

Daily Life in the Suburbs

Tool kit for a sustainable densification of single family house neighbourhoods

Diploma Project in Architecture EPFL - Valerie Linda Weibel

Present

One becomes two

Enlargement

Substitute

low rise high density

Urban Planning



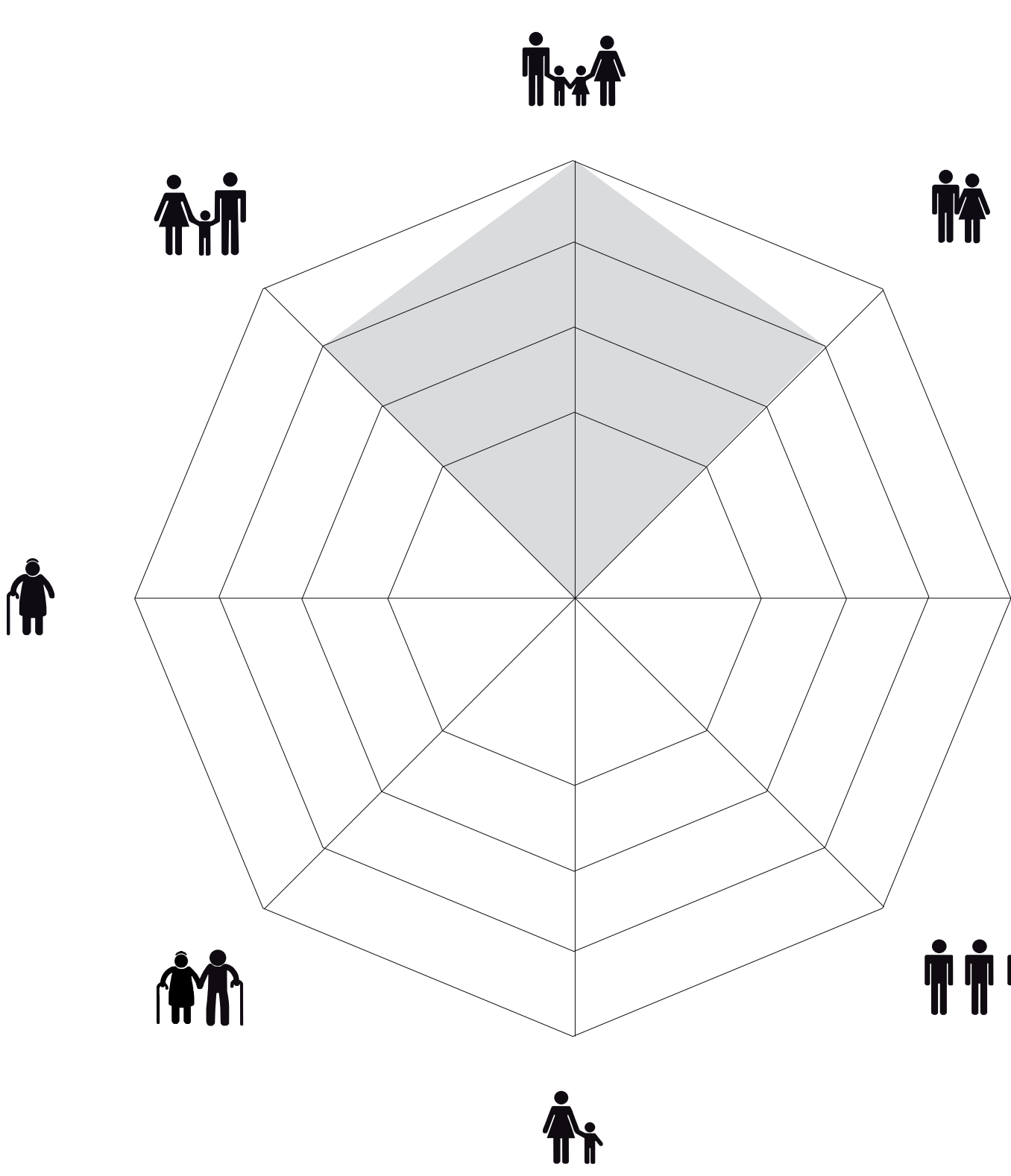
Diversity



SINGLE FAMILY HOUSE LANDSCAPE

Often, experts and planners accuse districts of single-family houses being a blurred residential area that is responsible for all the urban sprawl. Frequently the single-family house districts have been portrayed unflattering. A symbol of uniformity and standardisation of the lifestyle of nowadays society. But in the first place, parallel to this very critical view, the single-family house is an experimental space of every individual to choose his way of living. It can be the small private paradise, a comfortable and safe nest where children can grow up and develop freely, a garden where a new passion for planting can evolve.

