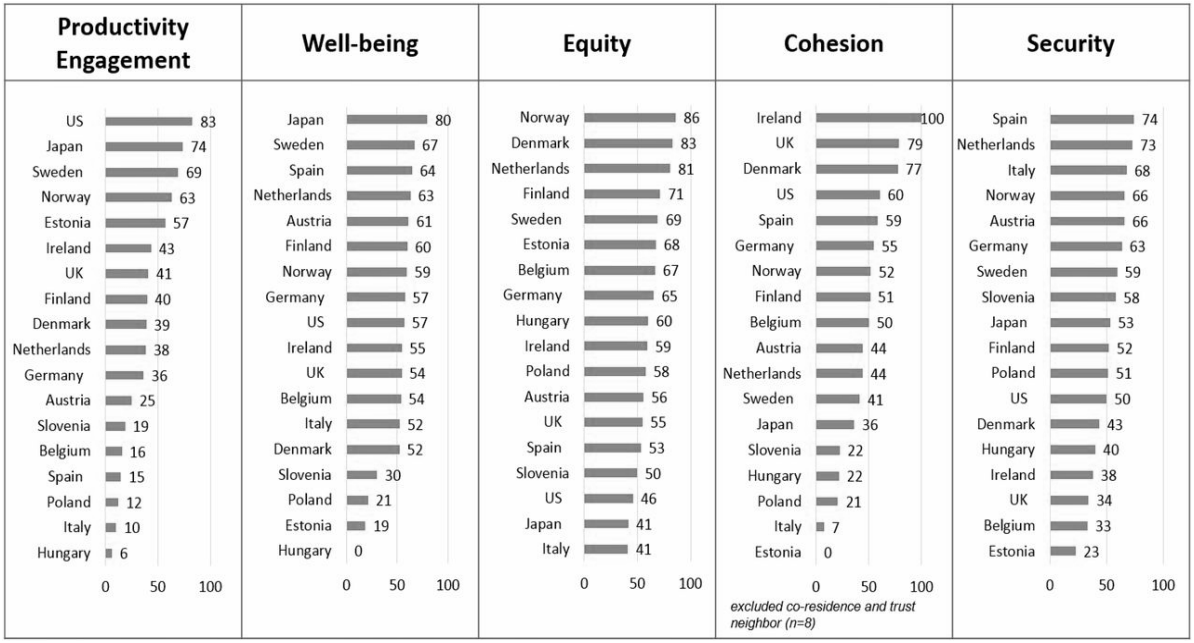


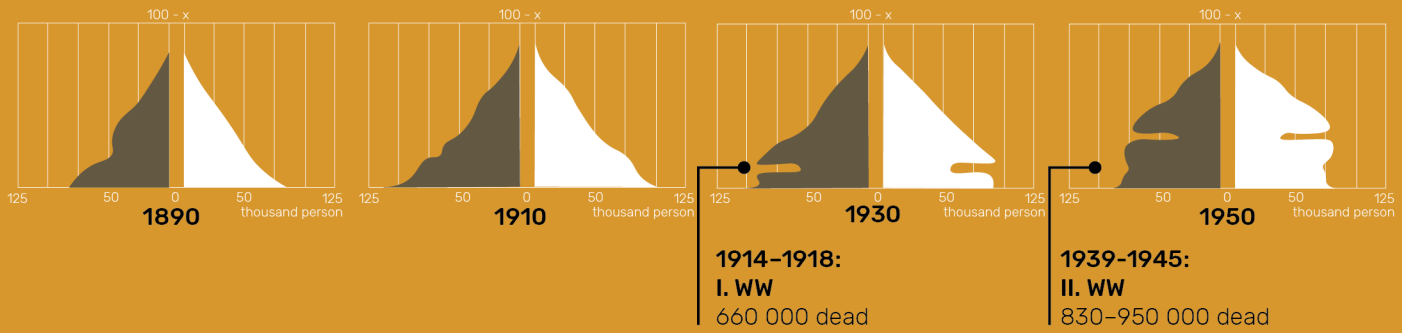
Figure 13
Country ranking by domain scores in the Aging Society Index (Chen et al. 2018)

To understand the current challenges of Hungary's aging society and struggling welfare system, it's important to look at demographic trends over the past century. For much of the 20th century, Hungary's population grew steadily, with high birth rates until the World Wars, which caused major population losses, that are clearly visible in the population pyramid.

In the decades following World War II, during the socialist era, a combination of state-driven family policies and a ban on abortion led to a pronounced rise in birth rates, producing what is often referred to as a "baby boom." However, this proved to be temporary. After the fall of communism in 1989 and the transition to a market economy, Hungary faced widespread economic instability, rising unemployment, and social uncertainty, all of which contributed to a sharp and lasting decline in fertility rates.

This long-term demographic shift has culminated in a steadily aging population, placing growing pressure on the country's welfare infrastructure. These pressures have been further exacerbated by political developments in recent years. Since coming to power in 2010, the current government has introduced a series of legislative and policy changes that have gradually dismantled key elements of the welfare state. These measures have included cuts to social spending, reduced support for public institutions, and a shift in responsibility from the state to individuals and families—leaving many, especially the elderly, to navigate growing needs with increasingly limited support.

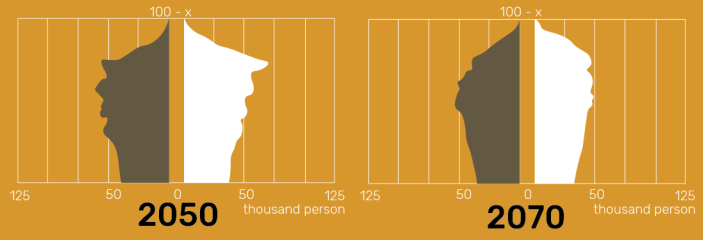
Demographic changes in Hungary

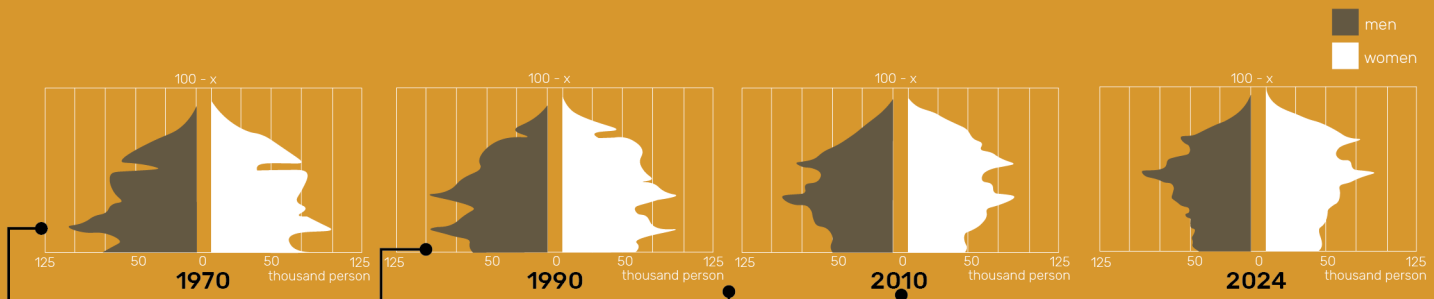


1914–1918:
I. WW
660 000 dead

1939-1945:
II. WW
830–950 000 dead

Future predictions





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

Demographic Pressure and the Healthcare Crisis

Hungary is experiencing significant demographic shifts, with the old-age dependency ratio steadily increasing. In 2015, it stood at 26.4, and by 2025 it is projected to reach 32.3, indicating an aging population (KSH, 2025). This trend places growing pressure on the welfare system, particularly healthcare and social support services. Healthcare reforms over the past decade have led to the centralization of medical institutions under state control, resulting in the closure of many smaller clinics. This has significantly hindered access to care for older adults, especially those in rural or underserved areas.

Due to low wages, poor working conditions, and limited career prospects, many doctors and nurses have emigrated. These shortages have overwhelmed the public healthcare system, leading to long waiting lists. While some patients turn to private healthcare, the costs are often unaffordable for elderly individuals, effectively excluding them from essential services. Meanwhile, professionals who remain in the system face burnout, low pay, and a lack of motivation (MOK, 2024).

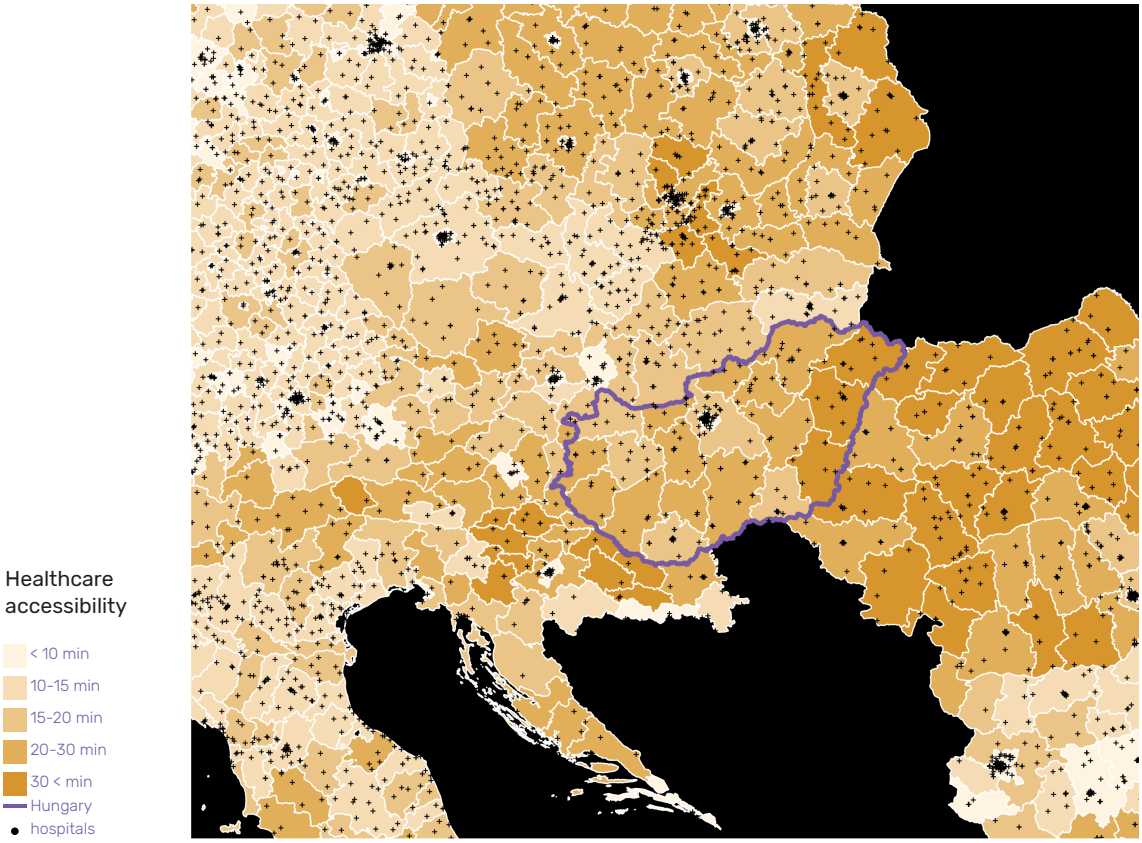
Elder Care

The crisis in elderly care extends beyond hospitals. Around 1.3 million Hungarians over the age of 65 live with some form of limitation, yet the care system has not kept up with this growing need. No new spaces have been added in state-funded nursing homes in recent years (Gyarmati, 2019), and a serious shortage of professional caregivers persists. Approximately 500,000 people care for an adult family member at home, but only about 20,000 receive any financial support for this (Gyarmati, 2019).

The burden of care has increasingly shifted to families, especially after a 2022 amendment to the Social Law declared that individuals are responsible for their own social security (Telex, 2022). This ideological shift, emphasizing personal responsibility over state support, places a disproportionate burden on those who lack the resources to manage care independently.

At the same time, there is a growing societal emphasis on "successful aging," often understood as maintaining an active, self-sufficient lifestyle into old age. While this narrative may appear empowering, it subtly shifts responsibility onto individuals and stigmatizes those who cannot meet these expectations. Those who age in ways that deviate from this ideal are often blamed, while systemic and social determinants—such as poverty, previous life stages, or unequal access to care—are ignored (Zsinka, 2020).

Figure 14
Top 3 longest waiting list



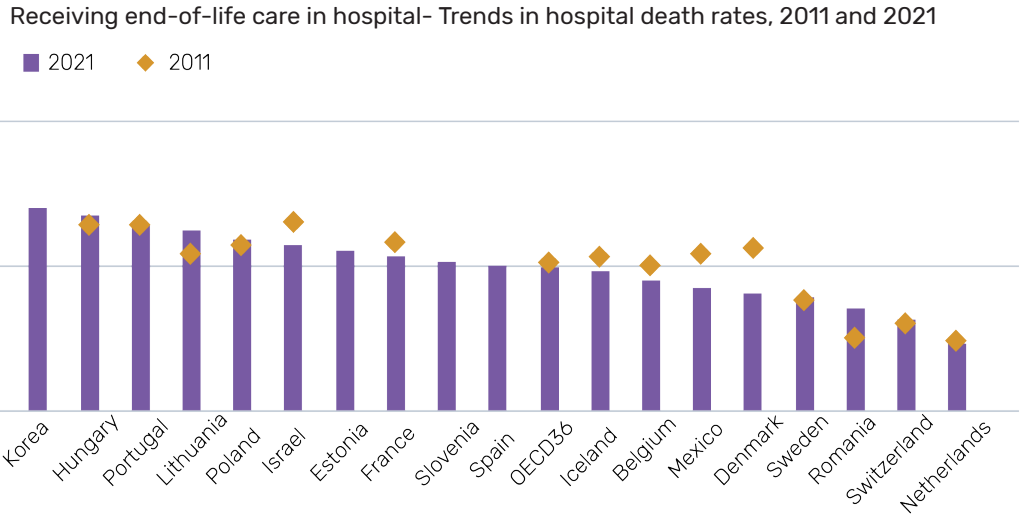
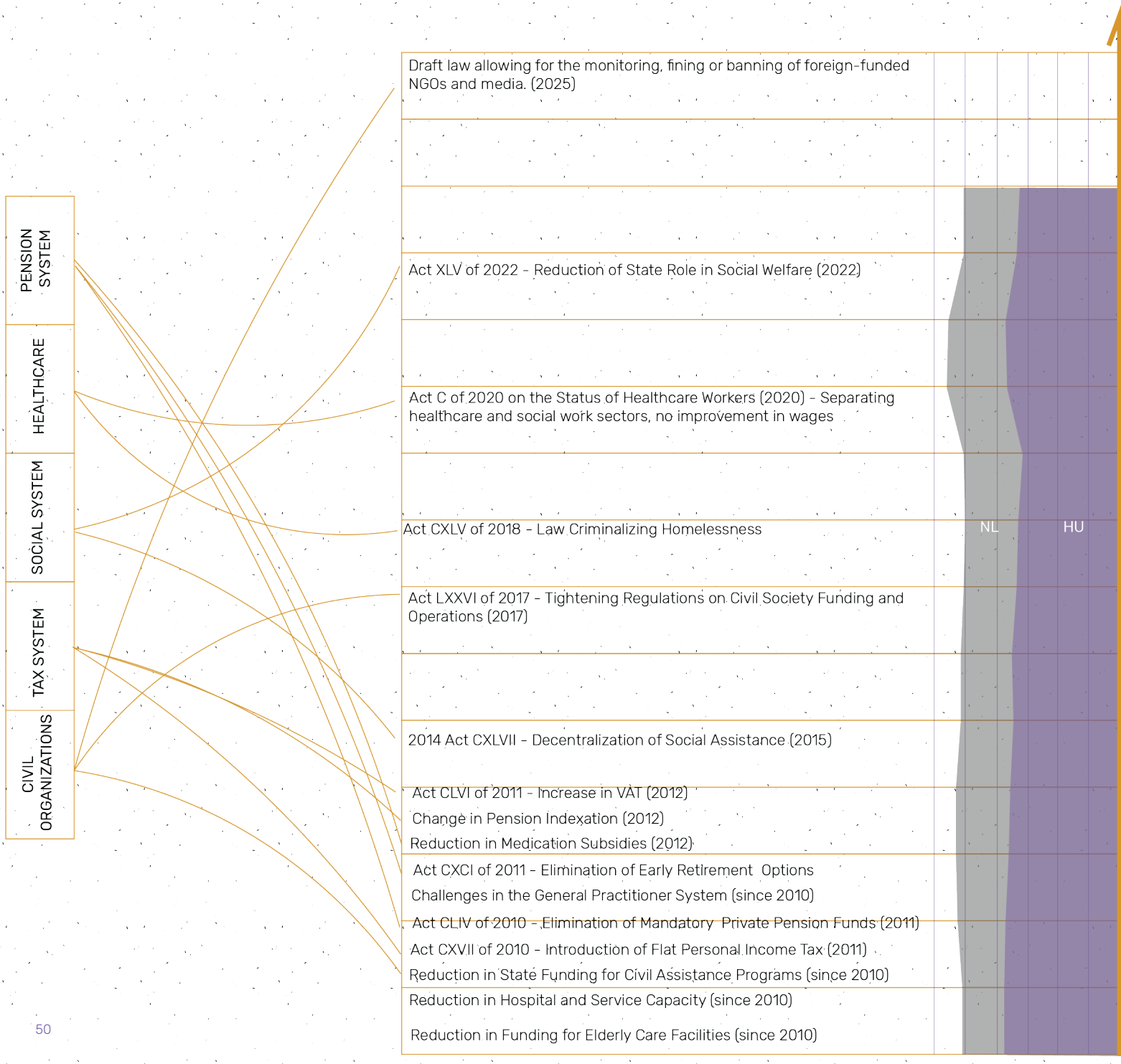
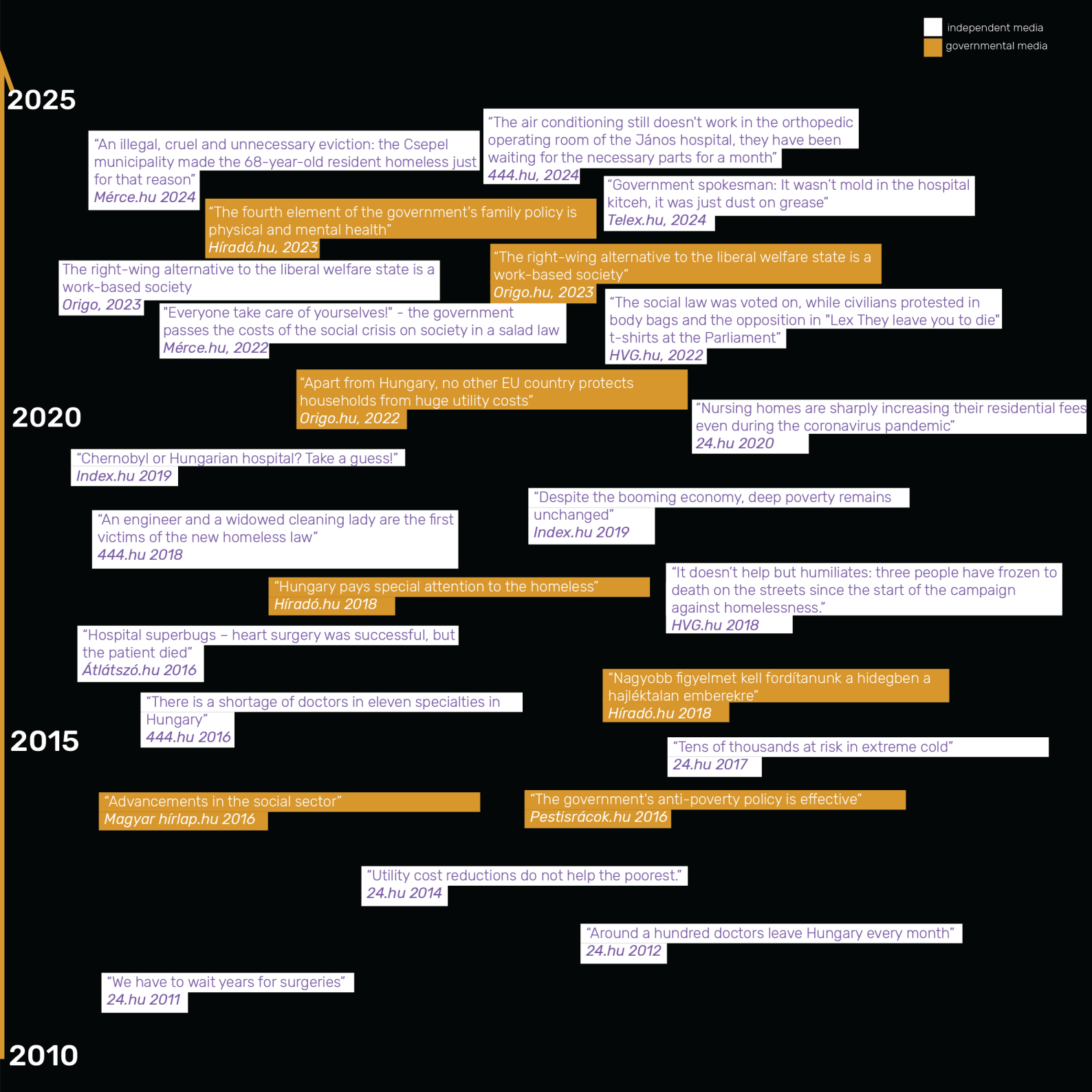


Figure 15
Recieving end-of-life care in hospital


PENSION SYSTEM
HEALTHCARE
SOCIAL SYSTEM
TAX SYSTEM
CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS
Draft law allowing for the monitoring, fining or banning of foreign-funded NGOs and media. (2025)
Act XLV of 2022 - Reduction of State Role in Social Welfare (2022)
Act C of 2020 on the Status of Healthcare Workers (2020) - Separating healthcare and social work sectors, no improvement in wages
Act CXLV of 2018 - Law Criminalizing Homelessness
Act LXXVI of 2017 - Tightening Regulations on Civil Society Funding and Operations (2017)
2014 Act CXLVII - Decentralization of Social Assistance (2015)
Act CLVI of 2011 - Increase in VAT (2012)
Change in Pension Indexation (2012)
Reduction in Medication Subsidies (2012)
Act CXCI of 2011 - Elimination of Early Retirement Options
Challenges in the General Practitioner System (since 2010)
Act CLIV of 2010 - Elimination of Mandatory Private Pension Funds (2011)
Act CXVII of 2010 - Introduction of Flat Personal Income Tax (2011)
Reduction in State Funding for Civil Assistance Programs (since 2010)
Reduction in Hospital and Service Capacity (since 2010)
Reduction in Funding for Elderly Care Facilities (since 2010)
NL
HU
Healthcare expenditure
(% of GDP)
12
10
8
6
4
2
0


independent media
governmental media
2025
"An illegal, cruel and unnecessary eviction: the Csepel municipality made the 68-year-old resident homeless just for that reason"
Mérce.hu 2024
"The air conditioning still doesn't work in the orthopedic operating room of the János hospital, they have been waiting for the necessary parts for a month"
444.hu, 2024
"Government spokesman: It wasn't mold in the hospital kitceh, it was just dust on grease"
Telex.hu, 2024
"The fourth element of the government's family policy is physical and mental health"
Híradó.hu, 2023
The right-wing alternative to the liberal welfare state is a work-based society
Origo, 2023
"The right-wing alternative to the liberal welfare state is a work-based society"
Origo.hu, 2023
"Everyone take care of yourselves!" - the government passes the costs of the social crisis on society in a salad law
Mérce.hu, 2022
"The social law was voted on, while civilians protested in body bags and the opposition in "Lex They leave you to die" t-shirts at the Parliament"
HVG.hu, 2022
"Apart from Hungary, no other EU country protects households from huge utility costs"
Origo.hu, 2022
2020
"Nursing homes are sharply increasing their residential fees even during the coronavirus pandemic"
24.hu 2020
"Chernobyl or Hungarian hospital? Take a guess!"
Index.hu 2019
"Despite the booming economy, deep poverty remains unchanged"
Index.hu 2019
"An engineer and a widowed cleaning lady are the first victims of the new homeless law"
444.hu 2018
"Hungary pays special attention to the homeless"
Híradó.hu 2018
"It doesn't help but humiliates: three people have frozen to death on the streets since the start of the campaign against homelessness."
HVG.hu 2018
"Hospital superbugs – heart surgery was successful, but the patient died"
Átlátszó.hu 2016
"Nagyobb figyelmet kell fordítanunk a hidegben a hajléktalan emberekre"
Híradó.hu 2018
"There is a shortage of doctors in eleven specialties in Hungary"
444.hu 2016
2015
"Tens of thousands at risk in extreme cold"
24.hu 2017
"Advancements in the social sector"
Magyar hírlap.hu 2016
"The government's anti-poverty policy is effective"
Pestisrácok.hu 2016
"Utility cost reductions do not help the poorest."
24.hu 2014
"Around a hundred doctors leave Hungary every month"
24.hu 2012
"We have to wait years for surgeries"
24.hu 2011
2010

Limited Support and Inequality in Social Policy

The state presents itself as “family-friendly,” offering tax benefits and financial incentives to mothers and large families. However, these policies disproportionately benefit households already in stable financial positions (444, 2017). Older adults, who are no longer seen as economically productive or raising children, are largely left out. Although the government maintains the 13th-month pension, this is widely regarded as a symbolic gesture rather than a meaningful improvement. As of April 2025, the median pension in Hungary was around €530 (grantis.hu, 2025), with half of all pensioners receiving less than this amount each month.

Hungary is among the most corrupt countries in the EU (Transparency International, 2024), which has deeply eroded public trust. Many citizens feel abandoned, perceiving government efforts as superficial and short-term. Despite occasional improvements in official statistics, Hungary continues to lag behind EU averages in multiple social indicators. Together, these dynamics reflect a social system that increasingly expects individuals - especially the elderly - to manage on their own with decreasing support from the state, growing inequality, and democratic backsliding.

The government allocates very little to social expenditures and continues to narrow the scope of available benefits. Political polarization and economic inequality are intensifying (Ferge, 2008), with the gap between the wealthy and the poor widening. These divides extend across generations, and older adults, who are often politically exploited, see little tangible improvement in their conditions.

Another major issue lies in the system of local governance. Municipalities are tasked with delivering social care, but the level and quality of services they must provide are not clearly defined (Ferge, 2008). This results in stark regional inequalities and leaves many elderly individuals without consistent or adequate support.

Civil Society Restrictions

The Hungarian government declared a state of emergency at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, affecting the transparency of social policy decisions. Since the war in Ukraine began in 2022, the state of emergency has been extended indefinitely. This allows the government to enact regulations without parliamentary approval, temporarily granting them the force of law and raising serious concerns about democratic oversight.

Civil society, once a key actor in advocating for vulnerable populations, has also come under increasing pressure. A 2017 law required NGOs receiving more than €20,000 in foreign funding to label themselves as “foreign-funded”, a measure ruled unlawful by the European Court of Justice in 2020. Still, the current administration continues to threaten civic space. As of June 2025, a new legislative proposal is under discussion that would allow for the monitoring, fining, or banning of civil organizations and media outlets supported from abroad.

4.3.Climate analysis

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

Further steps were taken to examine the capital of Hungary, Budapest, in terms of climate and social aspects. This was done to identify the areas of the city that are most vulnerable to the challenges posed by extreme weather, as well as to determine the locations of the social groups that are most affected.

Urban green spaces play an important role in the functioning of a city. They provide recreational areas for residents, help regulate temperature, improve air quality, and enhance biodiversity. These spaces are accessible to everyone, significantly contributing to the well-being of the population. (KSH, 2024)

Currently, Budapest has only 6 m² of green space per resident, falling short of the 9 m² recommended by the WHO, highlighting the urgent need to develop new, high-quality green areas. (portfolio.hu, 2021)

The effects of increasingly extreme climatic conditions are also evident in Budapest. Flash floods and extreme summer heat are becoming more frequent, with the highly built-up areas, such as the city center, being the most affected. Air pollution remains a significant issue, particularly in winter, due to industrial activity and heavy traffic, while dense urban fabric often prevents effective air circulation.

Maps show that the inner districts are the most exposed to these weather-related challenges, emphasizing the need for climate resilient planning.

Budapest's districts

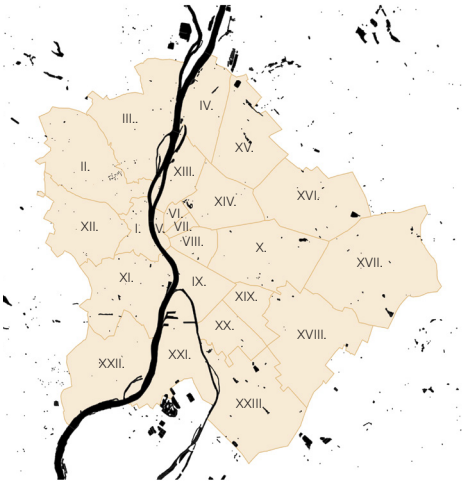
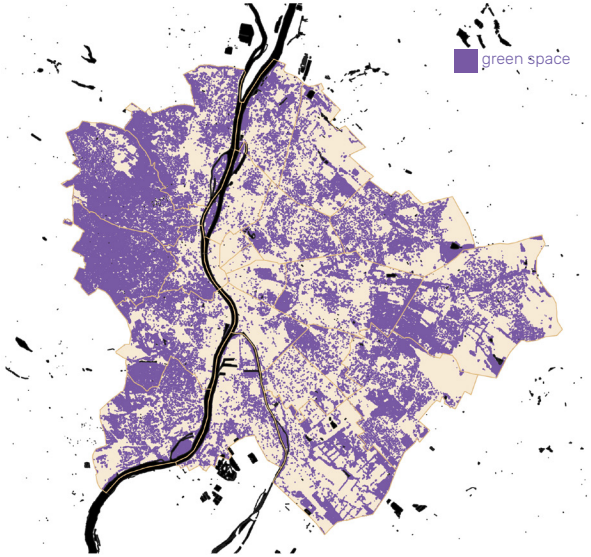
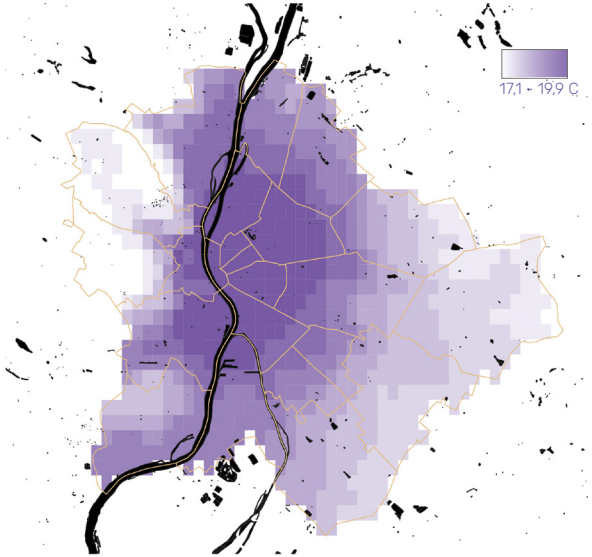


Figure 16.
"Apartman building in Pest during the heatwave"
(Ludas Matyi, July 14th 1950.)

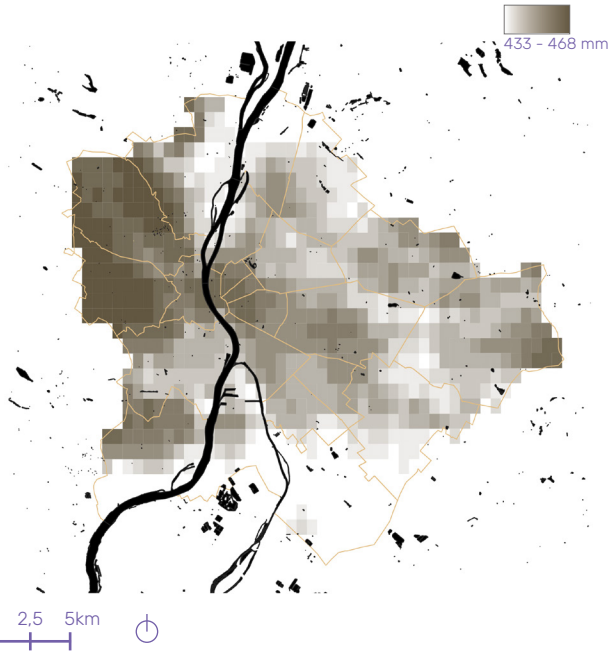
Green spaces



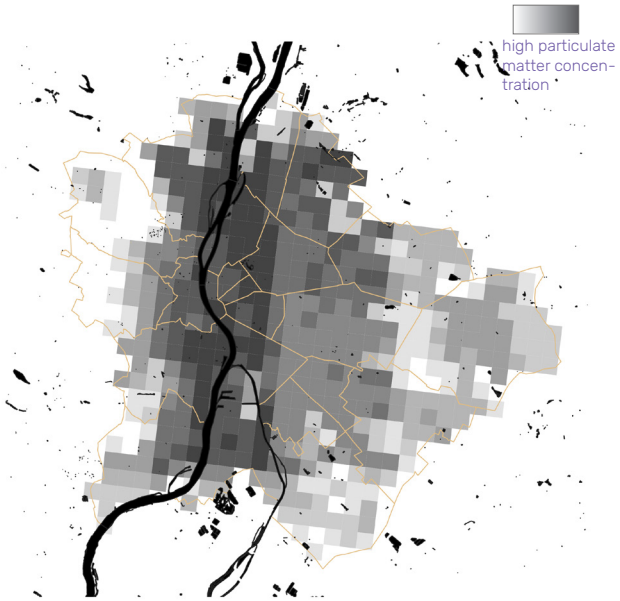
Average temperature in summer



Pericipation



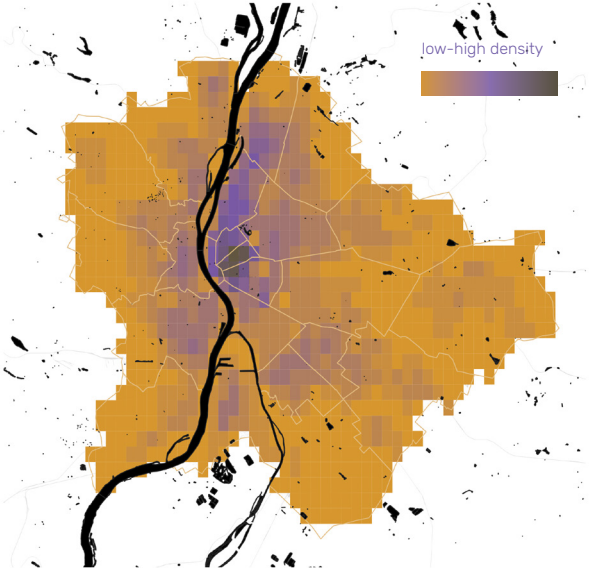
Pollution



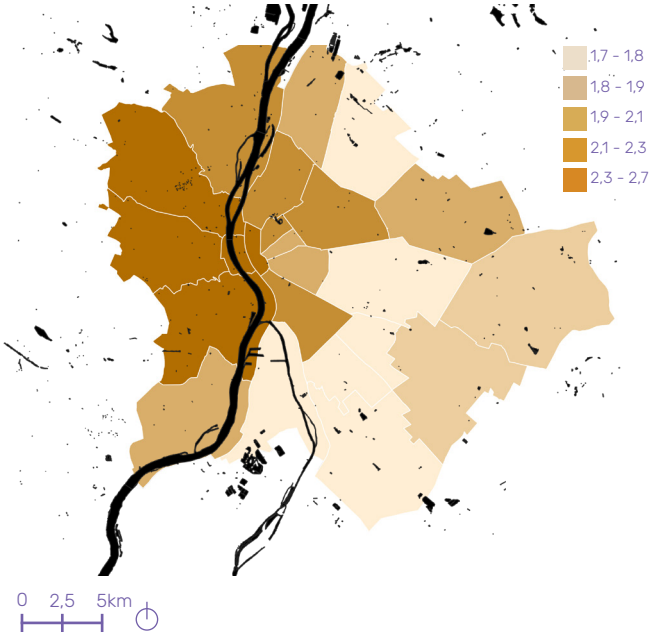
4.4.Social analysis

Concentration of 65+

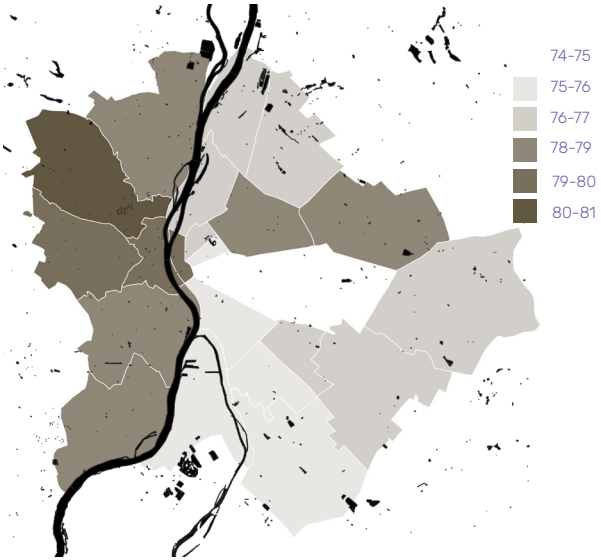
Density

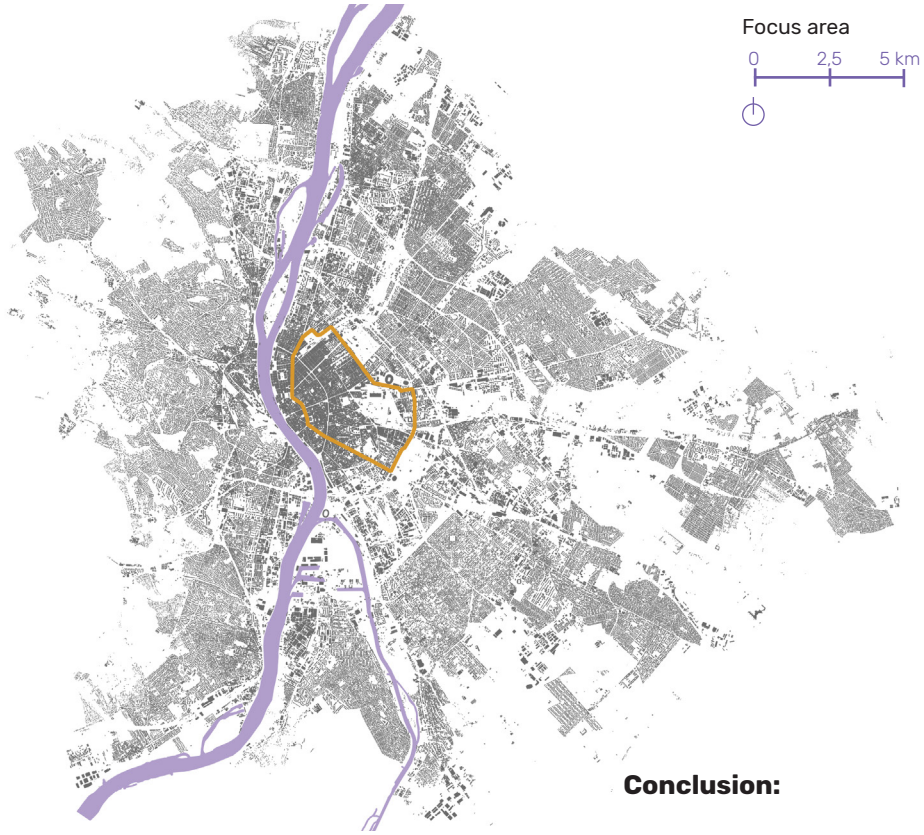


Gross average salary (1 000 Euro)



Life expectancy (year)





The social analysis reveals that the central part of the city is a high-density area with a significant concentration of elderly residents. Compared to the Buda side, the Pest side has lower average gross incomes and shorter life expectancy, indicating that many older residents are living in disadvantaged conditions, which negatively impacts their health and long-term well-being.

