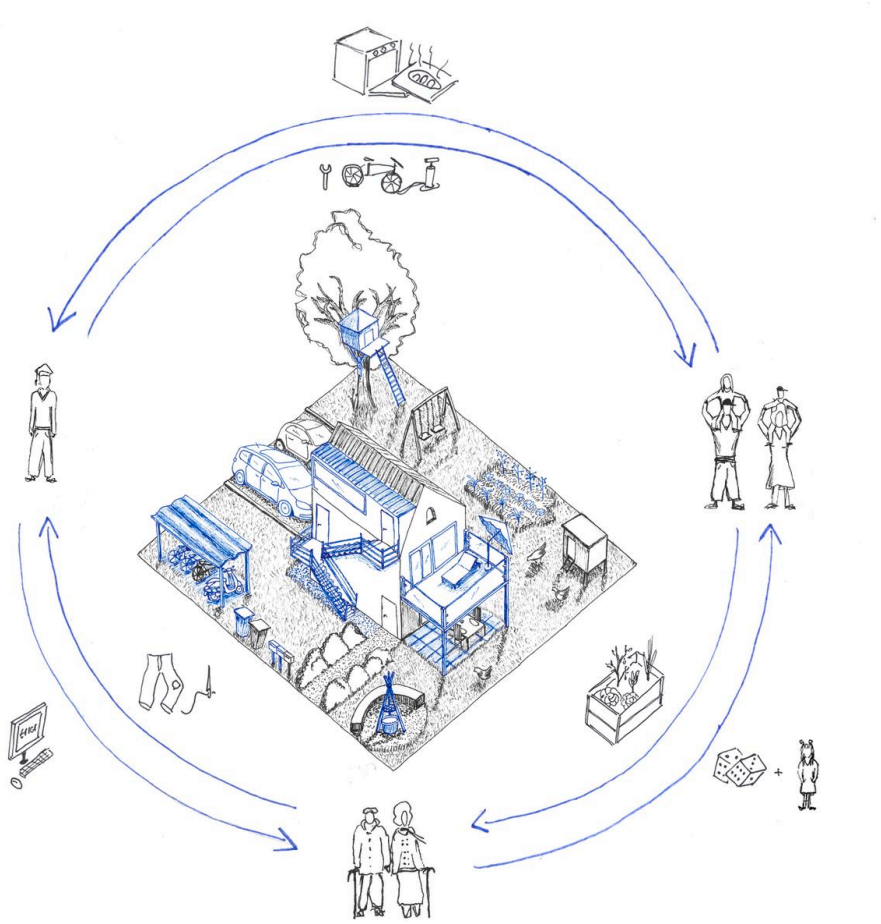
ETH Zurich Department of Architecture
ARCHITECTURE OF TERRITORY
Chair of Architecture
and Territorial Planning
Professor Milica Topalović

Village Life
Spring 2022

Zumikon

Landsehnsucht: Zurich's Very Own Village

Manuela Foscaldi and Carla Ringenbach



The *Landsehnsucht* led many wealthy people from Zurich to Zumikon, who build a single-family house for their children in the green meadow. 20 years later, after the children have moved out, these neighbourhoods have lost on vibrancy and what remains is an ageing population of home owners and high earners. Zumikon's single-family house landscape of 63 percent is above the Swiss average. These houses are mainly inhabited by pensioners. This results in 80 percent of the single-family houses not being fully occupied, while more than 60 percent of them are owned by 60 years old and older. As a result, many older people in Zumikon live alone in a big single-family house. At the same time, one third of all Swiss pensioners feel isolated. We want to counteract this trend with our proposal of intergenerational living in the existing single-family houses. As there is no need to built more but just to adjust the already built fabric. This means that the goal should be to reach a social density and so to increase the number of interpersonal interactions. By doing so the village should be seen as a social concept to be implemented in the single-family houses in Zumikon to reactivate the social responsibility deriving from the idea of a village. Families or students could move in a single-family house with an older person, which would lead to more interactions, support and less isolation. Old and young would live together again.

It Was Never Really a Village: A Brief Architecture History of Zumikon

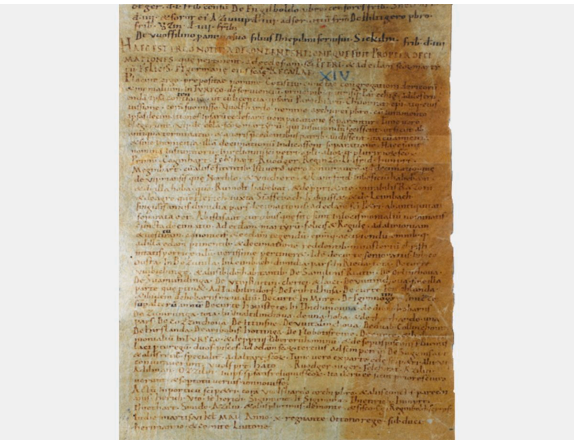


Zumikon was never really a village, while it is a place of paradoxes. Thanks to its proximity to Zurich, it became the projection of *Landsehnsucht*. Early in history, Zumikon was a popular recreation area for the citizens of Zurich. With the construction of the Forchbahn, the first rich citizens of Zurich came to build their villas with mountain views in Zumikon. Later in the 1950s, an academic urban elite came, who was looking for life in the countryside but not in the village. Over the years, the idea of *Landsehnsucht* changed and with it the typology of the buildings. What remains is a large number of single-family houses and the desire to be finally a village.

A Day Excursion into the Countryside



Zumikon ceased to have a typical village economy at a very early stage. The construction of the Forchbahn created new opportunities for day tourism for the people of Zurich. It offered a variety of local recreation areas, including Zumikon with walking trails, vantage points and a guesthouse. Zumikon´s proximity to the city attracted wealthy Zurich residents who built their country estate with a view of the mountains.



The first mention of Zumikon as "Zumminga", 946.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.



The three hamlets Zumikon,
Waltikon, and Gössikon, 1827.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.

Until 1900, Zumikon had no history at all, only a past in which almost nothing happened. But history means that something happened or is happening. Almost only the names of the three parts of the municipality have been mentioned as isolated references to their existence. The first reference to the existence of Zumikon dates back to the year 946. Zumikon was known as Zumminga and was only a hamlet like Waltilinchova (Waltikon) and Cozzinchova (Gössikon). In 1803, the three hamlets finally became a municipality with the name Zumikon.



Typical homework in Switzerland, working on a Loom like in Zumikon, 1880. Source: Swiss National Museum. [https://sammlung.nationalmuseum.ch/de/list/collection?detailID=100327429]



Typical Farmehouse in Zumikon, 1908. Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.

From early on, work in Zumikon did not correspond to the traditional village economy, which is agriculture. Home weaving was already widespread in the 18th century and remained the most important and in some families the only occupation until the 19th century. So in 1850 there were already 221 people working at the silk weaving and only 174 people in agriculture. However, this shift to the cottage industry and handcraft did not lead to a new house typology. The farms were merely adapted internally to the changed needs of the inhabitants and became multi-purpose farms, but it remained a farmhouse architecture.
From 1850 to 1899, at the beginning of industrialisation, there were no factories in Zumikon and thus no fuel for an economic boost. Life in Zumikon came to a standstill and to an stagnating economic. As a result, Zumikon remained a village of home weavers, small craftsmen and some farmers until the early 20th century.



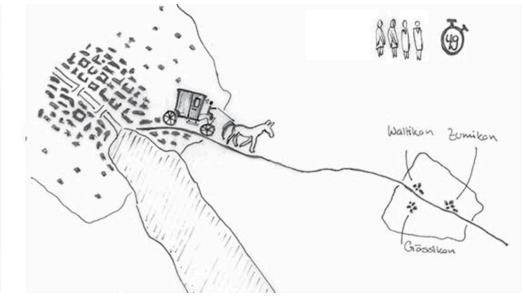
Carriage Service, 1836-1906. Source: vhf-egg. [http://www.vhf-egg.ch/bilder/erkunde-die-strecke-der-fb/zumikon.html]



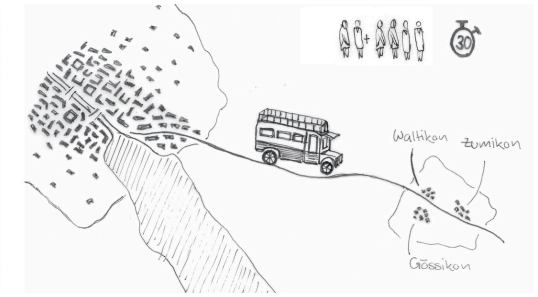
Bus Service, 1905-1912. Source: vhf-egg. [http://www.vhf-egg.ch/bilder/erkunde-die-strecke-der-fb/zumikon.html]



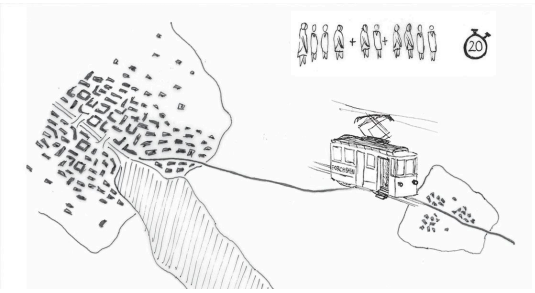
Forchbahn, 1912.
Source: vhf-egg. [http://www.vhf-egg.ch/bilder/erkunde-die-strecke-der-fb/zumikon.html]



Transport capacity and velocity of the carriage service, 1836-1906.

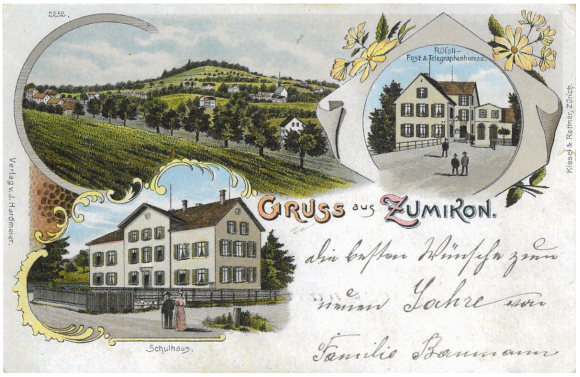


Transport capacity and velocity of the bus service, 1905-1912.

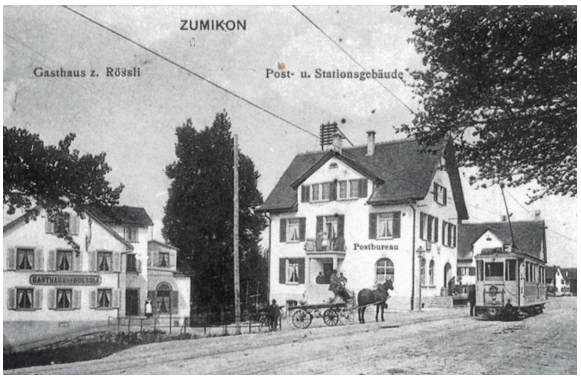


Transport capacity and velocity of the Forchbahn, 1912.

The stagnation was interrupted with the construction of the Forchbahn in 1912, which connected Zumikon with Stadelhofen Zurich. As a result, Zumikon experienced an upswing. Nevertheless, it had always been connected to Zurich. Initially by a carriage service, which allowed the transport of four people in about 49 minutes. The introduction of the bus service allowed the transport to be more efficent with six people in 30 minutes. Since 1912 the Forchbahn, which transported ten people in only 18 minutes. This conscious decision to build a tram as a very urban element was basically built for the people of Zurich.