In this thesis I emphasize and try to answer the question how these two anti-thetic poles can be combined: creating sustainable districts of single family houses that fulfill the expectations of the residents but at the same time perceive their needs and accept their way of live.

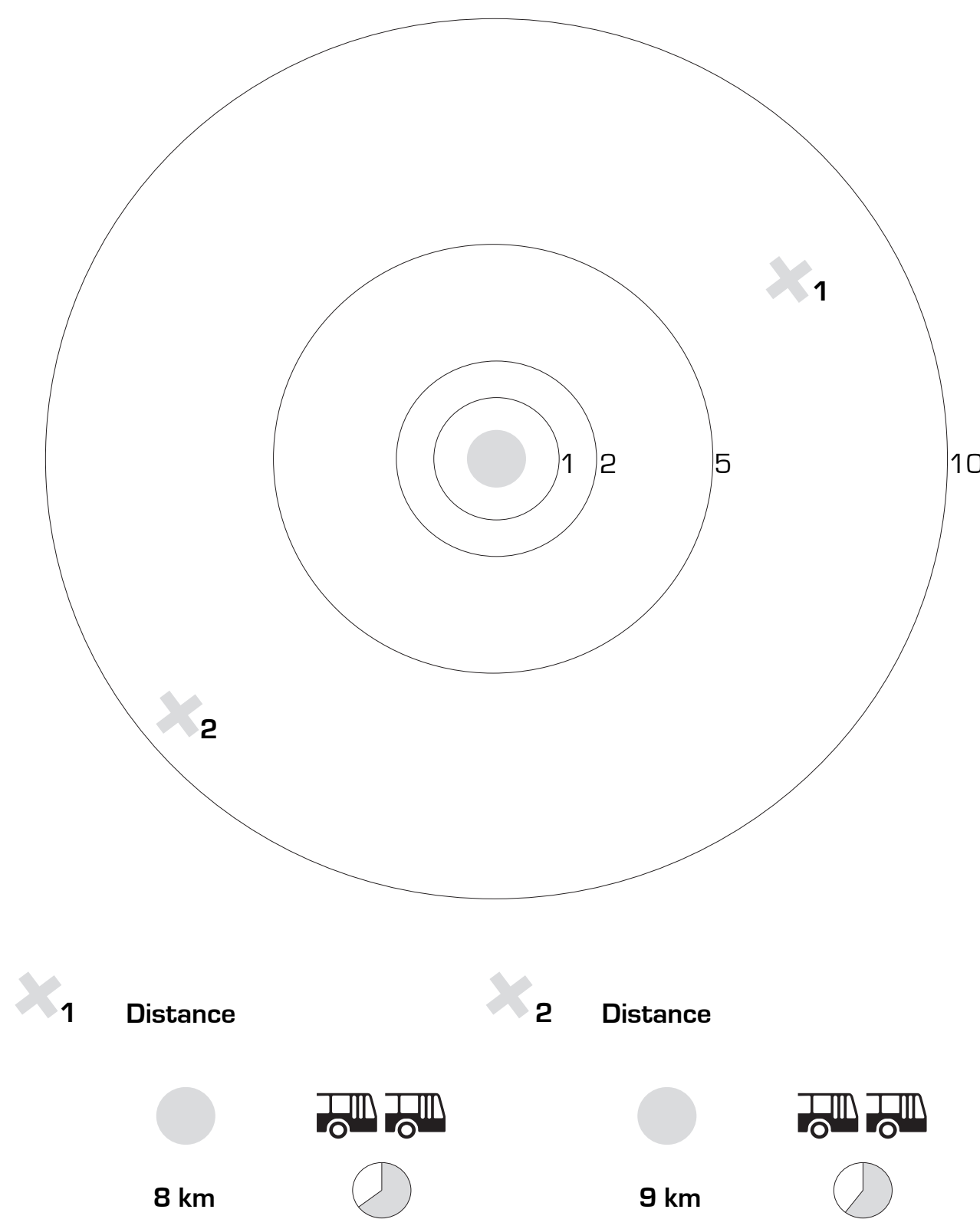


SUBURBAN FAMILY

In general, middle class families live in suburban regions although it was been observed over the passed few years that the number of per capita households reduces as, in the meantime, children born in the 90s have grown up and moved out.