Conclusion:

Drawing on insights from both the climate and social analyses, the inner districts of Budapest were identified as key focus areas for the next stages of the thesis. These areas are characterized by high population density, a significant proportion of elderly residents, and increased vulnerability due to socio-economic disadvantage and limited access to quality public space. At the same time, they are also among the most exposed to urban heat, lack of green infrastructure, and the spatial consequences of climate change. This overlap of social and environmental challenges makes the inner districts a critical context for exploring in the next steps of the thesis.

4.6.Walk & talk interviews

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

To gain a better understanding of the everyday lives of elderly residents in Budapest, eight interviews were conducted with individuals who responded to a call for participation, most of whom were members of an elderly club. The interviewees came from various parts of the city and represented a broad range of lived experiences, financial backgrounds, physical and mental conditions, ages, and genders.

As part of the methodology, each participant was invited to choose a location that held personal significance to them. This approach ensured that every meeting took place in a unique setting, offering insight into meaningful places in their daily lives. By walking and using public transportation together, the interviews provided a first-hand understanding of the small-scale challenges they encounter in their urban environment.

The hour-long conversations were gently guided, focusing primarily on their daily routines, experiences within the city, perceptions of climate and the built environment, and their social connections. In addition to these topics, many participants openly shared personal stories about their early lives, careers, experiences of loss, and reflections on aging.

It is important to note that all of the individuals interviewed were in relatively good health and did not have disabilities, which influenced the type of experiences they described.

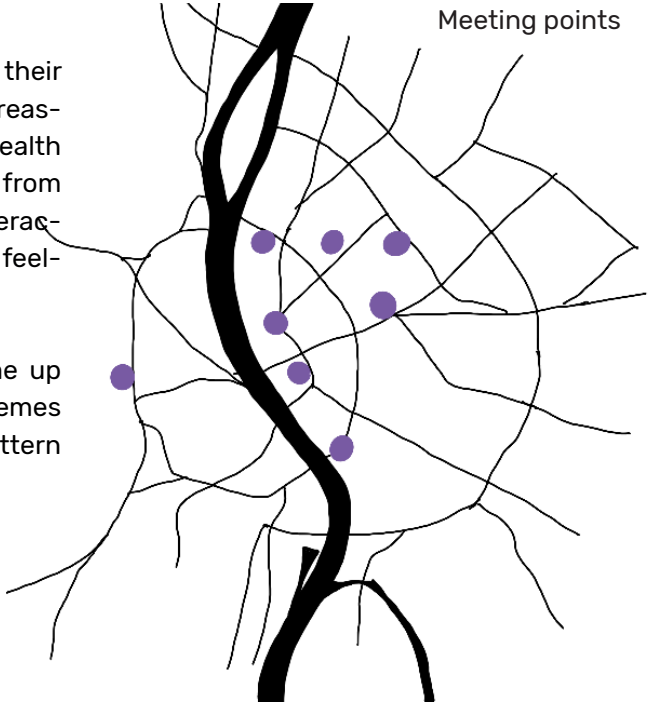
From these interviews, I learned that people typically frequent the nearest locations for recreation and routine activities, such as shopping. A common concern expressed by nearly all participants was the lack of accessible amenities in the city, such as public toilets, benches, and the difficulty posed by stairs. These issues were especially problematic in buildings with higher floors or when navigating public transportation, such as trams and metro stations. Many of the interviewees also highlighted the challenge of enduring the hot summers, as most preferred to stay indoors during these times, further emphasizing their feeling that there aren't enough green spaces in the city to offer relief.

Regarding social connections, many of the participants are now living alone due to the loss of partners, but they have managed to find a sense of community through volunteer work. However, nearly all of them expressed difficulty in connecting with younger generations, even within their own families, due to the younger people's heavy reliance on phones, which they found alienating. A shared sentiment among the interviewees was the importance of daily movement, not just for physical exercise, but for the opportunity to see faces on the streets, reinforcing the social fabric of the city

.Almost all participants mentioned that their immediate surroundings have become increasingly important to them. As their physical health declines, they feel less inclined to travel far from home, which in turn affects their social interactions. This limited mobility often leads to feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

During the interviews, certain topics came up repeatedly. I identified these recurring themes as patterns and included them in the pattern book to inform the design process.

These interviews were incredibly valuable, especially at this stage of my research. They provided critical insights into what elderly individuals look for in an urban space, the challenges they face, and the features that can either enhance or hinder their experiences. These insights are instrumental in shaping the design process and ensuring the creation of spaces that are truly inclusive and supportive for all generations.

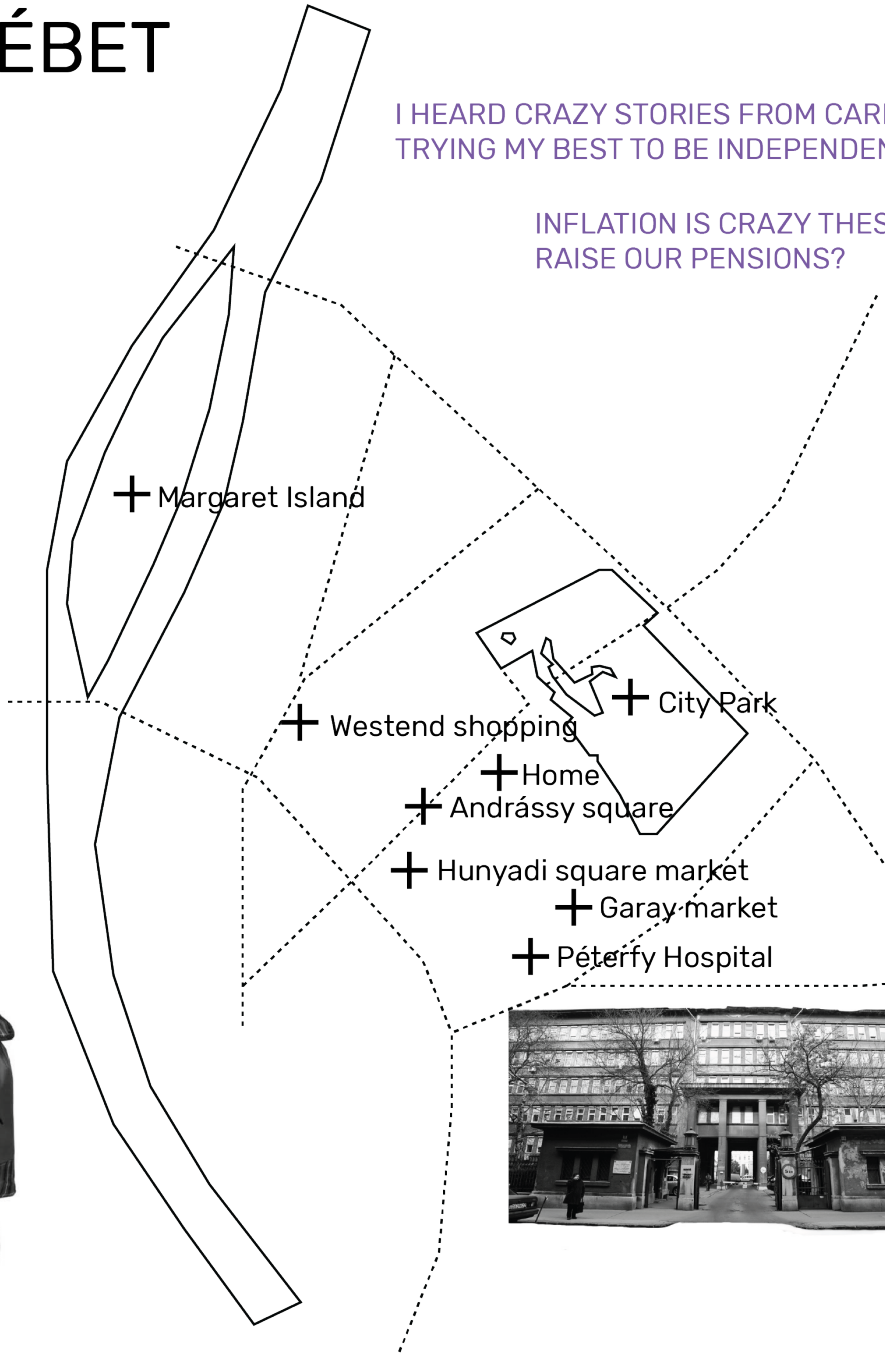


Desclaimer:
I have changed the names of the people I talked to in the report.

ERZSÉBET

I HEARD CRAZY STORIES FROM CARE HOMES, SO I AM TRYING MY BEST TO BE INDEPENDENT AS LONG AS I CAN.

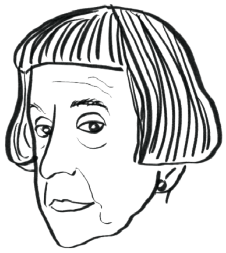
INFLATION IS CRAZY THESE DAYS, AND WHO'S GOI RAISE OUR PENSIONS?



MY LEGS HURT AND M TO HAVE A HIP REPLA WAITING LISTS ARE S TO WAIT 2 YEARS FOR

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

NNA



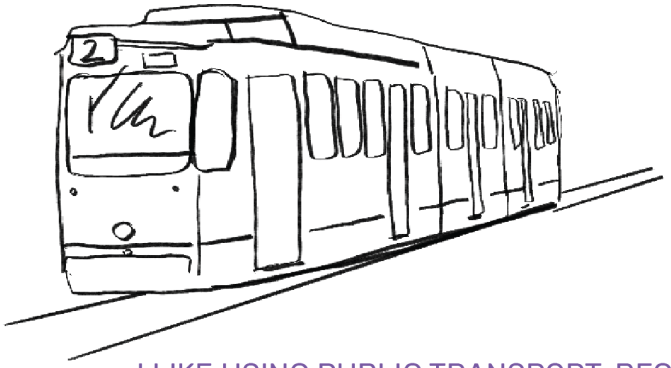
place

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

MY DOCTOR SAID I NEED
ACEMENT, BUT THE
O LONG... I THINK I HAVE
R 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

ZSUZSA



OH FIRST I WAN
EXPECT ME TO
NICELY, I DON'T

I LIKE USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT, BECUSE I SEE NEW FAC
FEEL CONNECTED TO OTHERS

HOWEVER I OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH GETTING ON THE TRA

MY YOUNG NEIGHBOUR CAME OVER TO MY PLACE AND WHEN HE LEFT HE SAID THANK YOU, BUT I SAID DON'T BE SILLY, I ONLY GAVE YOU TEE. AND HE SAID: NO, THANKS FOR THE CONVERSATION

MY APARTMENT IS MY SHELTER

MY WORLD IS GETTING SMALLER DA

IT TO SAY THAT I DON'T LIKE BEING OLD. THEY
ACT A CERTAIN WAY AND CURL MY HAIR
WANT THAT.

ES, AND I

M

Y BY DAY

I SEE MY GIRLFRIENDS FOR A COFFEE VERY OFTEN

EVERY MONTH MY GRANDCHILD IS STAYING WITH ME FOR A WEEKEND

Szabó Ervin Library

KÁLMÁN

Hármashatárhegy hill

MOVING MY BODY IS REALLY IMPORTANT,
SO I LIKE TO GO ON LONG WALKS

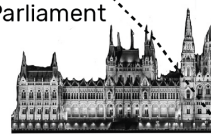
IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO CONNECT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE,
THEY DON'T WANT TO HAVE A PROPER CONVERSATION,
THEY ONLY WANNA TEXT

Home

Margaret Island

Honvéd Park

Parliament



ONCE EVERY MONTH ALL OF MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN COME TO OUR PLACE AND WE HAVE LUNCH AROUND OUR 3 M LONG TABLE

MY FAMILY DOESNT OWE ME ANYTHING. WE HAVE TO BE INDEPENDENT WITH MY WIFE, EVEN IF WE LOSE EACH OTHER, WE CANT LEAN ON OUR CHILDREN, THEY HAVE THEIR OWN LIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THEY DON'T GIVE OUT FREE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT CULTURAL NEWS ANYMORE, ONLY ABOUT PROPAGANDA

USE OF PUBLIC SPACES

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 BE
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:





CLIMATE

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

NCHES

ACK OF BINS

UNEVEN PAVEMENTS

STREETLIGHTS CHANGE TOO QUICKLY

AIR POLLUTION

NOT ENOUGH GREEN SPACE

DIFFICULTIES WITH EXTREME HEAT

STORMWATER ISSUES

PARTNER DIED

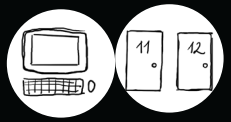
GENERATIONAL GAP

LACK OF CONNECTIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

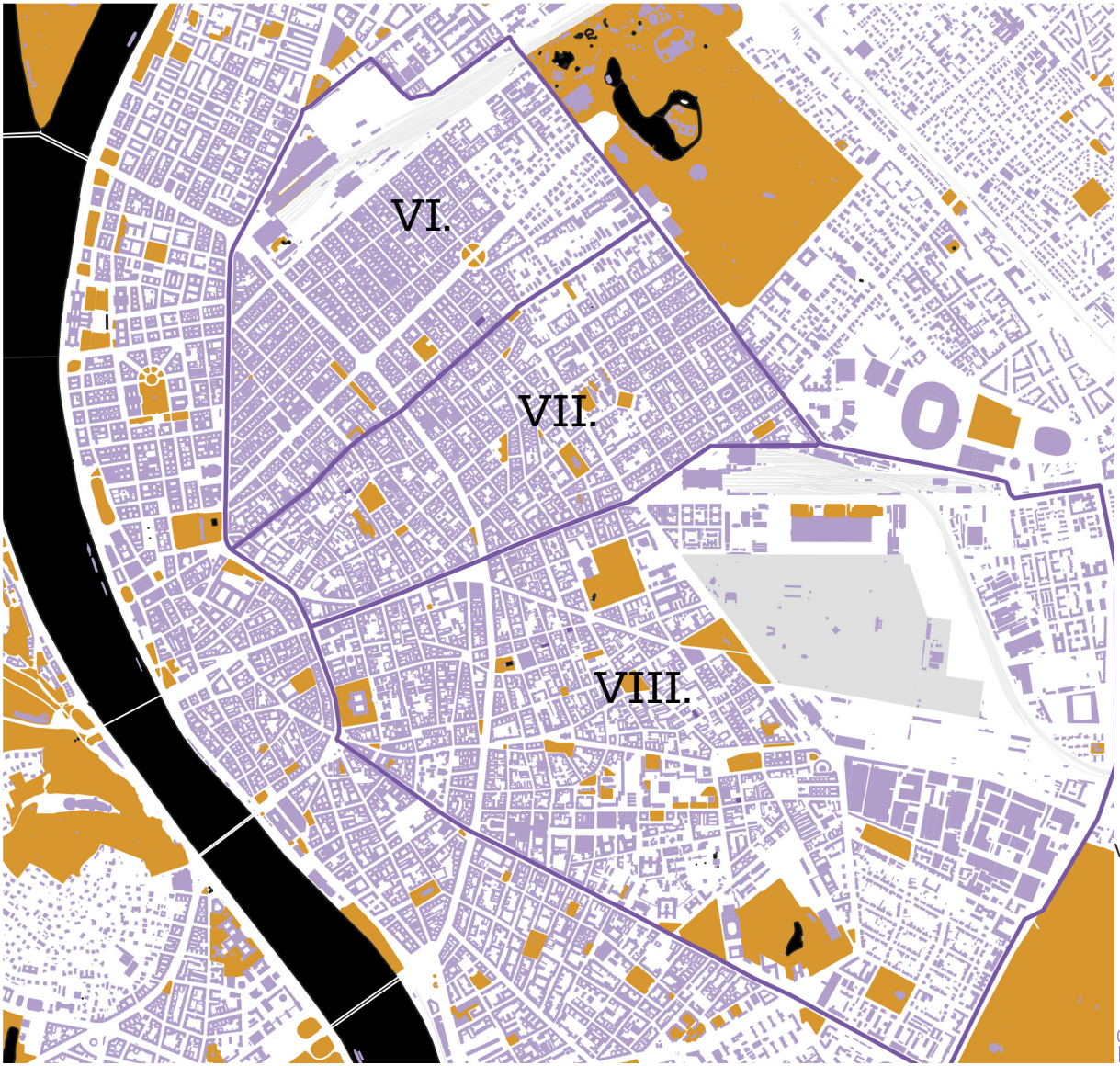
NOT CLOSE WITH FAMILY

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE ONLINE WORLD

NO CONNECTION WITH NEIGHBOURS



4.7.Focus area



4.7.1.Historiography

To understand the current context of the central parts of the city, it's important to look back at how this dense central area was formed, as it now plays a key role in shaping the city's image. For this reason, a historical overview was conducted alongside an analysis of archival photographs to uncover key architectural elements and tell the story of the area's development. This approach also highlighted current challenges, illustrating how the district's past continues to shape its present urban issues.

After many turbulent centuries, the 18th century saw the beginning of the period of reconstruction, which also brought social changes. At the beginning of the century, Pest and Buda were still two separate small towns, but later the city developed a lot, the population grew in large numbers and by the 19th century it had an important economic and administrative role. Many urban developments took place around the years of the 1848 Revolution, and an important event of the century was the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in 1873, which created Budapest.(archi.budapest.hu, 2025)

Later the demand for housing increased as the population grew, and more major construction projects were started. Up until the First World War, many new buildings and infrastructure were constructed. This period saw the construction of tenement housing typical of the inner districts, modelled on Vienna and Paris. According to the regulations of the late 19th century, the inner city was declared a closed block zone with a maximum of 85% built-up area, while detached houses were allowed in the outer parts (Körner, 2010).

This type of closed, courtyard building became widespread in the second half of the 19th century and was commonly built until the First World War, generally as four- to six-storey buildings in the large cities of Central Europe. Blocks followed rigid geometric forms and buildings were aligned with the street line, creating enclosed rows. They typically consisted of 2 wings towards the street and 1 wing towards the end of the plot, with an inner courtyard. As the regulations provided a minimum framework, owners were interested in maximising the development of the plot in order to maximise profits. As a result, there is often one toilet per floor and side of the building, and the technical quality also differs. (Meggyesi, 2009).

Zoning map of Budapest (Benkő, 2011.)

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

Basement plan of a typical multi-storey, closed-row apartment block with external walkway access

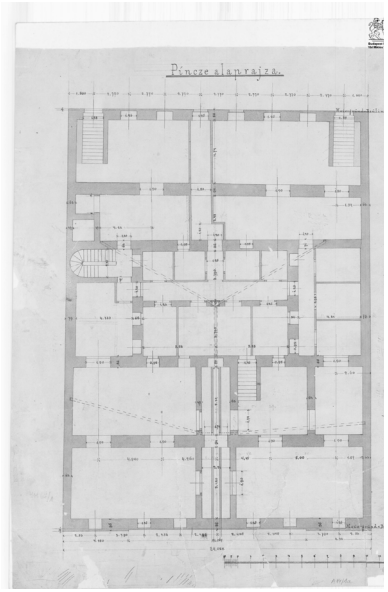


Figure 17.
Basement plan
https://ybl.bparchiv.hu/

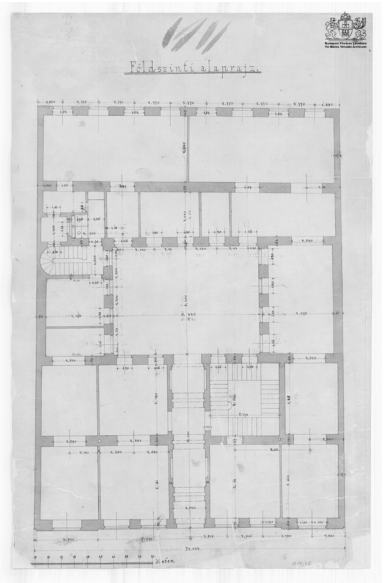


Figure 18.
Ground floor plan
https://ybl.bparchiv.hu/

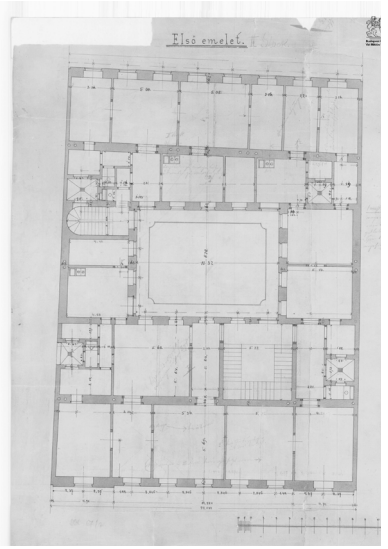


Figure 19.
First floor plan
https://ybl.bparchiv.hu/

Doorway

Figure 20.
Door of a building, (1985 Fortepan)

Courtyard

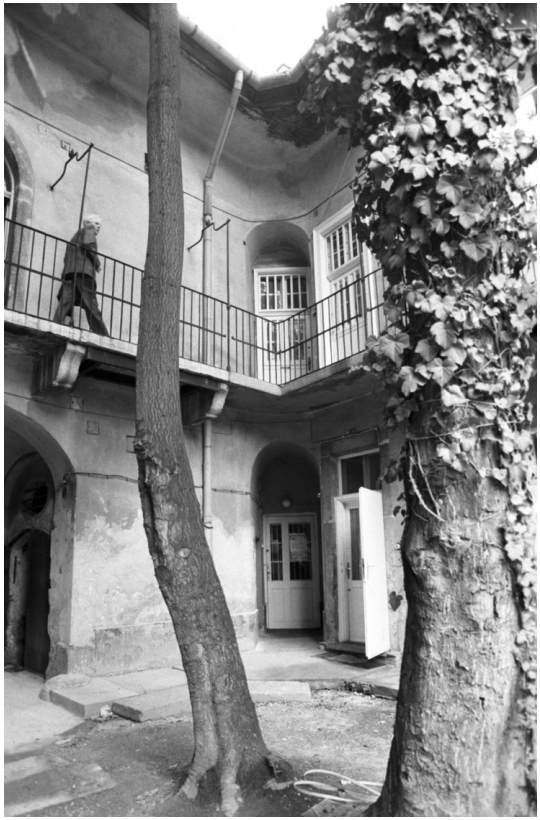


Figure 21.
Courtyard of a building, (1990 National Photo Gallery)Í

Figure 22.
An old woman stands next to the carpet cleaner in the courtyard of a residential building in the VII. district
(National Photo Gallery)

Stairs

Figure 23.
Stairs, 1984
Fortepan

Open corridors

Figure 24.
An elderly woman pulls bread up in a basket, 1964
National Photo Gallery

Figure 25.
Children cooling themselves off in the summer heat in the corridor, 1961
National Photo Gallery

Figure 26.
Everyday life, 1961
National Photo Gallery

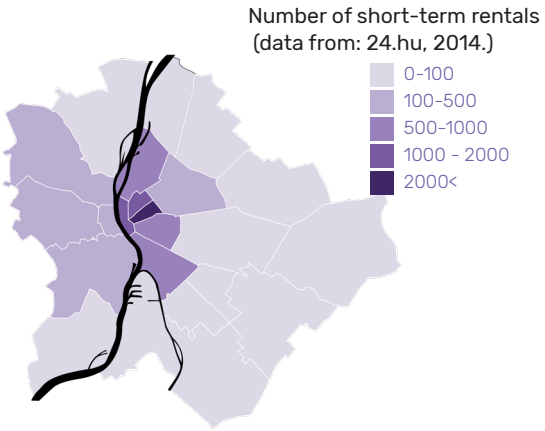
Figure 27.
Children playing on the last day of school before the summer break, 1961
National Photo Gallery

The challenges of today:

Privatization:
After the political transition in 1989, most residential buildings were converted into condominiums, where nearly all apartments became privately owned.

Rehabilitation projects:
Although some rehabilitation projects have been carried out, many were poorly executed. In numerous cases, large, continuous buildings were constructed across multiple plots, often disregarding the traditional architectural patterns of the existing urban fabric, leading to spatial conflicts. Profit maximization frequently took precedence over the development of long-term, sustainable environments. (Benkő, 2011.)

Short-term rental platforms:
Rental platforms, like Airbnb have further intensified these problems by attracting noisy tourist groups who stay only for a few nights. Additionally, the proliferation of short-term rentals has contributed to rising rental prices. In response to these challenges, a referendum was held in Budapest's 6th district, where more than half of the local population voted in favor of banning Airbnb operations.

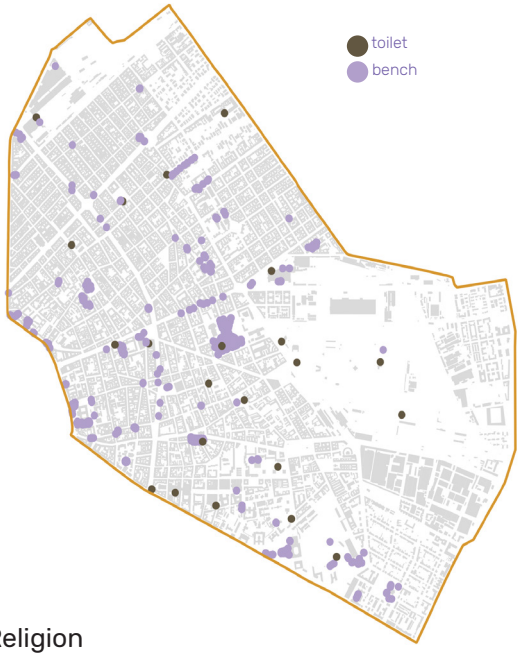


Common areas are underutilized:
All of the buildings feature shared courtyards intended for communal use. However, these spaces are often underutilized. In many cases, residents choose to pave over the area to minimize maintenance and to create a smooth surface that ensures easy access. While some courtyards include plants or trees, the space doesn't allow interactions, it only provides the most direct route to individual apartments with minimal time spent in the space.
Additionally, courtyards are frequently used for storage, housing items such as trash bins, bicycles, and other belongings, particularly by ground-floor residents. Seating is rarely provided. As a result, these spaces often become neglected and feel like "no man's land," lacking a clear sense of ownership or purpose.

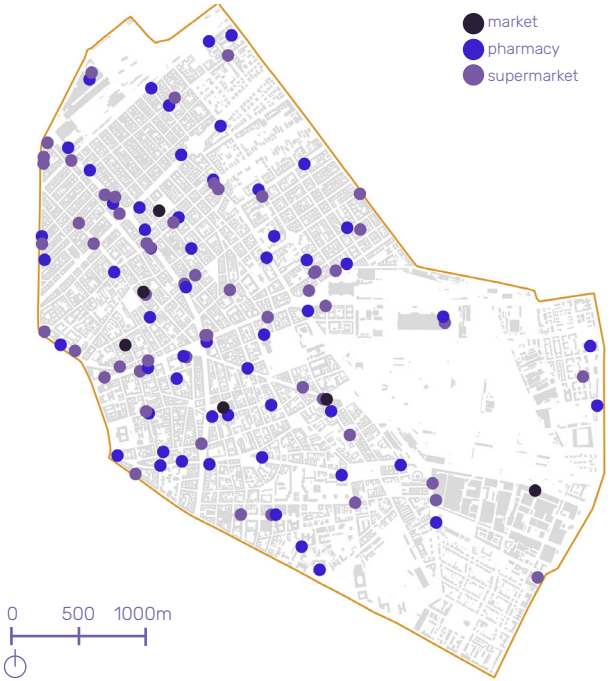
Shifts in community:
The social fabric of residential communities has significantly changed. A high turnover of residents, fueled by short-term rentals, has become common. Temporary tenants, such as university students, often show little interest in collective issues or the long-term maintenance of shared spaces.

4.7.2.Urban space analysis

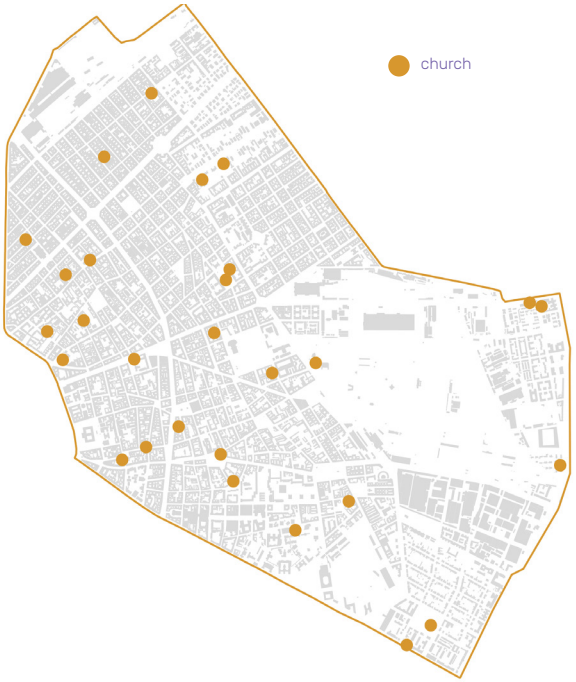
Toilets, benches



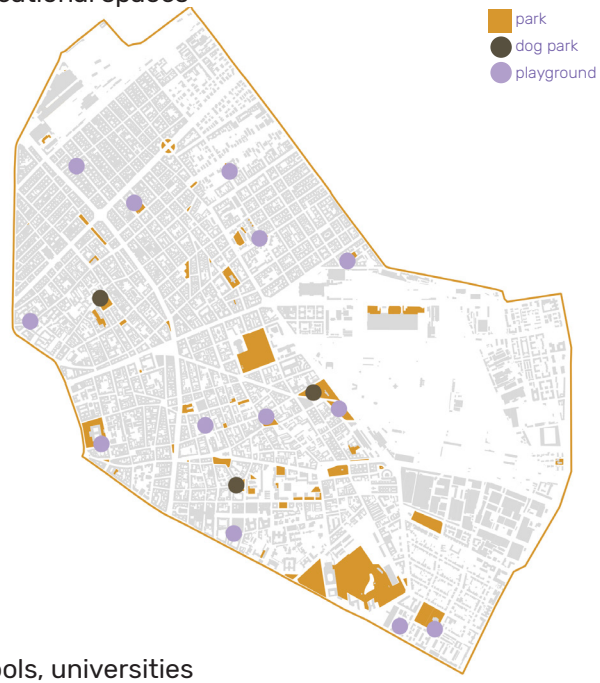
Shopping



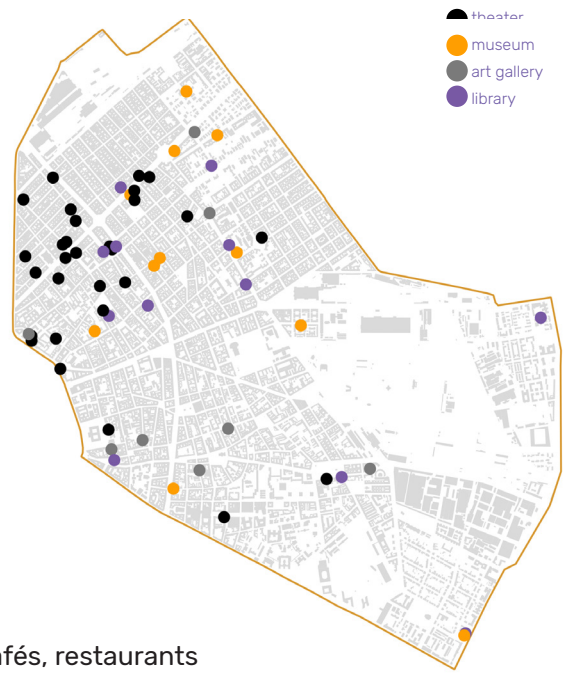
Religion



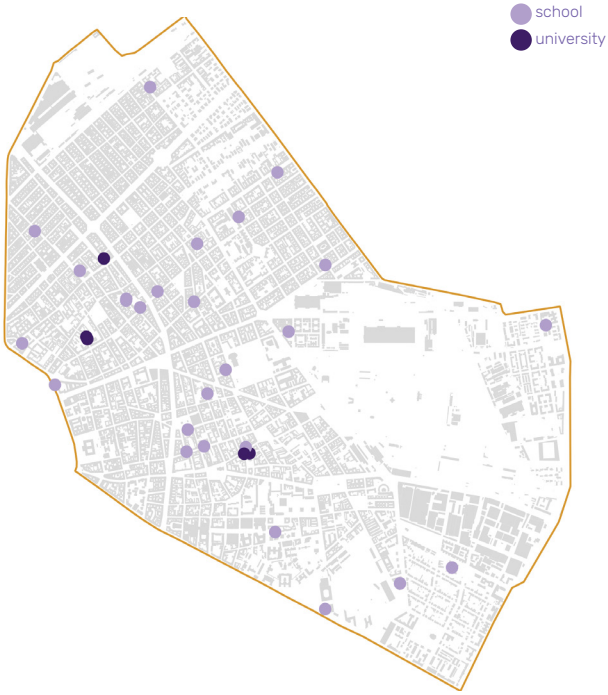
Recreational spaces



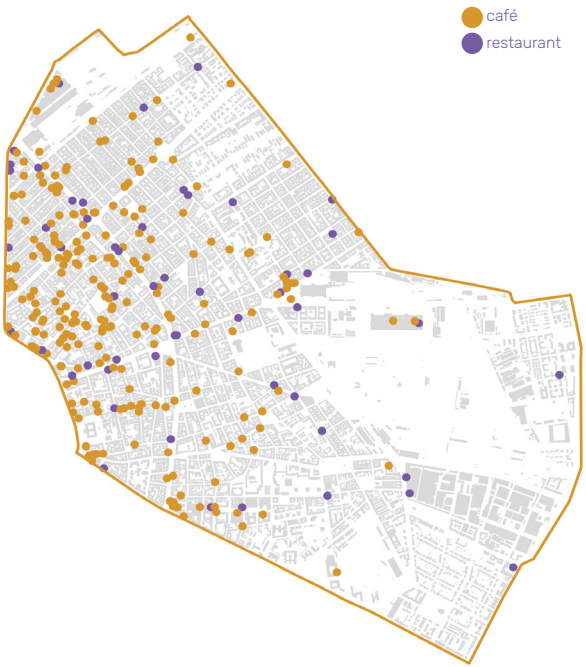
Culture



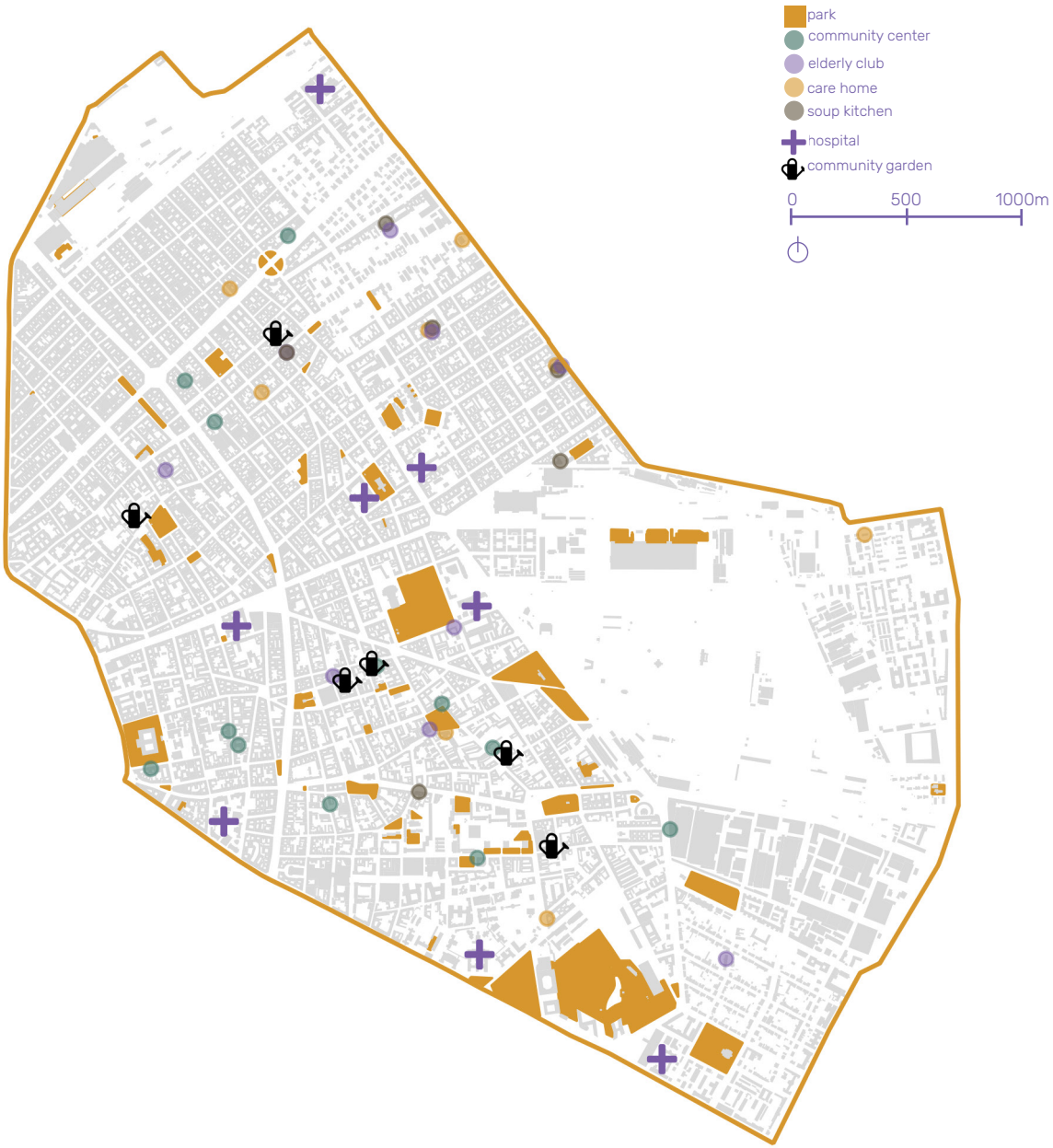
Schools, universities



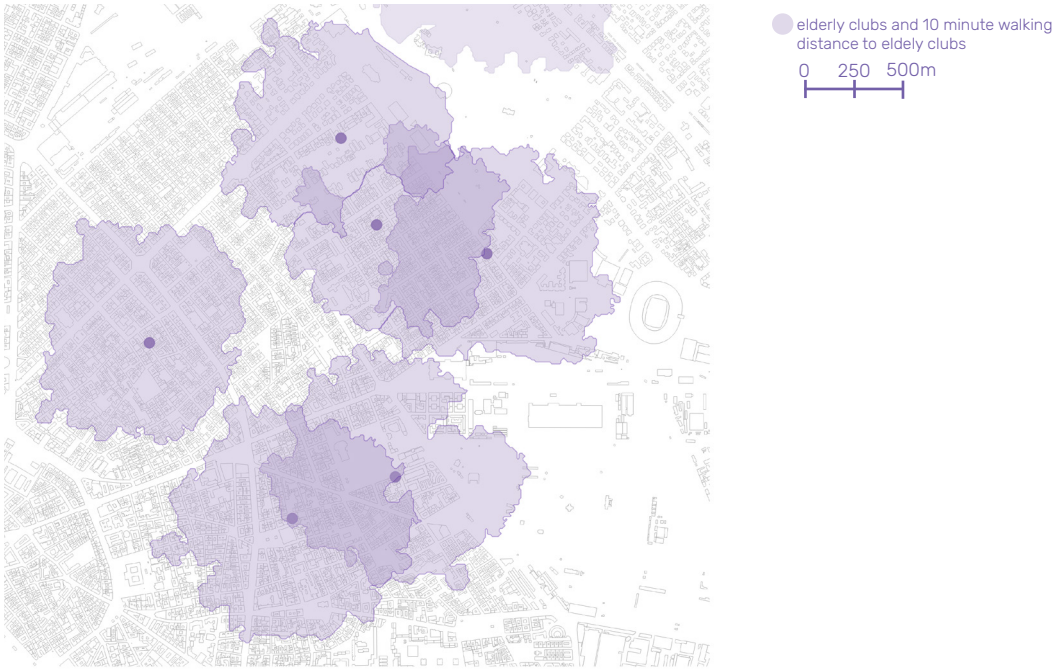
Cafés, restaurants



Spaces of care



Elderly clubs



Cultural and retail spaces are clearly more concentrated toward the city centre, while larger recreational areas are mostly found in the 8th district. Despite the appearance of many public toilets on maps, in reality, most are either closed or too far apart, often more than a 10-minute walk. The same goes for benches: some areas have a cluster of them, but many large zones have none at all, making it hard for people to rest, especially the elderly or people with limited mobility.