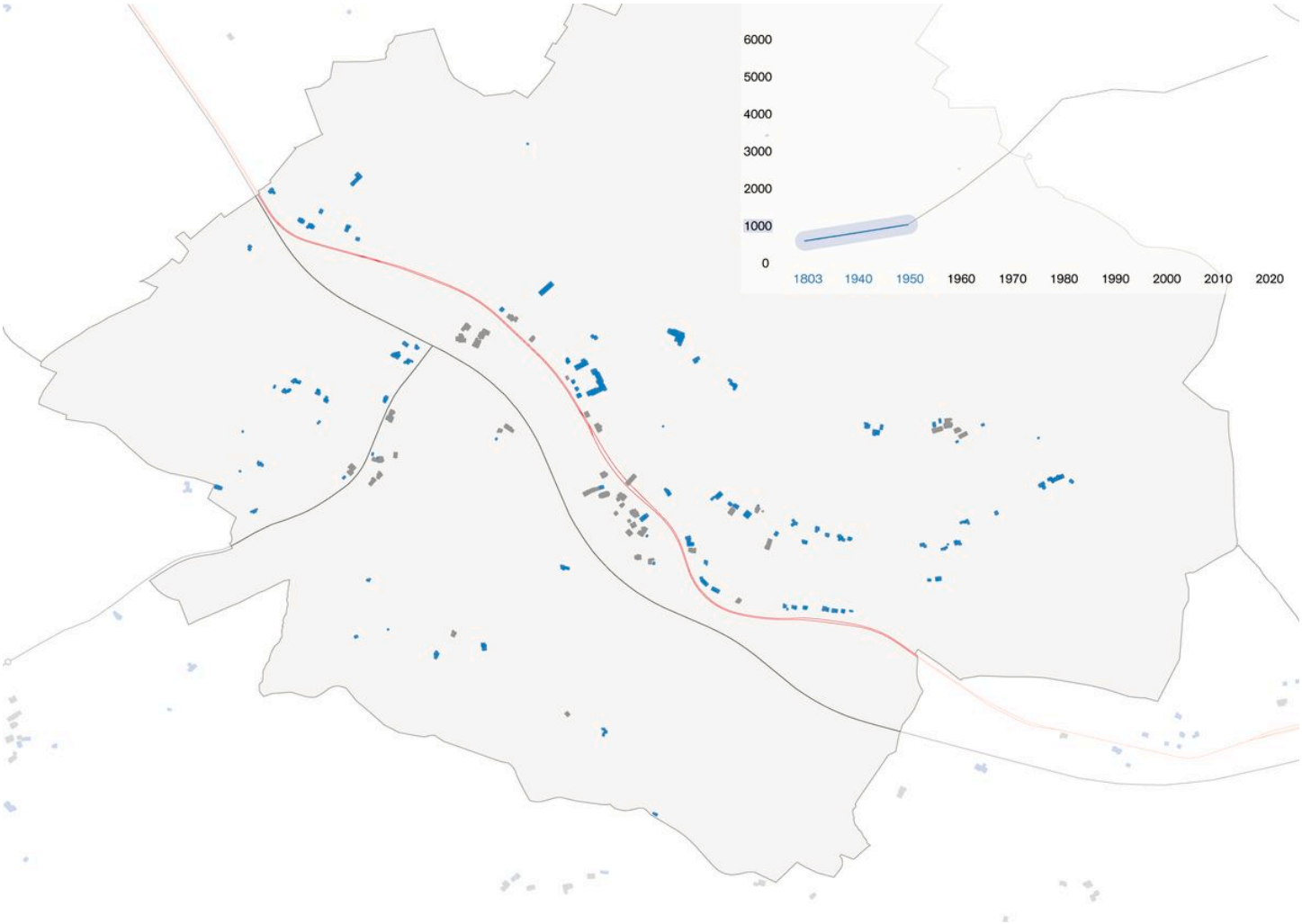


Zumikon as a Recreation Area,
Postcard 1876.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.



Guesthouse “zum Rössli” alongside
the Forchbahn line, 1912.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.

The idea was to offer Zurichs residents a one-day excursion to the countryside. This in return promoted life in Zumikon, making it more accessible and attractive. Zumikon, for its part, promoted this daily tourism among other things with a guesthouse, restaurants alongside the tram line and with sightseeing postcards.



It was Never Really a Village,
Building and population development, 1912.
Source: History Zumikon [https://www.zumikon.ch/geschichte/7501].

Buildings 1912-1950 Buildings until 1912 Forch line



Grieder House, 1928.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.



Grieder Billboard, 1928.
Source: Bongenie Grieder.
[https://www.bongenie-grieder.ch/de/bongenie-grieder-werbeplakat-fur-s-strandbad-zu-grieder-cie-bunt-wohnen-a229095-uniq?gclid=Cj0KCQjw1tGUBhDXARIsAIJx01kXKpaAiyacLSn8tNSxaDp3PuGv-T9h8q2ic5y6MYYUaIbSg6s08dIaAtglEALw_wcB]

The municipality was around 1912, after the building of the Forchbahn, less than 1,000 inhabitants and hardly built up. Nevertheless, this new connection to Zurich, the housing shortage and, limited building land in the City of Zurich, resulted in a local economic boom and in an increased building activity in Zumikon. Which was mainly driven by the Zurich elite. In the Chapf area, well-known businessmen from Zurich built first country houses and villas. Among them was Edgar Grieder, the owner of the famous Zurich silk boutique. He built his country house in the Chapf area in 1928, which offered a lot of green space and a beautiful view of the mountains and the lake. The built house had an insurance value three times higher than the church in Zumikon.



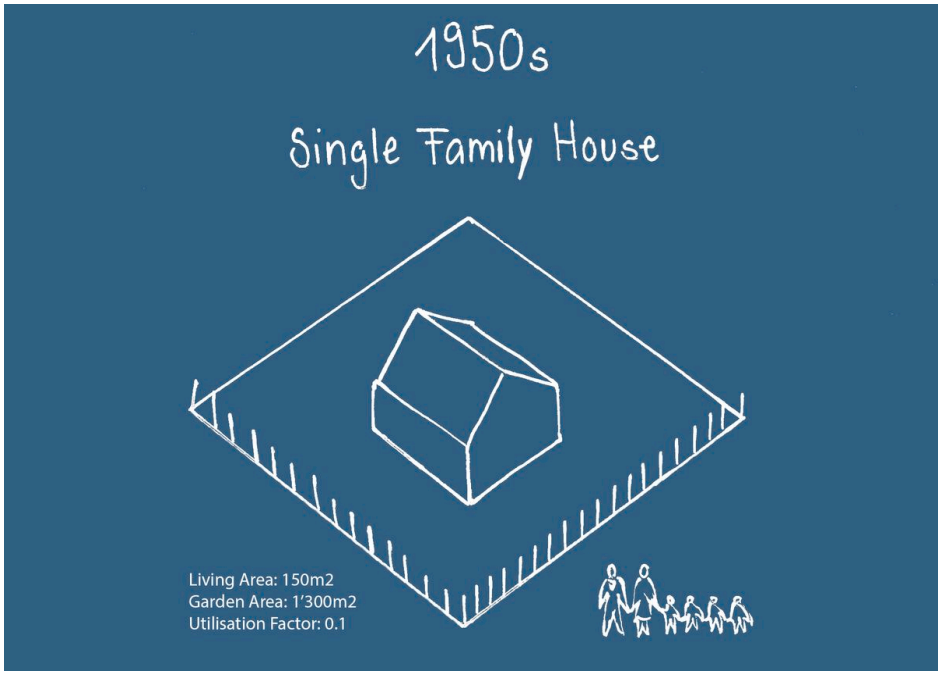
Golf & Country Club Zurich
independent of Zumikon, 1930.
Source: GCCZ [https://www.gccz.ch/club].



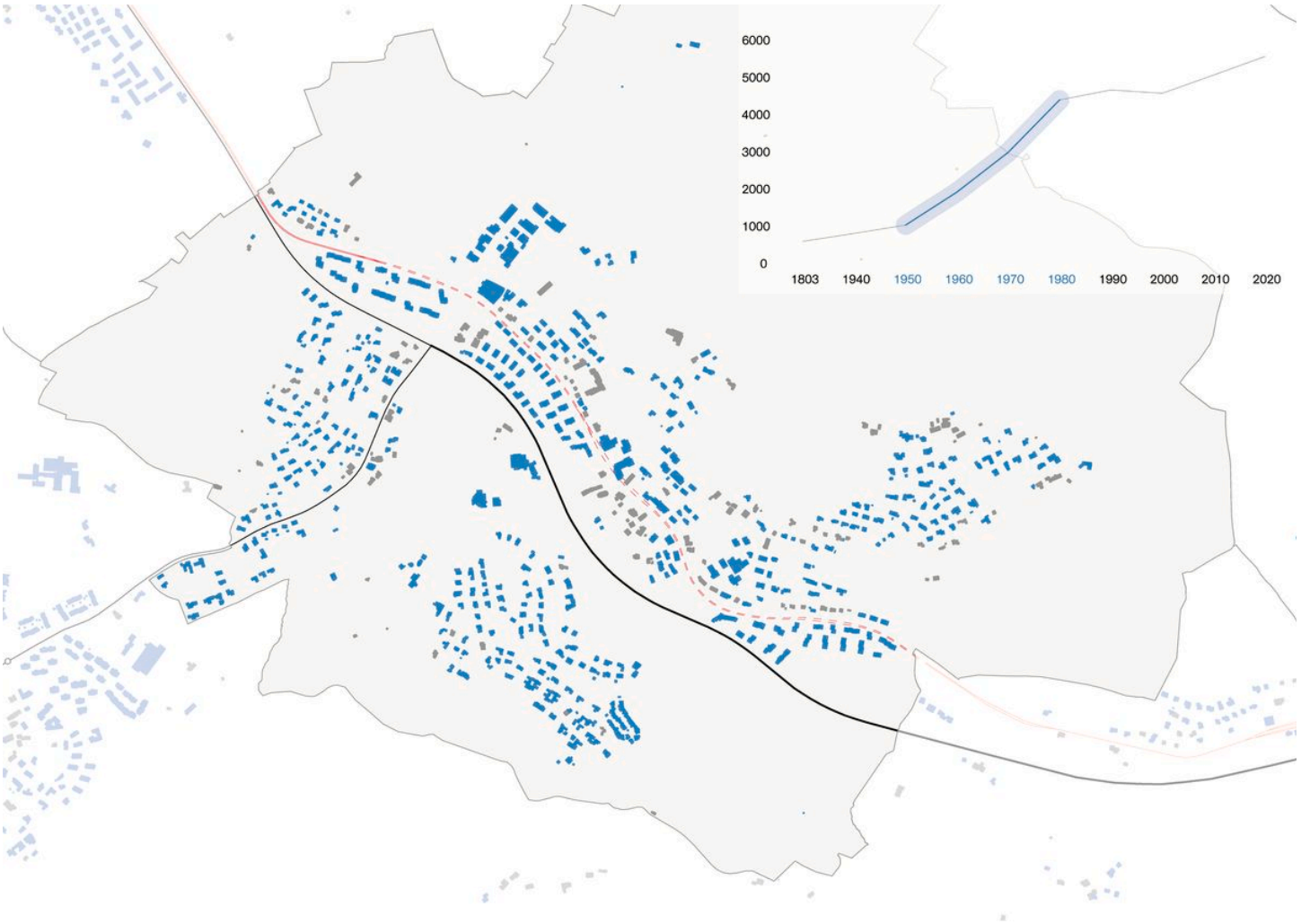
Golf & Country Club Zurich, 1930.
Source: GCCZ [https://www.gccz.ch/club].

The many growth incentives led to the construction of the golf course in 1930. It had been built by the people of Zurich for the people of Zurich. The initiators were members of the Golf Club Zurich, who made it possible to build the 18-hole course near the city. The golf course admits access only to selected persons. It has a life of its own, independent of Zumikon. It doesn´t even appear on the municipality homepage in the directory of local clubs.