At present, the parents live by their own in their one-family house.

But a trend can also be seen that middle-aged married couples buy or build houses in the country side.

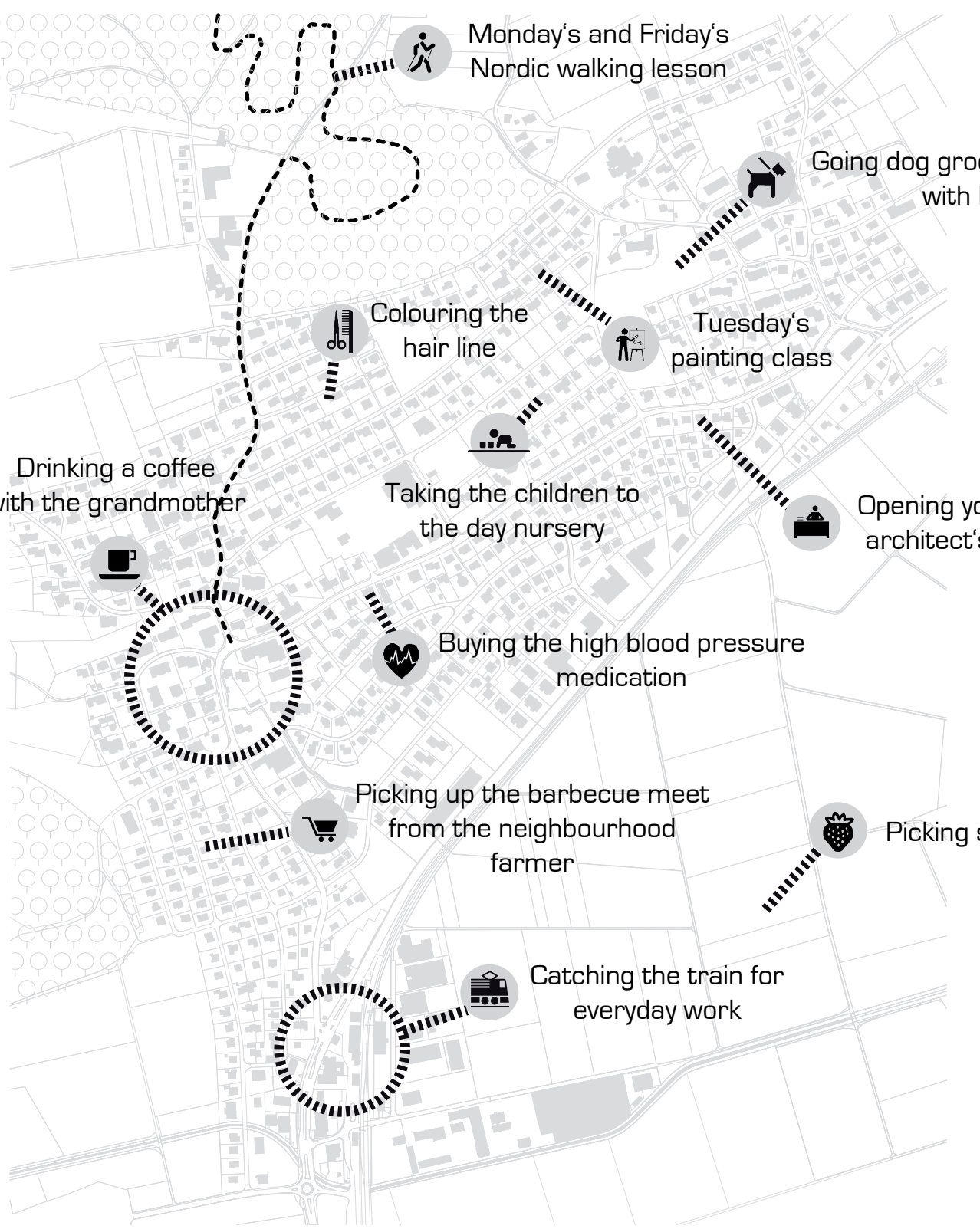


CARE FACILITY

Nowadays, senior citizens who cannot maintain their houses anymore by themselves have two possibilities: Either they move to an assisted living facility or to a residential care home for elderly. Both of these options are associated with long waiting lists.