In terms of care infrastructure, the central part of the 8th district has a relatively high number of community spaces and gardens. There's also a noticeable presence of care services around the borders of the 6th and 7th districts. However, many of these places are beyond walking distance for those who need them most, and they're not enough to meet the needs of the area's aging population. There's also a serious lack of communal kitchens and other low-threshold services for people facing financial difficulties.

Despite the density of some services, the overall distribution is uneven, leaving gaps in basic public infrastructure, especially in parts of the area with high social needs.

Vázsonyi Vilmos Nursing Home I.

Vázsonyi Vilmos Nursing Home

Erzsébetváros Integrated Nurs-

Erzsébetváros Integrated Nurs-

Napfény Nursing Home

Olajág Nursing Home

Murányi Soup Kitchen

Baross Soup Kitchen

Király Soup Kitchen

Golgota Day Shelter

Benczúr Elderly Club and Soup

Víg Elderly Club

Reménysugár Elderly Club

Őszikék Elderly Club

Napraforgó Elderly Club

Ciklámen Elderly Club

MagNet Community Center

K11 Art and Cultural Center

Akácos Udvar Elderly Club

Ezüstfenyő Transitional Nursing

Auróra Community Center

Dankó Udvar Community Center

Gólya Presszó Community Center

H13 Cultural Center

Párbeszéd Háza Cultural Center

Kesztyűgyár Community Center

TIT Kossuth Klub Cultural

Lehetőségek Tere

Eötvös10 Cultural Center

Turbina

Romano Kher Roma Cultural Center

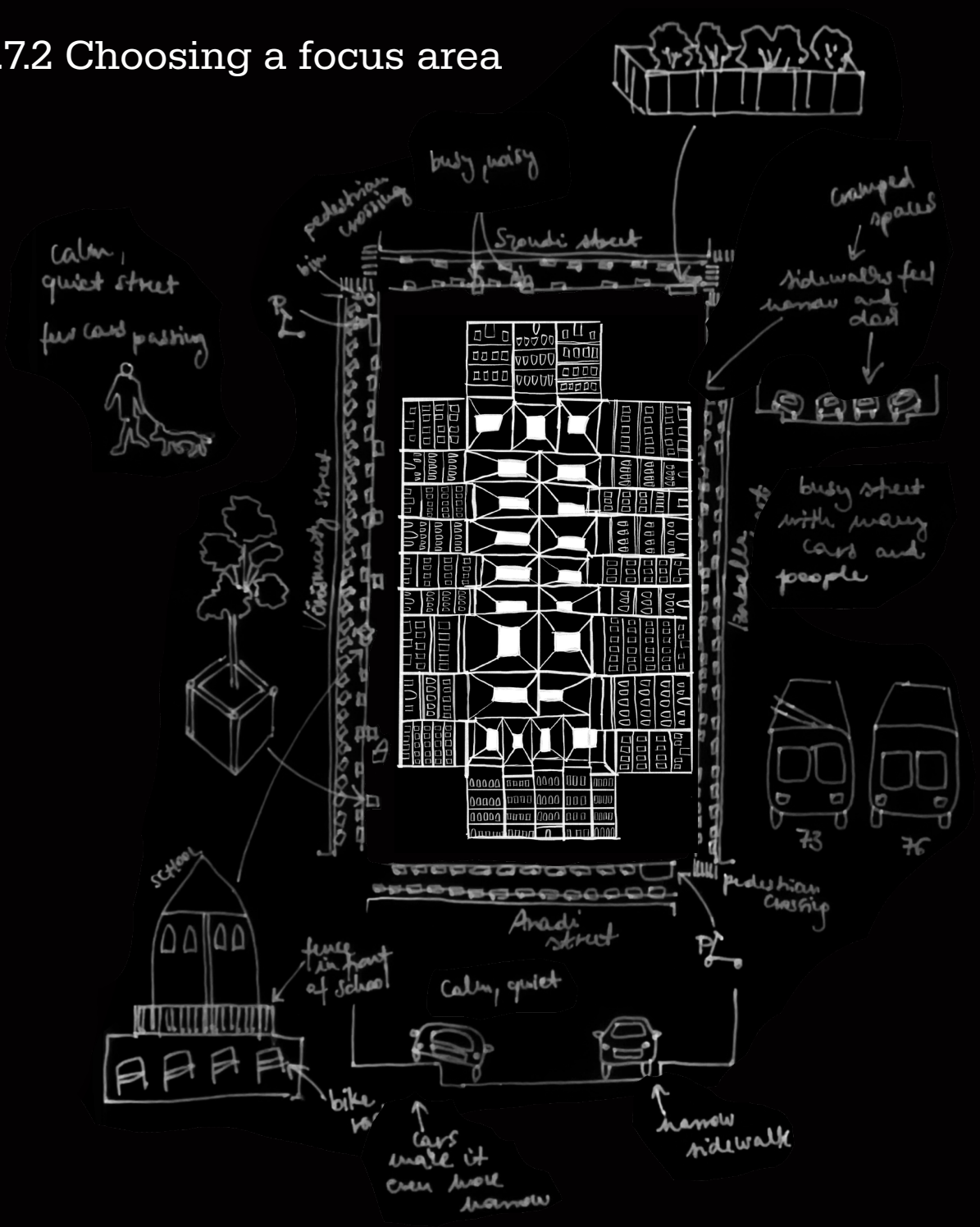
Care homes

Community centers

Soup kitchens

Elderly club

4.7.2 Choosing a focus area



VI. district

Area: 2.38 km²
Number of resident: 36 123
Number of residents above the age of 65 (2022.): 5900

Figure 28.
VI, district

Budapest's 6th District (Terézváros) shows promising signs of care through improved bik lanes, visible municipal engagement, and efforts to maintain public spaces. The district is not uniform—while some parts are densely bu and face housing pressures, others, such as t Andrássy út area, are characterized by elegar historic buildings and wealthier residents. Co munity participation has been strong, as seen in a 2024 referendum to ban short-term rentals starting in 2026—a move aimed at improving affordability and everyday livability. Still, challenges remain: tourism continues to strain infrastructure, green space is limited, and the effects of housing reforms are yet to unfold. Despite these tensions, the district is gradually moving toward more inclusive, climate-conscious urban care.

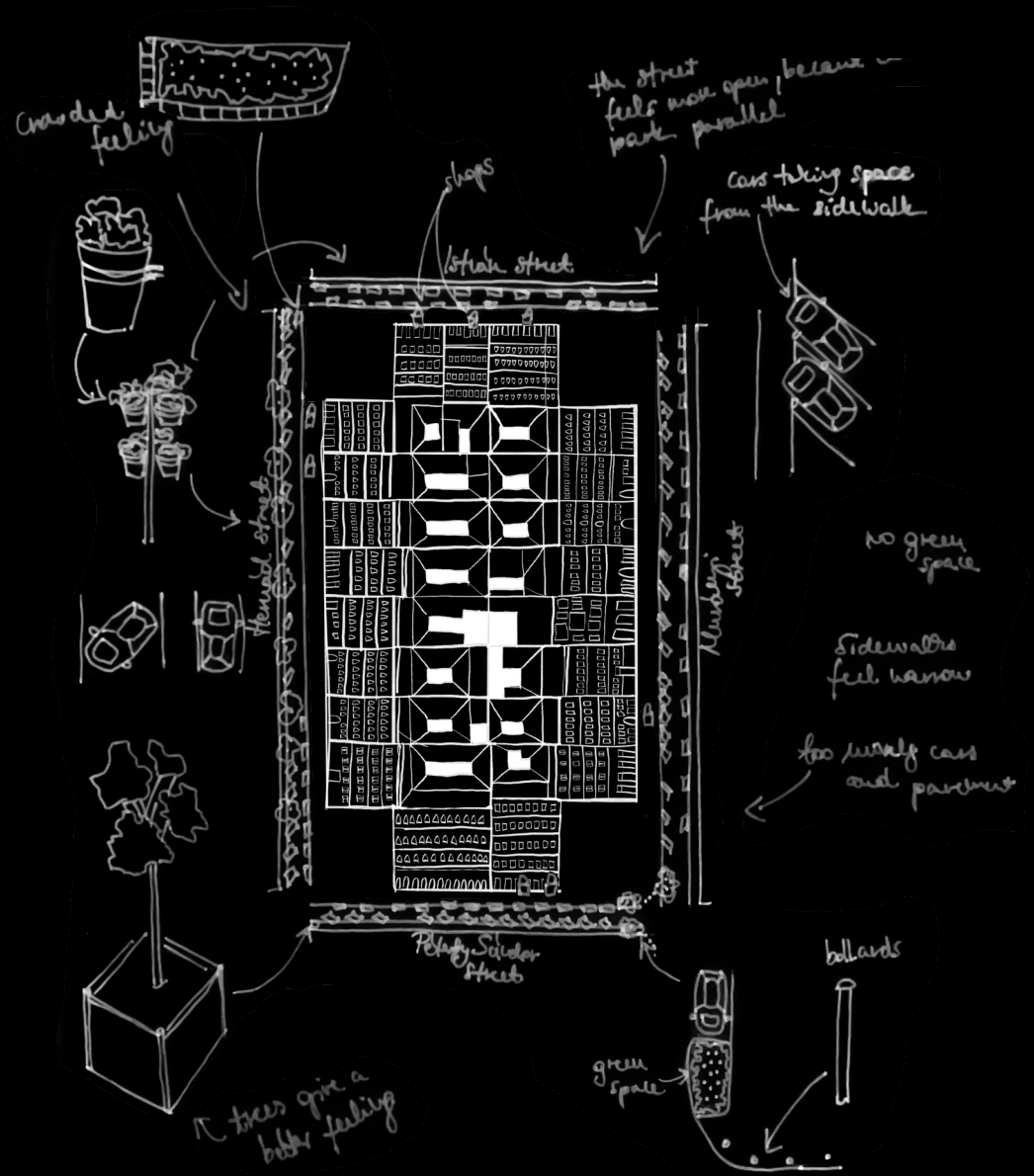


Figure 29.
VI, district

VII. district

Area: 2.09 km²
Number of resident: 48 227
Number of residents above the age of 65 (2022.): 8098

The 7th District (Erzsébetváros) faces significant urban and social challenges, with clear signs of neglect in many areas. Public space is dominated by parked cars and excessive pavement, leaving little room for greenery or pedestrian comfort. Green spaces are scarce, and the hard urban surface intensifies both environmental stress and the district's livability. Beyond physical conditions, the area also suffers from a weak sense of community, with few signs of strong local cohesion or collective care. Together, these factors contribute to a fragmented urban fabric where social and environmental needs are often overlooked.
While the district municipality has taken some steps toward regulating nightlife and short-term rentals in the inners part of the district, its overall capacity to address deeper structural issues, such as public space management, green infrastructure, and community support—remains limited and often reactive rather than visionary.

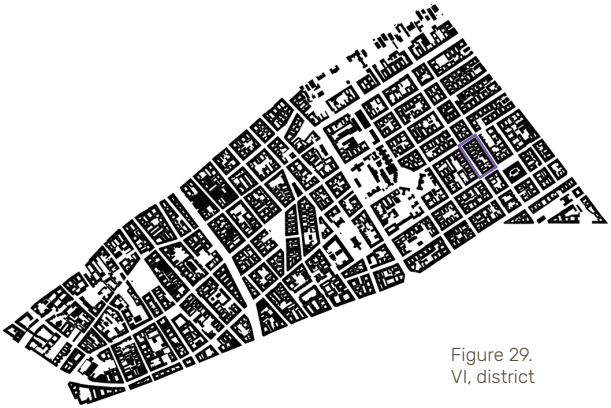
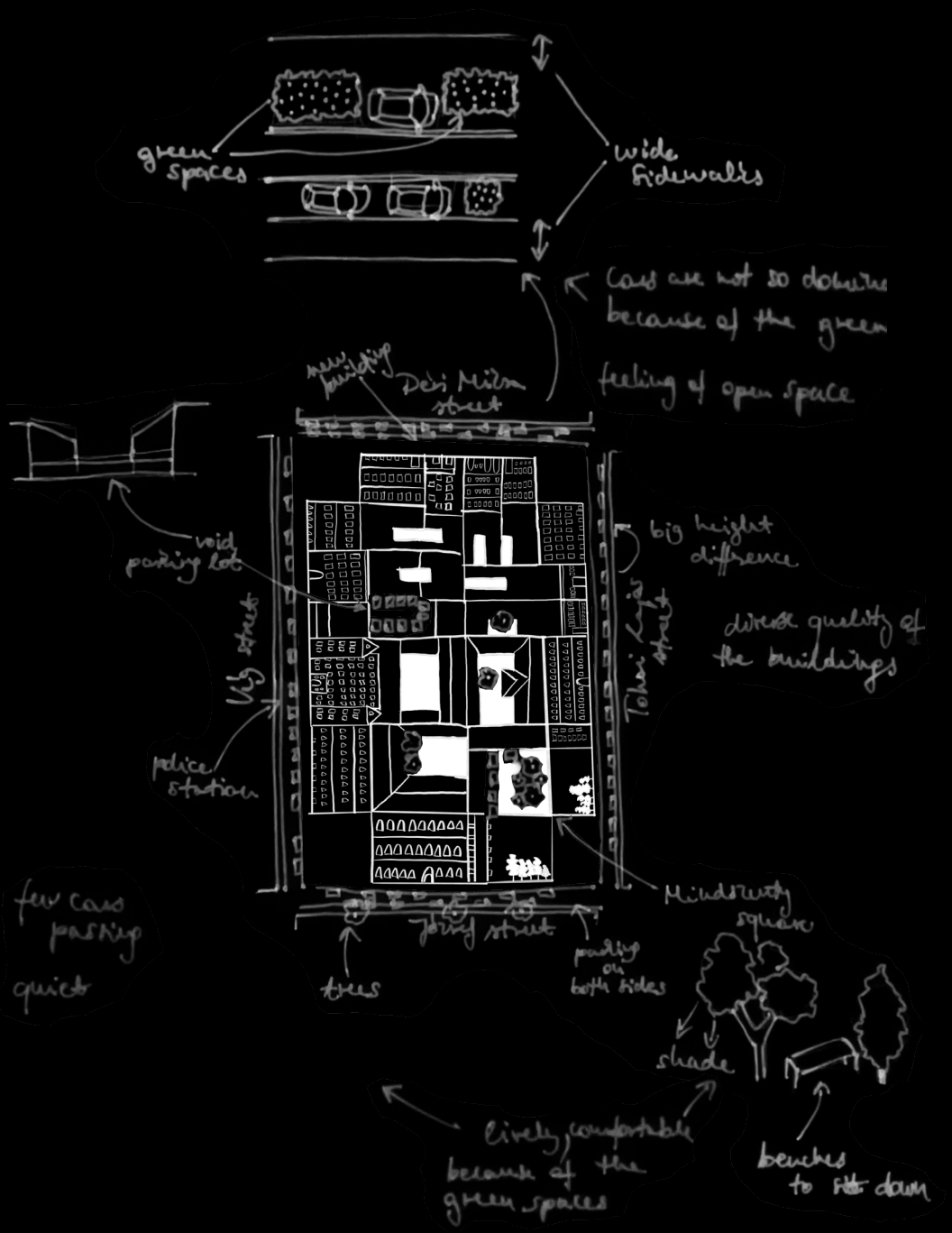


Figure 29.
VI, district


green spaces
wide sidewalks
Cars are not so dominant because of the green
feeling of open space
new building
Deli Milm street
void parking lot
big height difference
diverse quality of the buildings
Ugly street
Tokiwa Lajs street
police station
few cars passing
quiet
trees
parking on both sides
Mindaugo street
shade
lively, comfortable because of the green spaces
benches to sit down

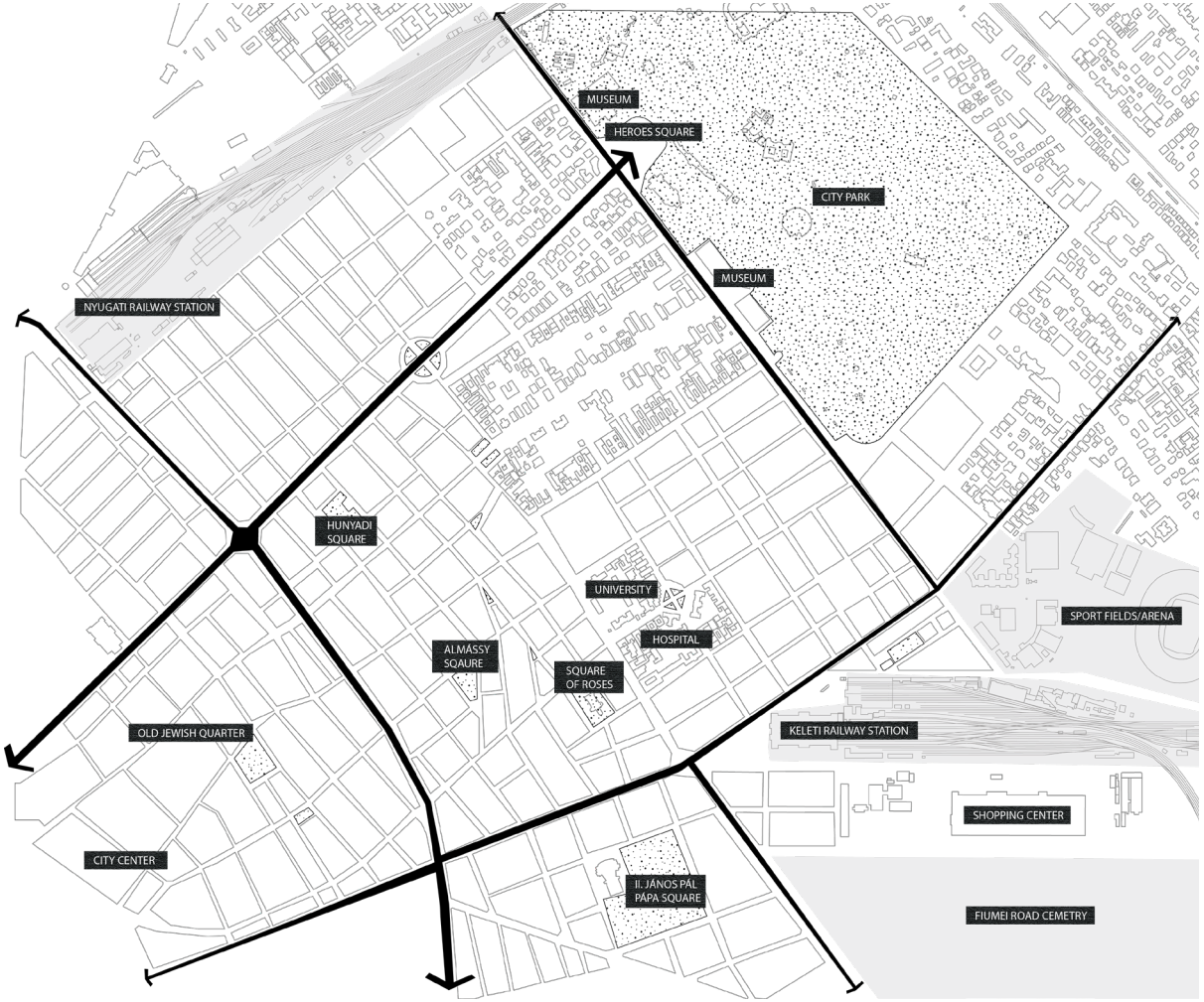
VIII. district

Area: 6,85 km²
Number of resident: 70 309
Number of residents above the age of 65 (2022.): 10944

Figure 30.
VI, district

Budapest's 8th District (Józsefváros) shows clear signs of care, with a mix of small green parks, open areas, and an eclectic architectural character. It has been a site for various urban regeneration efforts, ranging from tactical urbanism to large-scale rehabilitation. However, bigger projects often overlook their immediate context, focusing narrowly on the site itself.
The district benefits from a stronger local community and a more proactive municipality, which supports initiatives to limit car use and build social ties. This combination of experimentation and civic engagement positions Józsefváros as a more adaptive and socially responsive part of the city.

Conclusion area



Conclusions

After conducting fieldwork and analyzing the differences between the selected blocks, I found that the three districts share several similar spatial challenges, particularly when it comes to parking congestion and the lack of green, open spaces. These issues contribute to a sense of overcrowding and diminished quality of life. As a result, I have chosen the VII. district, particularly its outer areas, as the primary focus for this project.

The inner parts of the district (within the ring road) have a unique character, rooted in the historical Jewish quarter and now a bustling central party area. The area is marked by narrow, dense streets that give it a distinct atmosphere, but also create challenges in terms of circulation, accessibility, and urban heat. In contrast, the outer parts of the VII. district follow a more rigid geometrical structure with larger, more defined blocks, and a more formalized division between public and private spaces. This creates an environment where movement feels restricted, and there is a clear sense of separation between different zones.

The outer section of the district is predominantly residential, with a few small green parks scattered throughout, offering some relief but not enough to counterbalance the dense urban landscape. Key landmarks include a large hospital and a university, which add to the area's functional importance.

Despite the proximity of City Park, one of Budapest's largest green spaces, there is a noticeable lack of connection to this area. Residents do not easily access or feel the benefits of the park, especially in terms of cooling effects during the hot summer months. The area's urban design fails to establish meaningful pathways or connections that could help integrate the natural environment with the daily life of its residents.

The overall disconnect between these residential, institutional, and public spaces, combined with the lack of green infrastructure, is a significant issue for the district. The absence of thoughtful connections to nearby green spaces like City Park further highlights the need for interventions that could reintroduce nature into the urban fabric, reduce the dominance of cars, and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

4.7.3.Fieldwork based on eye-level observations

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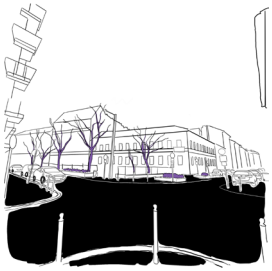

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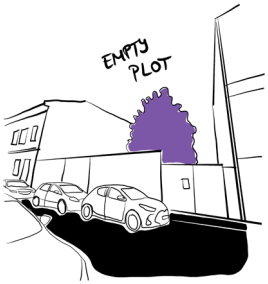

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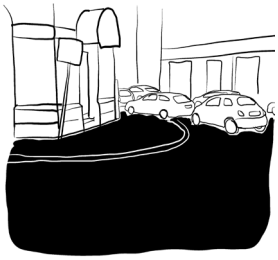

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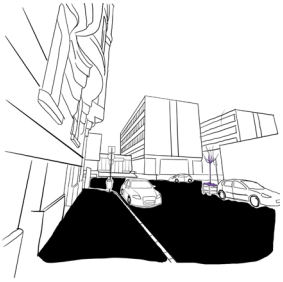

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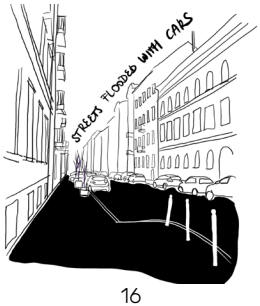


16

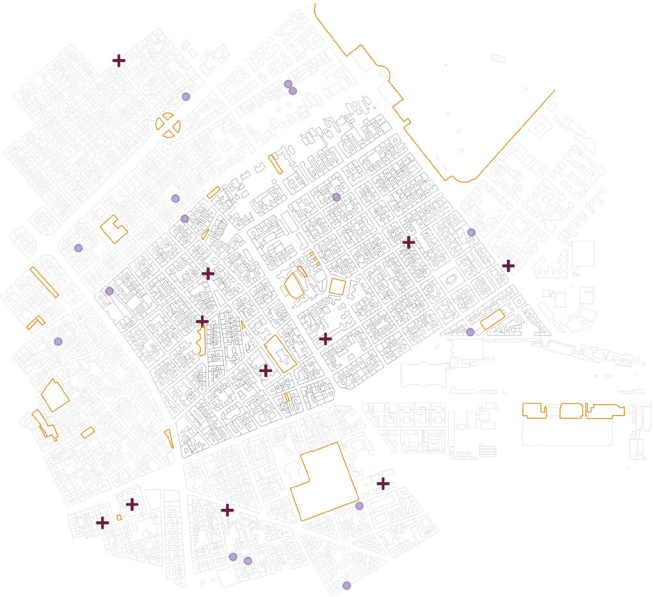
Learnings from fieldwork

To gain a deeper, eye-level understanding of the area, I conducted fieldwork focusing on both the infrastructural and intangible, soft aspects of the urban environment. As part of this process, I walked a route connecting all the existing green spaces in the neighborhood, observing the spatial conditions and identifying opportunities that might support caring interactions in everyday life.

From this fieldwork, it became clear that the area suffers from a lack of semi-public spaces—those that exist between fully public and fully private realms. Streets primarily serve as corridors of movement, with most people simply passing through: walking on sidewalks, parking, and entering buildings. There are very few places that encourage lingering or informal social activity. The atmosphere is often harsh, shaped by hard surfaces and the dominance of parked cars. Public seating is almost entirely absent, and there are no intentional “soft” zones that invite people to pause, gather, or engage with one another.

The only informal appropriation I observed was a small group of construction workers sitting on the pavement edge, a telling sign of the absence of basic street furniture and comfortable public amenities.

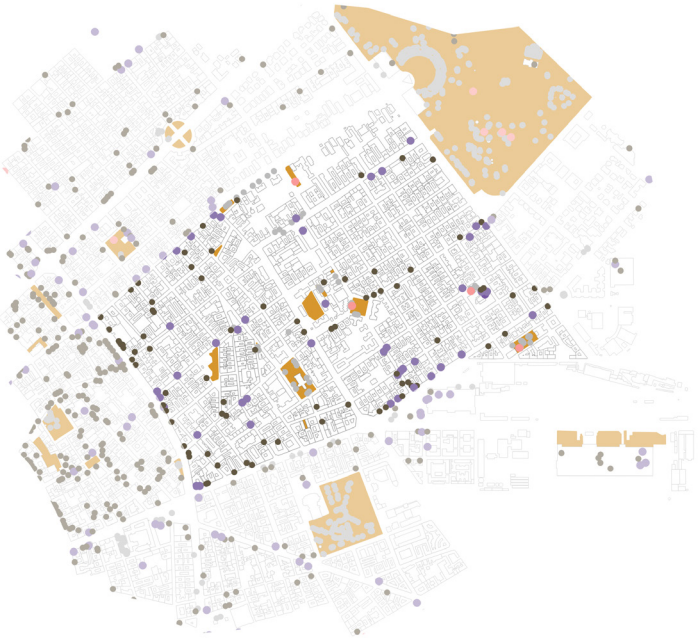
4.7.3.Formal and informal spaces of care



Formal spaces of care

park
elderly clubs, kitchens, community centers
hospital
0 250 500m

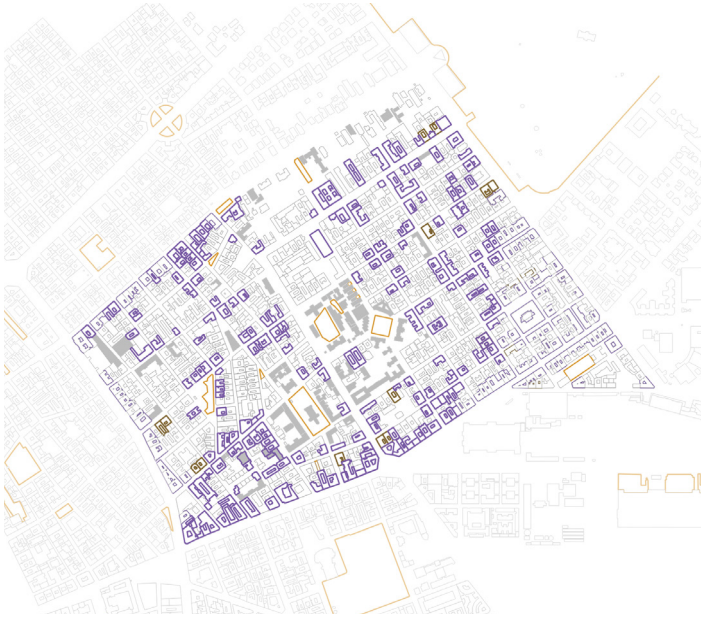
The neighbourhood is relatively well-equipped with healthcare facilities, including a large hospital complex with buildings distributed throughout the area, as well as several general practitioners. However, when it comes to communal care facilities, such as elderly homes or senior community centres, the neighbourhood is lacking. Only a few such spaces exist, which are insufficient to meet the needs of the area.



Spaces of everyday interaction

park
bar, restaurant, café,
shops
playground
bench
0 250 500m

Informal everyday interactions tend to concentrate around the central areas, where cafés, restaurants, and shops create more vibrant public life. However, accessible and free public open spaces are limited. The neighbourhood contains only a few small green areas and lacks adequate playgrounds, reducing opportunities for spontaneous or intergenerational encounters.

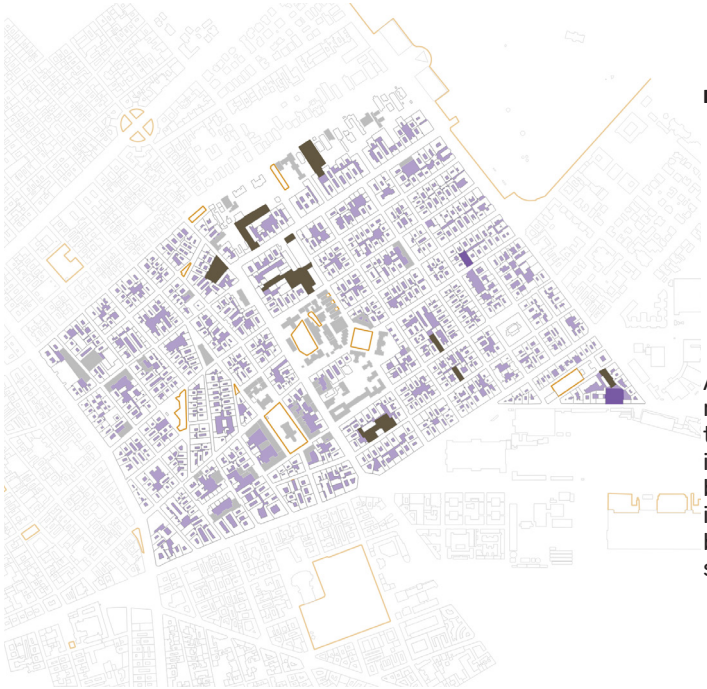


Ground floors

- parks
- whole building has special function
- active cellar
- active ground floor

0 500 1000m

Many buildings in the neighbourhood were originally designed with active ground floors intended for shops and services. Today, however, a significant number of these storefronts are closed or no longer in use. In addition, some buildings have basement levels that are or were used for commercial purposes.



Potential spaces

- parks
- whole building has special functions
- parking
- empty plot
- courtyard

0 500 1000m

Although the rigid architectural structure of most buildings limits spatial transformation, there are still some areas with potential for intervention. These include vacant lots left by demolished buildings, underutilized parking areas, and shared courtyards that could be reimagined as more inclusive or functional spaces.

Age of buildings

1800 - 1867
1868 - 1918
1918 - 1949
1960 - 1979
1980 -
no data

0 500 1000m

The majority of the buildings were constructed between 1868 and 1918, reflecting the architectural style typical of Budapest's inner districts. However, the building stock is more diverse than it first appears. A closer look at the map reveals that many structures were added in later decades, such as hospital buildings, university facilities, a large shopping centre, and various residential blocks.