1950s: Longing for a Country House



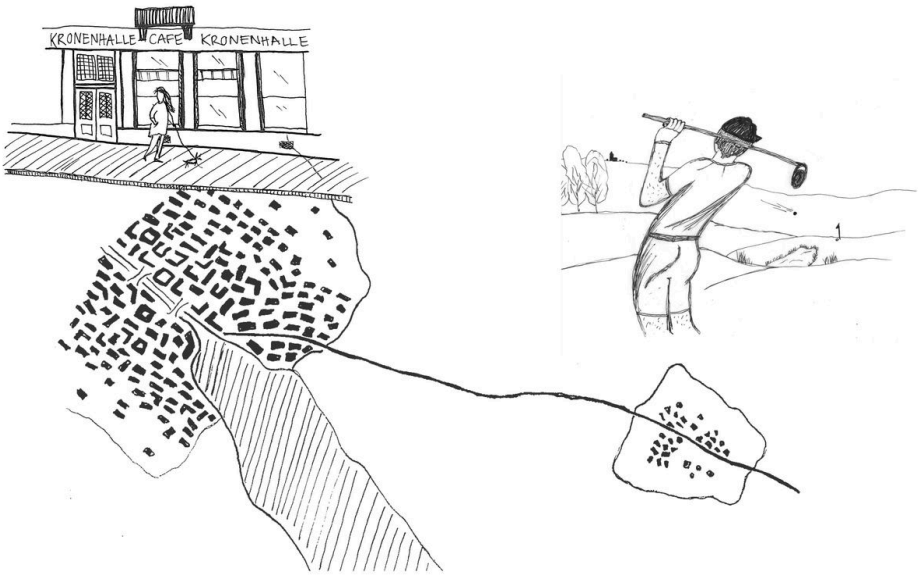
The newcomers, belonging to Zurich´s urban academic, choose the advantages of life in the countryside, such as the view, the peace and quiet and the seclusion of green spaces. Without wanting to have anything to do with the village life or the agriculture and building big single-family houses in the middle of the green meadow.



Building Boom,
Building and population development, 1950-1980.
Source: History Zumikon [https://www.zumikon.ch/geschichte/7501].

Buildings 1950-1980
Buildings until 1950
Forch line
Forch street

The building boom continued in the 1950s to the 1980. One could say that during this time almost all of Zumikon has been built. The Population grew each ten years around 1,000 people and has triplet in only 30 years.



Meeting Places for the Urban Academic Elite.

After the Second World War the building activity is characterized by built houses for Zurich´s urban academics, like graphic designers and artists. The new development of the Forchbahn linked Zumikon even more closely to Zurich and the construction of the golf course enabled this new class not only to meet in the Kronenhalle in Zurich Stadelhofen to enjoy an intellectual exchange, but also to extend their leisure time to Zumikon in the new golf course.



First International Privat
School in the Canton of Zurich,
Inter Community School, 1960.
Source: ICSZ [https://www.icsz.ch/about-ics/school-history].

ICS inter-community school zurich
EST. 1960

Financial Regulations

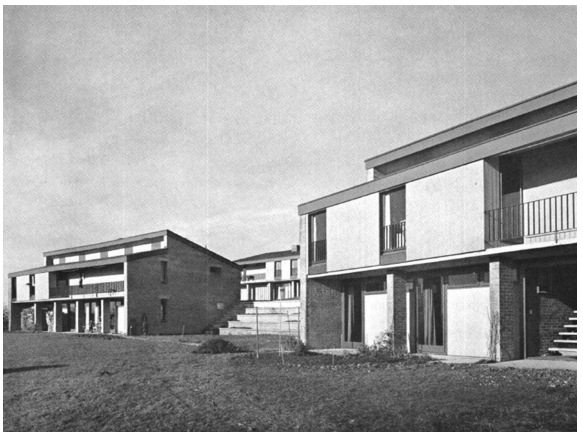
2.1 Application Fee	
Application Fee	CHF 400
2.2 Captial Fund Fee	
Pre-Kindergarten	CHF 1'000 - 4'000
Kindergarten 1 or higher	CHF 5'000
2.3 Tuition Fee	
Pre- Kindergarten	CHF 25'250
Kindergarten 1	CHF 25'750
Kindergarten 2	CHF 29'950
Grades 1-5	CHF 29'950
Grades 6-8	CHF 33'950
Grades 9-10	CHF 34'950
Grades 11-12	CHF 36'950

Financial Regulation of the
Inter Community School.
Source: ICSZ
[https://www.icsz.ch/admissions/tuition-application-fees].

Zurich´s urban academics began to settle in Zumikon, which also resulted in the construction of the privat International Community School (ICS), the first of its kind in the whole Canton of Zurich. Today it is the biggest school in Zumikon with more students than at the public schools. It has very high fees that can afford mainly the urban academic class that moved to Zumikon. It is certainly a school built for their children. However, it also has a pull effect on the people from this class outside of the municipality. Moreover, the arriving of the Zurich´s urban academics attracted also well-known architects, while the discussion about the flat or sloped roof began, which are representatives for the urban and rural discussion. It´s a first hint of the *Landsehnsucht* arising in Zumikon. The question is, what were this newcomers architecturally longing for?



Three Studio Houses,
Ernst Gisel, 1953.
Source: ETH Library. [https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=wbw-002:1955:42::38#39]



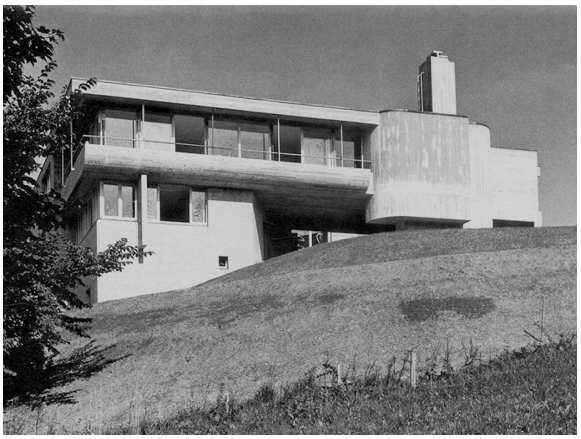
Three Single-Family Houses,
Oskar Burri, 1955.
Source: ETH Library. [https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=wbw-002:1956:43::1540#244]



Residential House,
Theo Schmid, 1954.
Source: ETH Library. [https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=wbw-002:1955:42::1183#1184]



Country House,
Prof. Dr. William Dunkel, 1952.
Source: ETH Library. [https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=sbz-002:1963:81::185#1707]

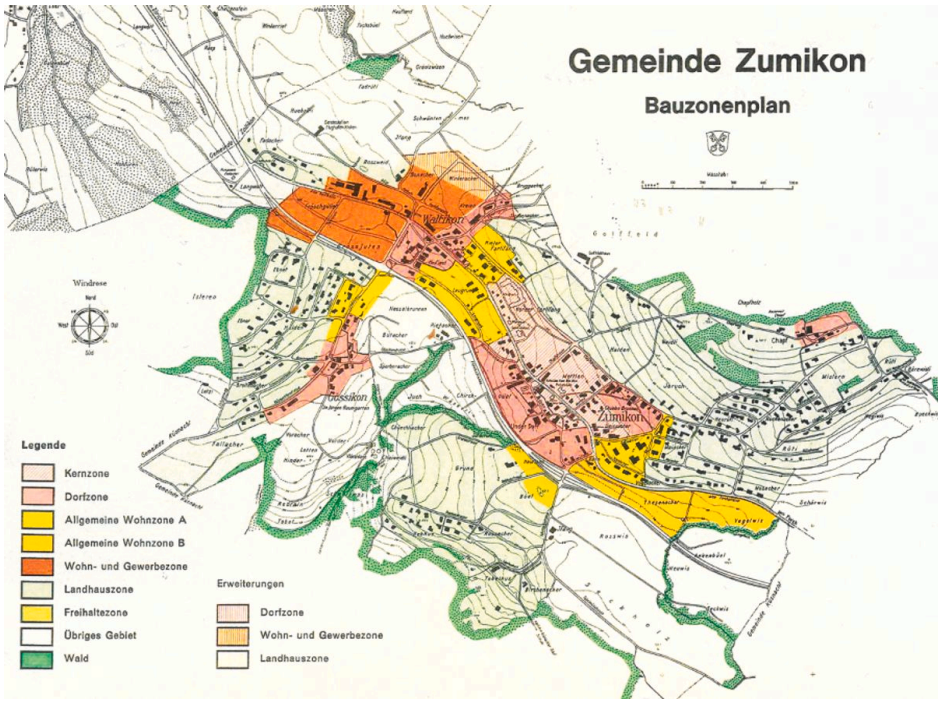


House Gisel,
Ernst Gisel, 1966.
Source: Elara Fritzenwalden Archiv.
[https://elarafritzenwalden.tumblr.com/post/156232136515/house-gisel-zumikon-z%C3%BCrich-switzerland-1965-66]



Bill House,
Max Bill, 1967.
Source: MaxBill.
[https://www.maxbill.ch/pagina.php?0,9,0]

A well-known architect that built in Zumikon was Ernst Gisel. He designed three studio houses in 1953 for a painter, pianist and, the graphic artist Hans Aeschbach. These houses were situated in the middle of the green meadow. Architect Oskar Burri built three unconventional single-family houses in 1955 with a sloped roof, tending to a flat roof. The country house at the Chapf, with mountain view and, peace and quiet has been built in 1954 by the architect Theo Schmid. He tried to avoid the flat roof ban with a combined gable and pent roof construction. There is a classic country house near the golf course from 1952 with a classic gable roof by the architect William Dunkel, who was an architecture professor at the ETH in Zurich. The house was inspired by the Fourth Swiss National Exhibition of 1939, called Landi 39. In this exhibition, traditional architectural styles of various cantons were shown in the “Landidörfli”. Nevertheless, other like Theo Schmid tried to find a new style than the traditional architectural style of a sloped roof, but still according the laws. He found his expression in the pent roof as a middle way between the flat and sloped roof. Thus, this new class of urban academics from Zurich were longing for big single-family houses to enjoy permanently the live in a country house. This building process went still on in the 1960s with the buildings from Ernst Gisel and Max Bill.

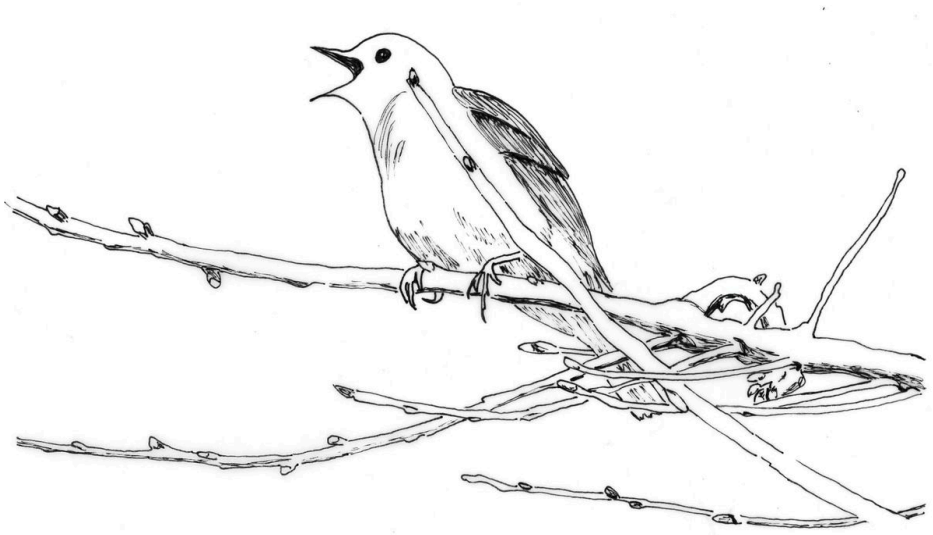


First Building Zone Plan of Zumikon, 1956.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.

The discussion of sloped vs. flat roof culminated in the building zoning plan of 1956. It officially allowed in some zones flat roofs. Some citizens of Zumikon also expressed their views on the flat roof discussion.

“The flat roof embodies the building style of the city and is not welcomed in the village”.
— Pastor Epprecht

“I came because I didn’t find any flat roofs here. Many people come up here because they still expect a village here.”
— Former Citizen of Zurich



However, what does living in a village mean for them? By reading this quote from Robert Epprecht it will get more clear.