In either case, mostly the parties involved have to leave their social environment and relocate some kilometres. Due to the fact that elderly people are often not very mobile anymore they are reliant on intricate and complicated bus connections to visit friends and family.

The new typology "one becomes two" offers a possibility for seniors to stay within short distances of their social networks and neither to be depended on waiting list nor nursing services. In this model, family members can assist each other in nursing, tending the gardens, childminding or learning to apply new technologies.

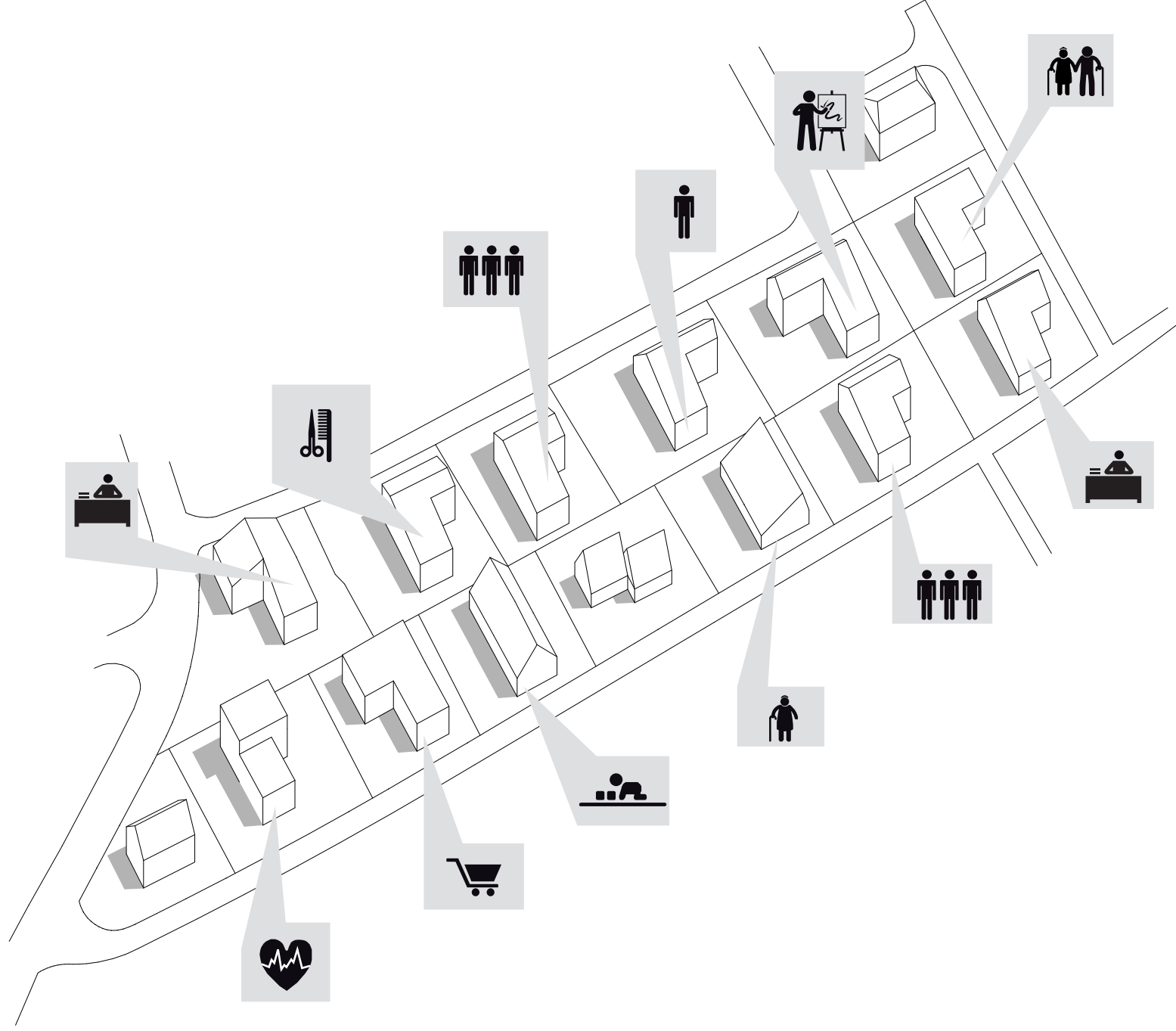


PUBLIC SERVICE NETWORK

The architectural „Enlargement“ - typology completes the existing public monofunctional service network - such as example: bus stations, trains, small shops and industry - and covers its deficits.