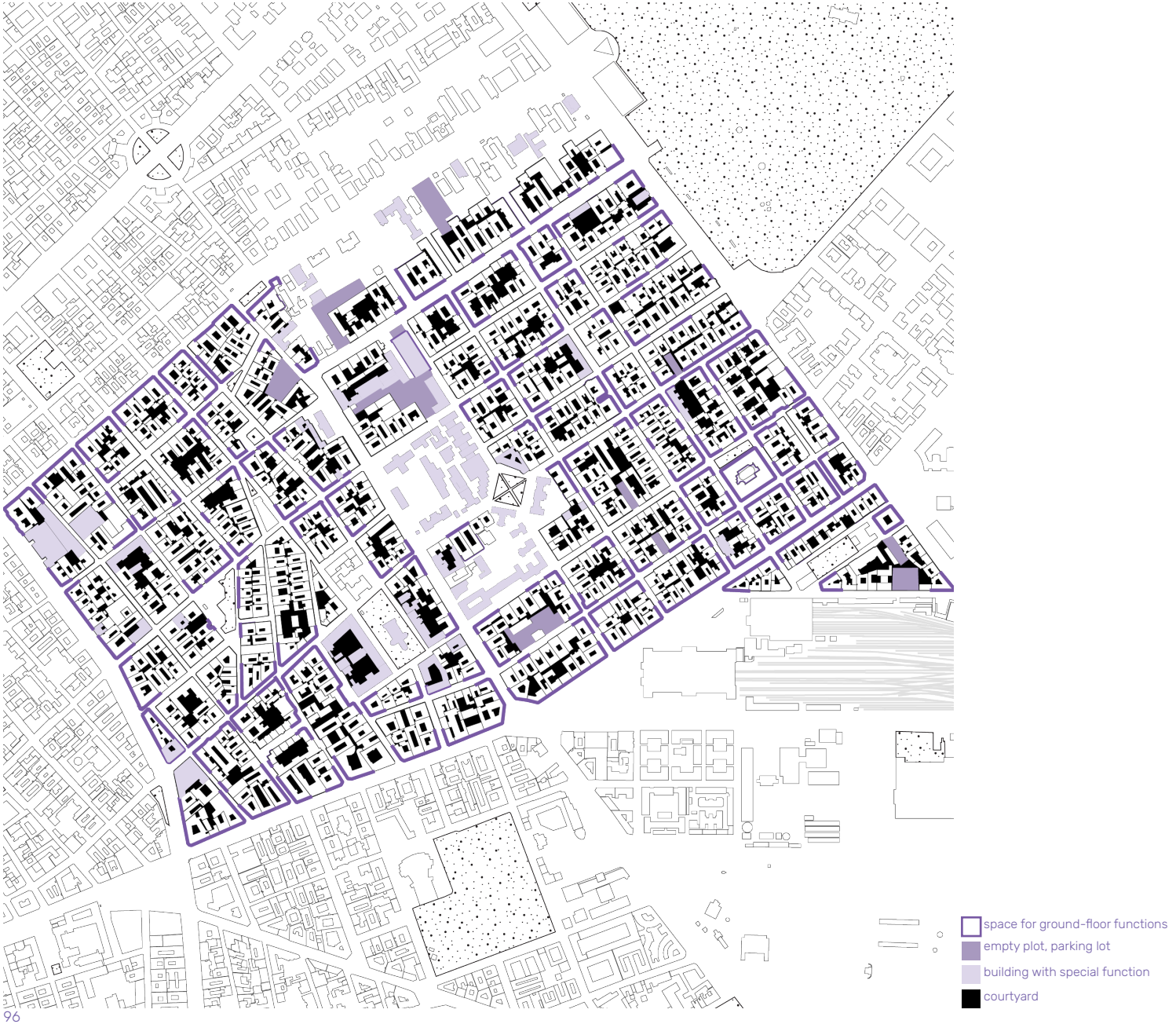
Protected buildings

heritage
protected

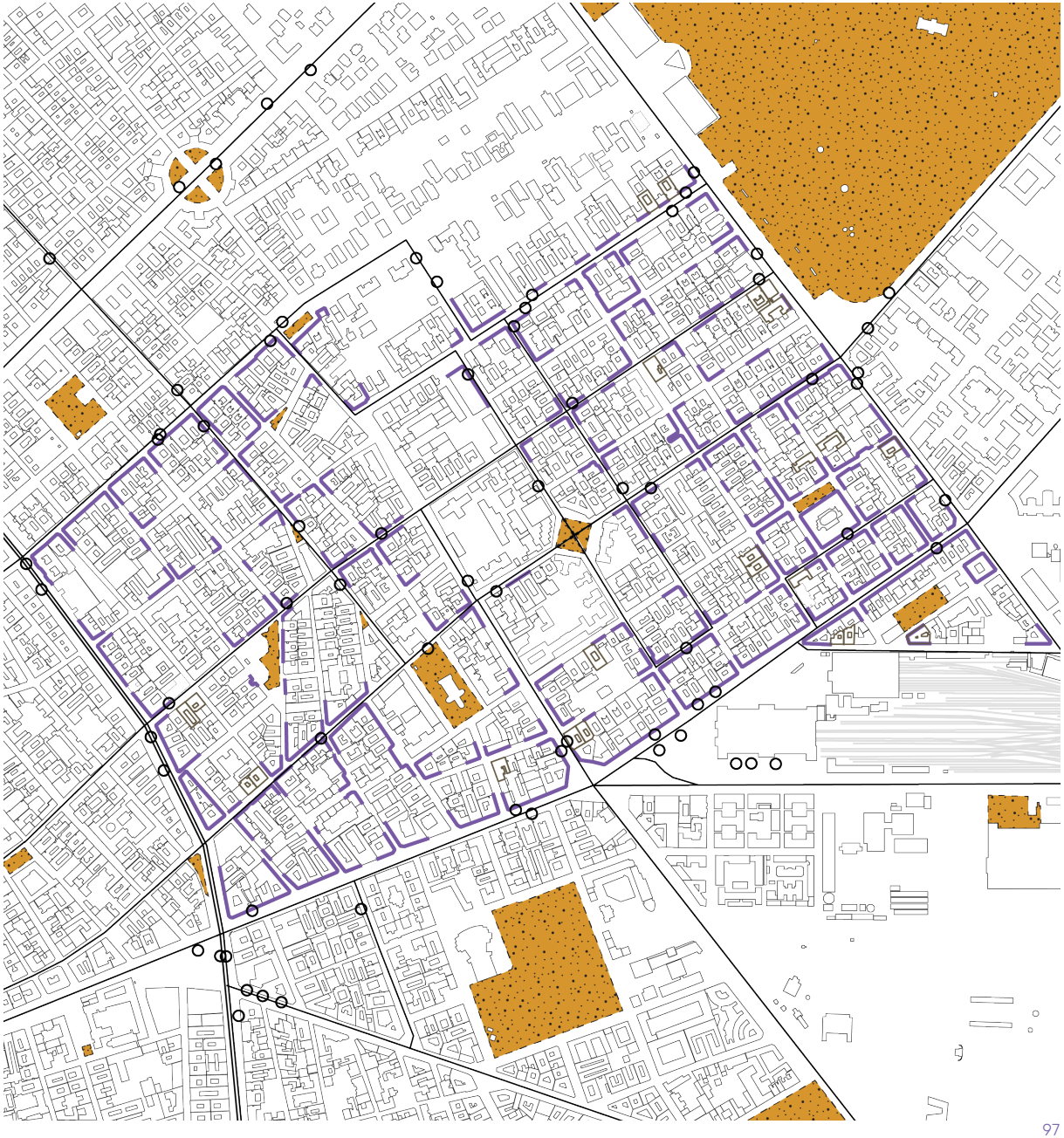
0 500 1000m

Several buildings in the neighbourhood, particularly those located along the ring road, have protected or heritage status. This means they are subject to strict preservation regulations, limiting the extent of renovations and prohibiting demolition.

potential spaces



public transport stops

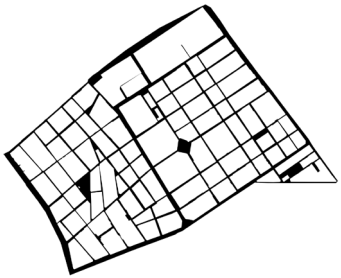


public transport stop
space for ground-floor functions
park

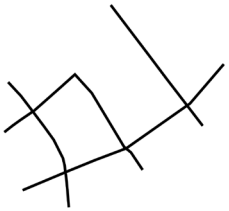
4.7.4. Public space analysis

private spaces
- buildings and
courtyards

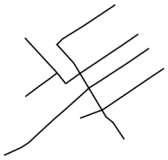
public spaces
-streets, squares,
green spaces



STREETS

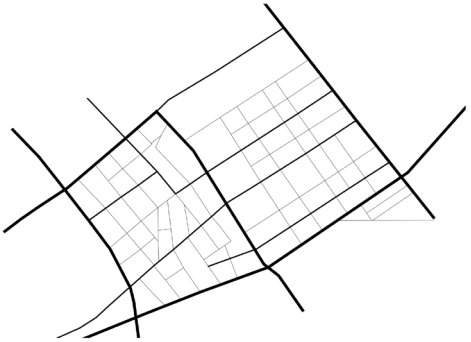


main street



mixed-use street

living street



Type of space:

place to stay/place for movement

Function:

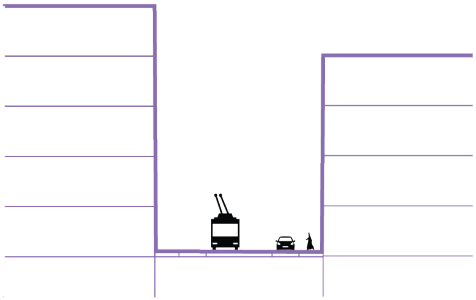
mobility, economic, social, residential

Qualities:

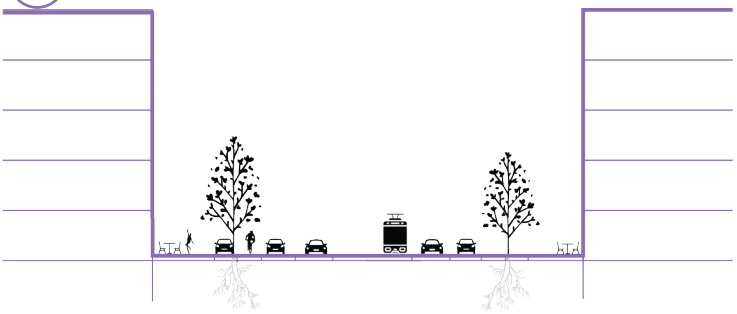
- active ground floor
- outside seating
- public transport
- green spaces/trees
- place to interact
- connectivity
- eyes on the street

Challenges:

- loud
- busy



Király street



Erzsébet boulevard

Main streets are the most dynamic areas in the neighbourhood, attracting a diverse mix of people due to their strong transportation connections, such as trams and trolleybuses. These streets serve multiple purposes, combining residential, economic, social, and mobility functions.

A main street is both a place for movement and a space to stay. Active ground floors, with cafés, shops, and other businesses, create a lively atmosphere where people can pause, interact, and engage with their surroundings. Outdoor seating areas strengthen the connection between buildings and the street, making the space more inviting. Green spaces and trees provide shade and improve the environment, while efficient public transport ensures accessibility. Strong connectivity links different parts of the city, and the constant presence of people- ”eyes on the street”, enhances safety.

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

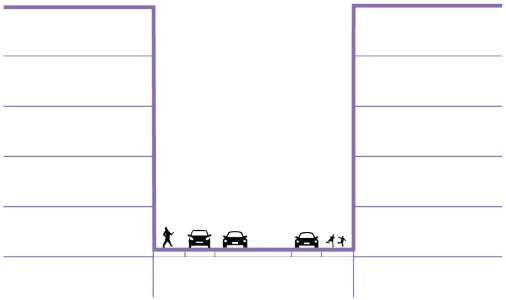
mobility, economic, residential

Qualities:

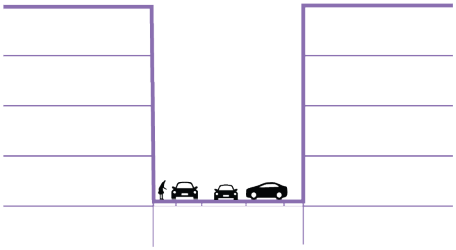
- public transport
- connectivity
- many ground floor function
- eyes on the street

Challenges:

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



István street



Wesselényi street

A mixed-use street is designed primarily for movement but also incorporates residential, economic, and mobility functions. It serves as a key connection within the city, ensuring accessibility through public transport and strong connectivity. The presence of various ground-floor businesses contributes to activity, while constant movement provides “eyes on the street,” enhancing safety.

However, mixed-use streets often face challenges. An excess of parked cars can dominate the space, limiting pedestrian areas and reducing accessibility. The lack of green spaces and outdoor seating makes the environment less inviting, and without dedicated places for interaction, the street can feel purely functional rather than social.

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

residential

Qualities:

quiet

Challenges:

no outside seating

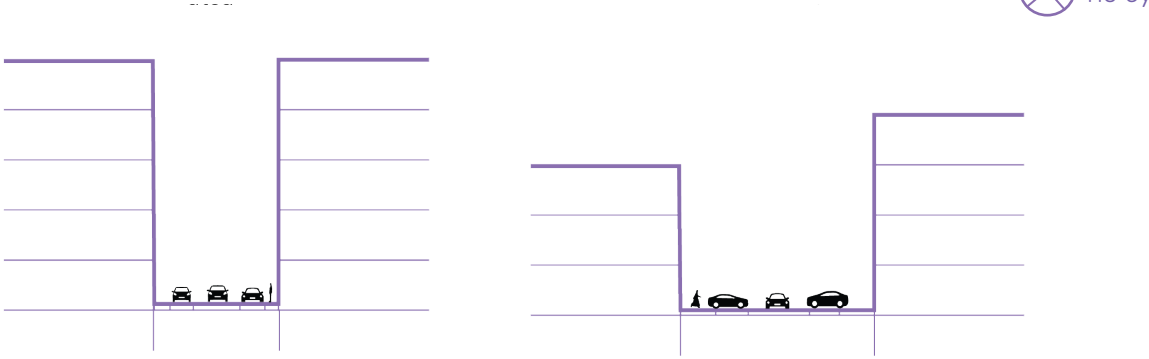
no places to interact

no public transportation

no ground function

parking cars

no eyes on the street



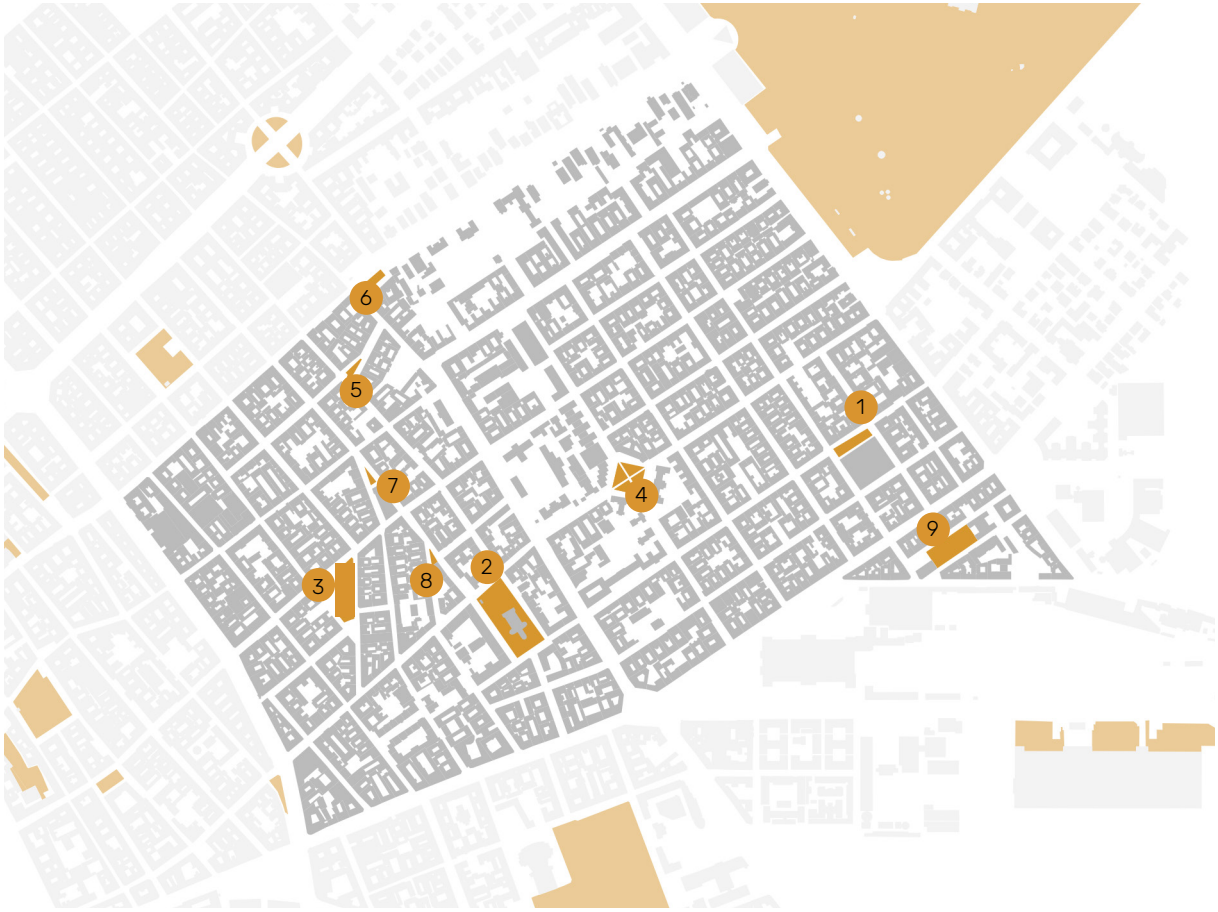
Szinva street

Vörösmarty street

Living streets are primarily residential spaces designed for movement, but they often feel empty and dominated by parked cars. While they are quiet, this lack of activity can make them uninviting and disconnected from the rest of the city.

These streets face several challenges. The absence of public transportation limits mobility, especially for those without private vehicles.

With no active ground-floor functions like communal spaces or cafés, there are few opportunities for interaction. The lack of outdoor seating and shared public spaces further reduces social engagement. Parked cars often flood the area, and with few people outside, there are no “eyes on the street,” which can affect both safety and the sense of community.


6
5
7
4
1
9
3
8
2

1 GARAY SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

square in front of a shopping center

Qualities:

- green space
- small playground
- active ground functions around

Challenges:

- fenced spaces
- only a few one-person benches
- no free toilet
- the trees don't offer enough shade

2 RÓZSÁK SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement

Function:

square around the church

Qualities:

- green space
- benches

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours
- no open toilet

3 ALMÁSSY SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park with playground and dog park

Qualities:

- green space with trees offering shade
- benches and tables
- playground
- place for different age groups
- spot to collect compost
- water tap

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours
- no open toilet

4 BETHLEN GÁBOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement,place to stay

Function:

square at an intersection

Qualities:

- green space
- playground
- active ground functions around

Challenges:

- fenced spaces
- only a few one-person benches
- no open toilet

5 SZENES HANNA SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

small park

Qualities:

- green space, with trees providing shade
- benches

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours

6 LÖVÖLDE SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park

Qualities:

- green space, with trees providing shade
- many benches

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours

7 HEVESI SÁNDOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place for movement, place to stay

Function:

square in front of the theater

Qualities:

- green space

Challenges:

- no seating

8 IZABELLA - ALSÓ ERDŐSOR SQUARE

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

square in an inter-section

Qualities:

- green space
- benches

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours

9 SZÁZHÁZ PARK

Type of space:

place to stay

Function:

park with playground

Qualities:

- green space
- benches
- playground

Challenges:

- fenced with opening hours

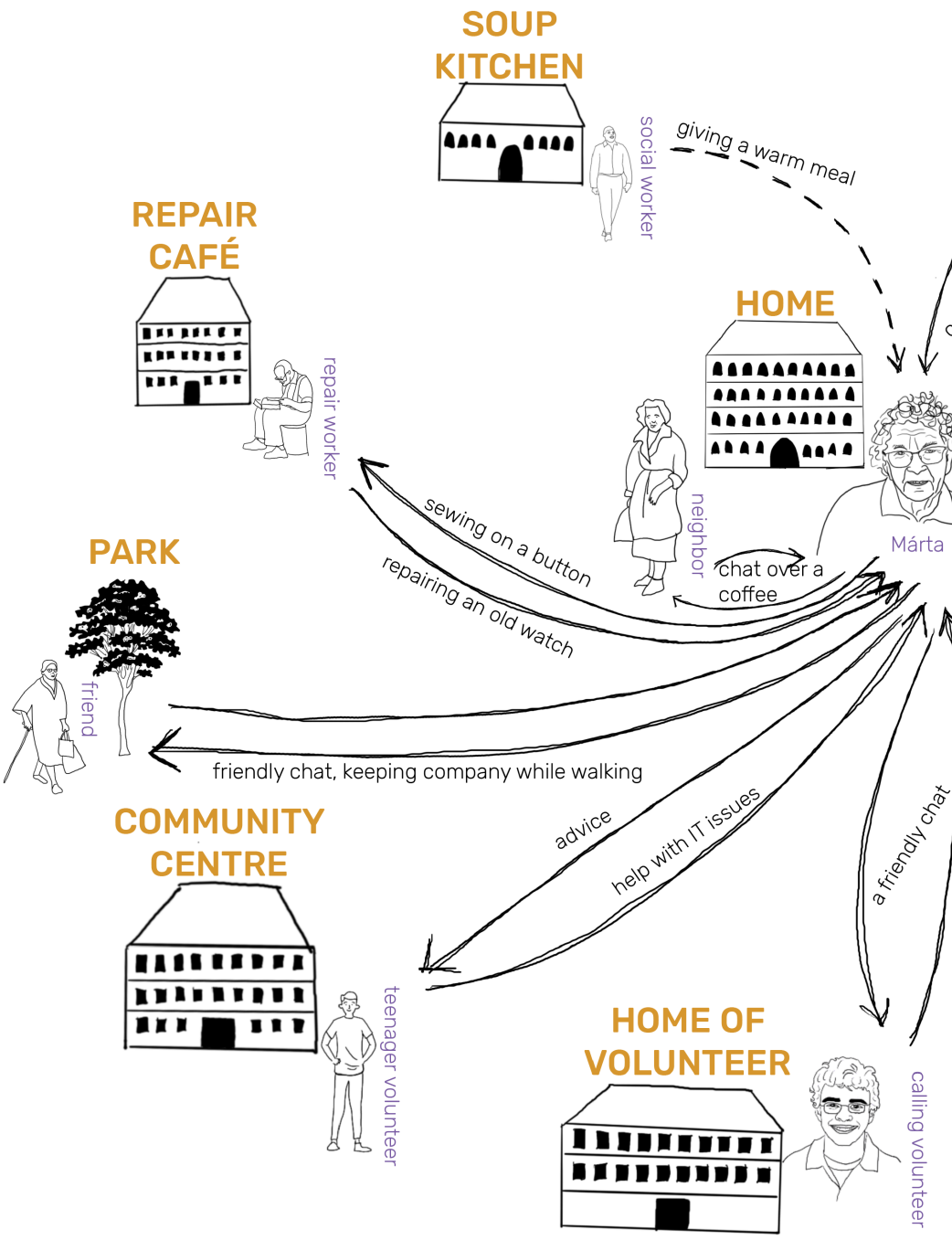
Learnings from the public space analysis

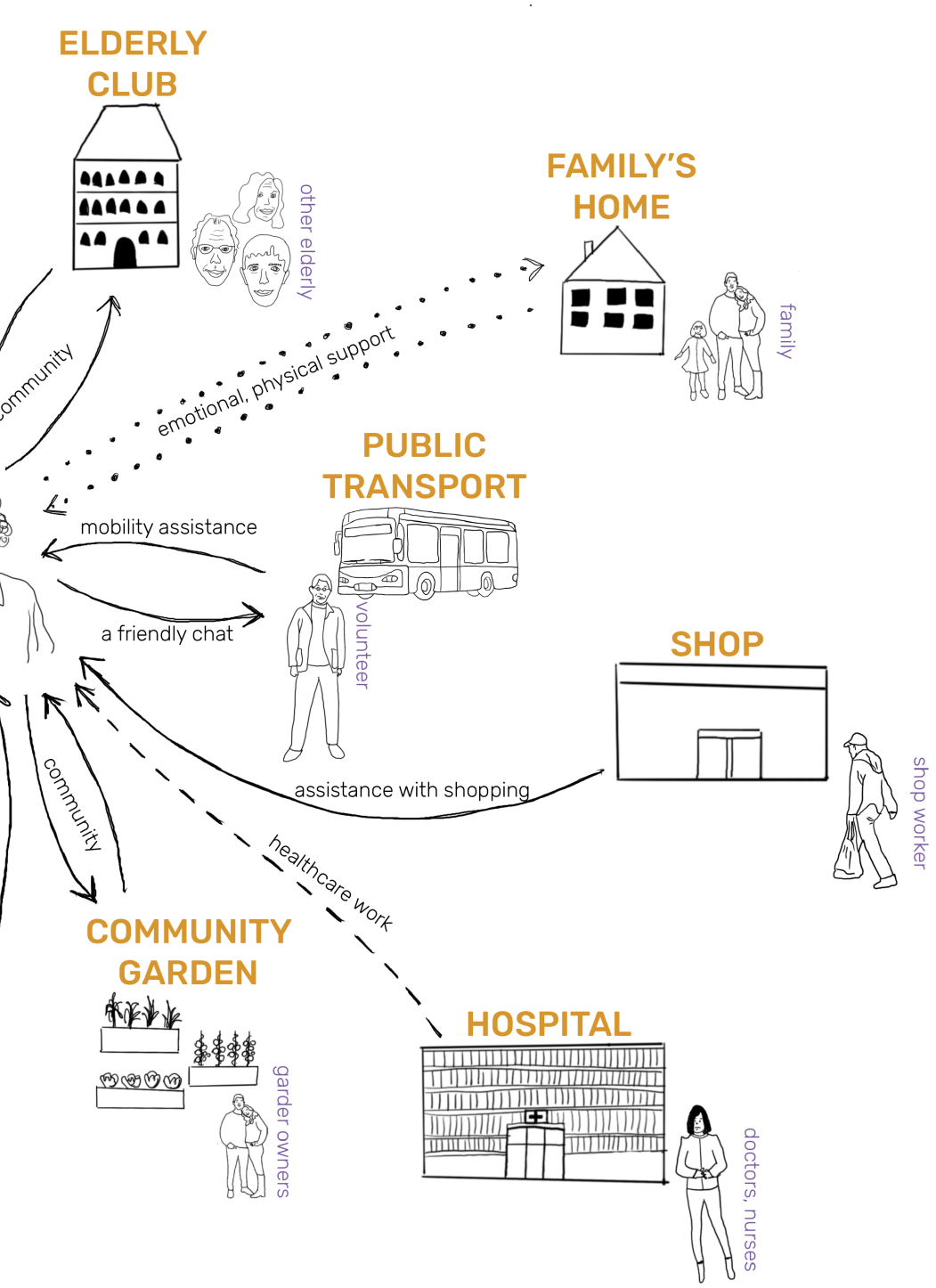
The design and layout of public spaces play a crucial role in shaping how people interact with them. They influence the types of behaviors that emerge—whether people feel welcome to claim the space or whether they feel they must stay distant. Thus, the essence of a public space is not solely determined by its layout or functions, but also by the types of interactions it fosters. The spatial conditions dictate which activities are possible and how people engage with the space.

Upon reviewing previous analyses, I noticed the absence of transitional spaces between public and private areas. Additionally, many public spaces lack a true sense of "publicness." For instance, most green spaces are fenced off and have restricted hours, limiting who can access them and how they are used. Often, seating options are sparse and not designed with homeless individuals in mind. Moreover, these spaces typically serve a single function, without engaging with their surrounding environment or providing amenities that would support a diverse range of users, such as spaces for various age groups, community services, or even basic facilities like toilets.

As a result, these spatial conditions create a feeling of alienation. People may feel that they don't belong in these spaces or that they are not entitled to use them, leading to a sense of exclusion. Without opportunities to develop an attachment to the space, certain groups are often left out of the social life of the area.

CHAPTER 5.
PROPOSING


SOUP KITCHEN
social worker
giving a warm meal
REPAIR CAFÉ
repair worker
HOME
Márta
neighbor
sewing on a button
repairing an old watch
chat over a coffee
PARK
friend
friendly chat, keeping company while walking
COMMUNITY CENTRE
teenager volunteer
advice
help with IT issues
a friendly chat
HOME OF VOLUNTEER
calling volunteer


ELDERLY CLUB
other elderly
FAMILY'S HOME
family
emotional, physical support
PUBLIC TRANSPORT
mobility assistance
a friendly chat
volunteer
SHOP
shop worker
assistance with shopping
community
community
healthcare work
COMMUNITY GARDEN
garder owners
HOSPITAL
doctors, nurses

5.1.Design exploration

Care as a tool to reshape boundaries

The theories and various analyses have highlighted the spatial and social injustices faced by the elderly in Budapest's District VII. These challenges often lead to their isolation and exclusion from public life. This chapter explores potential spatial interventions aimed at fostering a more just and inclusive environment for the elderly, building on insights from the previous chapters, that play an important part:

- Promoting the ability to age in place by designing inclusive environments that enable communities to support each other's abilities while nurturing their independence.

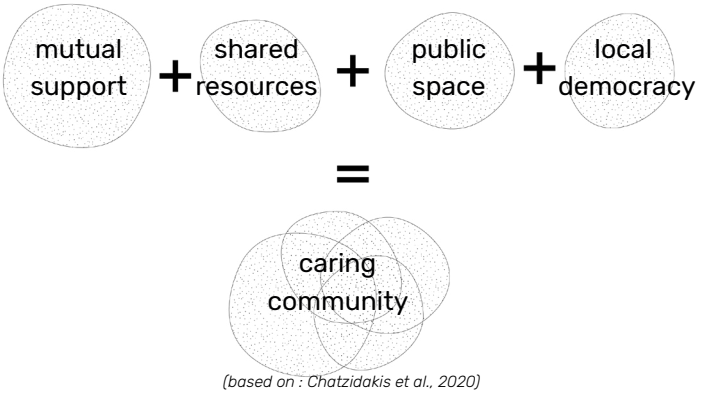
- Creating spatial conditions where older adults not only feel a sense of ownership over their urban surroundings but are also empowered to access, use, and actively shape public spaces. These environments should be co-produced, ensuring that their voices are heard and valued.

- Providing equal access to healthy, inclusive environments where resources are distributed fairly and equitably.

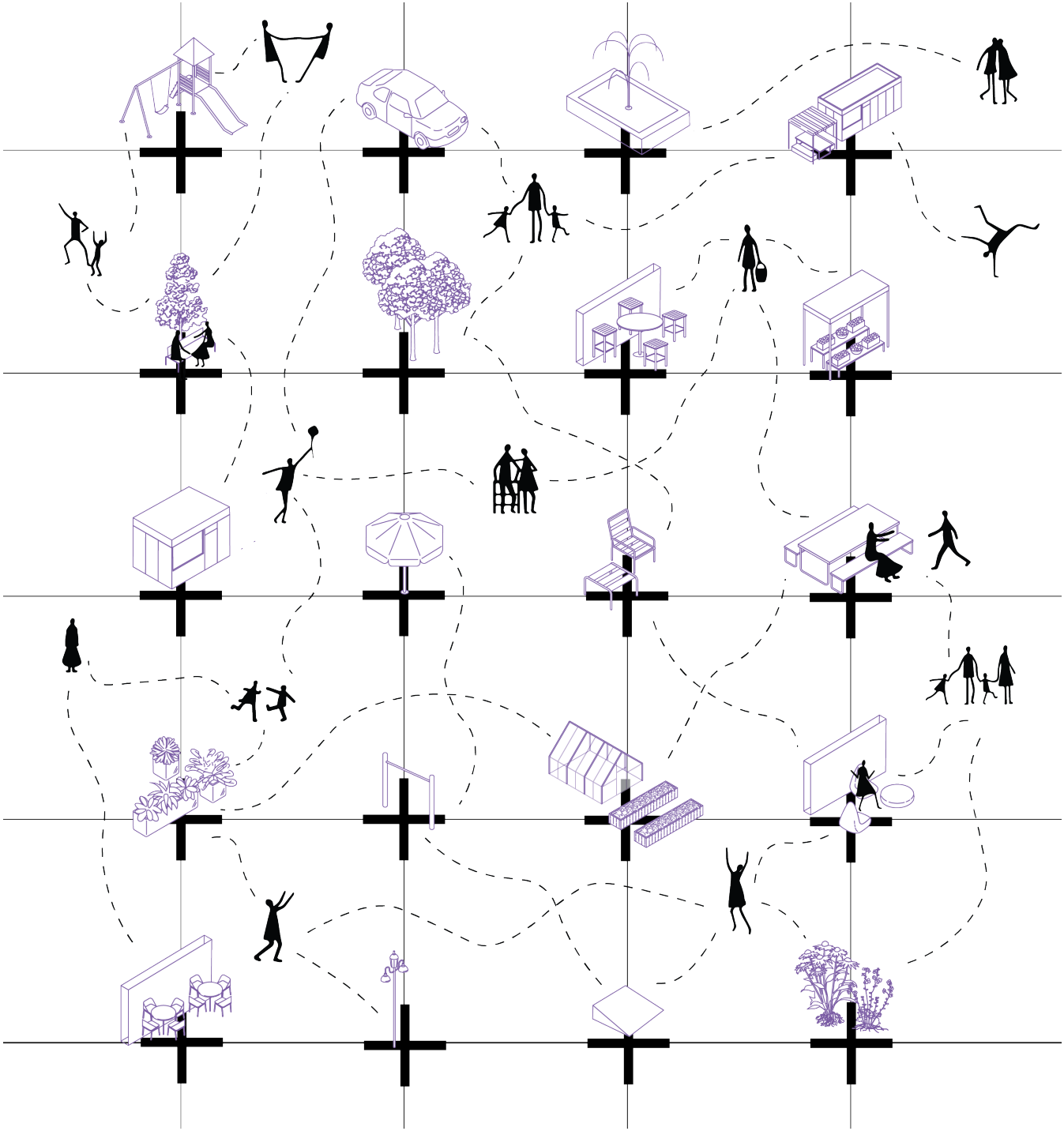
- Promoting care as an integral part of everyday life, recognizing it not as a specialized act, but as a continuous, shared practice that shapes how people relate to one another in daily interactions.

Achieving these goals requires reimagining care as a public, regenerative force. No longer hidden away in private homes and institutions, care must begin to spread into public spaces, into our streets, parks, and squares, enabling informal acts of support and fostering relationships where community members look out for one another. This shift calls for a rethinking of boundaries and a reorganization of shared spaces and infrastructures. Opening up and sharing environments creates new possibilities for connection and mutual support, gradually transforming the city into a space of collective care.

Just as in the early days, when these buildings were constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries, people from diverse backgrounds moved in together from across the country, forming close-knit communities that felt like small villages on each plot. The aim of the design is to revive that atmosphere, not only where neighbours know each other, but where a deeper sense of care and connection is fostered among them.



(based on : Chatzidakis et al., 2020)



5.2.Pattern language

Building on insights from literature, fieldwork, and spatial analysis, a Pattern language and Pattern Book were created, inspired by Christopher Alexander's seminal work (1978). These patterns encapsulate the key learnings, organized into distinct categories that reflect different scales and thematic focuses. Each pattern includes a title, a brief explanation, the thoretical foundation, and guidance for practical implementation. The patterns are inherently interrelated, forming a cohesive Pattern field, where each one connects and interacts with the others, contributing to the overall vision of the space.

These patterns are grouped into four main categories, though many overlap due to the interdependent nature of the elements:

- Social connectivity
- Climate adaptation
- Urban infrastructure
- Agency

The first category is focused on fostering social connectivity, emphasizing the creation of spaces that encourage interaction, engagement, and the development of caring relationships. These patterns aim to facilitate spatial transformations that empower individuals and communities, encouraging the cultivation of relationships built on mutual support and care.

The second category focuses on climate adaptation, proposing not just green spaces, but small, strategic interventions within urban spaces that mitigate the effects of extreme climate. These patterns consider the environmental aspects of urban life, integrating green spaces and other interventions that simultaneously serve ecological functions and create caring spaces for the community to gather and interact. These patterns recognize the importance of climate resilience while promoting wellbeing and communal care.

The third category delves into urban infrastructure, focusing on spatial transformations that reshape the boundaries of public spaces, and challenge the status quo of the existing urban fabric. These patterns seek to reimagine how spaces are used and how they can be restructured to better serve the public.

Finally, the Patterns of Agency focus less on spatial qualities and more on the interpersonal and collective dynamics that the other patterns facilitate. These patterns explore how spatial transformations can catalyze a shift in how individuals and communities care for one another, promoting a collective sense of responsibility and empowerment. They address how to build a caring system that exists not just within the space itself but also among the people who inhabit it, fostering agency, collaboration, and collective action.

To implement the patterns, the pattern groups are divided into two sets: the first three establish enabling spatial infrastructure, which means physical interventions that create the conditions for social use, primarily through top-down approaches. The fourth category provides supporting social infrastructure, which sustains and reinforces the use and effectiveness of the spatial framework through community-driven initiatives.
Through this reciprocal relationship, spatial and social systems evolve together, enabling adaptive, long-term change grounded in context.

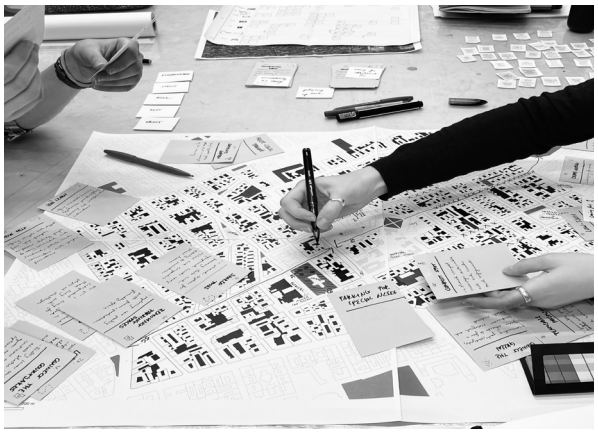
Pattern workshop

As part of developing the patterns, we organized a small workshop with fellow students, applying the same methodology to test each other's patterns. This allowed us to explore how others might implement them and evaluate their clarity and usability. It was reassuring to see that the patterns were understandable and usable by others. Additionally, the process was valuable for identifying new patterns that emerged through the collaborative testing.

1. Social connectivity
2.Climate adaptation —— **enabling spatial infrastructure**
3.Urban infrastructure

4.Agency ———— **supporting social infrastructure**

The patterns do not need to be applied universally in every case, rather, they function as a flexible guide for implementing targeted interventions. These patterns offer a framework for taking gradual steps toward positive change, helping to shape spaces in the right direction. Instead of providing rigid solutions, they encourage thoughtful and adaptable actions that can be tailored to the specific context, needs, and goals of each space or community.