“Today, not only is there no cuckoo to be heard in Zumikon, unfortunately there is no nightingale neither. A few years ago, there was still a large bush near today’s Bad Juch where the bell-like song of this rare bird could be heard. But there were newcomers who couldn’t stand this nightly "disturbance of the peace”, and they had no peace until the bushes were cut down and the much-praised fairytale song probably fell silent forever."

1960s: Growing Like a City



The building boom in the 1960s attracted the middle class from the City of Zurich, because at that time the dream of owning a home in Zumikon was still affordable. During this time more apartment buildings were built. This new development of Zumikon can be interpretet as Zumikon getting closer to a neighbourhood of Zurich.



The new Forchstreet outside the village centre, 1960.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.



Farlifang School, 1960.



Juch School, 1969.



Bad Juch, public swimming pool, 1973.
Source: Badi Juch. [https://www.badi-info.ch/fotos/schwimmbad/Zumikon-Freibad.htm]



Tennis Club, 1978.
Source: TCZ. [https://www.tczumikon.ch/verein/]

During this population grow Zumikon expanded its infrastructure with the construction of the school Farlifang and Juch and built the new Forchstreet for a faster connection from the region to Zurich. Moreover, the range of public services has been expanded in the 1970s with the construction of the Bad Juch with an indoor pool and even a sauna, later was also added an outdoor pool and a tennis court. In correspond of the upper middle class living in Zumikon.



68-Movement,
Urban Exodus Zurich.
Source: Luzerner Zeitung
[https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/kultur/1968-wende-zur-heutigen-gesellschaft-ld.87597].



Homeless people at Platzspitz,
Urban Exodus Zurich.
Source: Neue Zürcher Zeitung
[https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/aktuell/25-jahre-zuercher-platzspitz-platzspitz-chronologie-ld.143466].



Drug scene at Platzspitz,
Urban Exodus Zurich.
Source: Neue Zürcher Zeitung
[https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/aktuell/25-jahre-zuercher-platzspitz-platzspitz-chronologie-ld.143466].



Children playing in the green,
Landsehnsucht Zumikon.
Source: Emuseum
[https://www.emuseum.ch/people/51486/ernst-gisel/objects/images].



Family in front of their home,
Landsehnsucht Zumikon.
Source: Emuseum
[https://www.emuseum.ch/people/51486/ernst-gisel/objects/images].



Idyllic village,
Landsehnsucht Zumikon.
Source: ETH Library [https://ba.e-pics.ethz.ch/catalog/ETHBIB.Bildarchiv/r/798322/viewmode=previewview/qsr=zumikon].

The development of *Landsehnsucht* was only possible because of its counterpart the urban exodus happening in bigger cities like Zurich, during this time. In Zurich, the population decreased continuously as the people weren´t happy with the situation in the city. Around 1968 were a large number of protest movements worldwide, which were strongly supported by the young students. In Zurich it resulted in street battles between the police and the protesters. Public places like the Platzspitz, a park in the heart of Zurich, developed to a meeting place for drug users. Moreover, people had now enough income to buy or build a little house in the periphery of the city or in the agglomeration. Even though Zumikon was growing like a city, it kept its idyllic image of a city.



Farlifang neighbourhood, 1962.



Hanns in der Gand neighbourhood, 1965.



Maiacher neighbourhood, 1961.



Farlifang neighbourhood, 1962.



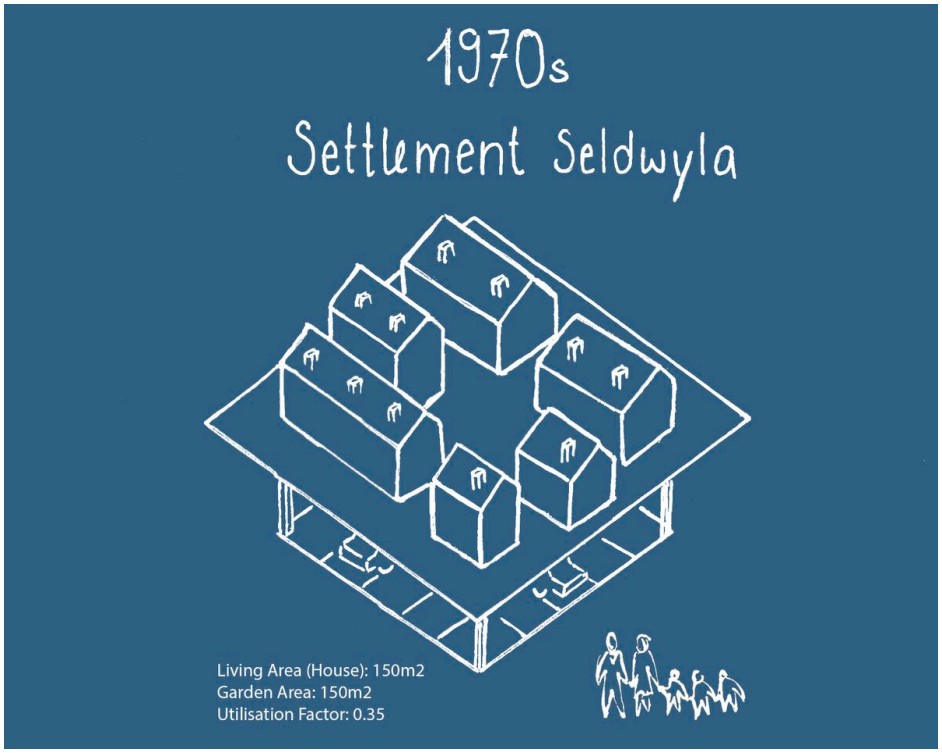
Leugrueb neighbourhood, 1969.



Maiacher neighbourhood, 1961.

The impact of the new zoning plan became visible in the building period of the 1960s. As Zumikon startet to grow like a city. Apartment blocks and multi-family houses gained ground in Zumikon and entire neighbourhoods were built. A Larger number of floor and new building shapes became possible. The buildings are characterized by exposed brick facade, a flat roof and a front garage. It became possible for the middle class to own a home. There is for example the Maiacher, which was built for 450 people and the Leugrueb for 540 people at a time when Zumikon had a total population of 2,000 people.

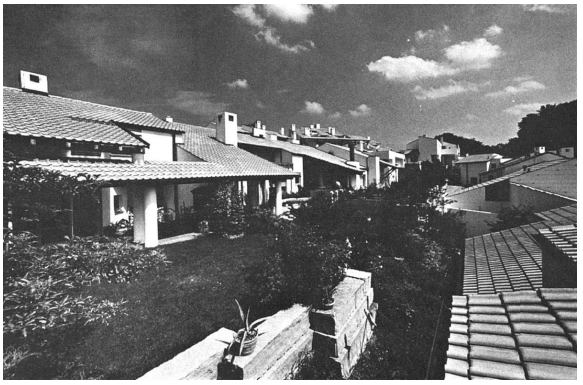
1970s: A Designed Village with Urban Comfort



In the 1970s the desire for a village life grew. In contrast to the 1950s, people were looking for a community, a meeting place and the “Grüezi Mitenand”. This idea of village life was thereby translated into idyllic architecture, as in the settlement Seldwyla. So the romantic idea was built on the foundation of urban comfort.



View from above,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]



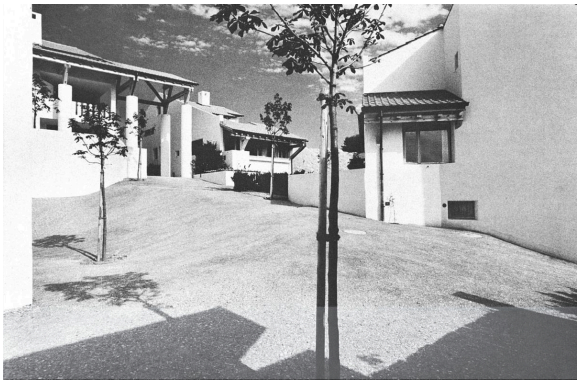
Garden view,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]



Roof view,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]



Covered porch,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]



Village square,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]



Narrow pathway,
Seldwyla.
Source: ETH Library. [http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-50152]

The recession following the oil crisis in 1973 did at first not affect the building activity in the 1970s, but it did lead to a return to the idea of a village life. So in this time period *Landsehnsucht* represented the spirit of the newly gained village life *Dorfsehnsucht*. This led to a creation of a new form of a settlement. Architect Rolf Keller together with other architects designed the settlement Seldwyla in Zumikon in the 1970s. He built a settlement that represented a densification in contrast to the previously built structure in Zumikon. He pursued the ideal that everyone knows each other, so that a community emerges that shares tasks and eats together from time to time. In this way, the settlement Seldwyla translates the Zeitgeist of *Landsehnsucht* to *Dorfsehnsucht* of that time into architecture. The settlement was perceived in different ways.

Some appreciated Sedwyla and called it a: *“bright white plaster with Mediterranean architecture, as a Zurich-modern variant of the Renaissance in 15th century Italy”.*

Others just thought it was a: *“squeaky-clean synthetic "instant remake” of an ancient Swiss village for stressed-out Zurich city dwellers."*

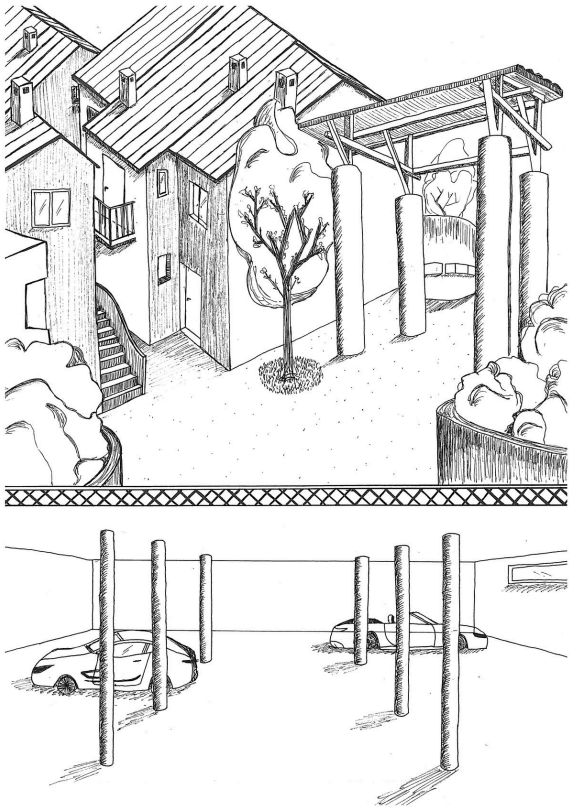


Village square building site, 1975.
Source: Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.

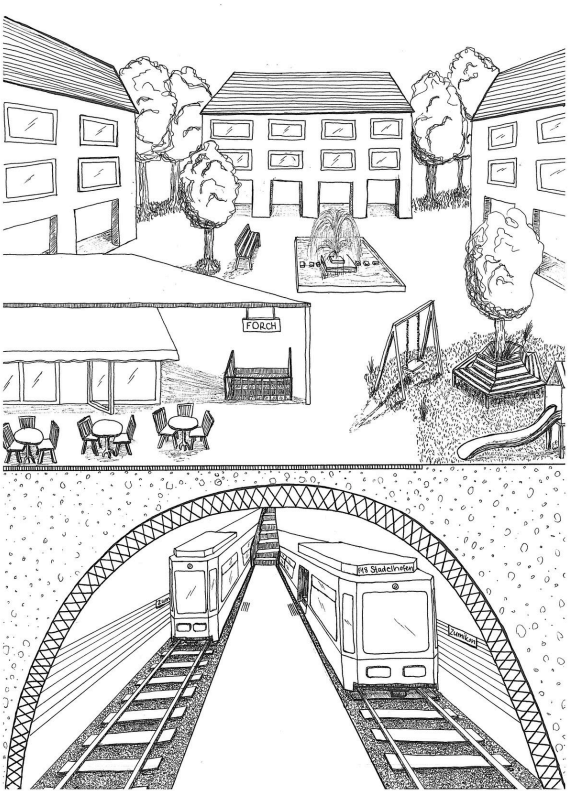


Undertunneling of the Forchbahn, 1977.
Source: Forchbahn renovation.
[https://docplayer.org/166849505-Tunnel-zumikon-sanierung.html]

The return to the village life together with the ongoing recession had an impact on the dimensions of the project of the village centre. It led to a renaissance of slope-roofed dwellings. As a result, the originally project with a flat roof became a rustic village square with cobblestones, surrounded by rows of mixed-use houses and a sloped roof. The development went hand in hand with the tunnel construction of the Forchbahn, without taking into consideration the old houses that fell victim to the new traffic planning.