I propound new complementary programs to the existing monofunctional areas of single family house neighbourhoods.

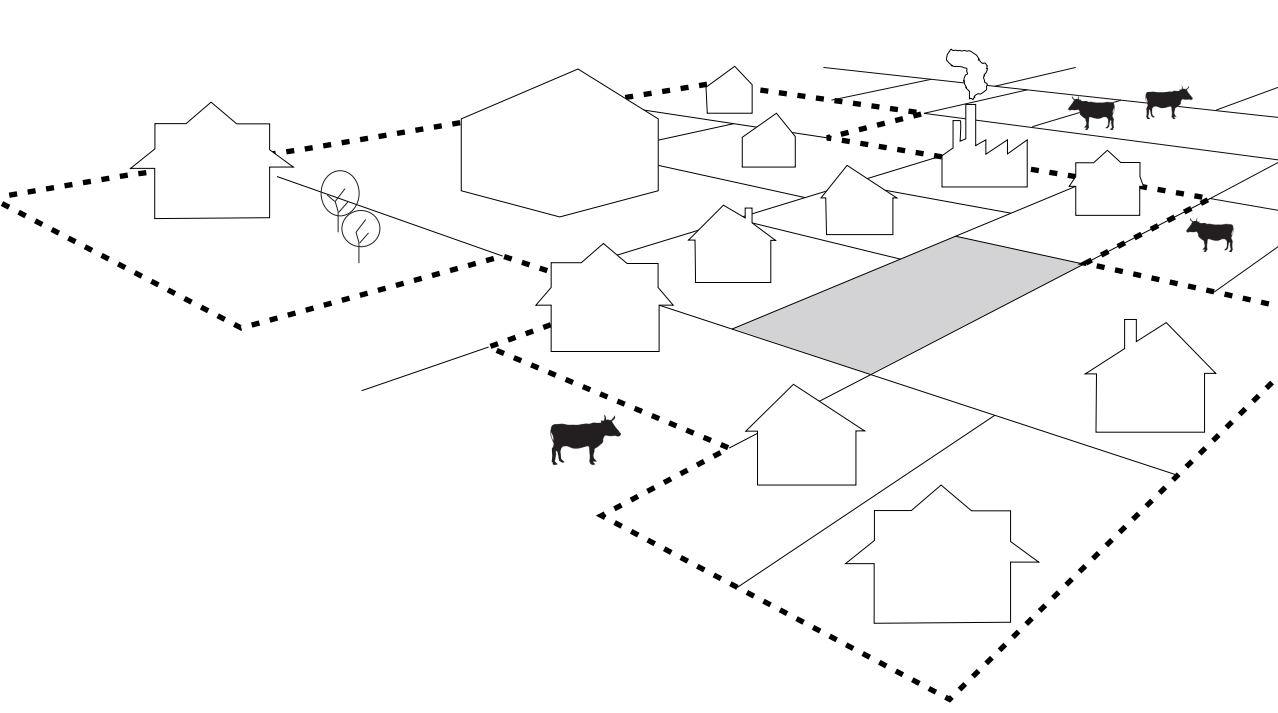
by doing this, new cultural and social programs can highly facilitate the life of citizens and increase the quality of life.



PROGRAM MIXITY

I disapprove of the conventional zoning plans which only allow a residential use within single family house neighbourhoods.