Patterns by theme

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 modification

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 companions

A2. Let's learn

A3. Tech help

A4. Volunteering part-time

A5. Multigenerational 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. Intergenerational housing

A14. Let's move in together

A15. Open / close

Temporal evolution of space:

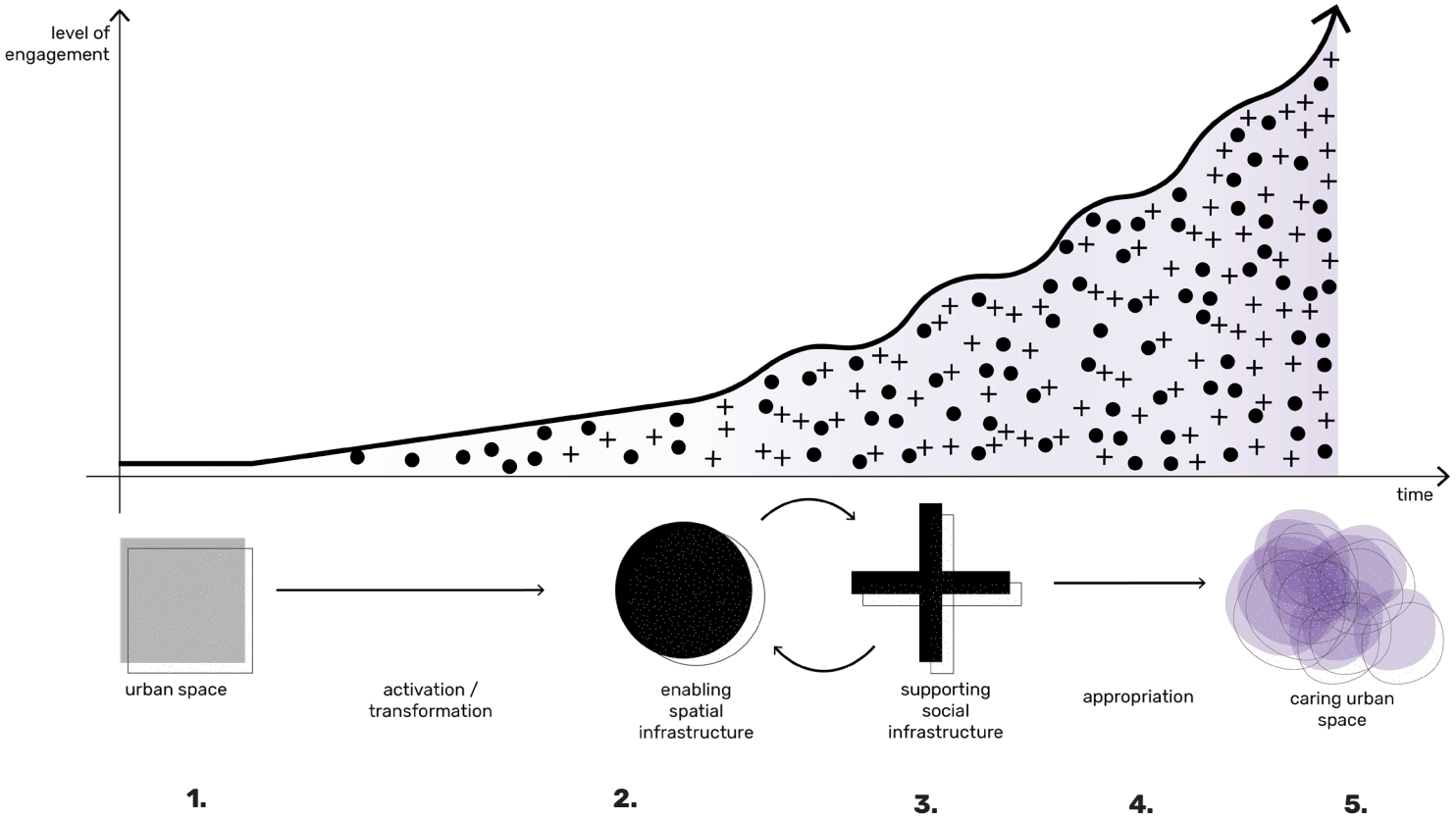


Figure 31.
Temporal evolution of space

Stakeholders:

MU	municipality	subsidies, policies, permits, infrastructure, funding
NGO	NGOs	mediation, programming, fundings
LC	local communities	networks, knowledge, programming, maintenance, management
PO	property owners	providing access, temporary leases
R	residents	appropriation, programming, maintenance
V	(paid) volunteers	maintenance, management

Phase	Description	Primary stakeholders
1.	Overlooked spaces are identified and reimagined as opportunities	MU, PO, NGO
2.	Activation or transformation begins, creating enabling spatial infrastructures	MU, PO,
3.	Based on the enabling spatial infrastructures, supporting social infrastructures begin to grow	NGO, LC, RE, V
4.	With time, appropriation occurs , and communities begin to use, adapt, and co-shape the space based on everyday needs	NGO, LC, RE, V
5.	Eventually, the space becomes a self-managed, collectively held site of care, where care practices spill over boundaries and become part of everyday life, relationships, and routines, always negotiated, evolving,	NGO, LC, RE, V

Patterns through scales

To gain a clearer understanding of the relationships between patterns, a pattern field was developed. This field maps the patterns according to three key dimensions: the scale of intervention (ranging from object-level to multi-scalar patterns), the temporal aspect of implementation (whether they can be applied now or in the future), and the level of abstraction (from abstract to concrete). The field reveals that the patterns operate across multiple scales, from small, localized interventions to broader, systemic strategies. It also shows that a significant number of the patterns are immediately applicable, highlighting their practical potential for generating change within urban space. At the same time, the inclusion of more abstract or long-term patterns ensures that the pattern language not only addresses current needs but also supports strategic, future-oriented thinking.

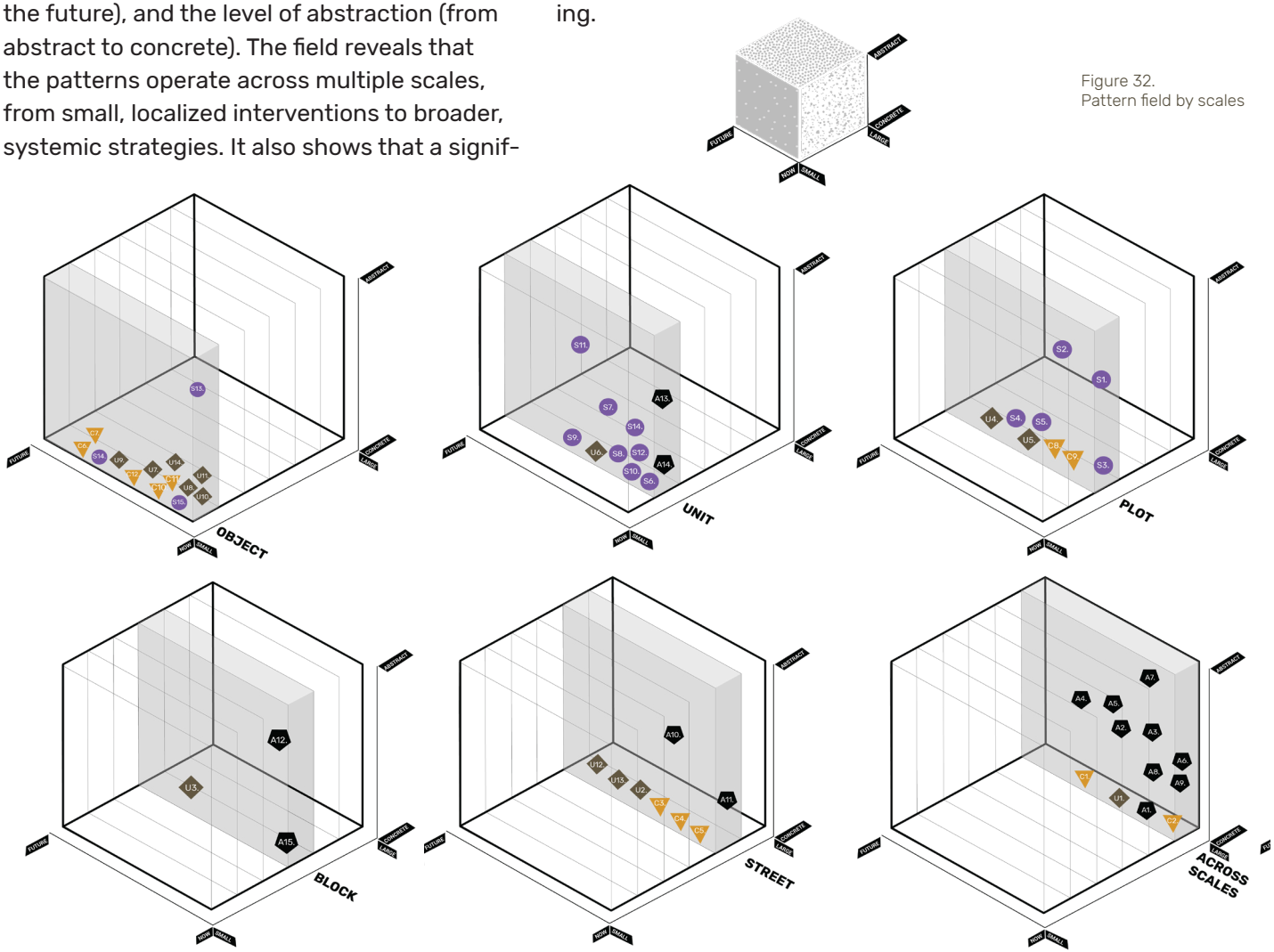


Figure 32.
Pattern field by scales

Pattern field

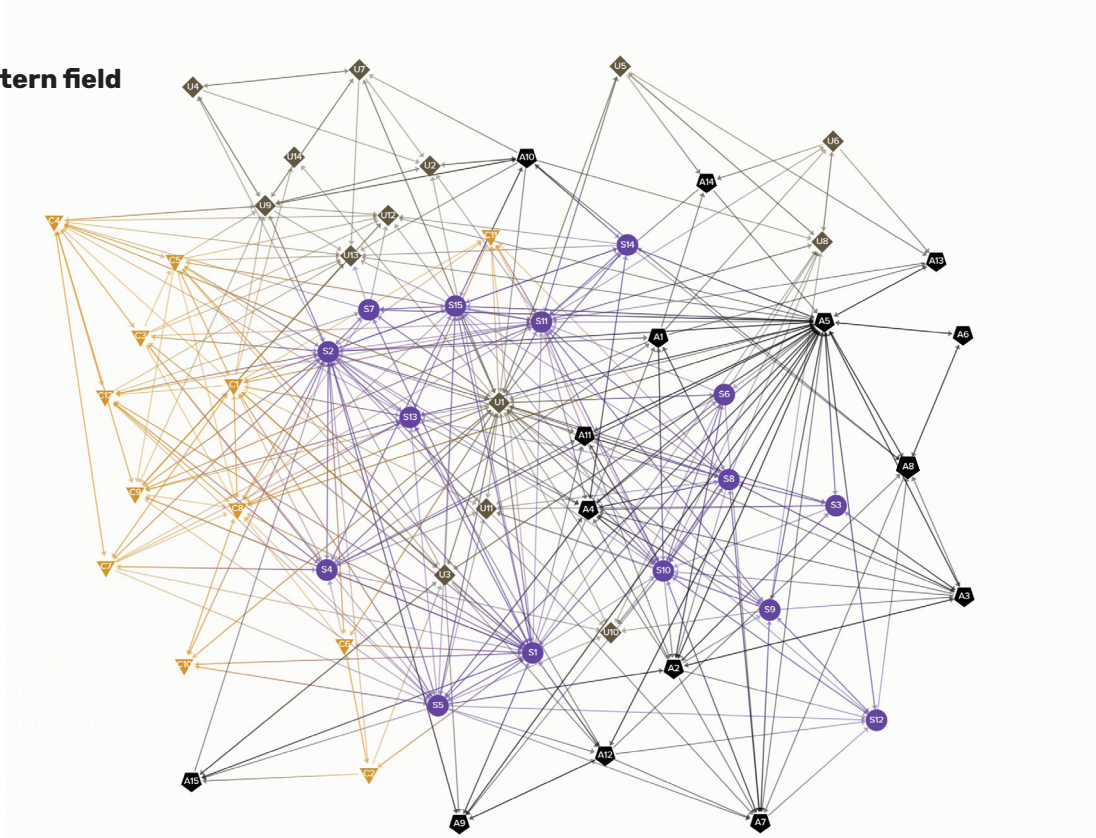


Figure 33.
Pattern field showing connections

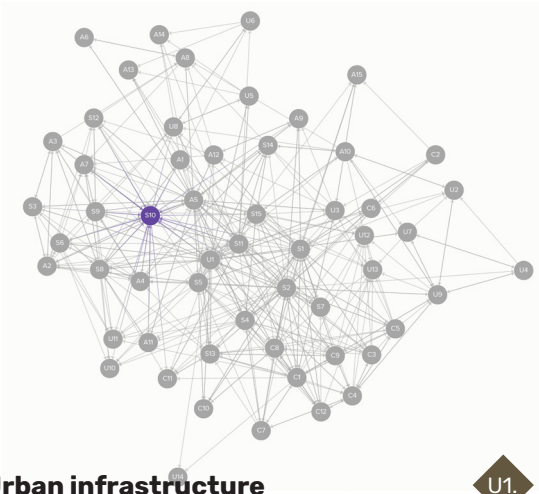
To better understand the structure and implications of the developed pattern language, a visualization was created to illustrate the interconnectedness of all identified patterns. This network mapping allowed for the identification of patterns with the highest number of connections, those that are most central within the system.

The most connected patterns function as key elements within the urban system, as they influence and support the implementation of many other patterns. Their central role suggests that focusing on these can lead to broader, system-wide improvements. These patterns also reflect essential needs and principles for a functional and inclusive urban environment. In addition, they serve as useful reference points in the design process, helping to guide decision-making and prioritize actions based on their wider impact.

To further analyze this structure, one highly connected pattern was selected from each of the four thematic categories. These selected patterns not only embody the core values and concerns of their respective domains, but also highlight the interdependence across categories. The patterns do not function in isolation but gain meaning and effectiveness when considered in relation to one another.

Conclusions from the pattern field

Social connectivity

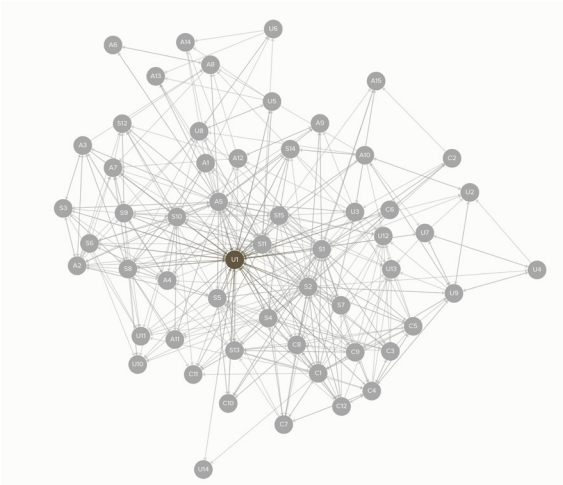


S10. Community hub

From the Social connectivity category, the Community hub pattern emerged as the most interconnected. Its strength lies in offering a free, accessible space where diverse user groups and activities can overlap, enabling intergenerational interaction and the formation of informal support networks. Acting as a physical and social anchor in the neighborhood, it fosters community cohesion and inclusive participation. This type of space is especially valuable for older adults and others who may face barriers to engagement, as it supports both everyday presence in public life and the development of strong social ties through planned and spontaneous interactions.

- accessibility
- participation
- free-to-use spaces
- social inclusion
- multigenerational spaces

Urban infrastructure

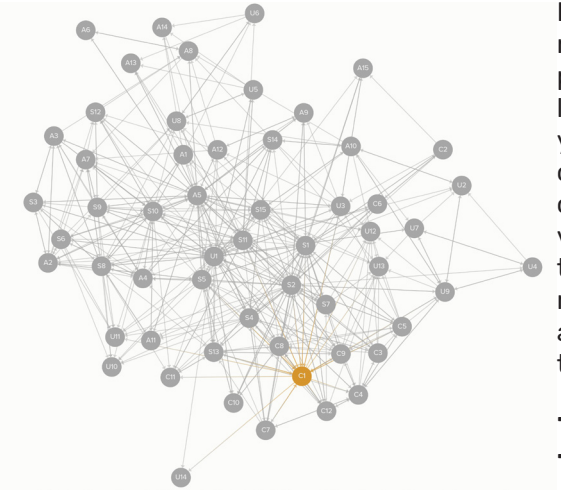


U1. A short walk away

In the Urban infrastructure category, the A Short Walk Away pattern emerged as the most interconnected. This reflects its critical role in creating accessible environments where essential services, social functions, amenities, and green spaces are within easy walking distance, particularly for elderly. Proximity is a key factor in enabling aging in place, as it allows older residents to maintain independence, participate in community life, and access daily needs without reliance on private transport. This pattern not only supports physical accessibility, but also reinforces social inclusion and health by encouraging active mobility and regular interaction with the surrounding environment.

- proximity
- accessibility
- participation
- healthy environment

Climate adaptation

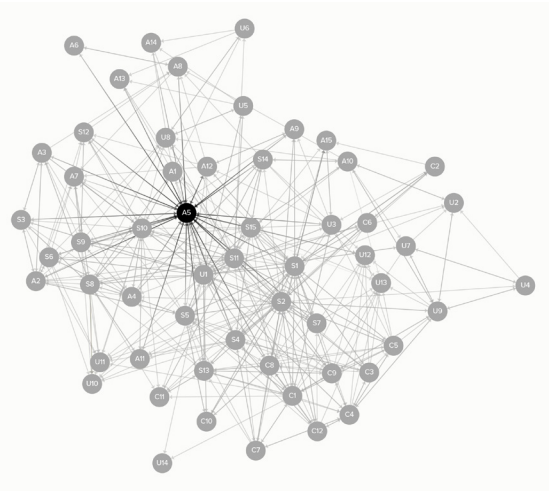


C1. Connect the green

In the Climate adaptation category, the most connected pattern was Connect the Green. This pattern plays a central role in establishing continuous ecological networks that support urban biodiversity. Beyond ecological benefits, connected green spaces are crucial for urban heat mitigation, offering shade and cooler microclimates that are especially important for vulnerable populations such as the elderly. In addition, these green corridors contribute to a healthier, more comfortable environment, supporting physical activity, mental well-being, and safe, pleasant access to nature within the urban context.

- accessibility
- free-to-use spaces
- climate resilience
- healthy environment

Agency



A5. Multigenerational mingle

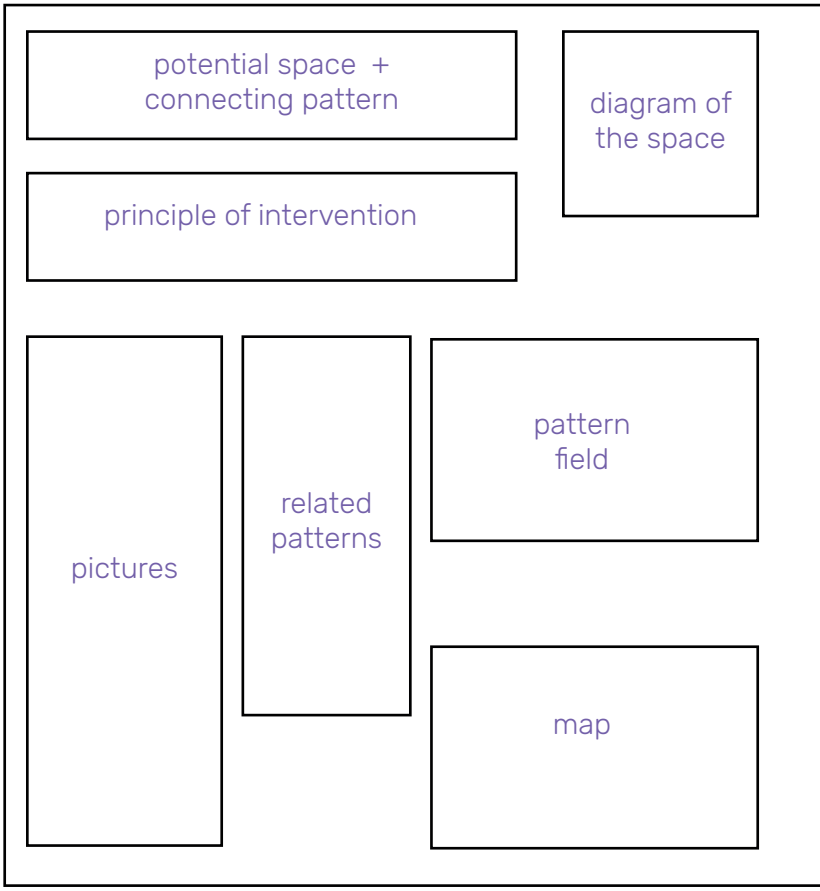
In the category of Agency, the most connected pattern was Multigenerational Mingle. This pattern highlights the value of designing spaces that encourage interaction between different age groups, fostering opportunities for informal connection and mutual support. The more such spaces exist, the greater the likelihood of everyday encounters between generations, promoting empathy, reducing stereotypes, and helping to bridge the generational gap. These interactions contribute to more inclusive, supportive, and socially resilient communities.

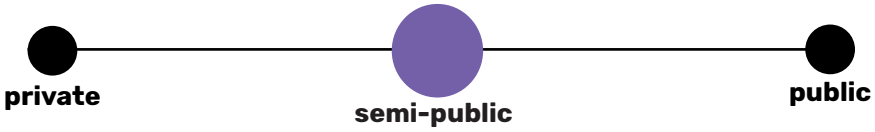
- participation
- social inclusion
- multigenerational spaces

5.3.Spatial cataloge of spaces

Although the neighbourhood of Budapest's VII. district is characterized by a rigid, geometric block structure with limited open spaces, the spatial analysis uncovered several areas with considerable potential for transformation.

By developing a categorization system to explore these potentials, I was able to identify specific rules for their transformation, as well as the optimal combinations of patterns to address these opportunities. This approach created a clear link between the patterns derived from the Pattern language and the design exploration, allowing for a practical and context-sensitive application of the pattern system.



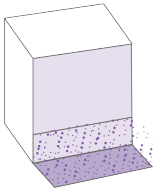


courtyards
empty ground floors
empty plots
parking lots

design explorations
of the space

Ground-floors

Connected pattern: S11. Activate the ground floors

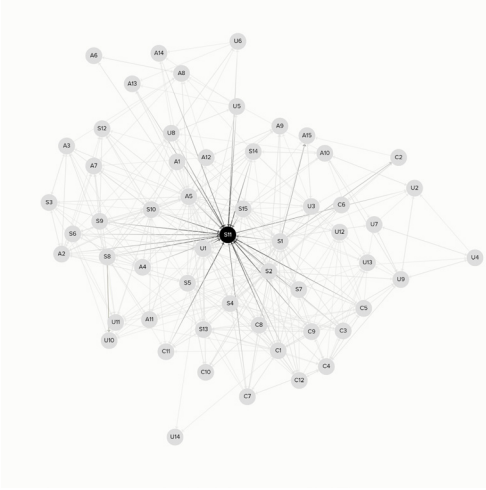


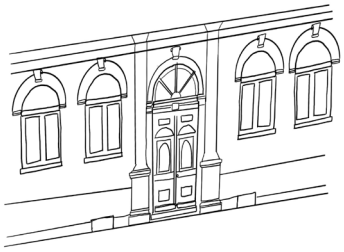
Principle

Transforming empty shops and unused ground floors to increase porosity by incorporating transitional zones, such as outside seating at cafés, putting out benches or having front gardens, that soften the boundary between private buildings and public space. Since ground floors are at eye level, they play a crucial role in shaping how we perceive the street and strongly influence its atmosphere. These zones should encourage informal interaction and foster a more socially cohesive and welcoming public realm.

Related patterns:

S8 - Elderly club
S9 - Repair center
S10 - Community hub
S14 - Community kiosk
C1 - Connect the green
C5 - Remove tiles
C9 - Rain garden
C11 - Put out a pot
C12 - Add shade
U1 - A short walk away
U2 - Clear streets
U5 - Ground floor for the old
U6 - Home modification
U8 - Entryway ramp
A2 - Let's learn
A4 - Volunteering part-time





communal space having connections with the streets

café having outside seating

shading elements providing cools spots

shop displaying products outside of the shop

empty shop turned into easy access residential spaces

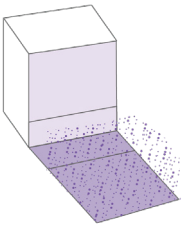
putting out pots of plants by the rsidents

benches and ramps help with accessibility

front gardens managed by resi-dent create a lively atmosphere

Streets

Connected pattern: U13. Transform the street

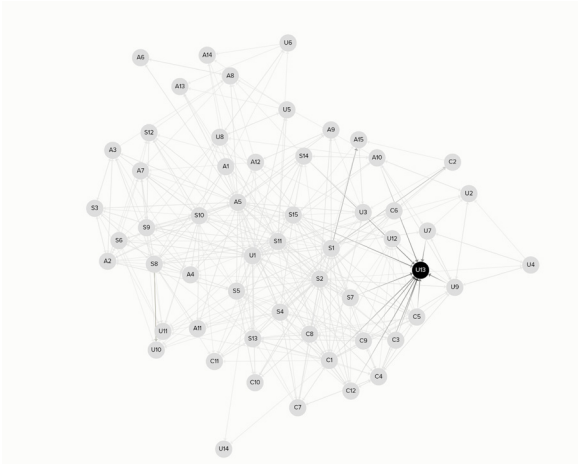


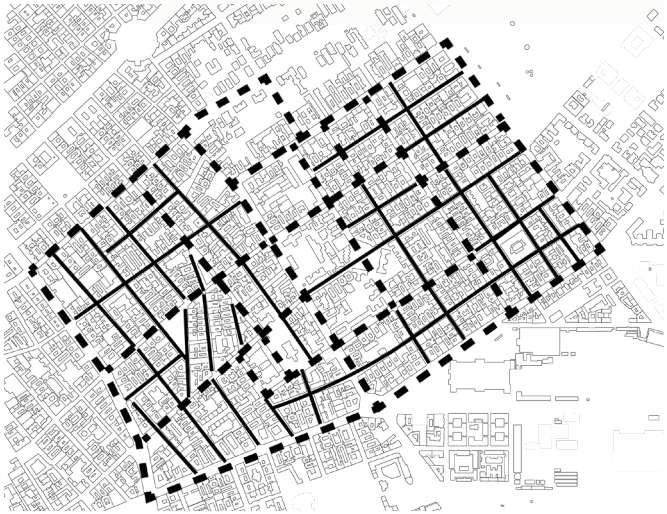
Principle

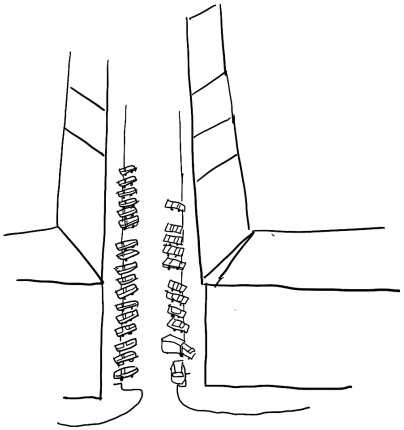
Based on the public space analysis focused on streets, three street types were identified and for the further steps grouped into two main categories: pedestrian-friendly streets acting as green corridors connecting open spaces and restricted to micromobility, residential, and service vehicles, and traffic streets, which allows general private car use.

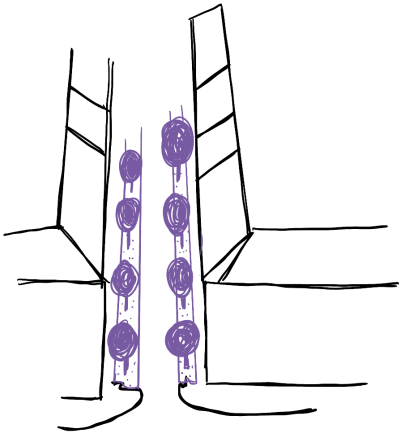
Related patterns:

S11 - Activate the ground floor
S13 - Adopt the green
S14 - Community kiosk
S15 - Take a seat
C1 - Connect the green
C3 - Permeable pavements
C4 - Plant the street
C5 - Remove tiles
C9 - Rain garden
C11 - Put out a pot
C12 - Add shade
U1 - A short walk away
U9 - Removing parking spaces
U13 - Transfrom the street
A10 - Street safety

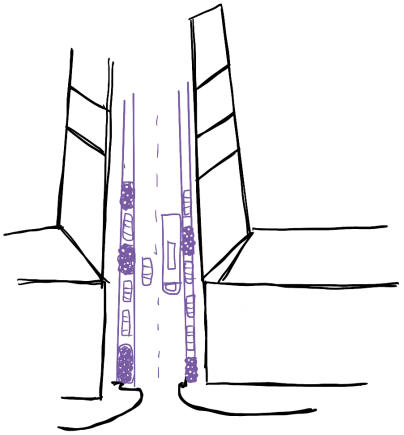








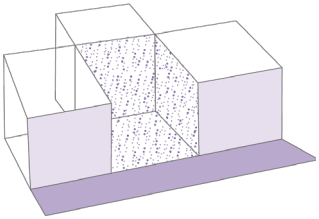
pedestrian street



traffic street

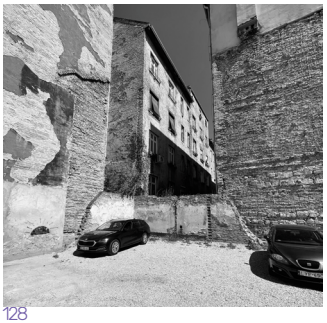
Empty plots and parking lots

Connected pattern: S2. Activate the empty plots



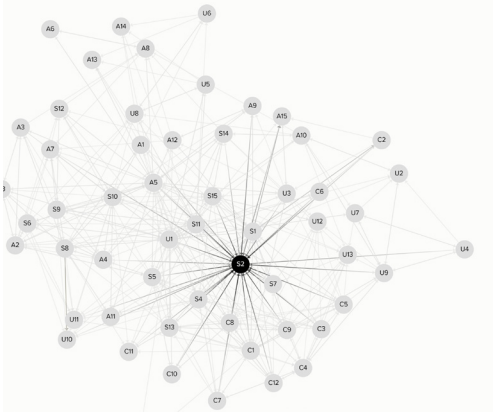
Principle

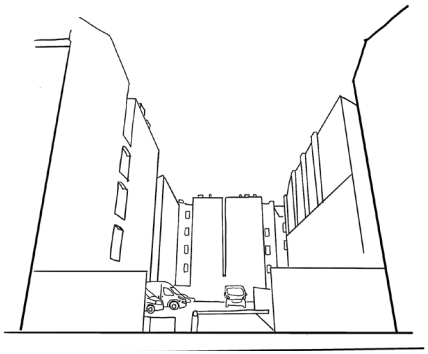
Empty plots and parking lots have a great potential as nexto to squares and parks they're the only large open spaces in the area, therefore they should be utilized in a way that mixed functions can take place ensuring that inclusive spaces are formed that are also intergenerational.

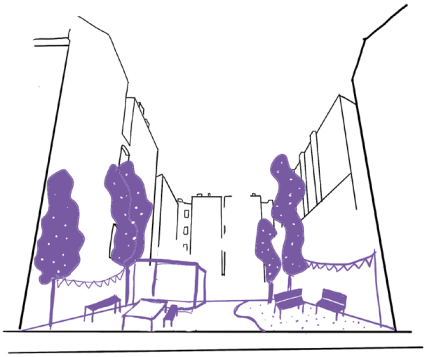


Related patterns:

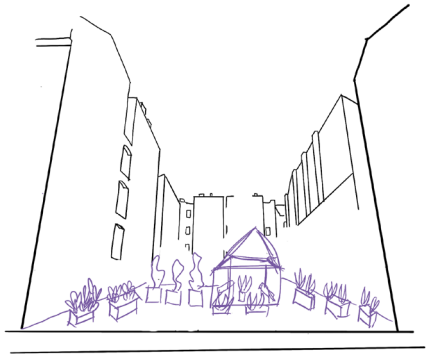
S4 - Intergenerational playground
S5 - Community garden
S7 - Quiet zone
S10 - Community hub
S11 - Activate the ground floor
S13 - Adopt the green
S14 - Community kiosk
S15 - Take a seat
C1 - Connect the green
C3 - Permeable pavements
C5 - Remove tiles
C6 - Cooling water
C7 - Green walls
C8 - Pocket parks
C9 - Rain garden
C10 - Compost spot
C11 - Put out a pot
C12 - Add shade
U1 - A short walk away
U4 - Multi-level parking
U9 - Removing parking spaces
U10 - Water tap
U11 - Free toilet
A1 - Animal companions
A4 - Volunteering part-time
A5 - Multigenerational mingle
A7 - Time banking
A9 - Voices of the block
A11 - Together in motion





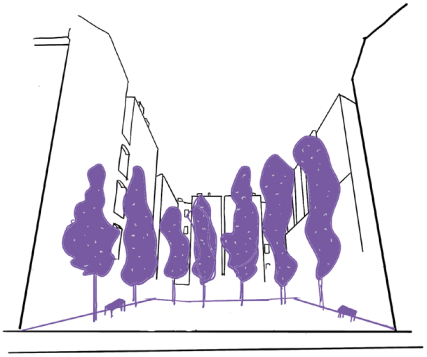


open community hub



community garden

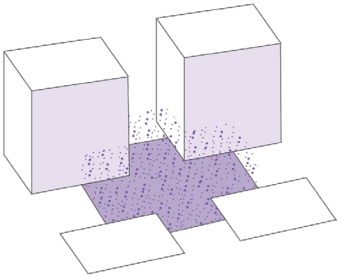
intergenerational play-ground



pocket park

Intersections

Connected pattern: U12. Transfrom the intersection

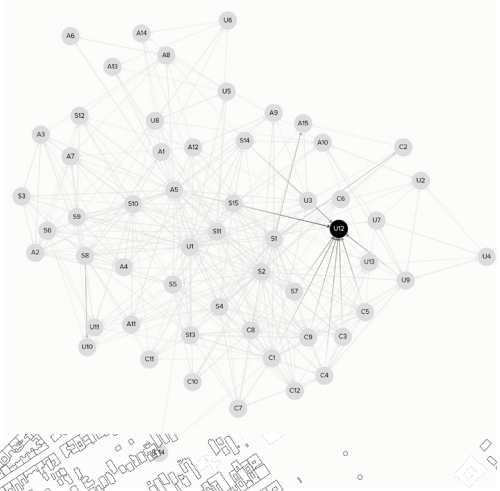


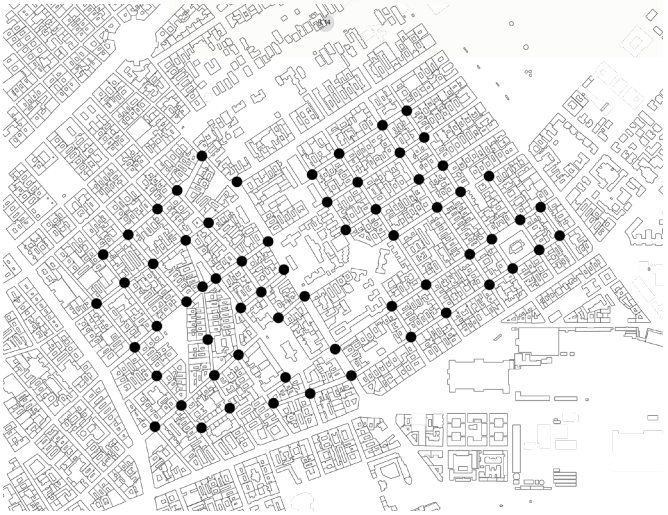
Principle

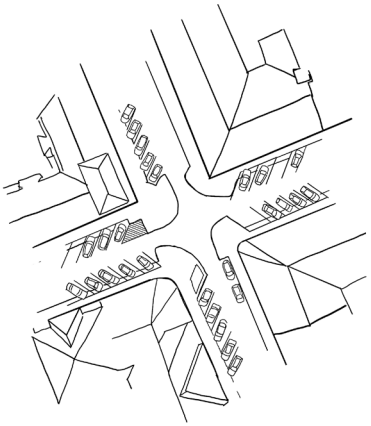
Intersections function as sub-centers within the block, characterized by active ground floors that generate local vibrancy and social interaction. These nodes can also serve as micro-hubs for climate adaptation by providing shaded areas for rest, social gathering spots, or elements that collect and retain rainwater.

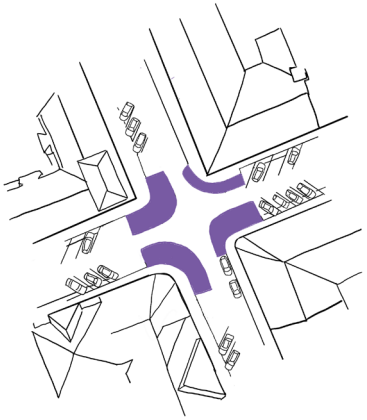
Related patterns:

S13 - Adopt the green
S14 - Community kiosk
S15 - Take a seat
C1 - Connect the green
C3 - Permeable pavements
C4 - Plant the street
C5 - Remove the street
C9 - Rain garden
C11 - Put out a pot
C12 - Add shade
U1 - A short walk away
U9 - Removing parking spaces
A10 - Street safety
A13 - Intergenerational housing

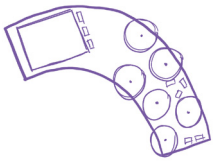




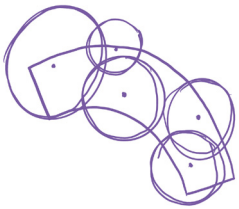




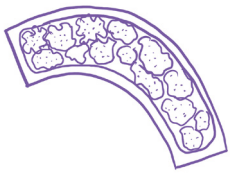
spaces to transform



café



small pocket park

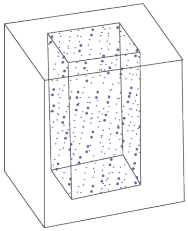


raingarden

Courtyards

Connected pattern: S1. Activate the courtyards

U3. Connect the courtyards

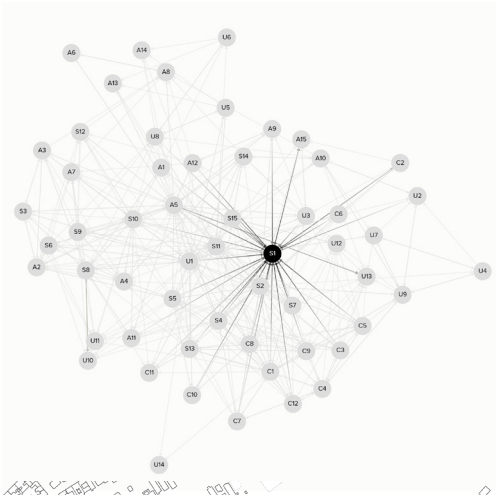


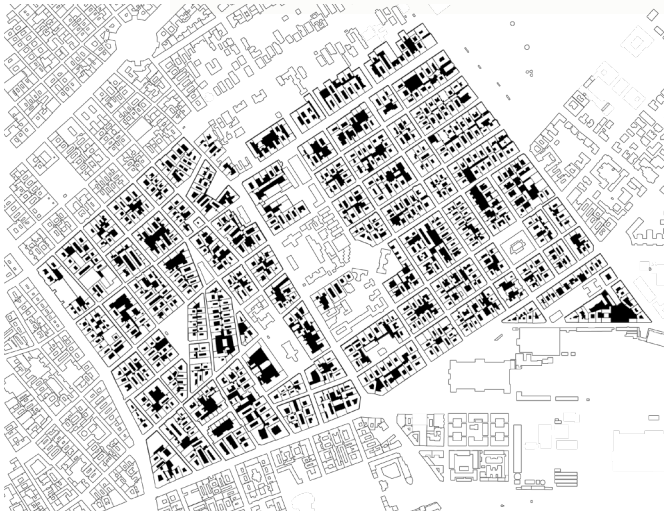
Principle

Activate underused private courtyards by introducing community-oriented programming and spatial transformations, and where possible, connect multiple adjacent courtyards to form a network of semi-public spaces.