Concept Sketch Seldwyla,
On top of a garage as an urban comfort.

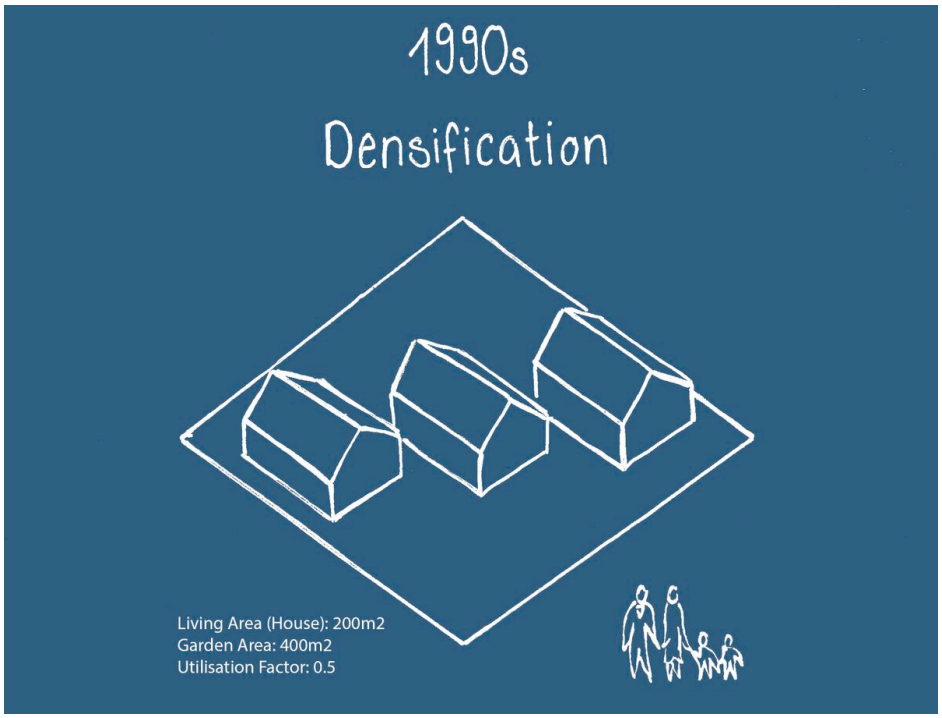


Concept Sketch Village Square,
On top of a tram station as urban comfort.

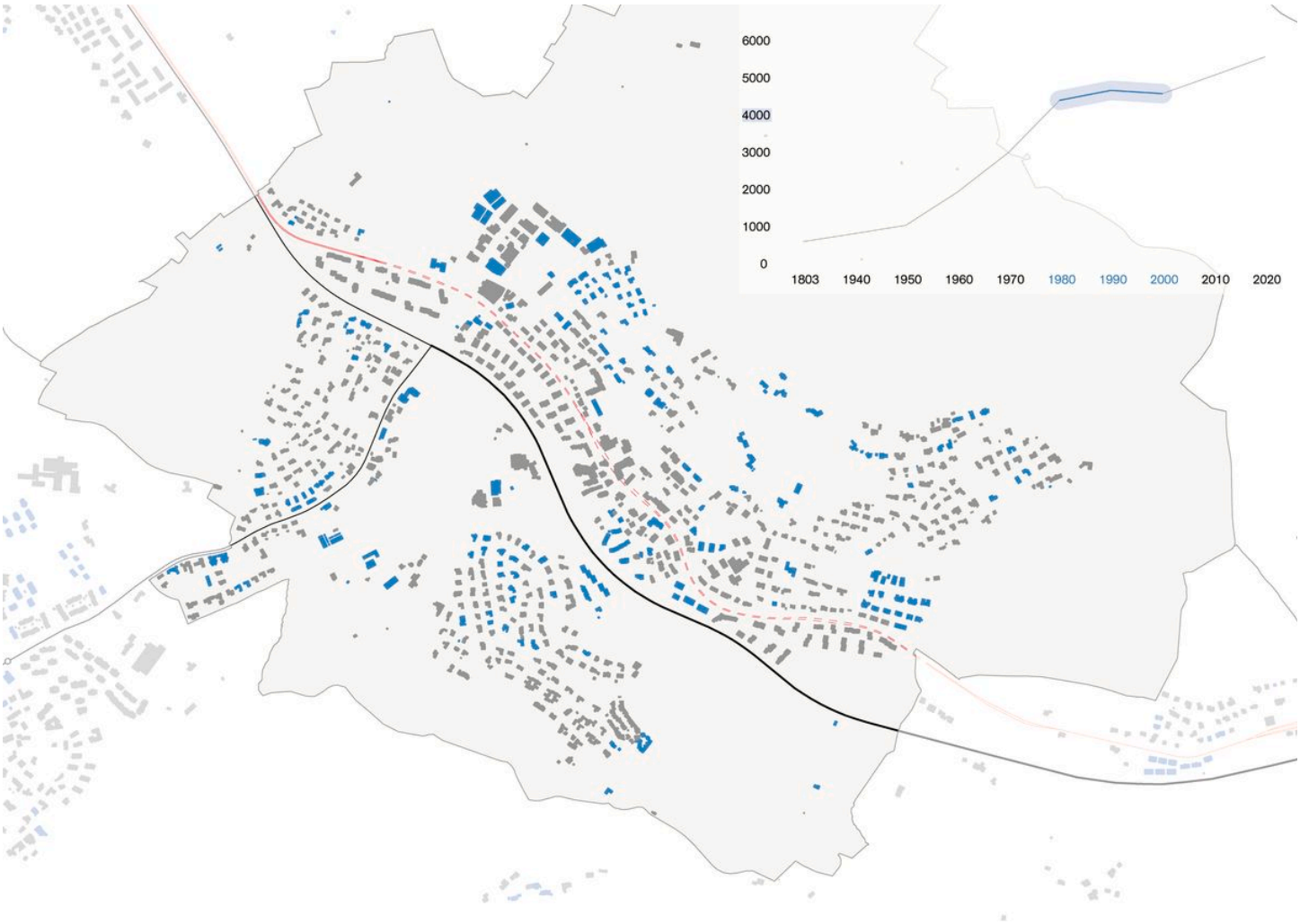
The new development of *Dorfsehnsucht* led to a new meaning for the construction of the village square. It tried as the new meeting place to be a gathering place for all people of Zumikon in which people could meet, have a chat togheter while having a cup of coffee. The goal was to creat a village atmosphere by using a sloped roof, a different flooring and, redemsioning the whole project by making it smaller and cosier. Paradoxically, it has been built on a strongly urban element like the tram.

The same thing is happening in Seldwyla, there is a romantic architecture with a desire to revive the village life, by translating this ideal into architecture. However, some critics say even that it tries to imitate a Swiss village. We think it has been able to translate the ideal spatially with the narrow pathways and a meeting place, but not socially. Even though the idea of shared tasks are still today kept on, they are less happening in a community sense as well the idea of gathering together is only once a year. There are incentives missing like a small grocery store, that could invigorate the idea of a village life in the settlement itself. While it paradoxically tries to catch the ideal of a village life it has been built over a big underground car park, an urban comfort.

1980s-2000: More Square Meters Per Capita



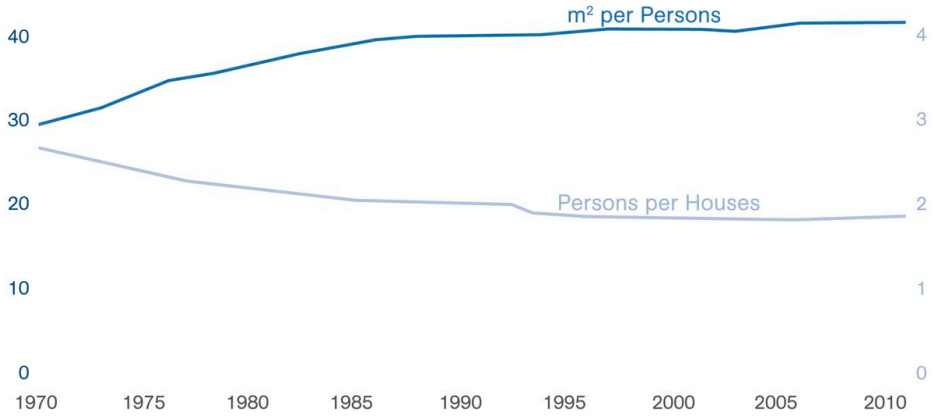
Population growth is declining for the first time in 70 years, while the amount of land required per person is increasing, As a result, the building boom continues. The main increase in density is within the existing building zones.



Densifying while Stagnating,
Building and population development, 1980s-2000.
Source: History Zumikon [https://www.zumikon.ch/geschichte/7501].

Buildings 1980s-2000
Buildings until 1980
Forch line
Forch street

In the recession following the oil crisis in 1973, the growth forecast was revised downwards from 13,000 to 8,000 and finally to 6,000 people. In the 1980s to 2000, the recession had a stronger impact on the construction activity, but it never came to a standstill and inward densification continued. At the same time, the population decreased and Zumikon even experienced a decline for the first time since the municipality was founded.



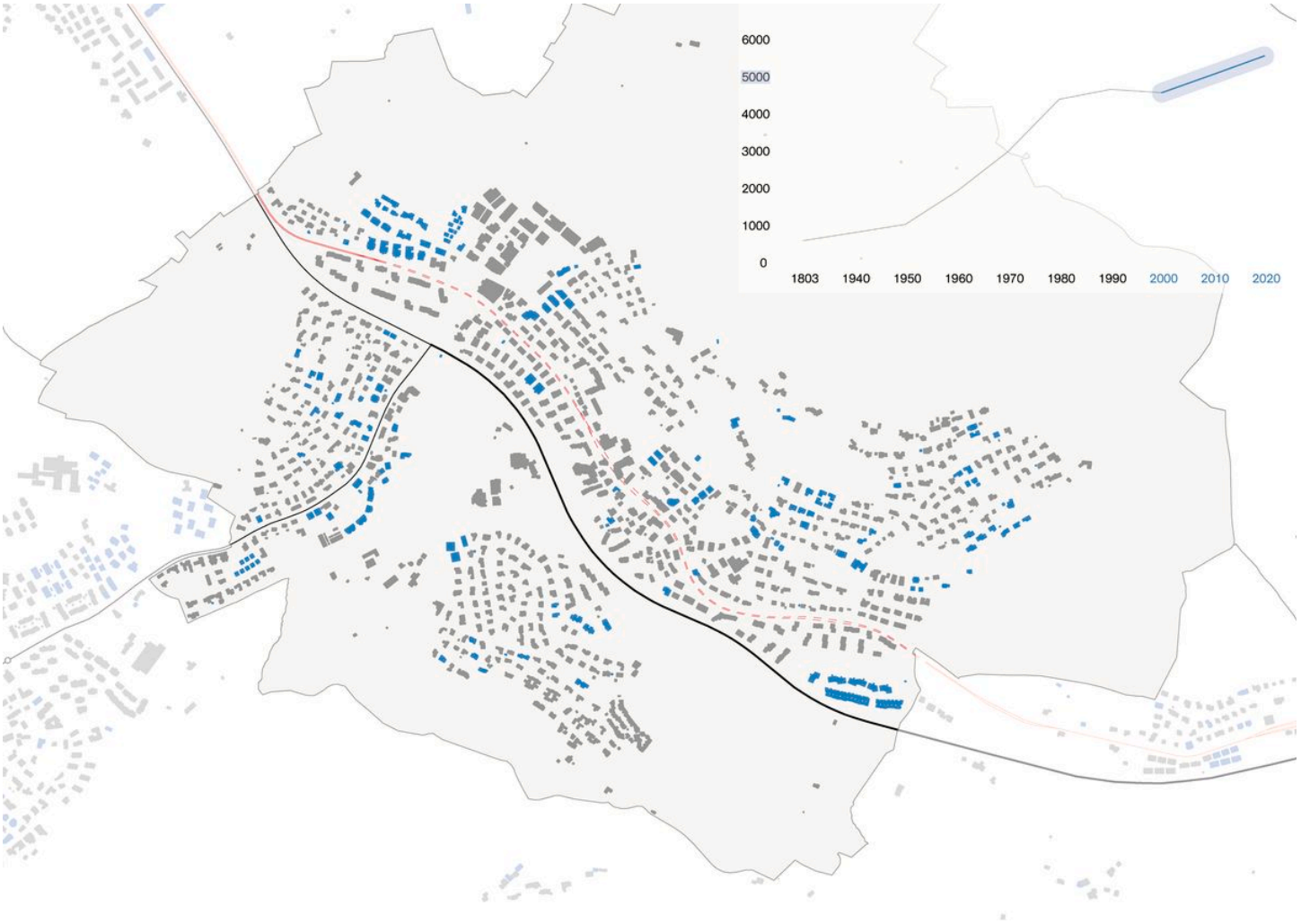
More Space per Person.
Source: City of Zurich [https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/statistik/publikationen-angebote/publikationen/webartikel/2013-03-28_Wie-viel-Wohnraum-braucht-der-Mensch.html].