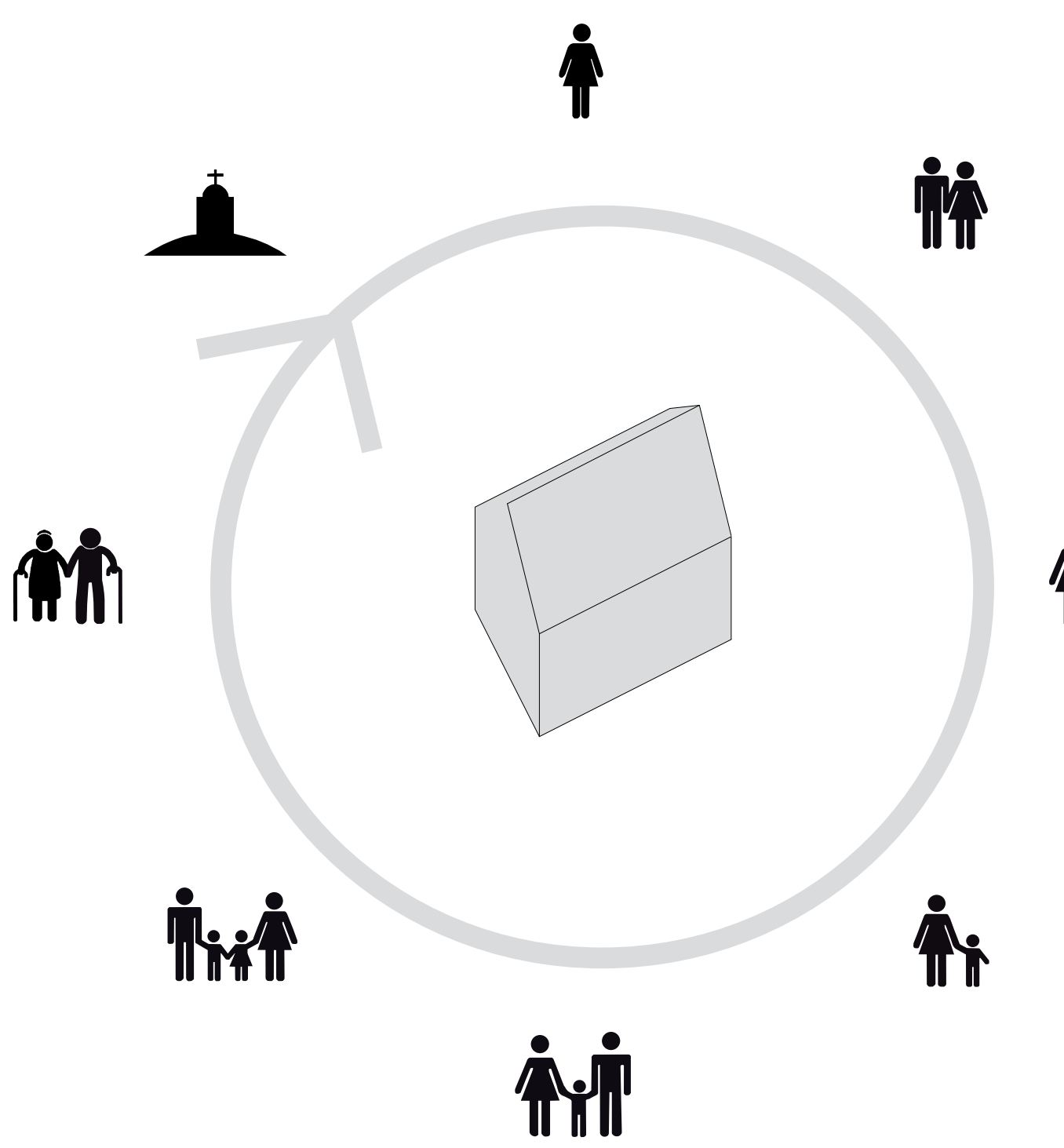
I furthermore make a stand against the current regulation, an interaction of different functions, and for a mixed program to valorize and simplify suburban everyday life.



FILLING THE VOID

Within a community there are several reserves of utilisation which have to be activated while densifying the way of living. One of these is the conversion - for example neighbourhoods with old stocks, as well as undeveloped areas in the inner of the settlement parameter - for example gaps between buildings or lots of land for construction.

At the most, the filling of unused spaces within the residential area perimeter has a huge impact on the sustainability of soil resources in Switzerland. Research of the ETH Zurich have proven that the sum of inner usage reserve have an enormous potential all over Switzerland. According to their calculations 0.7 to 1.9 million new residents could be able to live in this specific vacant zone without having to use none of the cultivated land.