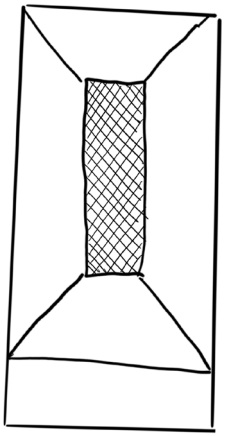
Related patterns:

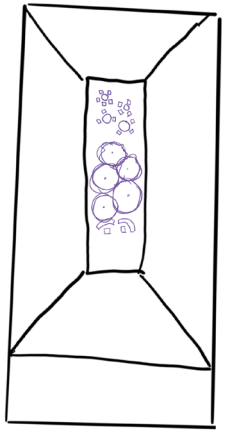
S4 - Intergenerational playground
S5 - Community garden
S7 - Quiet zone
S10 - Community hub
S11 - Activate the ground floor
S13 - Adopt the green
S15 - Take a seat
C1 - Connect the green
C2 - Airflow
C3 - Permeable pavements
C5 - Remove tiles
C6 - Cooling water
C8 - Pocket parks
C9 - Rain garden
C10 - Compost spot
C11 - Put out a pot
C12 - Add shade
U1 - A short walk away
U8 - Entryway ramp
A1 - Animal companions
A5 - Multigenerational mingle
A7 - Time banking
A9 - Voices of the block
A11 - Together in motion
A12 - Know your neighbour
A15 - Open/close



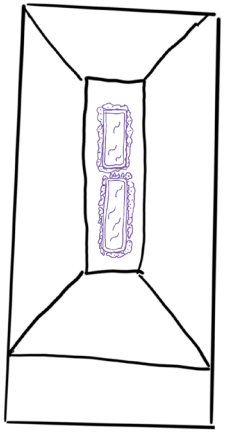


Activating courtyards

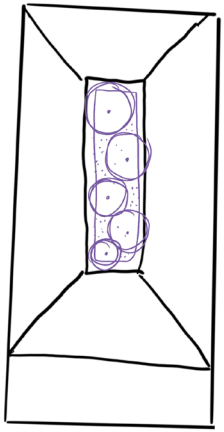




community hub expanding to the courtyard

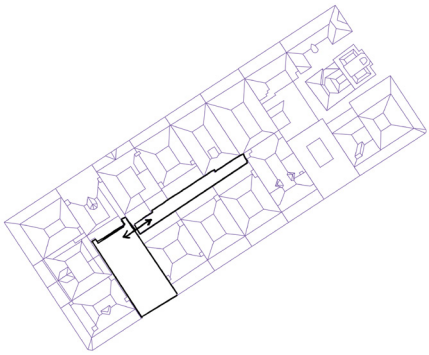


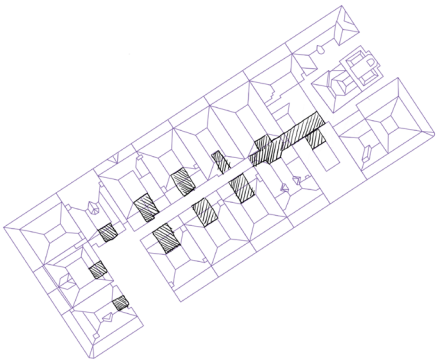
fountain providing cool spot

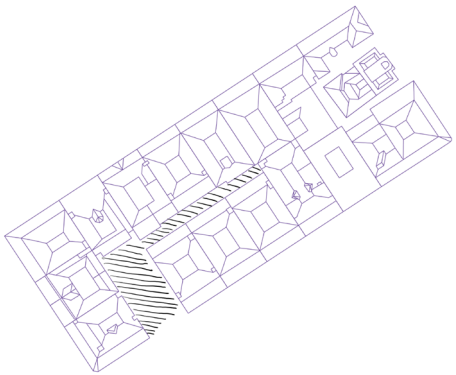


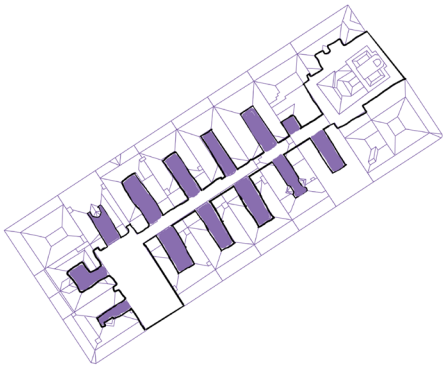
pocket park

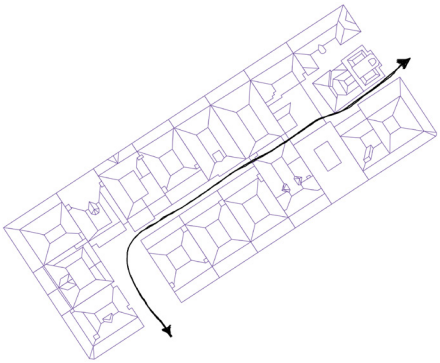
Maximizing semi-public space: design exploration

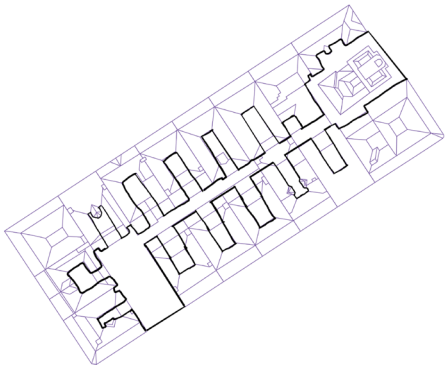


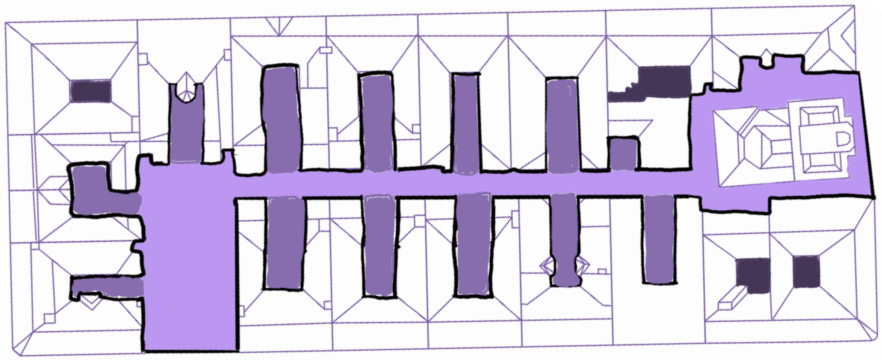






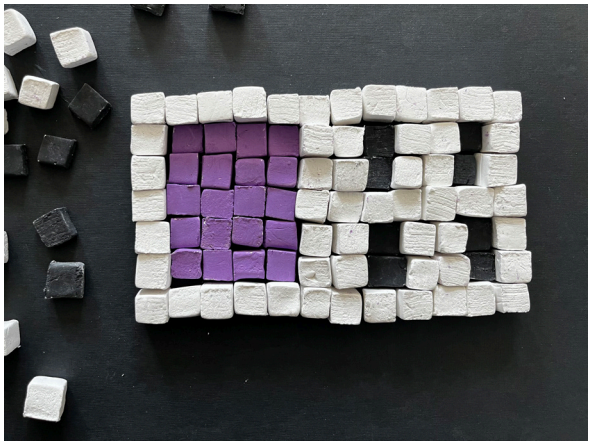






Current state

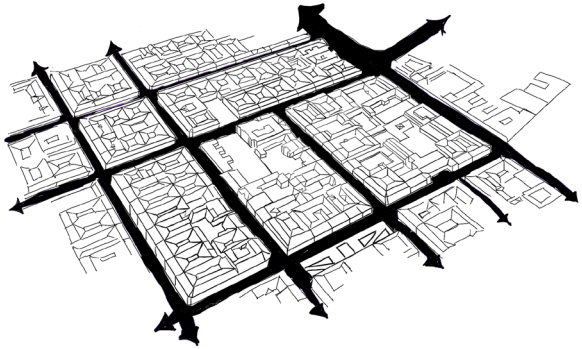
By strategically opening certain sections of the buildings, joint courtyards are created, encouraging interaction and a shared sense of space

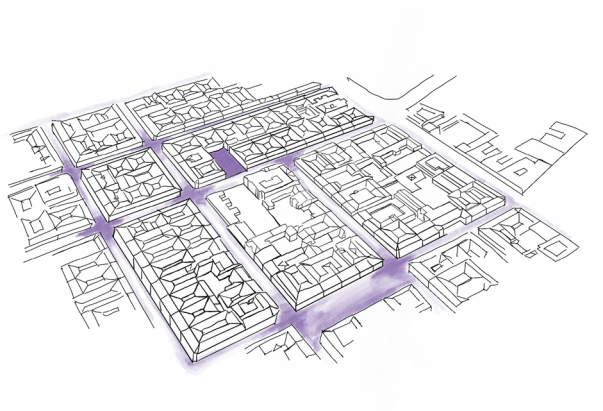


The joint space is maximized by fully opening up the buildings, retaining only the outer perimeter of the block

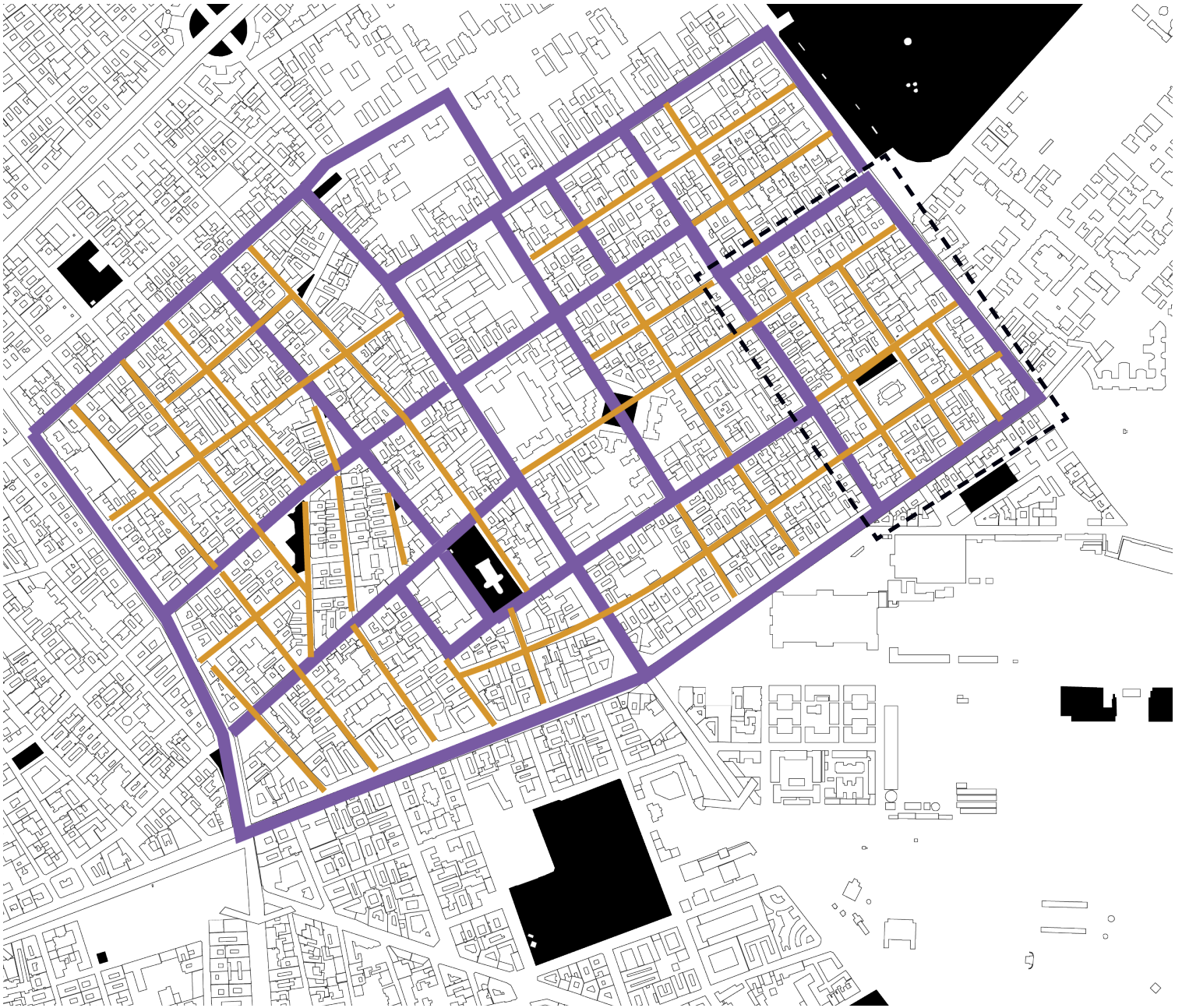
5.4.Neighbourhood-level strategy

The strategy focuses on transforming spaces from routes of movement into places of rest, interaction, and care. By softening the threshold between public and private realms, the design encourages informal encounters and shared use. Care is embedded in the continuity of space - through materials, circulation, and atmosphere - supporting a seamless experience across different functions. Special attention is given to the needs of the elderly, ensuring accessibility, comfort, and a sense of belonging at every step.





Multi block units

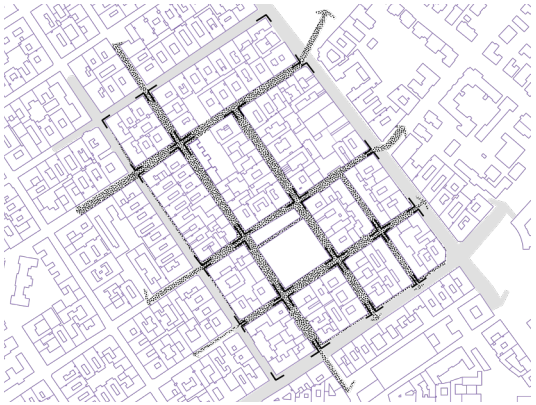


The project adopts a multi-block strategy rooted in the Superblock model, reimagining urban life at a human scale. Within this structure, movement shifts from a car-dominated logic to a pedestrian-centered experience. A network of walkable streets connects a series of green spaces, allowing for both everyday circulation and moments of pause, play, and interaction.

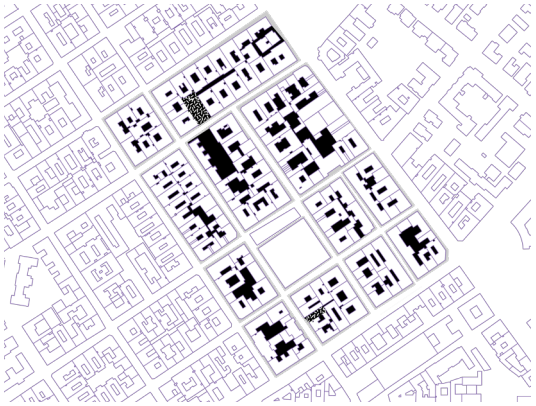
Motorized traffic is redirected to the perimeter of the block unit, where public transport is accessible and vehicle flow is minimized within the inner core. This separation creates a safer, quieter, and more inclusive environment, especially for children, the elderly, and those with limited mobility.

At key intersections within the pedestrian network, spaces are activated to serve as micro-centers—places where daily life concentrates. These nodes host amenities, social infrastructure, and opportunities for informal gathering, reinforcing the sense of community.

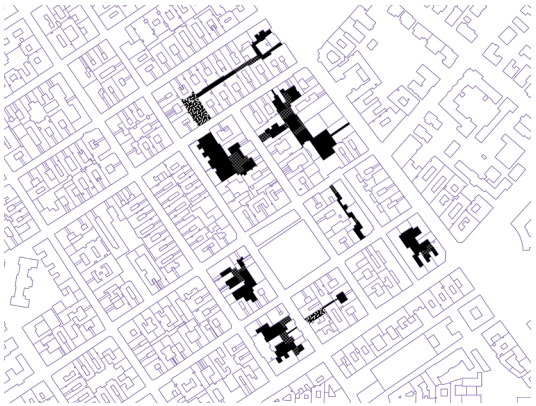
5.5.Small scale strategy



1. **pedestrian streets** connecting green spaces
2. **traffic streets** outside of the block unit, offering public transport
3. activated **intersections** acting as small centers



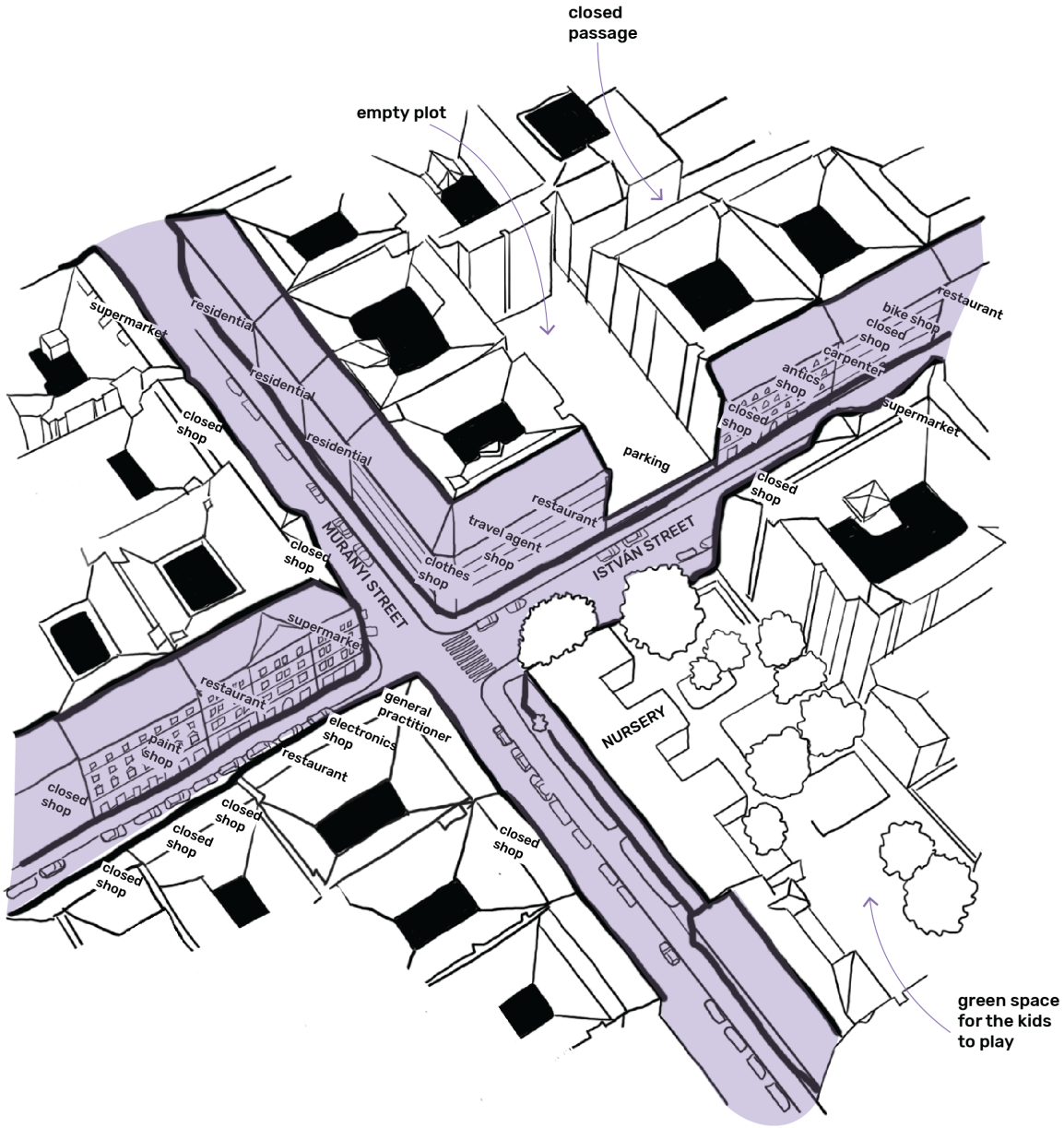
4. activated **empty plots** with diverse programming
5. activated **courtyards** with diverse programming
6. active **ground-floors** creating transitional spaces between private and public

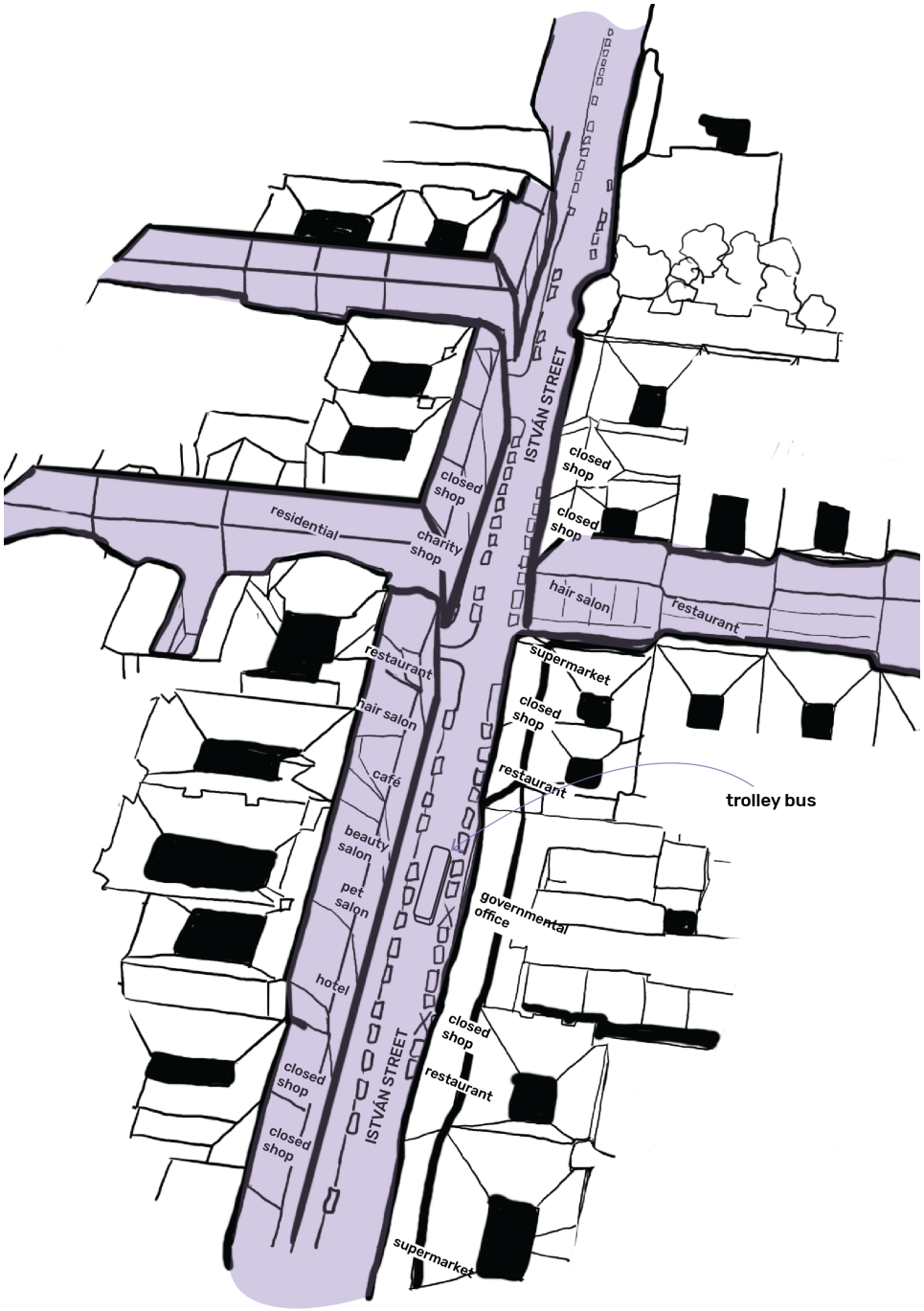


7. opening up the **buildings** to reshape boundaries
8. and create **public and semi-public courtyards**, that are open during the day and clossed for the night

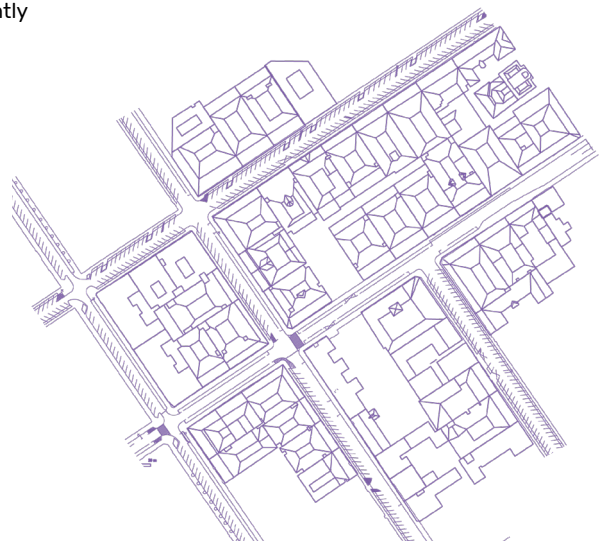
The area is situated on the eastern side of Külső-Erzsébetváros, where the streets primarily serve mixed functions and residential purposes, with limited active ground-level usage. Many of the streets in this neighborhood have parking on both sides, further narrowing the already restricted space. There is a noticeable lack of open public areas or inviting spots for people to sit and gather. The only seating available is a few one-person benches at Garay Square, so people often resort to sitting on the edges of the green space. As a result, the neighborhood feels dense and enclosed, with minimal greenery, making it highly vulnerable to urban heat effects and leaving little room for rainwater absorption.

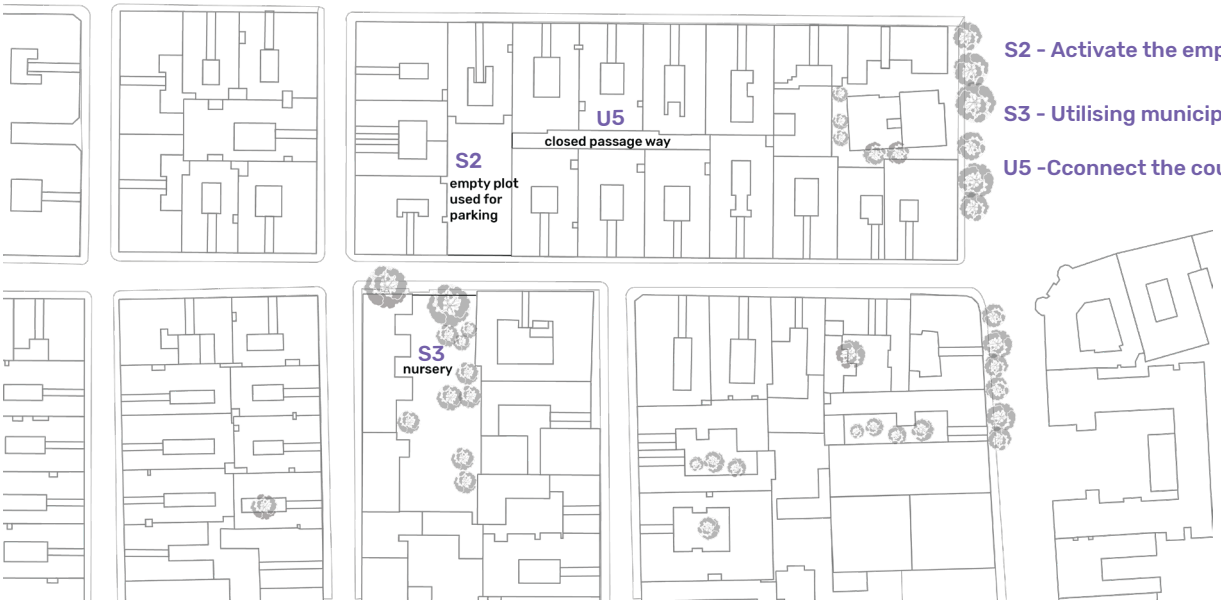
Current state zoom ins




ISTVÁN STREET
closed shop
residential
charity shop
closed shop
closed shop
hair salon
restaurant
restaurant
supermarket
hair salon
closed shop
café
restaurant
trolley bus
beauty salon
pet salon
governmental office
hotel
closed shop
ISTVÁN STREET
restaurant
closed shop
closed shop
supermarket

The site currently





S2 - Activate the empty plots

S3 - Utilising municipal buildings

U5 -Cconnect the courtyards


Public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Public
Semi-
public


U17
café
retail
culture
café
U17
U12
culture
retail
retail
retail
restaurant
S1
S1
S1
service
S1
retail
S1
retail
service
S1
S1
S1
U14
S11
S6
U7
retail
service
café
U16
U12
restaurant
retail
S14
retail
restaurant
culture
retail
retail
U7
service
retail
retail
retail
retail
gp
S1
service
S1
S1
S1
S1
S1
S1
S5
S8
S7 + S13
service
S1
U2
U5
retail
S1
U14
S1
S8
S2
S4
S8
S11
S19
U14
C9
C10
S1
S1
S1
S1
S1
S1
U14
S15
S10
café
retail
U7
service
restaurant
retail
U7
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retail
café
retail
service
restaurant
U16 U12
U12
S11
U16
U17
S11
service
retail
service
U7
retail
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café
U12
U17.
restaurant
retail
culture
S1
S1
retail
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S1
S1
retail
S7
S11
S1
S1
retail
culture
service
S1
retail
service
café
retail
S1
U14
S11
S6
C4
U12
U16
U14
S3
nursery
U5
retail
restaurant
S1
culture
retail
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S1
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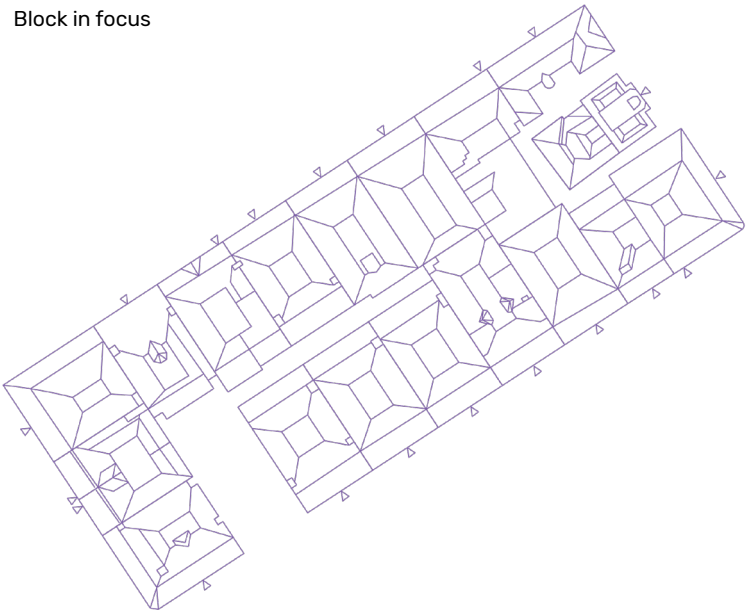
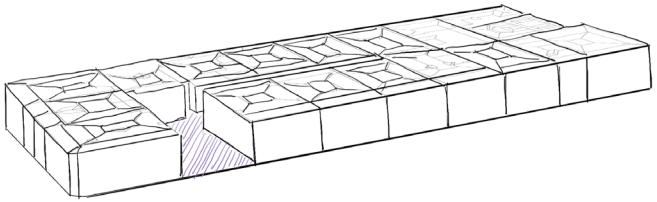
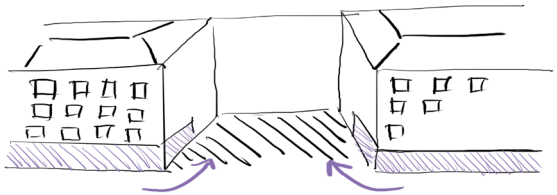
S7
service
S1
S1
culture
S1
retail
S9
S9
U5
U12
U16
retail
S1
service
S1
S1
U5
culture
restaurant
S1
S1
university
S3 A2
S1
U5
service

Block in focus

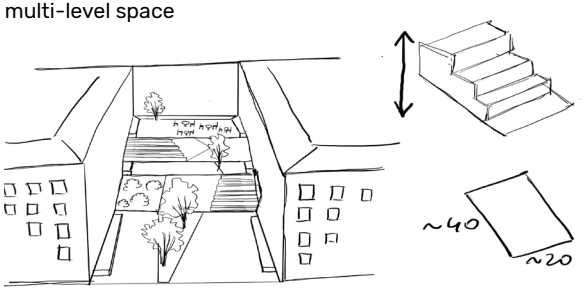




ground functions entering empty plot



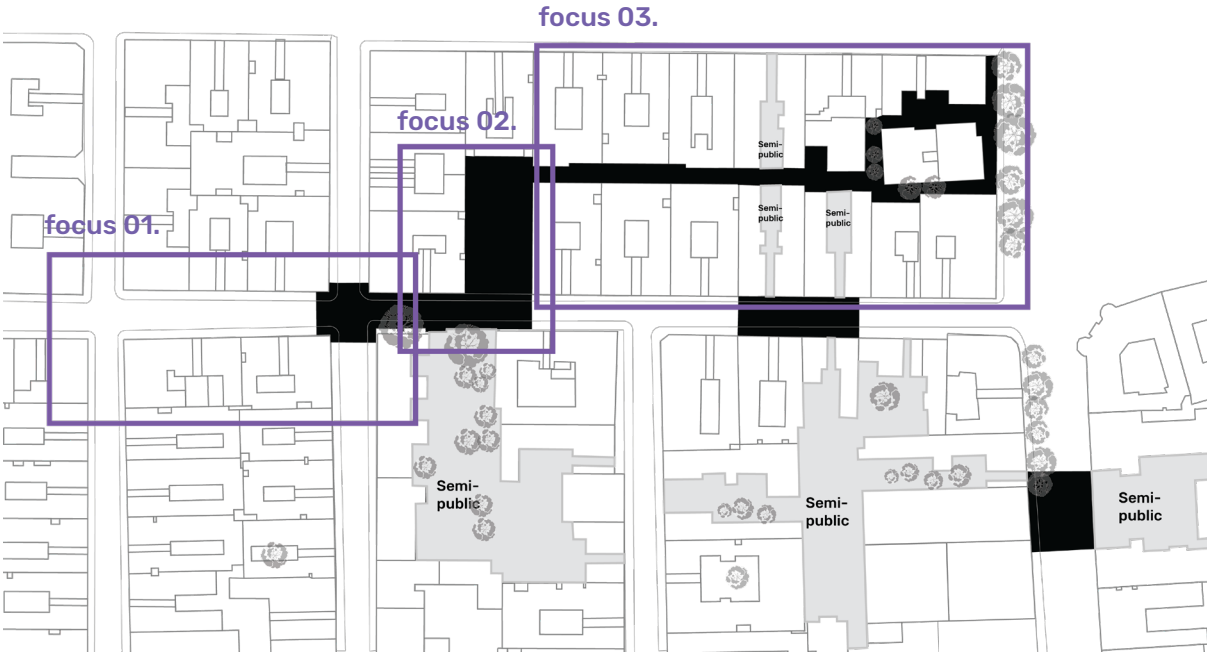
multi-level space



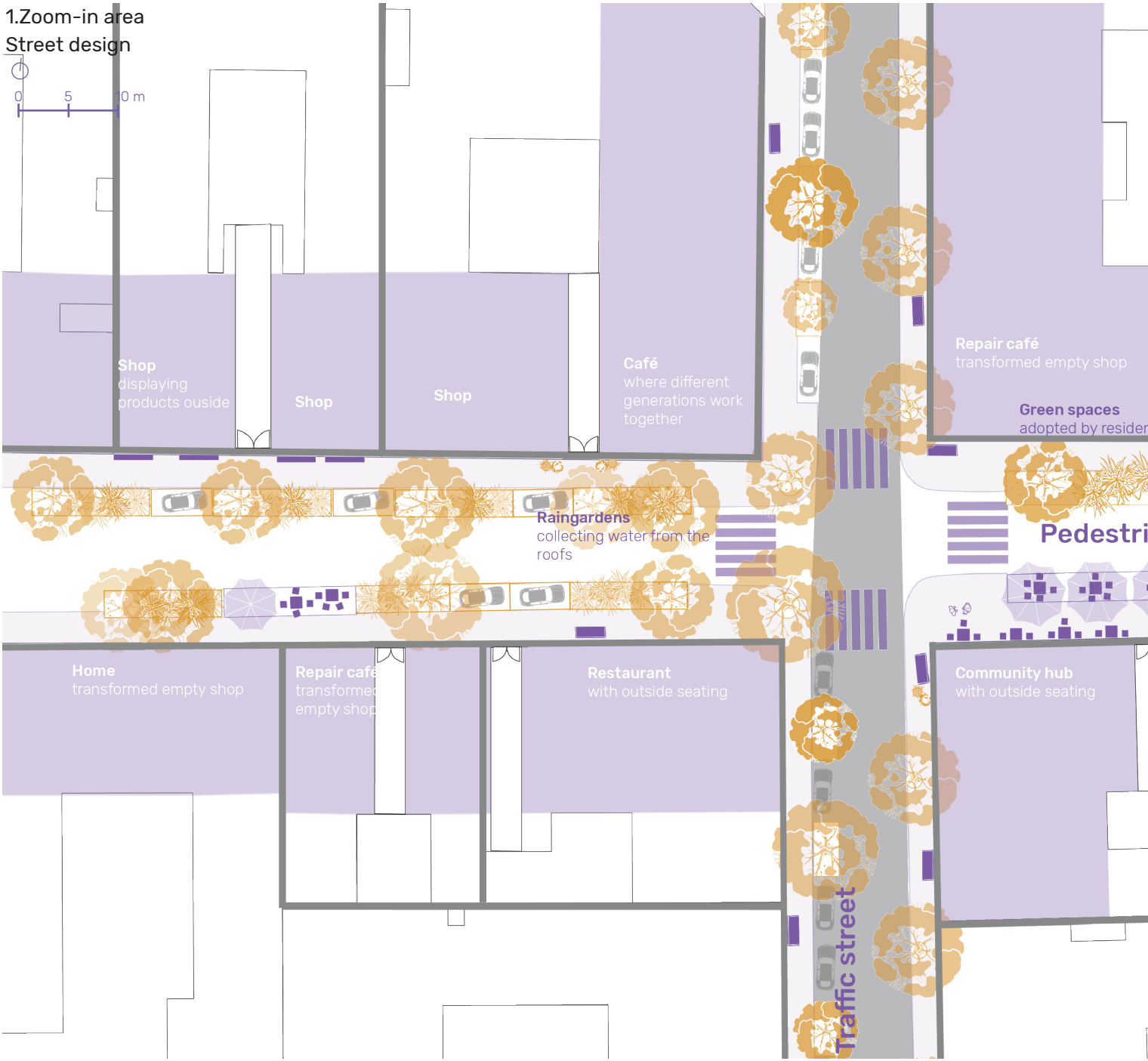
For the design exploration, I selected a block unit with multiple spatial opportunities for transformation and reconnection. The site includes an empty plot currently used as a parking lot, located next to a narrow passageway that, while currently closed off, could be opened to improve connectivity across the block. This offers significant potential for creating new links and shared spaces without requiring major demolition.