The decline in population with the ongoing construction activity in Zumikon can be explained by the development of square metres per persons in a dwelling. It is mainly due to the fact that the demand for square metres per person increased, while the number of persons per dwelling decreased. So there were at around 2000 approximately two persons in a household and each of them had around 40 square meter, a total of 80 square meter. Nevertheless, building activity continued, because the urge to grow knew no bounds, despite the declining population. Even the Canton of Zurich had to intervene and condemn the permission for creating a new zoning.

2000s-2020: The End of Growth



Zumikon is still a popular neighbourhood of Zurich to live in and the population is increasing again. However, there are barely any buildable land reserves belonging to the municipality of Zumikon left.



Growth is coming to an End,
Building and population development, 2000s-2020.
Source: History Zumikon [https://www.zumikon.ch/geschichte/7501].

Buildings 2000s-2020
Buildings until 2000
Forch line
Forch tunnel

Since the 2000 there are on the one hand barely new settlements emerging and on the other hand again an increase in population. The population exceeded the 5,000 mark in 2009. The only two new settlement standing out are the one at the Huebstreet and the Ankenbüel settlement.



Settlement Ankenbüel, 2018.



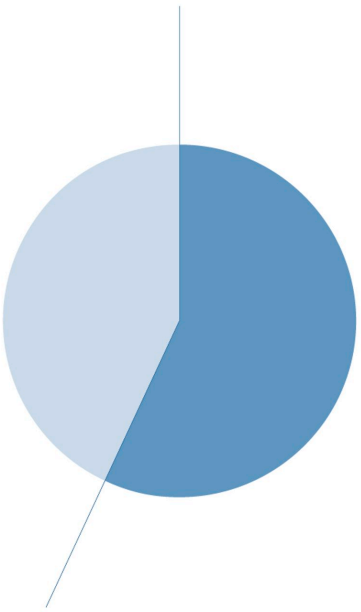
Settlement Huebstreet, 2002.
Source: NZAG. [https://nzag.ch/2001-2002-6-efh-huebstrasse-9-zumikon/]

Ankenbüel has been blocked for years by appeals and has been only completed in summer 2018. On the basis of Rene Haubensak's design plan, 123 rental flats have been built. Ankenbüel has like Seldwyla the character of an independent neighborhood with a striking colour scheme and different building typologies that give the new settlement its own identity. In contrast to Ankenbüel, the Settlement at the Huebstreet has the appearance of the more typical image one has of a village. They built single-family houses with sloped roofs in the green madow with some privacy. However, growth in Zumikon is slowly coming to an end as there are only a few buildable land reserves available belonging to the municipality.

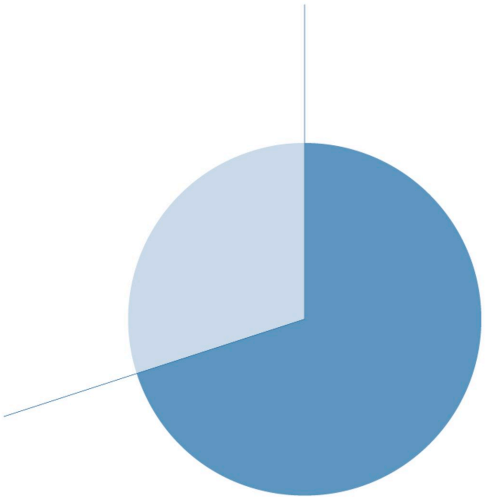
Paradoxes of a Single-Family Living Model



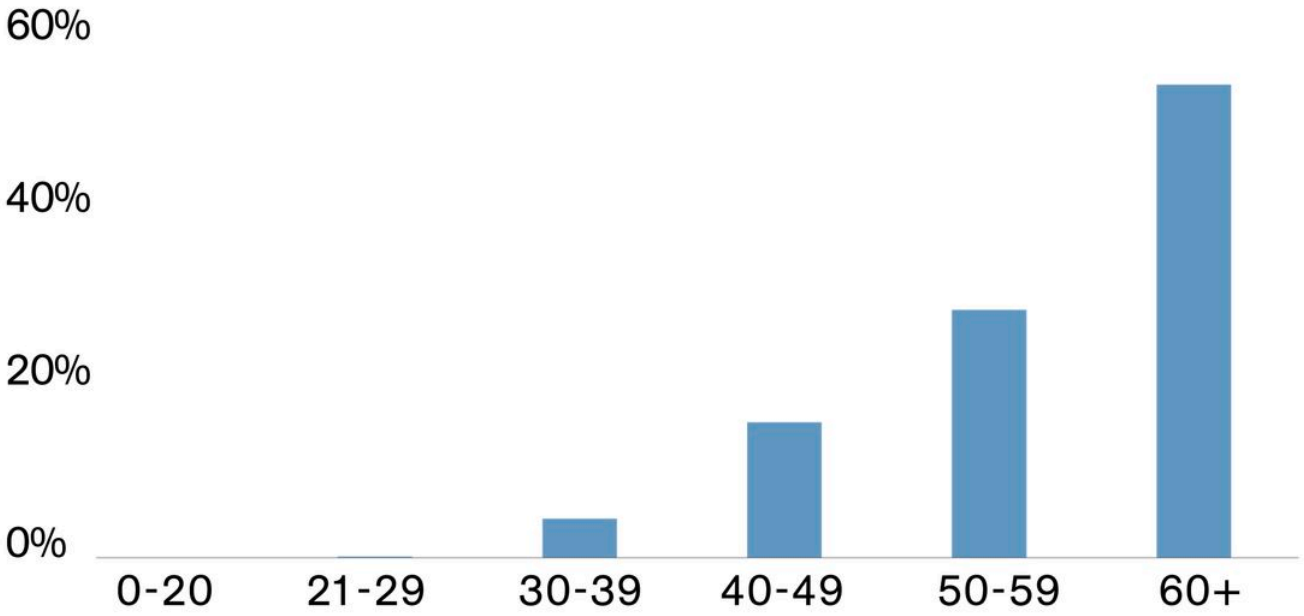
Single-family houses are built for families, but what happens when the children move out and one wants to remain in its familiar home with the nice big garden? This is the situation for many people in Zumikon. There is an ageing population of high earners, while the middle class can no longer afford the high land prices. This leads to the paradoxical situation that in a lot of single-family houses older people live alone. It is the paradox of the single-family house model.



57% of building stock are
single-family houses,
Switzerland.
Source: Statistischer Atlas der Schweiz.
[https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/regionalstatistik/atlanten/statistischer-atlas-schweiz.html]

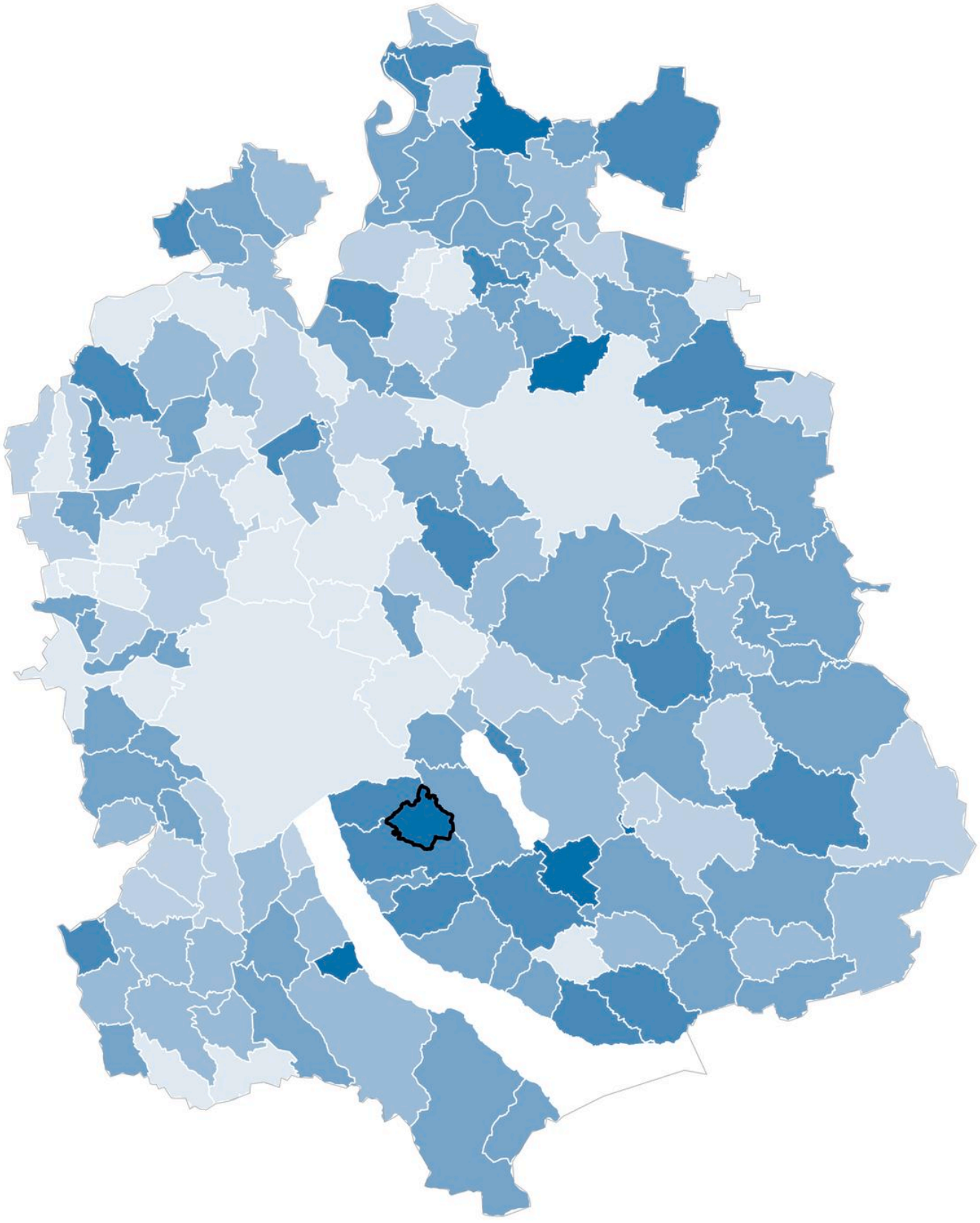


63% building stock are
single-family houses,
Zumikon.
Source: Statistischer Atlas der Schweiz.
[https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/regionalstatistik/atlanten/statistischer-atlas-schweiz.html]