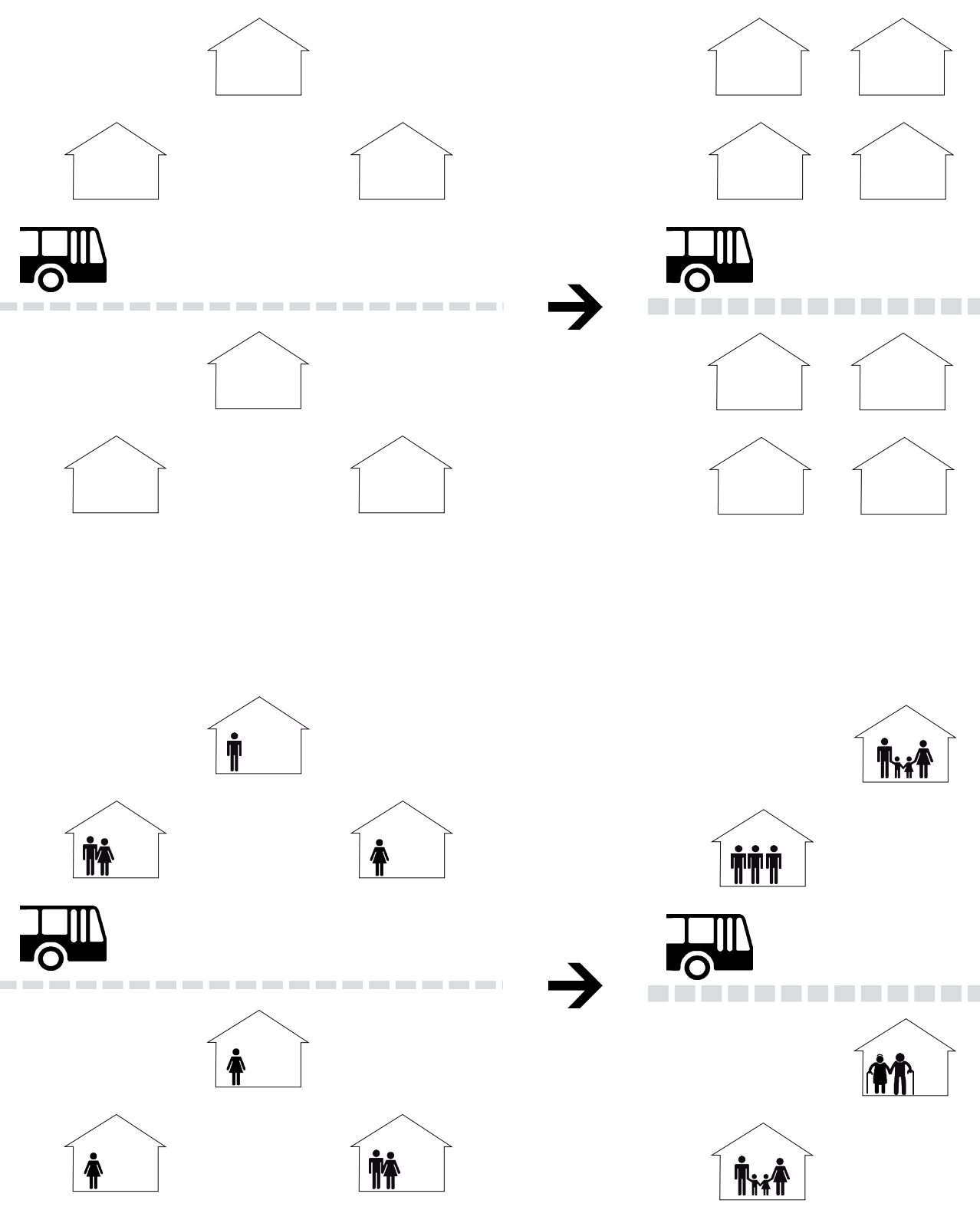


LIFE TIME CYCLE

The architectural typology of the „Substitute“ does not focus on a specific population. This typology promotes social, cultural and generational diversity, whilst seeking a balanced form of educating young people, a productive adult population and an elderly energetic one.

I suggest a neighbourhood being compared to a container of an entire life time cycle.

For this reason I propose buildings that support all the different changes in personal life, which are: founding and enlarging a family, separation, independence, senior citizenship, flat sharing communities, and so on.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The agglomeration of a village or city has an essential influence on the density of public transport. In this respect one can ask which one of the two is the initial point. Does a village necessarily need to be densified to be profitable for an enlarged public transport network, or does public transport has to be improved at first to attract newcomers in the neighbourhood at all?

If a village is already made accessible to public transport, the densification has a positive impact on the frequency of public transportation. In turn, the improved capacity supports the idea of a precinct neighbourhood of single-family houses. If a village and its public transport network are very dense, it is more attractive for residents to prefer public transportation over a car.