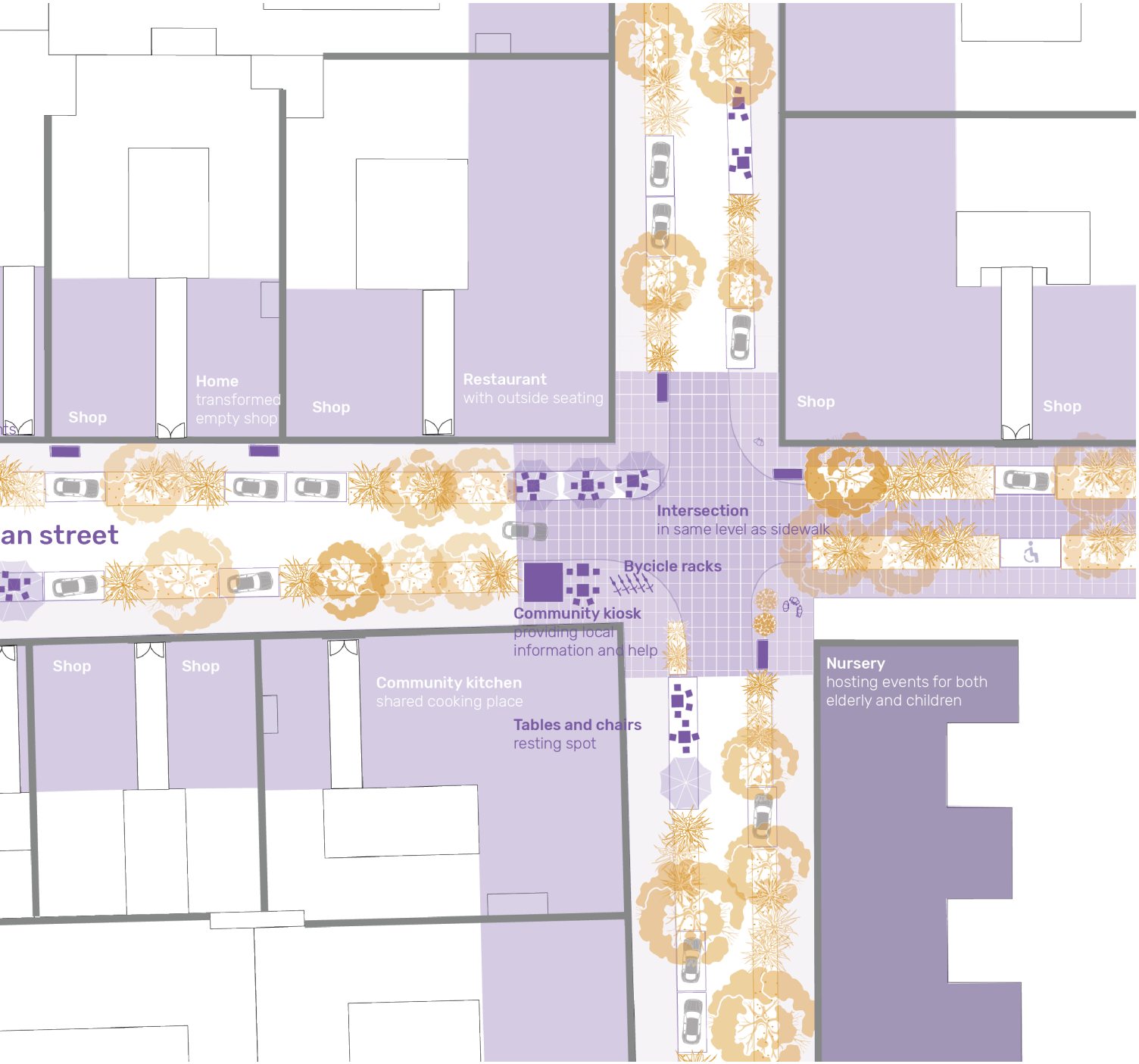
Since the surrounding buildings are 4-5 stories high, the empty plot can feel overwhelming and almost oppressive, as if the buildings are pressing in. Introducing varying heights and elevating parts of the plot could help create a more balanced and comfortable atmosphere. Additionally, the sides are dominated by large brick walls, making taller trees a beneficial addition to soften the space and enhance its visual appeal. To better connect the streets with the empty plots, ground-level functions can extend into the empty space, creating a more seamless and inviting transition.

6.CHAPTER
FINAL DESIGN


focus 03.
focus 02.
focus 01.
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public
Semi-
public

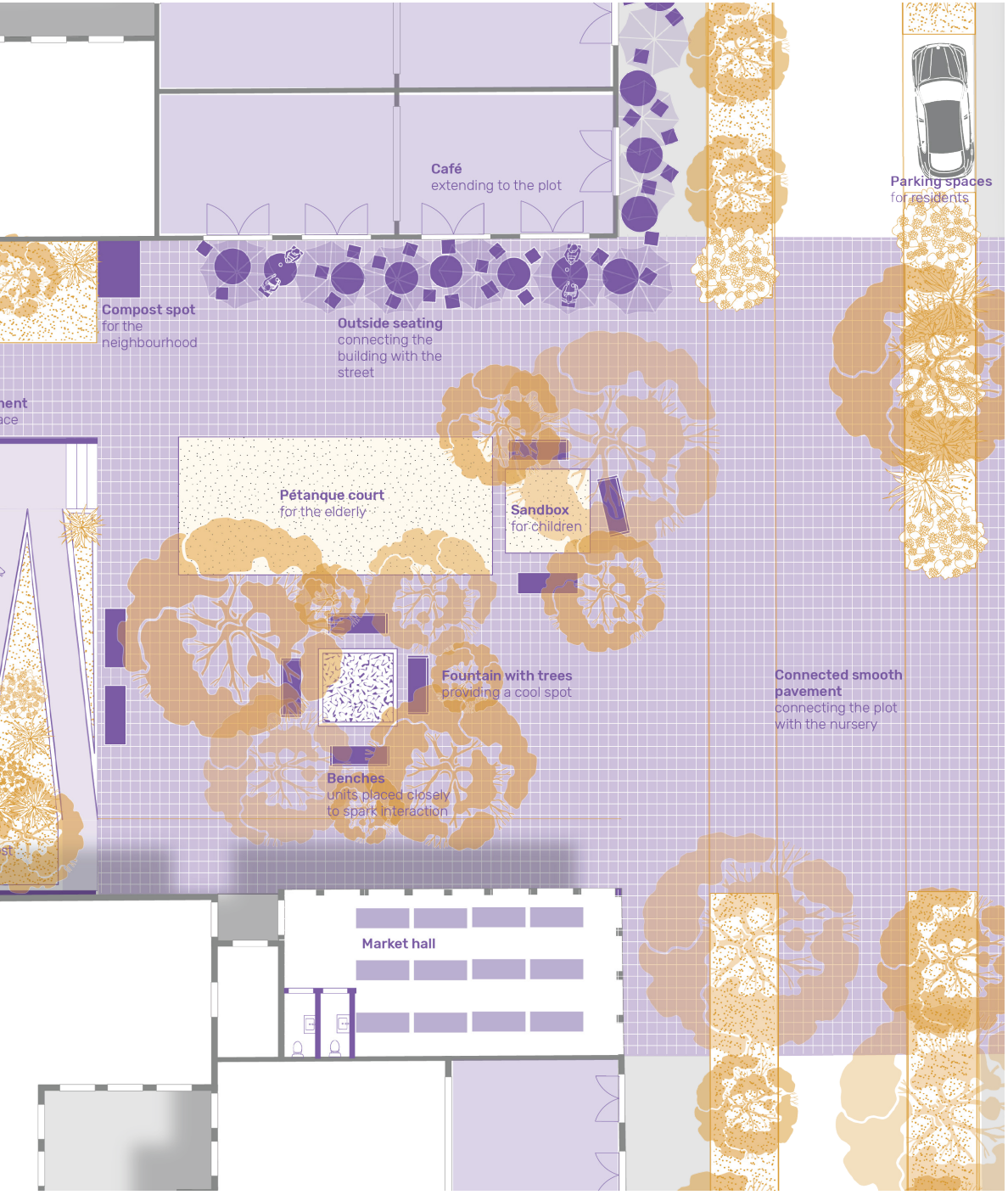
1.Zoom-in area
Street design




Shop
Home
transformed
empty shop
Shop
Restaurant
with outside seating
Shop
Shop
an street
Intersection
in same level as sidewalk
Bycicle racks
Community kiosk
providing local
information and help
Shop
Shop
Community kitchen
shared cooking place
Tables and chairs
resting spot
Nursery
hosting events for both
elderly and children

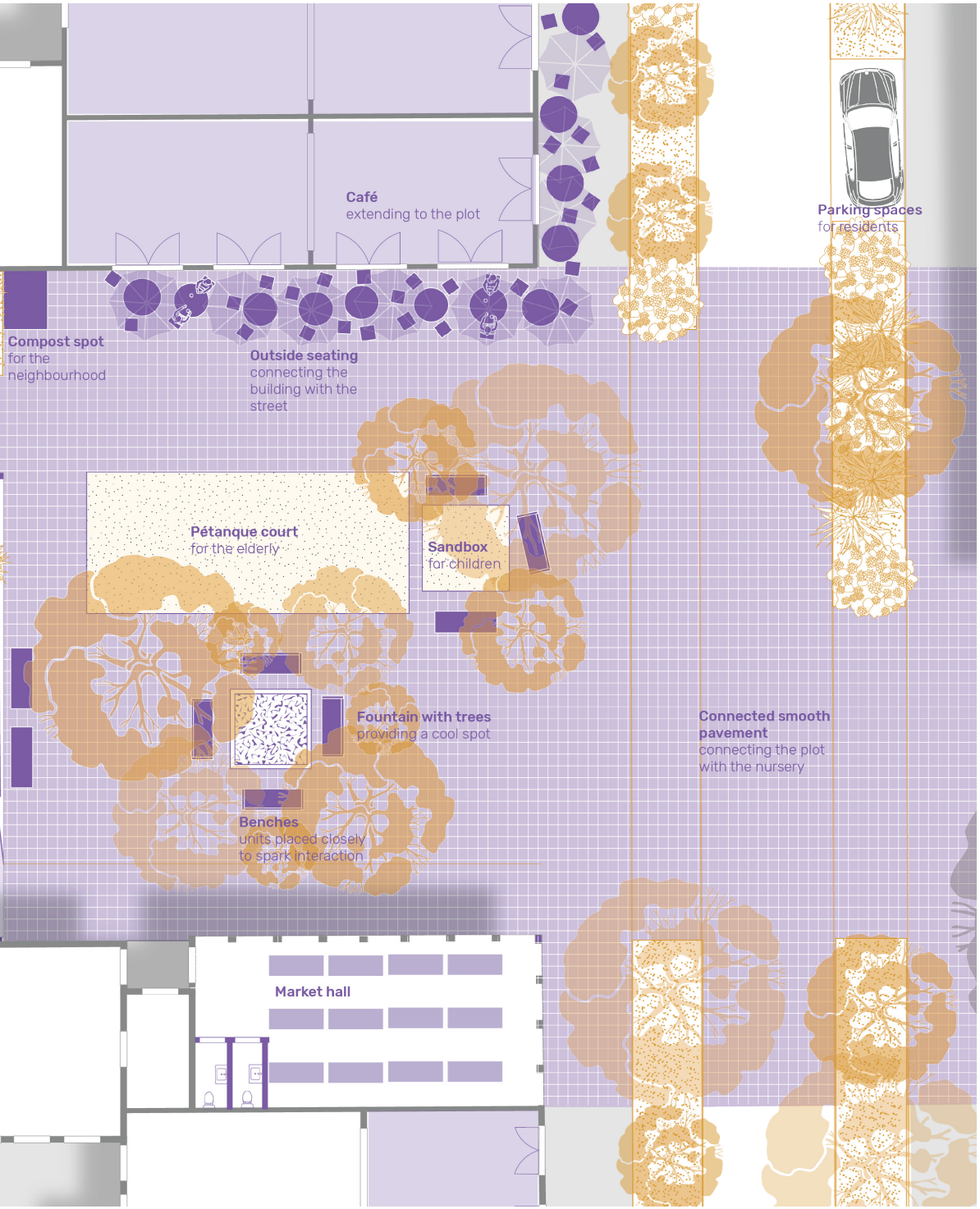
2. Zoom-in area
Empty plot-top view

0 5 10 m


Café
extending to the plot
Parking spaces
for residents
Compost spot
for the
neighbourhood
Outside seating
connecting the
building with the
street
Pétanque court
for the elderly
Sandbox
for children
Fountain with trees
providing a cool spot
Connected smooth
pavement
connecting the plot
with the nursery
Benches
units placed closely
to spark interaction
Market hall

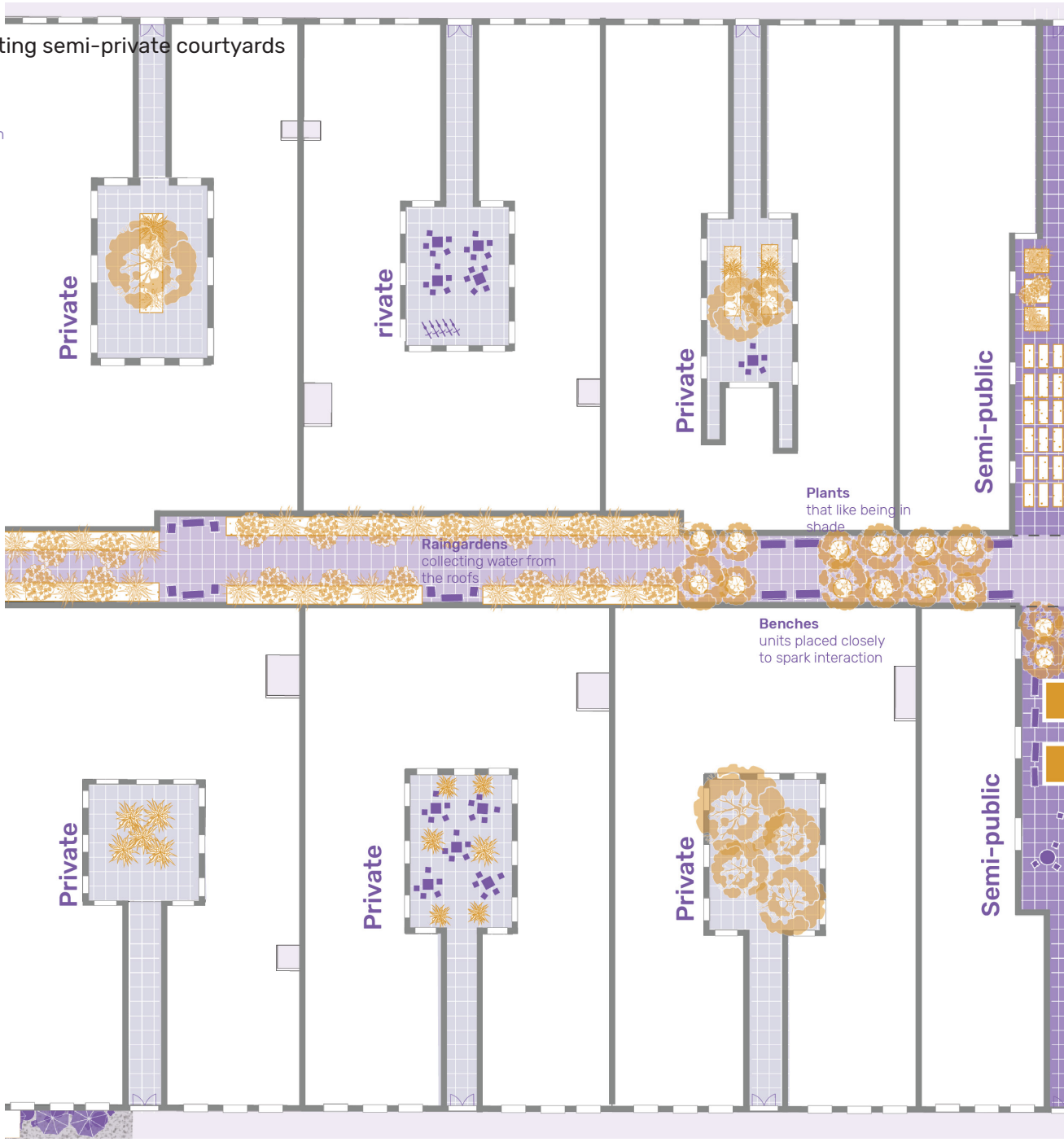
2.Zoon-in area

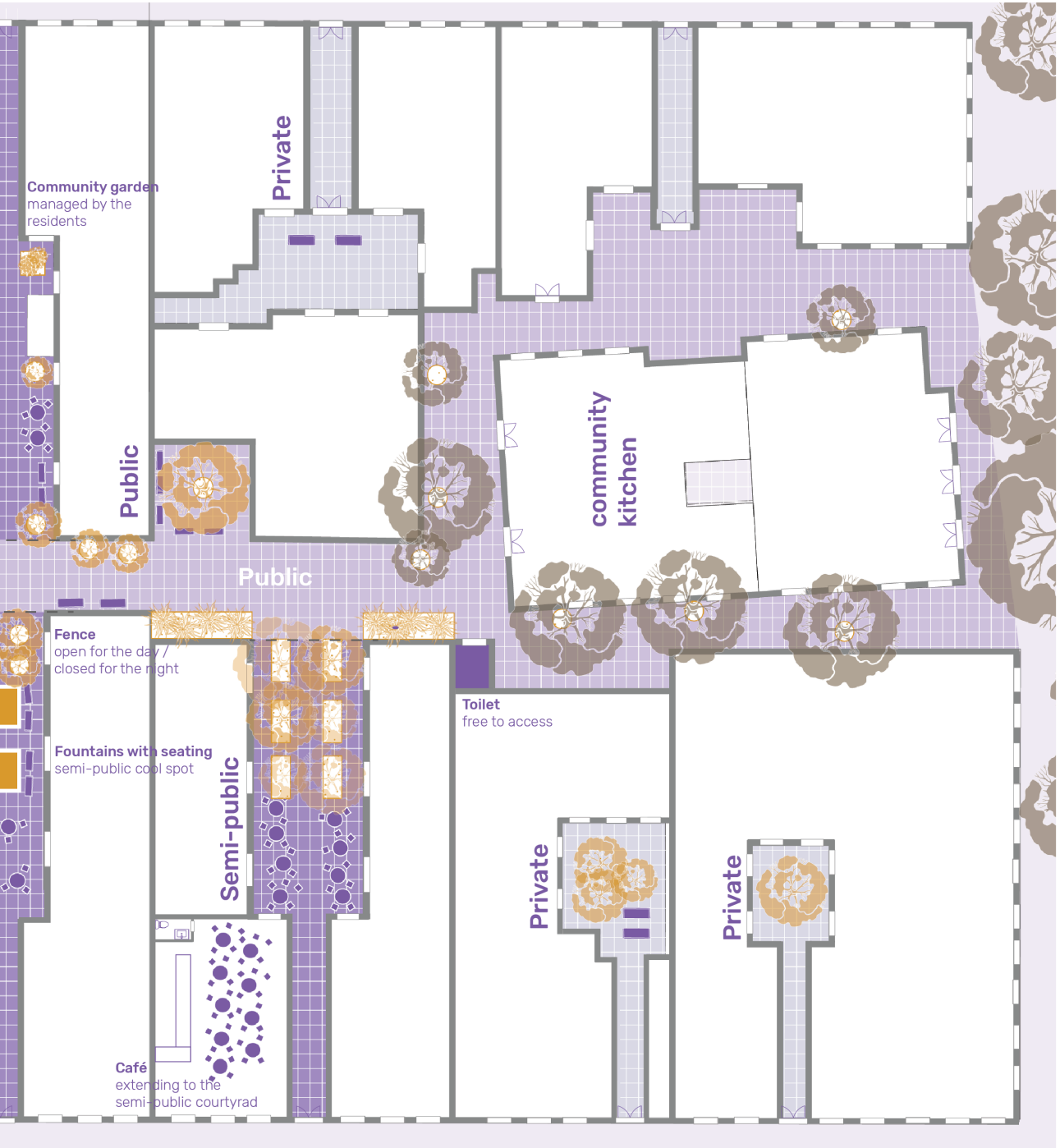
Empty plot- community hub ground floor


Café
extending to the plot
Parking spaces
for residents
Compost spot
for the
neighbourhood
Outside seating
connecting the
building with the
street
Pétanque court
for the elderly
Sandbox
for children
Fountain with trees
providing a cool spot
Benches
units placed closely
to spark interaction
Connected smooth
pavement
connecting the plot
with the nursery
Market hall

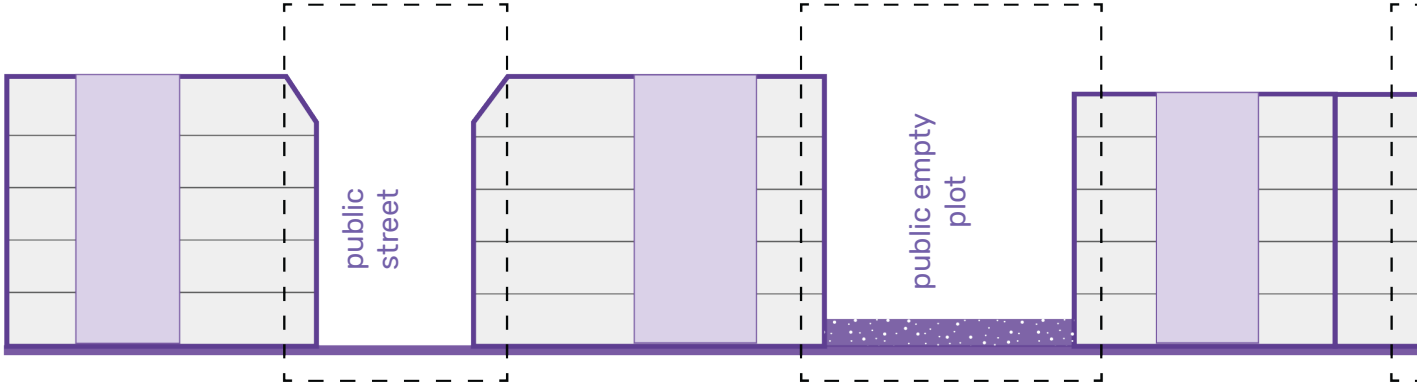
3. Zoom-in area
Passage connecting semi-private courtyards with the street

0 5 10 m

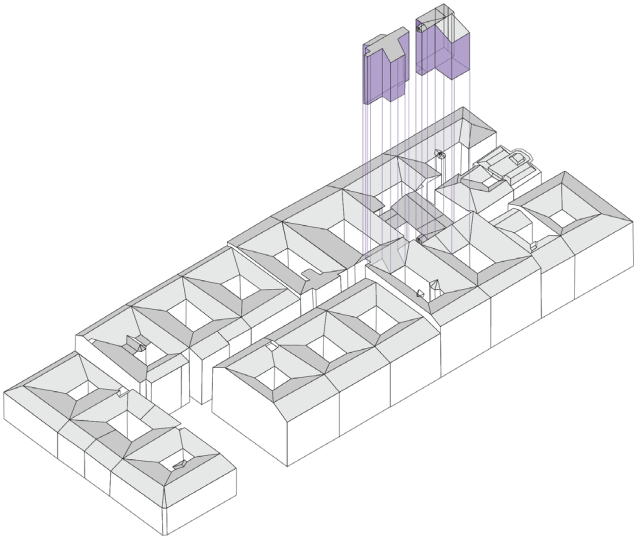


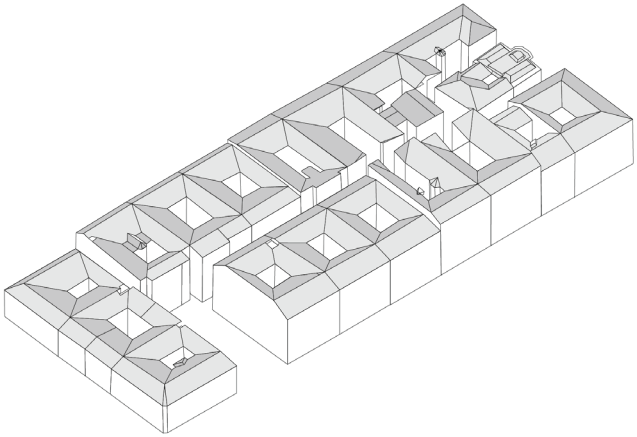

Community garden
managed by the residents
Private
Public
Public
community kitchen
Fence
open for the day / closed for the night
Fountains with seating
semi-public cool spot
Semi-public
Café
extending to the semi-public courtyrad
Toilet
free to access
Private
Private

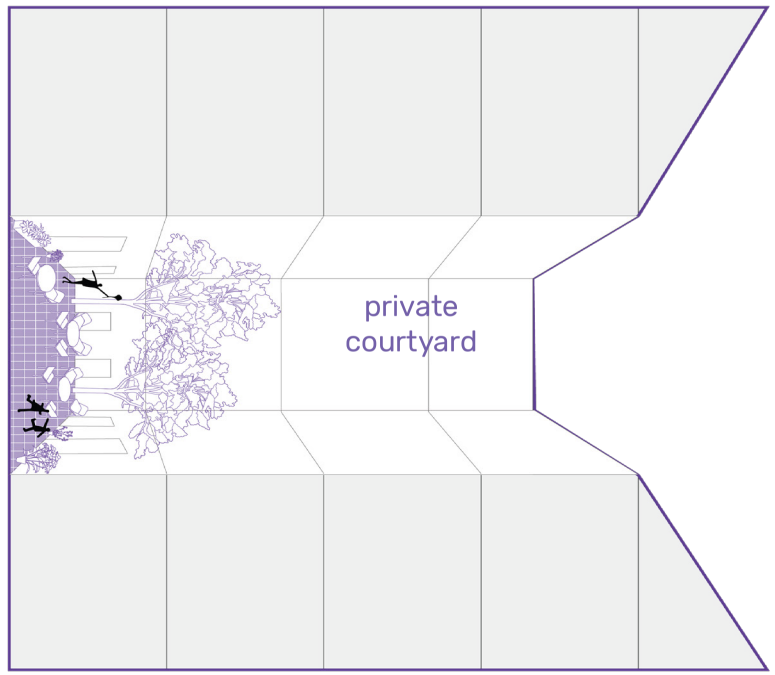
Section showing levels of publicness

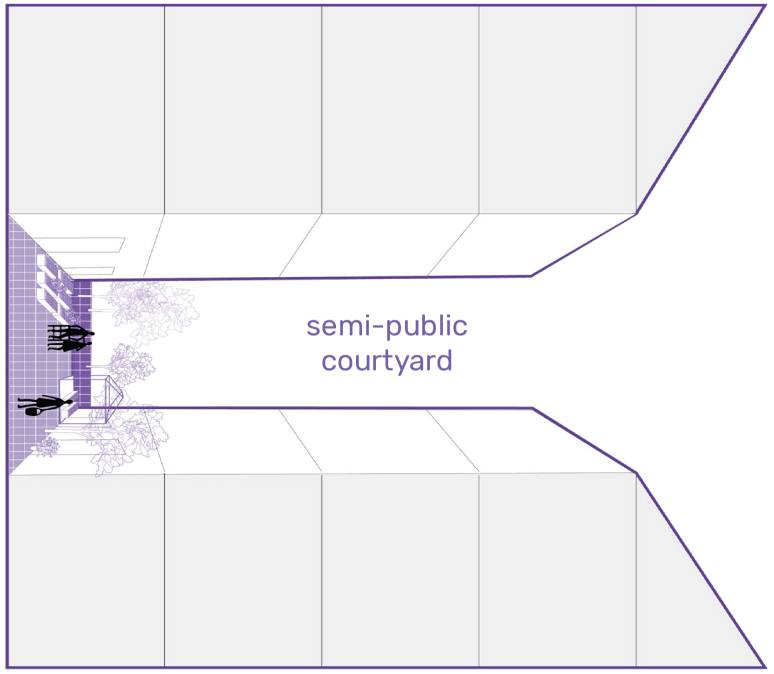


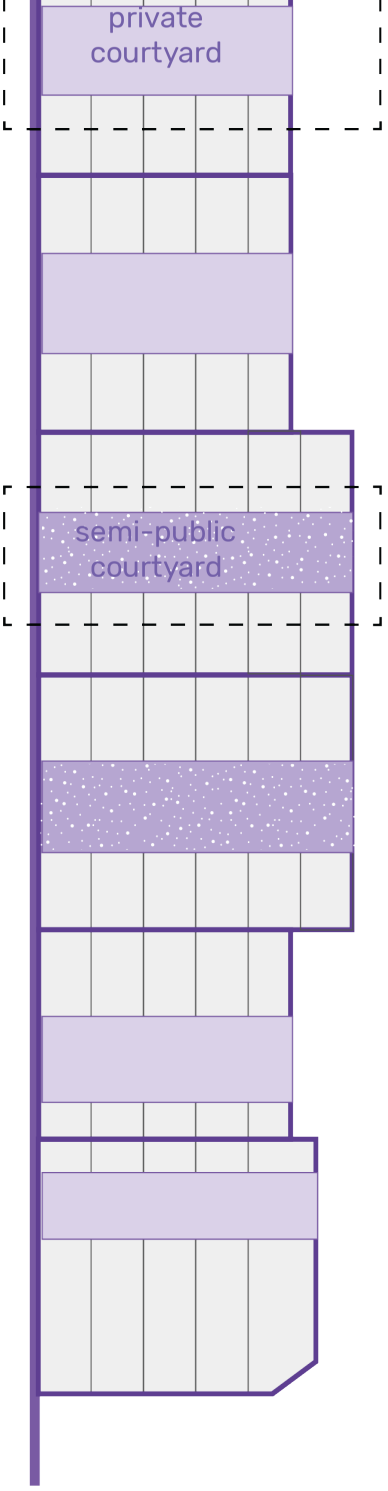
Opening the buildings to create connections