Owners of Residential Property by Age,
Switzerland.
Source: Zürcher Kantonalbank.
[https://www.zkb.ch/de/blog/immobilien/die-alten-bestimmen-das-angebot-von-morgen.html]

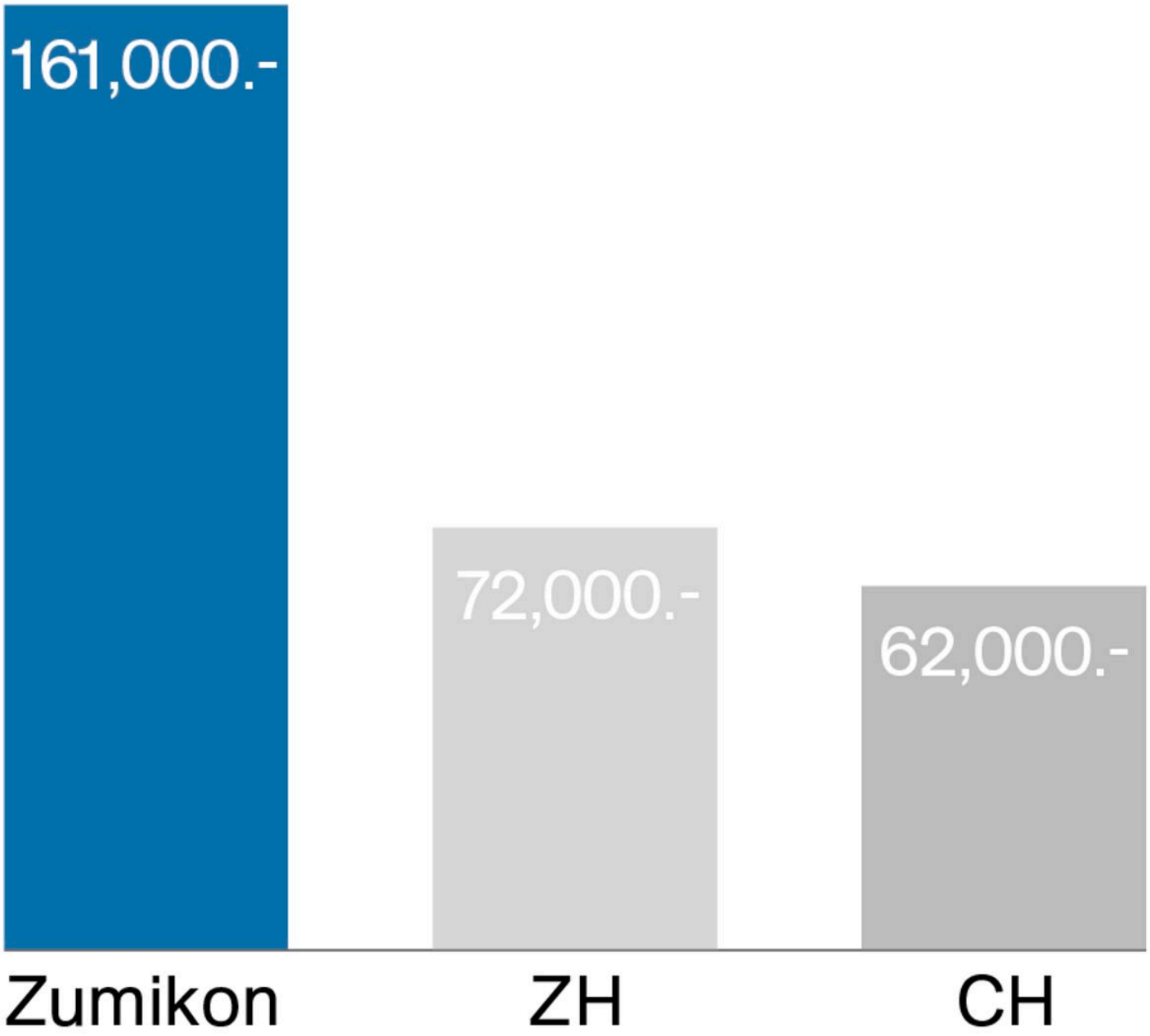
As the land reserves are coming to an end, one has to look at the remaining building fabric. The construction of single-family houses is a trend in Zumikon that has never really come to an end. In fact, in Zumikon the building stock of single-family houses is 63 percent, much more than in the average of Switzerland, where there are 57 percent of the housing stock still single-family houses. Meanwhile are foremost the one´s 60 years old and over, who are owners of this residential properties in Switzerland.



Ageing Population in Zumikon,
In comparison with the Canton of Zurich.
Source: Gemeindeporträt [https://www.zh.ch/de/politik-staat/gemeinden/gemeindeportraet.html].

17-26 %
26-29 %
29-31 %
31-36 %
36-41 %
41-45 %

Zumikon has in comparison with the rest of the Canton of Zurich one of the highest old-age dependency ratio. It describes the ratio of the older population, so 65 year olds and over, to the population in working age, the 20 to under 65 year olds. This means that there is an ageing population in Zumikon and many with home ownership.



Annual Income in Zumikon.
Source: Gemeindeporträt. [https://www.zh.ch/de/politik-staat/gemeinden/gemeindeportraet.html]



Land Price in the Region Pfannenstiel.
Source: Ginesta Zumikon.
[https://www.ginesta.ch/resources/public/lava3/media/kcfinder/files/Immobilienmarkbericht-2019-Ginesta-Zumikon.pdf]

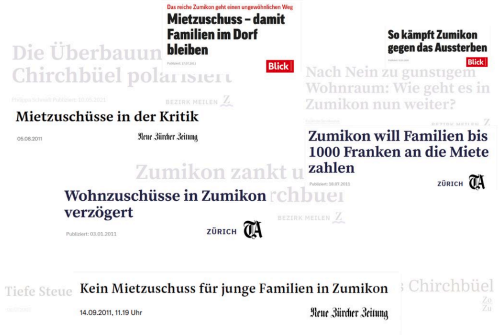
over 3'000 CHF | 2'500-3'000 CHF | under 2'500 CHF

Zumikon is not only home to older people and house owners, but also to high-income earners. They earn an average of 161,000 francs, which is more than two times as much as the average in the Canton of Zurich. This hyper elite class has also resulted in high land prices in Zumikon. Nevertheless, the high land prices are mostly due to the proximity to Zurich.

Having identified an ageing population with high incomes and home ownership, the question remaining is, what do they want for Zumikon? Sometimes it is easier to look at what they don´t want.



Zumikon doesn´t want any social housing.



Zumikon doesn´t want any families from the middle class.



Zumikon doesn´t want any money to invest for the community.



Zumikon does unlikely want any renters.

It looks like Zumikon doesn´t want any from the lower social classes. After they clearly mobilised against the construction of social housing at Chirchbüel and rejected the proposal from the community. They neither want middle class families. They decided against a rent subsidy for middle class families of up to 1,000 francs, which aimed for more social mix and wanted to attract families. They also do not want to invest money for the community. The required renovation of the Bad Juch should have been supplemented with the construction of a spa landscape, but this addition was abandoned and only the Bad Juch was renovated. Finally, Zumikon does unlikely want any renters. Ankenbüel is a housing estate with 123 rental flats and its plans were even pursued all the way up to the federal court.



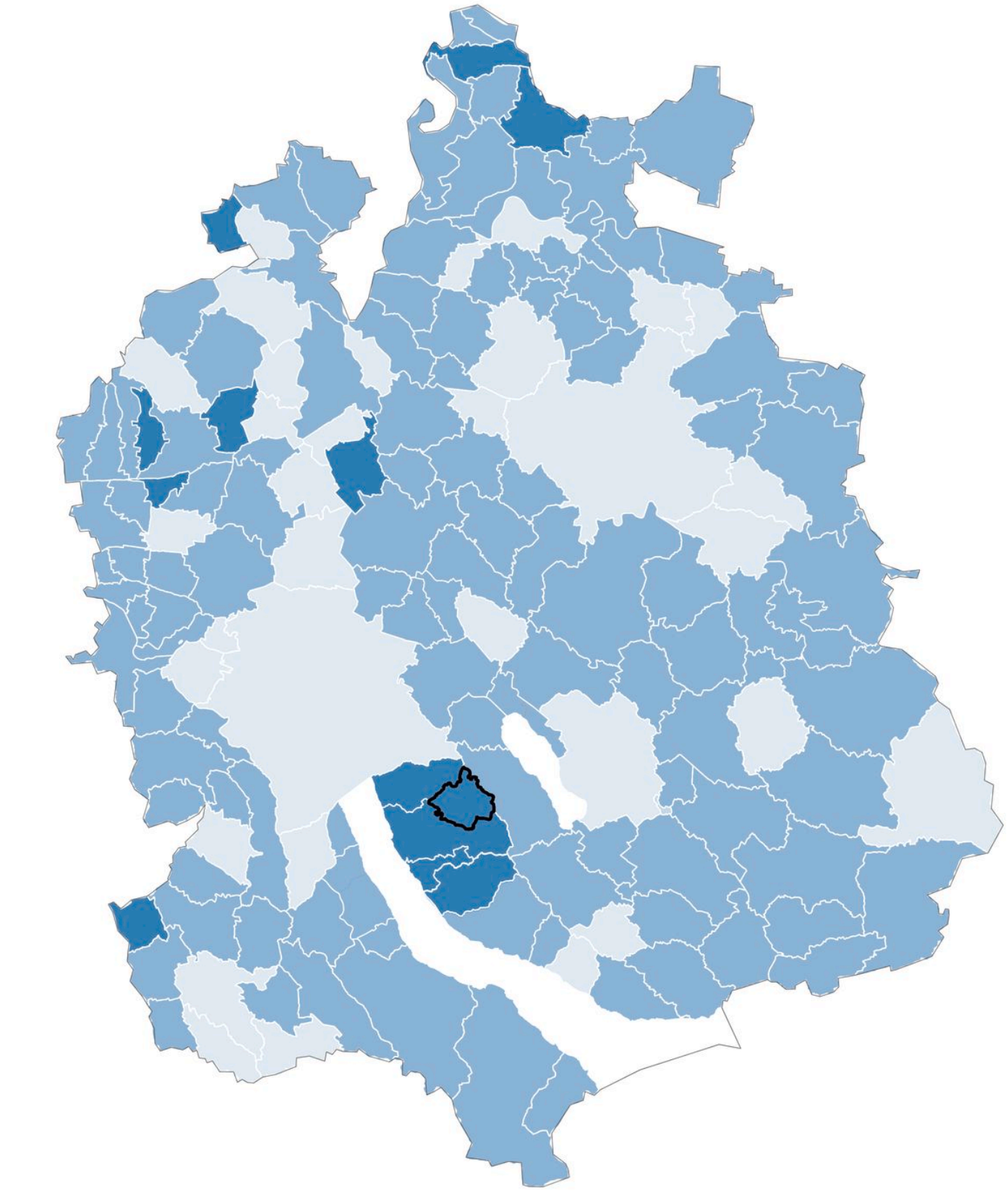
Verena in front of her red single-family house.

“Such a house for a single person is not necessary… no.”

“I know a lot of people here in the neighbourhood who live alone in a large single-family house.”

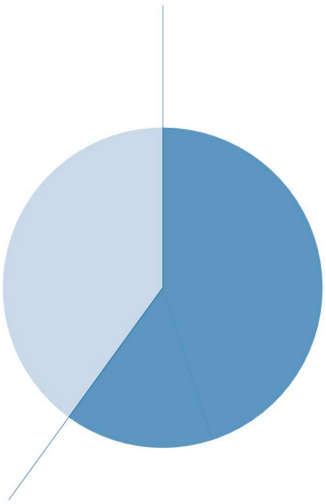
“What architects unfortunately don’t take into account enough is the practical use of a single-family house. As soon as the children move out, the house is far too big, especially when you’re alone.”