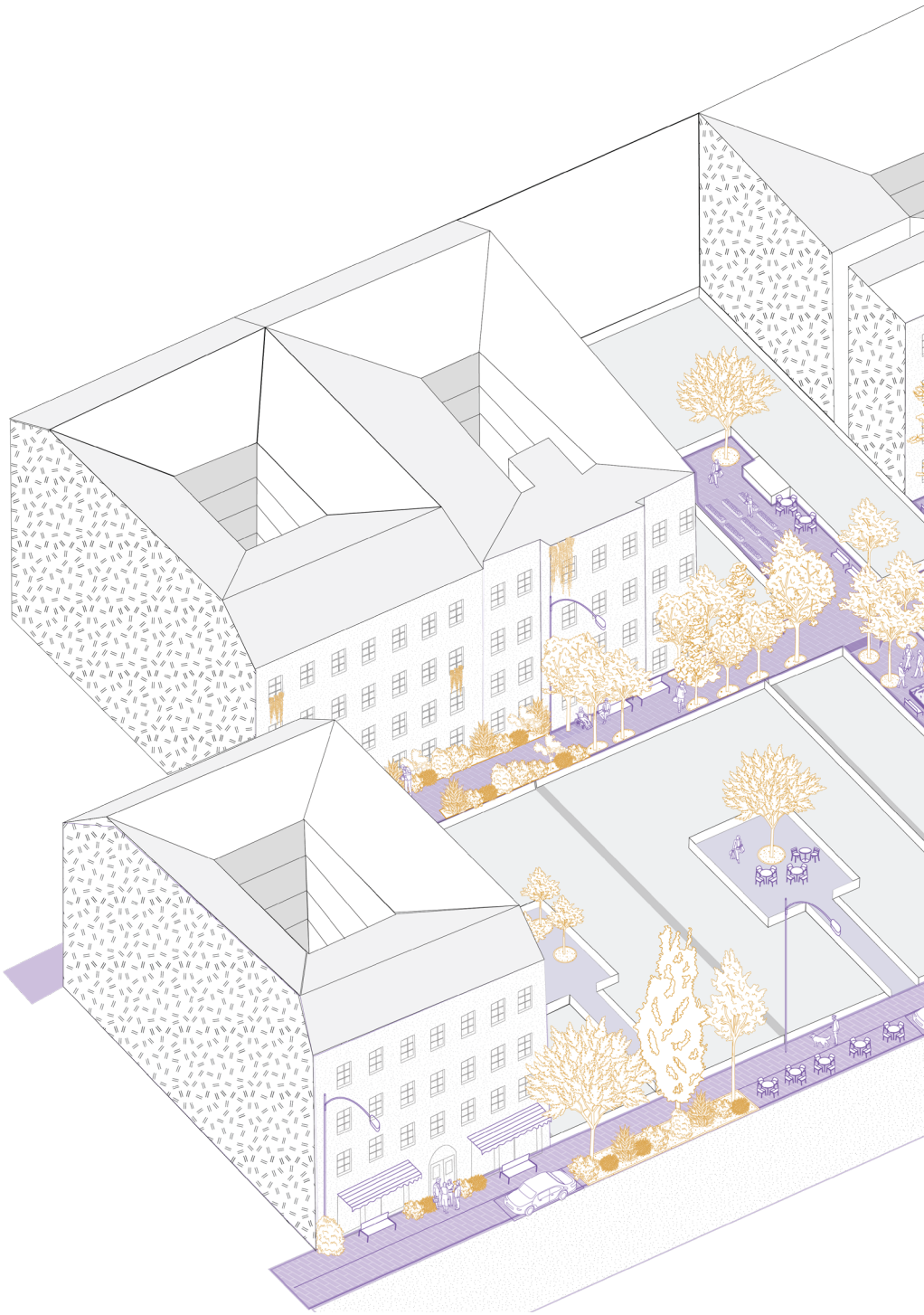


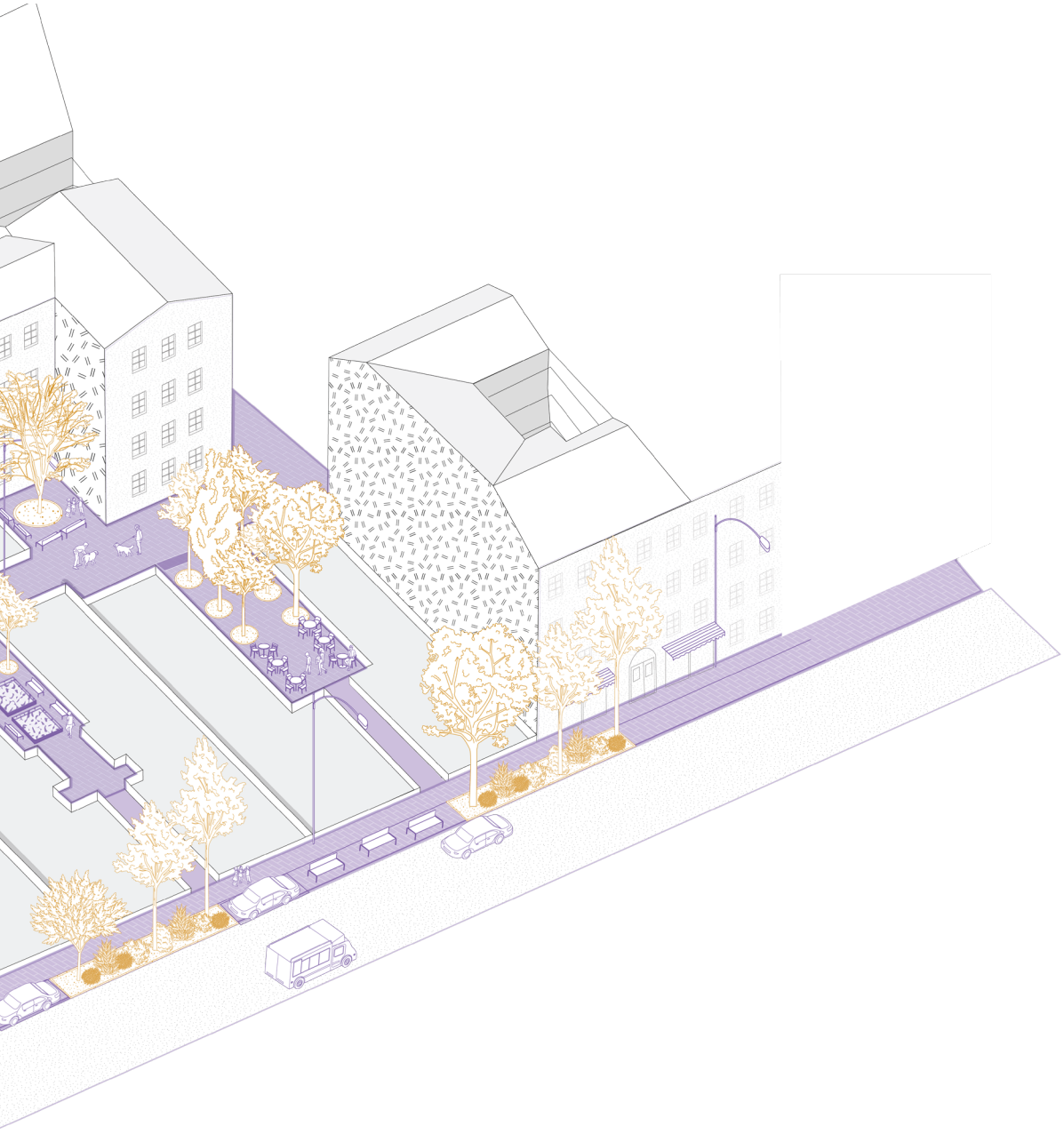



private
courtyard


semi-public
courtyard


private
courtyard
semi-public
courtyard

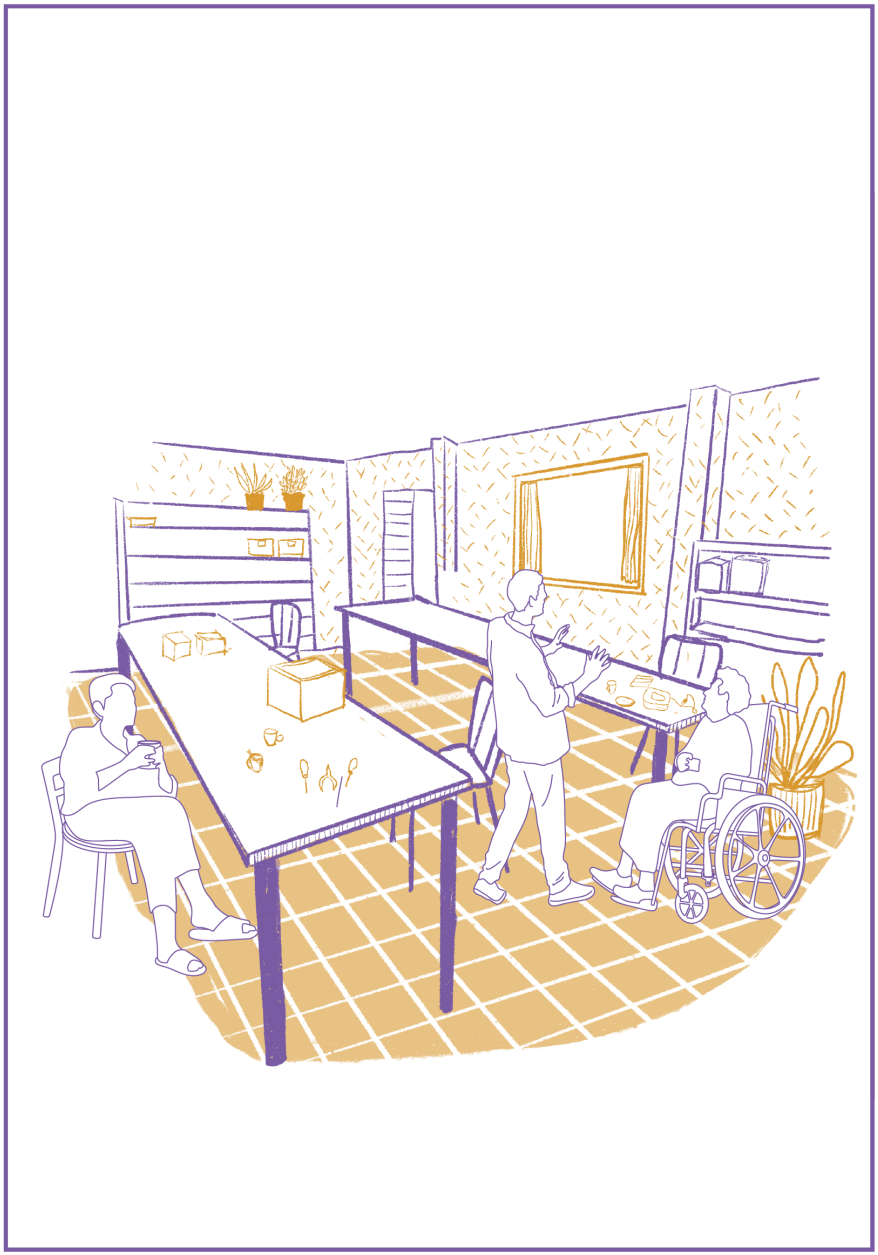




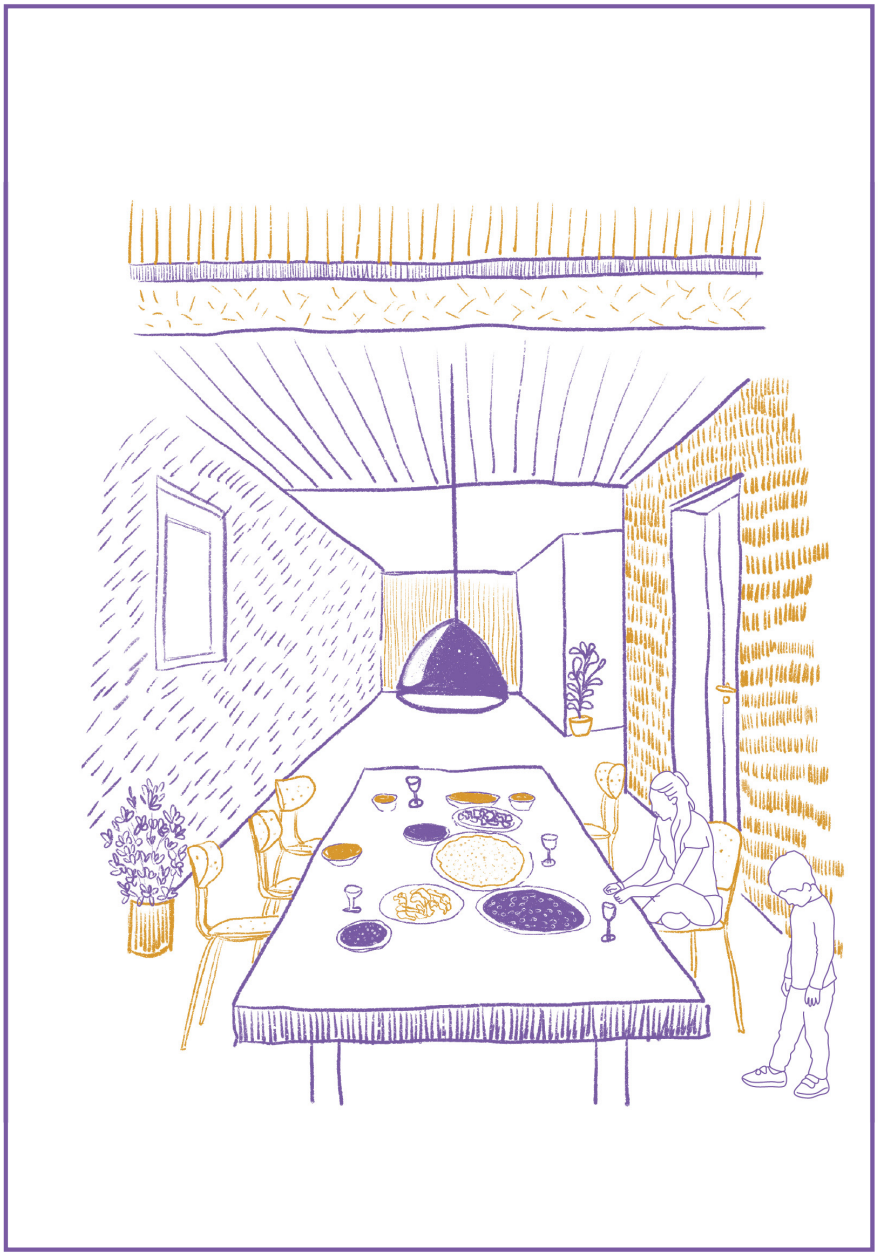
Postcards from Márta

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.

I like to start my day early, especially since the mornings are cooler. Living on the ground floor makes it easy for me to get outside and move around. I'm the one who opens the front door of our building each day, so neighbors and visitors can come in and enjoy our lovely courtyard - it's often much cooler there than out on the street.

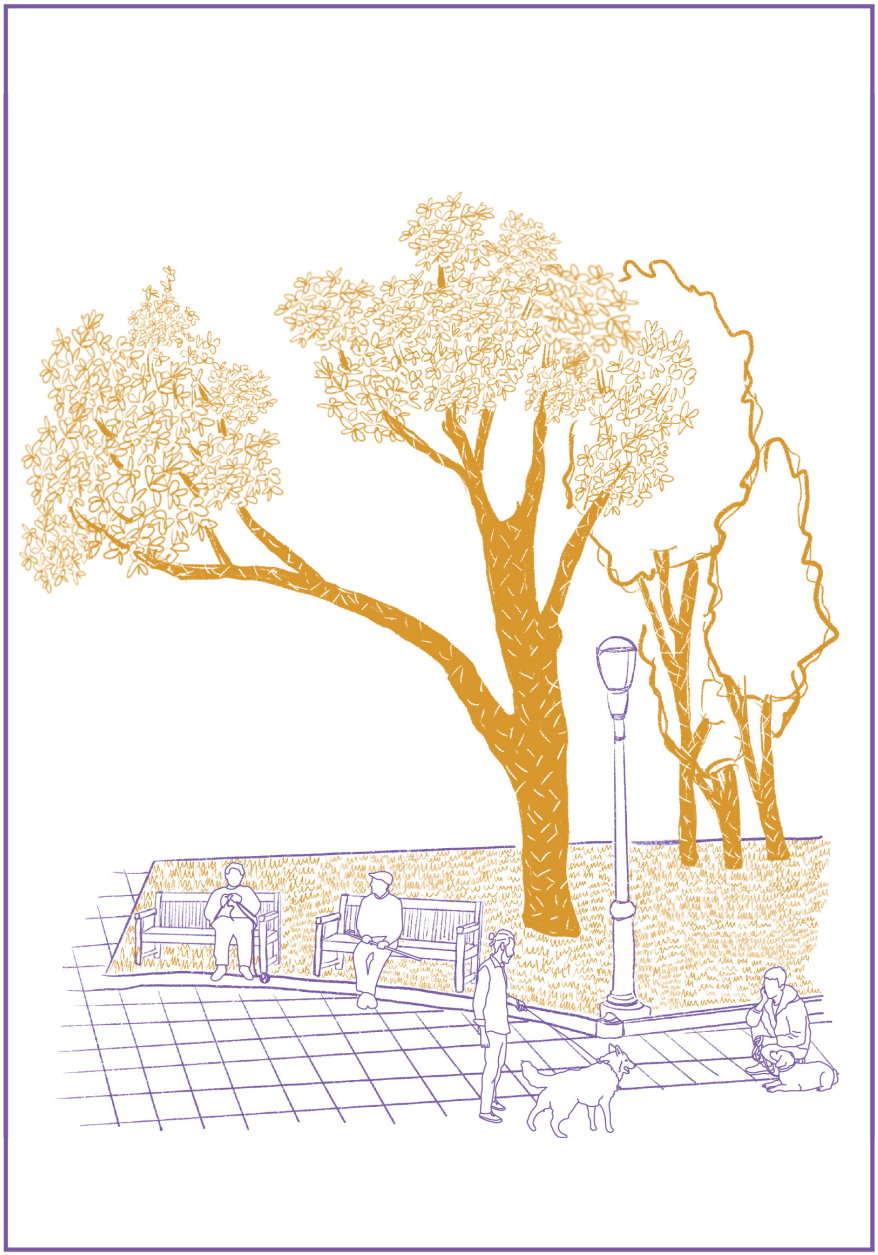


Three times a week, I work at a local repair hub, which I really enjoy. I'm glad to see that fixing things instead of throwing them away is becoming popular again. I mostly help by sewing people's clothes. I enjoy the company, the chance to meet new faces, and it's also a helpful addition to my low pension.

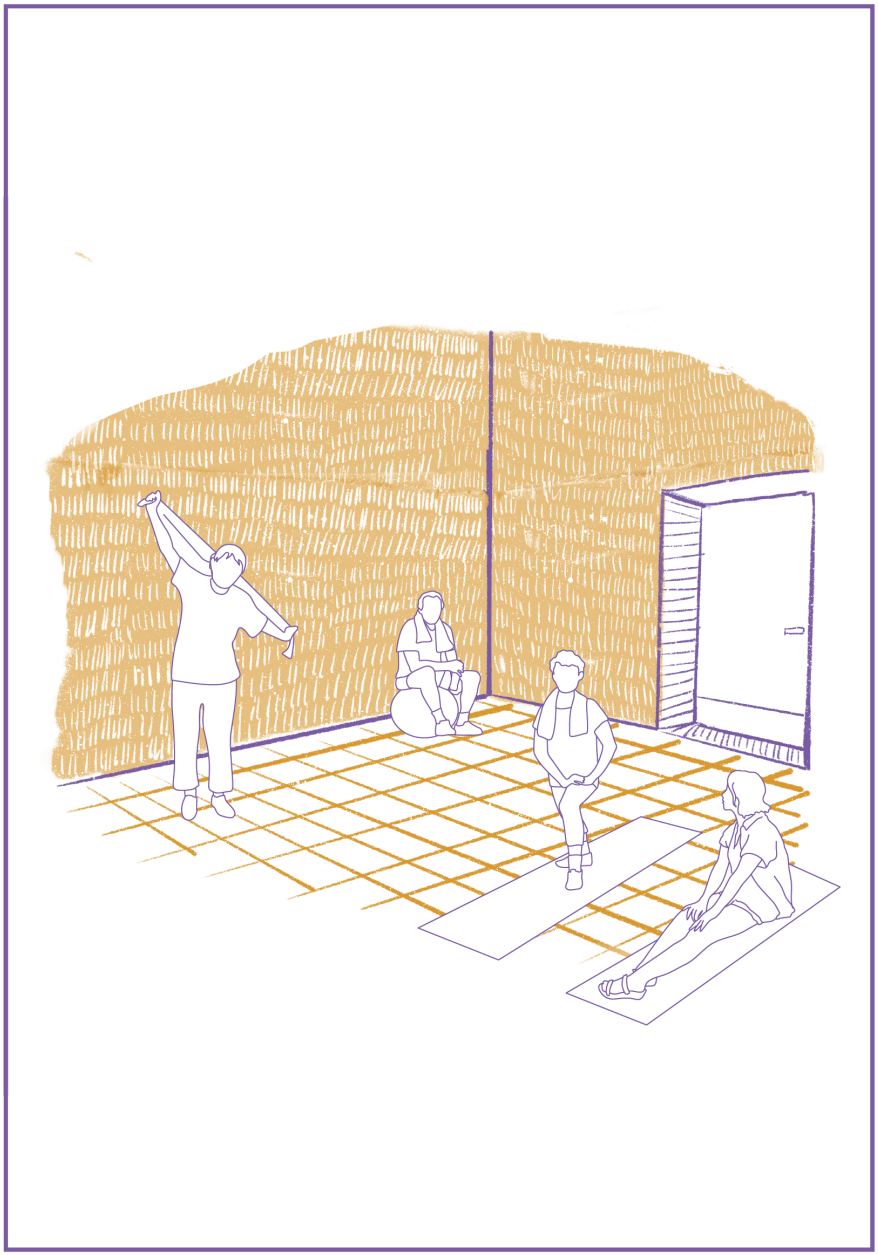


After work, I head home to our inter-generational household, where I live with six other people. I enjoy cooking for everyone, and they always make sure to help with the shopping. Over time, we've really built a lovely sense of community together.

In the afternoons, I like to sit outside in the courtyard, where I always run into a few neighbors. We usually spend some time gardening together, it's a nice way to relax and catch up. I'm often asked to keep an eye on the children for a few hours, which I'm happy to do.



I enjoy going to the nearby park to walk or simply sit for a while. I often meet my friend János there, and I like watching people go by while I sit on one of the benches, knitting.



I like to end my day by walking to the school just two blocks away. In the evenings, they open the gym there to hold exercise classes for people in the neighborhood. I go twice a week with a few friends—it's good for my leg, which still gives me some trouble now and then, and the movement really helps keep it from stiffening up.

Conclusions

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?

This graduation project set out to explore and propose strategies for a more caring city, with a particular focus on the needs of elderly residents. The research combined literature review, fieldwork, and spatial analysis to understand the current conditions and challenges. Based on these insights, design proposals were developed for the outer areas of Budapest's VII. district. The overarching aim was to open up a conversation about how we understand and prioritize care in urban environments, envisioning a city where care forms the foundation of everyday life.

It is essential to recognize that elderly-friendly cities are, in fact, better cities for everyone. By designing spaces that foster informal care, we create opportunities for social interaction, empowerment, and spatial justice. Interventions like adding more public seating, accessible toilets, or shaded resting areas do not only support older adults—they benefit children, caregivers, and all residents alike. Globally, the urgency of adapting cities for ageing populations is increasingly acknowledged, and this conversation must be met with action at the local level.

Focusing on Budapest's VII. district, the research highlights how this historical urban fabric remains underutilized and directionless. While neighboring districts are sites of both bottom-up tactical urbanism and top-down rehabilitation projects, often with mixed success or questionable impact, the VII. district still lacks a clear, cohesive vision. Many of its buildings are aging, inefficient, and under-maintained, and solutions for improving their physical condition and social life remain unresolved. A significant disconnect also exists between residents and the municipal government, limiting collective action. A combined approach, integrating community initiatives with municipal support is offering the most promising path forward.

A key outcome of the design exploration was to question and reimagine the boundaries between public and private space. By introducing transitional zones and semi-public spaces, such as reactivated courtyards, open ground floors, the project proposes spatial strategies that support informal interaction, accessibility, and shared use. These spaces can offer free, welcoming environments for older adults while fostering intergenerational connections and a stronger sense of community.

The concept of the age-friendly city is of global relevance. Therefore, it is valuable to extract some universal insights and recommendations from this local case, principles that could be adapted and applied in other urban contexts facing similar demographic and spatial challenges. To close this research, I propose three guiding principles working toward more inclusive and caring cities, especially for older adults:
To close this research, I propose three guiding principles for those working toward more inclusive and caring cities, especially for older adults:

Supporting more than physical needs

When designing for the elderly, it's important to recognize that healthy aging involves more than just adjusting the environment to meet changing physical abilities. While accessibility, safety, and comfort are essential, they are only part of the picture. Mental and emotional well-being are just as critical—and they are deeply shaped by social connection.

Designing with care means creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and support the formation of social networks. This includes opportunities for intergenerational interaction, informal encounters, and shared experiences. By acknowledging the full spectrum of needs , both physical and emotional, we can design environments that not only support aging, but celebrate it.

Rethink care as a process unfolding over time

Rather than simply reacting to demographic shifts, cities must anticipate how care needs will evolve, both in scale and in character. As the population ages, not only will more people require care, but the forms of care, social, physical, and environmental, will also change. Designing with this long-term perspective allows for flexible, adaptable urban environments that can respond to shifting needs rather than merely accommodating current ones.

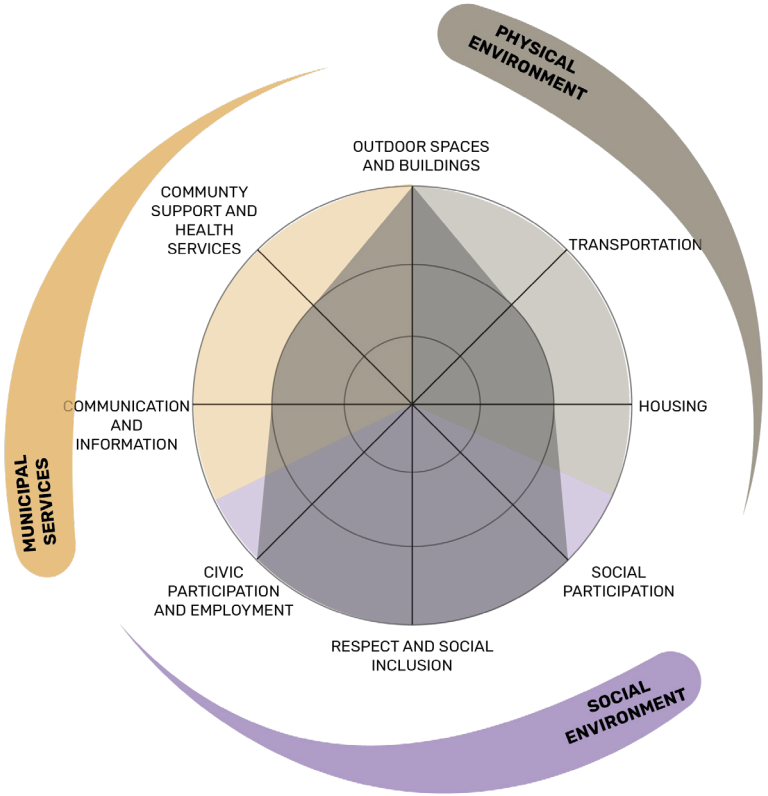
Reject segregated models of care

Caring should extend beyond formal institutions like hospitals or retirement homes. It must also go beyond familial or professional caregivers. Cities should enable shared, community-based care integrated into everyday spaces.

Acknowledge the diversity of ageing

Age alone does not define ability. Older adults have a wide range of physical and mental capacities, and designs must reflect this diversity rather than generalizing based on age.

Together, these principles advocate for a more inclusive, adaptive, and humane urban future, one where care is not a service to be hidden away, but a shared value embedded in the public realm.



Evaluation Through the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
The project focuses on improving everyday spaces, like adding seating, shade, and walkable streets. These changes support older adults' comfort and mobility while improving public space for everyone. Reactivated courtyards and open ground floors create safe, welcoming environments that invite informal use and interaction.

Transportation
Although public transport isn't the main focus, the proposal strengthens walkable connections and supports independent movement through pedestrian-friendly layouts and resting points.

Housing
The project acknowledges the poor condition of much of the district's housing and proposes incremental improvements through community use of shared spaces and gradual upgrades. Rather than replacing housing, it focuses on strengthening the social and spatial fabric around it.

Social Participation
A key strength of the design is its support for informal social life. By creating semi-public spaces and encouraging spontaneous interaction, the project helps reduce isolation and enables older adults to stay connected to their communities.

Respect and Social Inclusion
The design treats older adults as active members of the public, not just users with special needs. By encouraging intergenerational interaction, it promotes inclusion and challenges the segregation of age groups in the city.

Civic Participation
The project identifies the need for stronger collaboration between residents and local government. It supports civic participation by proposing spaces and systems that could enable bottom-up initiatives alongside institutional support.

Communication and Information
While not a central theme, the project supports this domain by promoting better access to information and knowledge for elderly residents.

Community Support and Health Services
Rather than focusing on institutional care, the design supports informal networks through shared spaces that allow neighbors to support each other, recognizing care as a social and spatial process.

The WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework provides important guidelines for adapting urban environments to the needs of aging populations. However, one key limitation is its emphasis on services and accommodations, which can unintentionally promote a passive view of older adults as simply recipients of care. This focus risks overlooking their potential as active, empowered members of the community who contribute meaningfully to social life.

This project challenges that perspective by emphasizing empowerment through design—creating spaces that not only meet the physical needs of elderly residents but also encourage social participation, intergenerational interaction, and community engagement.

REFLECTION

On the relation between my graduation project topic, the master track, and the master programme

My graduation project aligns closely with my Master Track (Urbanism) and the broader MSc Urbanism program by addressing the interconnected challenges of social and environmental transitions in urban spaces.

The Metropolitan Ecologies of Places studio, where I have conducted my thesis, provides a strong framework for exploring socio-ecological transitions and the critical relationship between design, space, and life. This studio's three primary approaches: designing places, designing space and life, and designing processes, resonate with my project's aim to understand how the global care crisis manifests spatially and how it affects both people and the environment.

By focusing on elderly people as a vulnerable group, my project examined how urban spaces can better support aging populations while also contributing to climate adaptation and resilience. This dual focus on social and ecological challenges directly reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the Urbanism Master Track, which integrates spatial, environmental, social and political perspectives. The thesis references a variety of concepts based on feminist moral theories and political, philosophical concepts. Emphasizing concerns about the care crisis combined with a larger perspective on the aging of Hungary's population.

Additionally, the MSc program encourages holistic, research-based, and solution-oriented approaches to urban issues. My project embodies this by combining spatial analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, literature review, and climate-conscious design strategies to propose interventions that foster care, social cohesion, and climate adaptation in Budapest.

On methodology

The primary goal of this research was to explore how the care crisis, particularly its impact on the elderly, manifests in urban space. Starting from global questions, I examined how social and environmental aspects of care translate to the local context of Budapest. A thorough literature review helped ground the project theoretically, drawing from both international and Hungarian sources to understand the broader crisis of care and the effects of Hungary's weakened welfare system. This foundation shaped both my research questions and methodology.

From the beginning, I used Christopher Alexander's pattern language as a core methodology. It offered a structured, iterative framework to identify recurring spatial and social patterns and to translate insights from research into actionable design tools. The method proved especially helpful during moments of uncertainty, offering a consistent reference point. Later, I organized a workshop with fellow Urbanism students to test the clarity and usability of the patterns. This collaborative session both validated the existing patterns and inspired new ones.

To connect the research with political and economic contexts, I conducted a policy and media analysis, reviewing Hungary's elderly care policies and comparing perspectives from independent and state-aligned media. This helped illustrate how narratives around urban care are constructed and contested.

A key part of my approach was ethnographic fieldwork. Having lived in the area for several years, I had a basic familiarity, but lacked deep, long-standing ties to local residents. To address this, I conducted walk-and-talk interviews and informal conversations in public spaces. These allowed participants to guide both the route and the conversation, leading to authentic insights into their daily lives and urban experiences. The spontaneous, open-ended nature of these interactions was especially effective in revealing how elderly individuals navigate, adapt to, or are excluded from urban environments.

Urban analysis and mapping were used to overlay climate data and social vulnerability indicators, helping to locate the most at-risk neighborhoods and public spaces lacking care infrastructure. This analysis led me to focus on central Pest, particularly the outer part of district VII. Later public space analysis identified key spatial challenges and possible points of intervention.

I also used photography and fieldwork sketches to record spatial and social dynamics. Photographs captured informal uses, atmospheres, and care-related conditions that might be overlooked by traditional analysis. The sketches layered architectural features, street-level activity, and perceived social dynamics, offering a fuller picture of everyday life.

Reflection on the methods

The strength of this methodology lies in its interdisciplinary and multi-scalar approach, combining theory, lived experience, and spatial analysis. The pattern language framework allowed continuous reflection and adaptation, while the use of ethnography gave voice to those often excluded from top-down urban processes.

Mapping and analysis helped connect these lived realities with broader systemic trend. While challenges included the open-ended nature of fieldwork and the subjectivity of visual data, these methods ultimately enriched the research, helping me explore the care crisis in both structural and deeply human terms.

On academic relevance

While much research has focused on aging societies and climate change separately, the intersection of these two issues, particularly in terms of care and community, remains underexplored. This project proposes a socio-ecological approach to address these challenges together. Current age-friendly design often treats the elderly as a homogeneous group, neglecting important factors such as gender, occupation, religion, and community ties (Hammond & Saunders, 2021).

This project aims to address this gap by considering the diversity of elderly individuals in designing inclusive spaces. In Hungary, the concept of an “elderly-friendly city” is not widely discussed in urbanism, with most conversations limited to architecture. This research seeks to expand the conversation by integrating urban planning, social care, and climate resilience, offering a more holistic approach to aging in a changing environment.

Age-friendly initiatives frequently concentrate on formal care environments, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or medical institutions, while largely neglecting informal forms of care that take place in everyday public life. By prioritizing institutional care, such approaches risk reinforcing spatial and social segregation, often relocating older adults to peripheral areas of cities, removed from their familiar surroundings and support networks. These facilities are typically accessible only to wealthier individuals, leaving those with fewer resources increasingly isolated in their homes.

This growing inequality underscores the importance of promoting the aging in place paradigm in design and planning. Rather than removing elderly individuals from their communities, we should be focusing on how to adapt public spaces to support their inclusion, autonomy, and social connection. This thesis explores how shared urban environments can be reimagined to combat isolation and foster a stronger sense of belonging for older adults within their neighborhoods.

On societal relevance

The societal relevance of this project lies in its capacity to address urgent challenges at the intersection of aging populations, climate change, and the care crisis, issues that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups (Chatzidakis et al., 2020).
These pressures are particularly pronounced in Hungary, where the aging population is growing rapidly and existing social safety nets are increasingly strained. In moments of political and economic instability, spatial designers have a critical role to play: while broader systems are eroding, spatial design can act as a catalyst for change by shaping environments that support resilience, equity, and care.

At a time when care work remains undervalued, underpaid, and understaffed, it is especially important to promote support structures for older generations while also upholding their autonomy. This project aims to influence policy by advocating for strategies that strengthen social connections, encourage community-driven responses, and promote civic engagement. In doing so, it seeks not only to address the need

In Hungary, there is an urgent need for innovative interventions that can bridge the gaps in the current welfare system, which is increasingly inadequate in addressing the needs of elderly individuals, especially in rural and marginalized areas. The project seeks to highlight how fostering a sense of community, resilience, and intergenerational solidarity can provide meaningful solutions to both the care crisis and the impacts of climate change.

On assesing the value of transferability of my project results

Cities worldwide face the shared challenge of aging populations. A key goal is to help older adults remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible, supported by inclusive public spaces that promote interaction and caregiving. The findings of this project are transferable because they address these universal needs—how to design urban environments that foster social ties and provide infrastructure for care.

The research is grounded in care ethics, particularly Carol Gilligan's work, which views people not as isolated individuals but as beings in constant interdependence. This perspective urges urban planning to create spaces that support caregiving relationships, among family, neighbors, and communities.
A second pillar of the work is the link between care and climate adaptation. In dense, overheated areas like Budapest's inner districts, care-oriented spaces can also enhance climate resilience, offering shade, improving air quality, and managing water more effectively.

Using pattern language, ethnographic fieldwork, and urban analysis, the project provides a flexible, site-sensitive framework. Its core principles, designing for inclusion, accessibility, and car can be applied across urban contexts.

Urbanism in times of crisis

Crises have always been part of human history, but today, due to globalization and the acceleration of information and consumption, crises are increasingly experienced on a global scale. What might have once been local or regional now affects us all. Neoliberal structures shape every aspect of our lives: how we live, how we spend our time and money, and even how we relate to each other. These systems have contributed to growing loneliness, mental health issues, and the erosion of social bonds. Public spaces have not been spared either, many have become commodified, excluding those who don't fit into commercialized norms of behavior or appearance.

At the same time, the environmental crisis has become both a global issue and an immediate one, no longer distant, but something we feel personally and locally. My generation grew up with a constant awareness of these intertwined crises, often accompanied by a sense of paralysis rather than empowerment. The relentless flow of information has brought the world closer, but also intensified the feeling of pressure, urgency, and sometimes hopelessness.

In this complex reality, I see urbanism as a powerful lens, one that allows us to understand and respond to these overlapping crises. It holds the potential to propose alternatives, reimagine our relationships, and offer spaces where care and connection can flourish. With my graduation project, I wanted to offer a small ray of hope, focusing on the elderly, one of the most marginalized groups in today's productivity-obsessed, individualistic society. The elderly are often reduced to political talking points, rather than seen as people with value, history, and wisdom. The intergenerational bonds that once formed naturally through shared living and caring have weakend, replaced by isolation many times.

Through this project, I wanted to bring back everyday, organic acts of care, something that feminist theory has long emphasized. I believe that only through collective thinking, shared responsibility, and mutual support can we begin to navigate these crises. In uncertain times, the most powerful thing we can do is start small, in our neighborhoods, in our relationships, in our design practice—and begin building something better from the ground up.

Personal reflection

From the beginning of the year, I knew I wanted to dedicate my graduation project to my home country and engage with some of its current social challenges. I had a vague but strong intention to focus on elderly people, a vulnerable group whose experience reflects both local issues and broader global trends. The case of ageing allowed me to connect a country-specific lens with a global conversation, as many societies today are facing the complexities of an ageing population. At the same time, the gradual erosion of open, inclusive public space has made socially engaged urban design more critical than ever. This intersection of space and social life has always been the part of urbanism that speaks to me most.

Early in the process, I encountered the concept of care ethics, and later its expanded articulation in the idea of the care crisis (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). These frameworks offered a clear, critical lens through which to explore the topic of ageing, not just as a demographic issue, but as one rooted in the distribution of care, responsibility, and visibility in urban space.

This graduation year has been a rollercoaster journey. One important decision was choosing Pattern Language as a core methodology from the very beginning. It became a reliable framework to structure my thinking and return to whenever I felt lost or overwhelmed. Even when the process was uncertain or difficult, I remained excited and committed to the topic.

I particularly enjoyed the fieldwork phase. Despite already being familiar with the site, being on the ground gave me a new perspective and helped me connect with the area and its residents on a much deeper level. I found joy in taking photos and making sketches, observing everyday life, and letting the place speak for itself. The interviews I conducted early on were incredibly helpful, not only to understand the daily realities of elderly residents, but also to emotionally connect to the topic. Some conversations were difficult, even emotional, but many were also filled with laughter and lightness. I'm deeply grateful for those moments, and I'll carry them with me.

Approaching the P3 presentation, I began to question how to translate the research and insights into spatial design. The period between P3 and P4 was especially challenging, filled with doubts, delays, and moments of frustration. I pushed the design process later than I should have, but I'm thankful for my mentors' patience and encouragement during that time. Eventually, I did enter the design phase, and that transition felt like a real step forward.

Through the process, I found myself gradually working at smaller and smaller scales. What started as broader urban strategies slowly shifted toward detailed, human-centered interventions. I realized that with a topic as soft and nuanced as aging and care, the strength of the design lies not in large architectural gestures, but in small, intentional decisions. It's about being careful with what and how I place things. The real impact happens at the human scale, on eye level, where everyday life unfolds.

I also came to understand that a final design isn't the ultimate goal of the project. Instead, the value lies in the entire process, the ongoing work of listening, questioning, adjusting, and designing with care. Especially when dealing with the challenges of an aging population and aging infrastructure, it's this responsive, process-driven approach that supports resilient, long-term futures.

Overall, this project has been transformative for me. It pushed me to try new methods, to reflect deeply, and to keep questioning while also trusting myself. It's been a journey of growing, reconnecting, and learning, both about the subject and about how I want to practice urbanism moving forward. For that, I'm very thankful.

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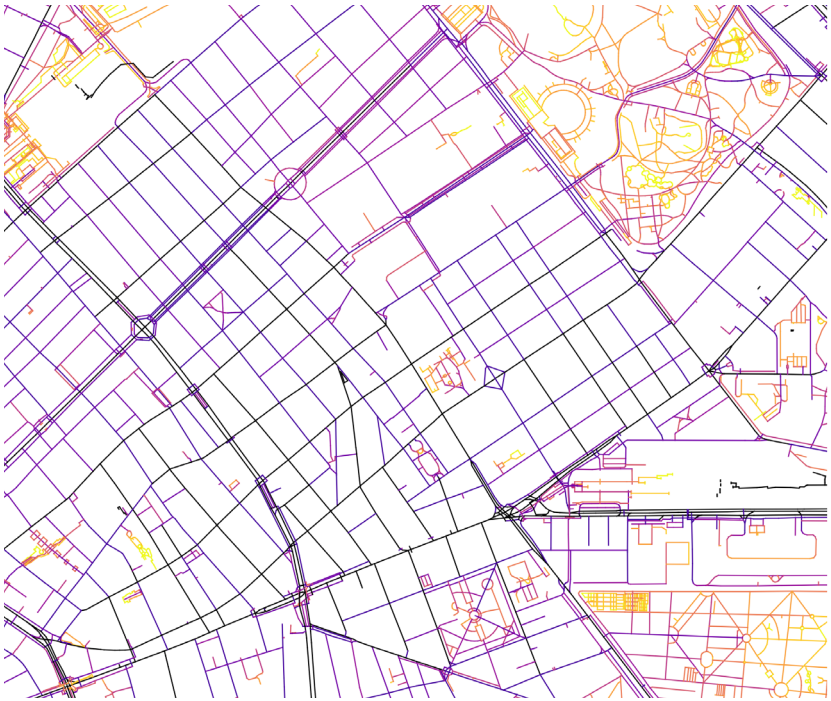
Appendix

space syntax - angular choice



A quantitative approach was then applied to support the research with data-driven insights. Space syntax analysis was used for its ability to systematically identify underused or disconnected urban spaces. Angular Choice Analysis was conducted to assess how likely each street segment is to be chosen as part of a route through the network. Within the neighborhood itself, the results showed that due to the rigid grid layout and uniform geometry, there is little street hierarchy, no particular streets stand out as significantly more used than others. However, at the edges of the neighborhood, larger and more important streets do emerge more clearly, indicating stronger through-movement potential at a broader urban scale.