— Verena (79 years old) from Zumikon

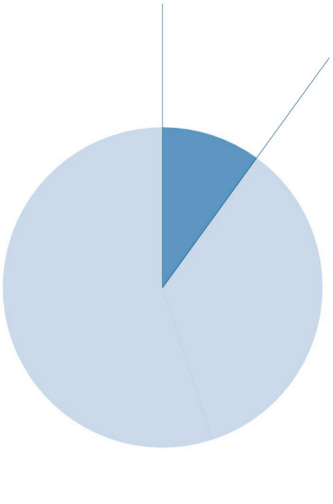


Not fully Occupied Single-Family Houses in Zumikon,
In comparison to the Canton of Zurich.
Source: Zürcher Kantonalbank.
[https://www.zkb.ch/de/blog/immobilien/einfamilienhaus-unterbelegt.html]

Over 80% 70-80% Under 70%



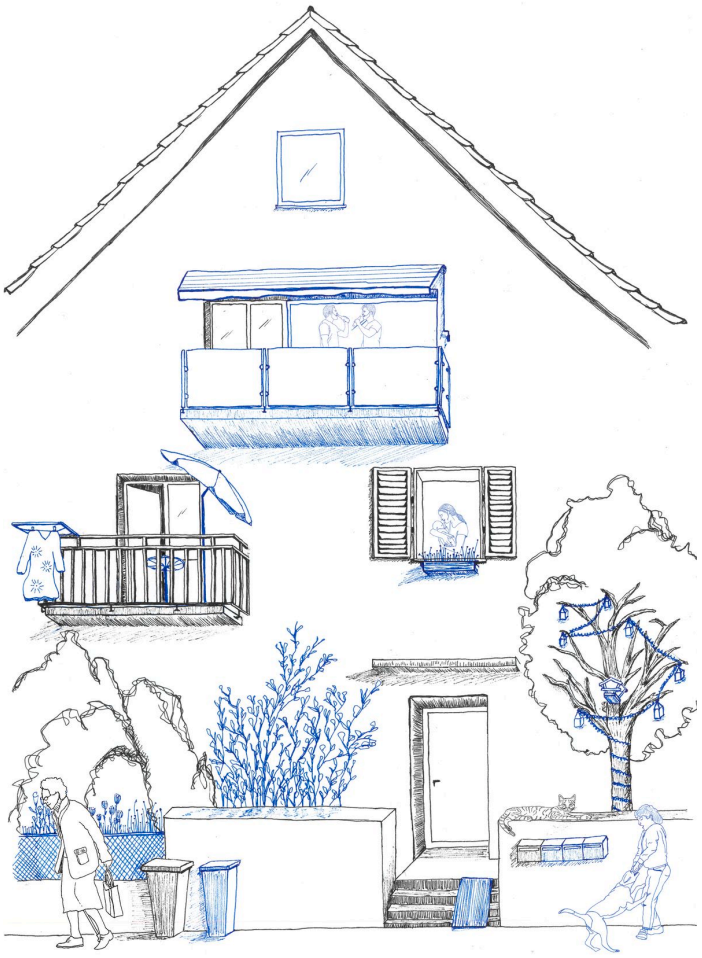
60% wants a single-family house, Switzerland.
Source: Swiss Life-Wohnstudie.
[https://www.swisslife.ch/de/ueber-uns/news-medien/medienmitteilungen/newsfeed-eqs/2019/20191015_0800.html]



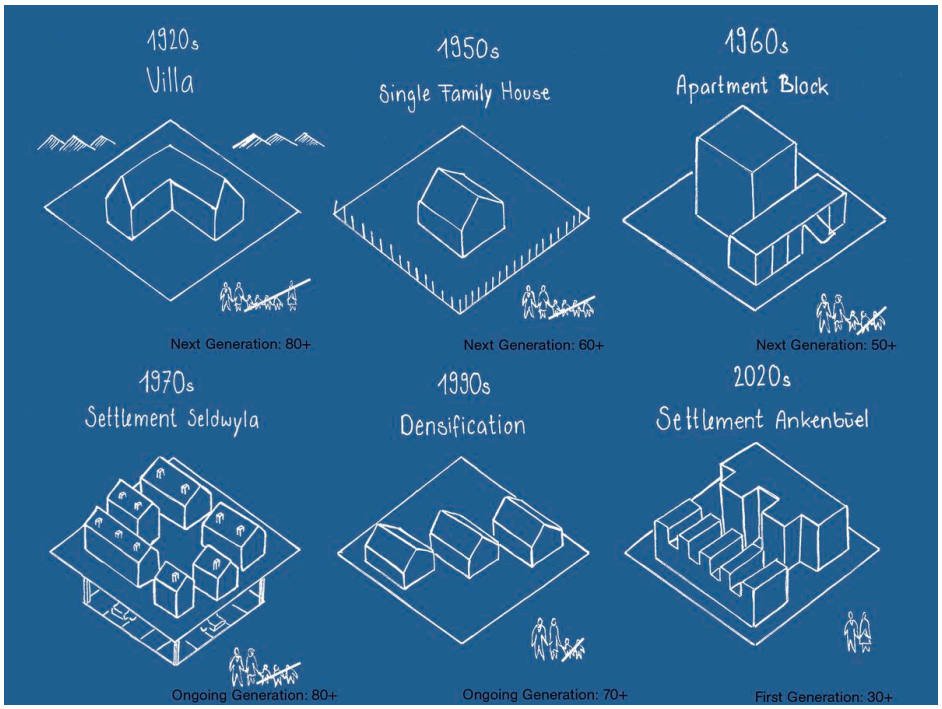
10% can afford a single-family house, Switzerland.
Source: Swiss Life-Wohnstudie.
[https://www.swisslife.ch/de/ueber-uns/news-medien/medienmitteilungen/newsfeed-eqs/2019/20191015_0800.html]

Despite all these headlines, people like Verena live in Zumikon. She is 79 years old and has been living alone in a single-family house on 850 square meter of land for a long time. Her daughter moved out and the big house that was meant for a family remains mostly empty. There are many like her in Zumikon. In fact, on the one hand Zumikon has a very high rate of 80 percent of not fully occupied single family houses, which is one of the highest rates in the Canton of Zurich. Paradoxically, on the other hand 60 percent in Switzerland would love to own a single family house, but only 10 percent can afford it. It is the paradox of the single family house model.

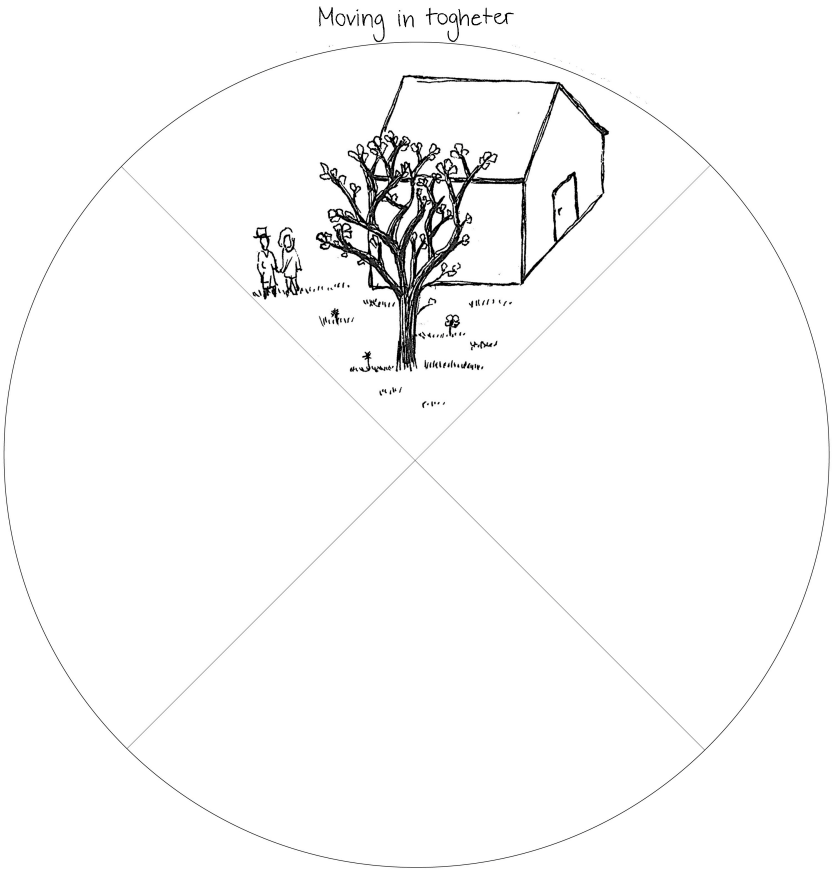
On the Way to Becoming a Village?



What does it mean to become a village? Which ideas would be needed to be implemented? Is the answer to build more according the image one has of a village with a lot of single-family houses and a big garden? We question whether there is a need in the first place to build more houses in Zumikon or if there are already enough single-family houses. A lot of these houses are only inhabited by pensioners and not fully occupied as they could be. The solution should rather be searched in the social concept of a village by implementing it in a new housing model of intergeneration living. This could be an opportunity to enable people that don´t earn 161,000 francs to live in Zumikon.

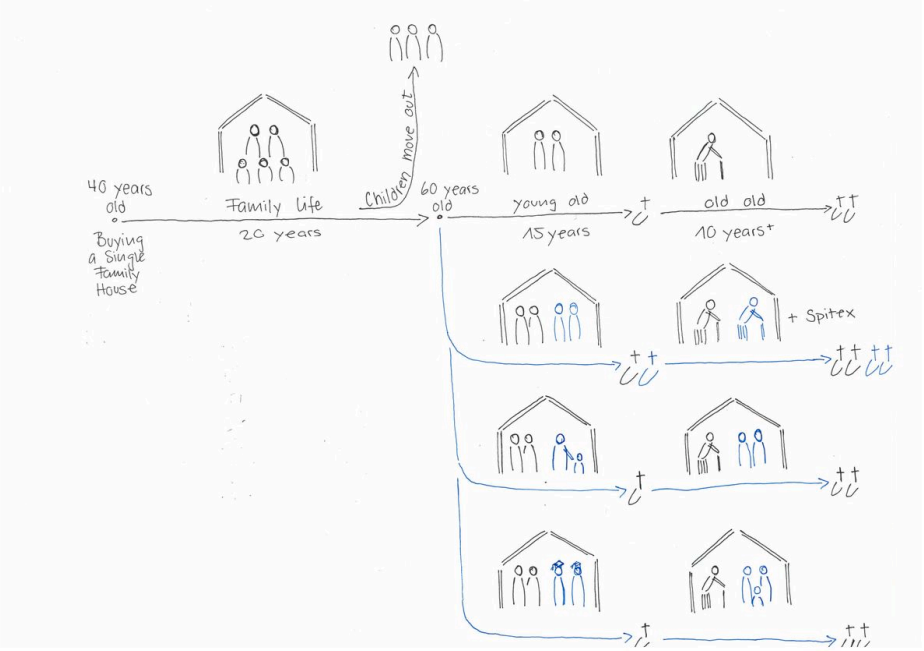


How could this desire of home ownership together with the fact that there are so many not fully occupied single family houses being merged with the image of *Landsehnsucht* in Zumikon. There has always been different understandings of *Landsehnsucht* over time. By looking at the characteristic architecture of each period we see a densification happening. In the villas, single-family houses and apartment blocks, the original owners may have already passed away and a generation change happened, while in the Seldwyla onwards it is happening. As we have seen before 60 percent are longing for the single-family house livestyle, while 80 percent of them are not fully occupied in Zumikon. Additionally, the land prices are very high and there are hardly any building lands available. Even though it looks like there is a clear demand for this lifestyle, it seems to be clear that the solution can´t be to build more single-family houses. Neither, the spatial densification should be the only response. We think that the solution should be rather found in the meaning of being a village, something that Zumikon is looking for since at least the 1950s as the whole issue of *Landsehnsucht* began.



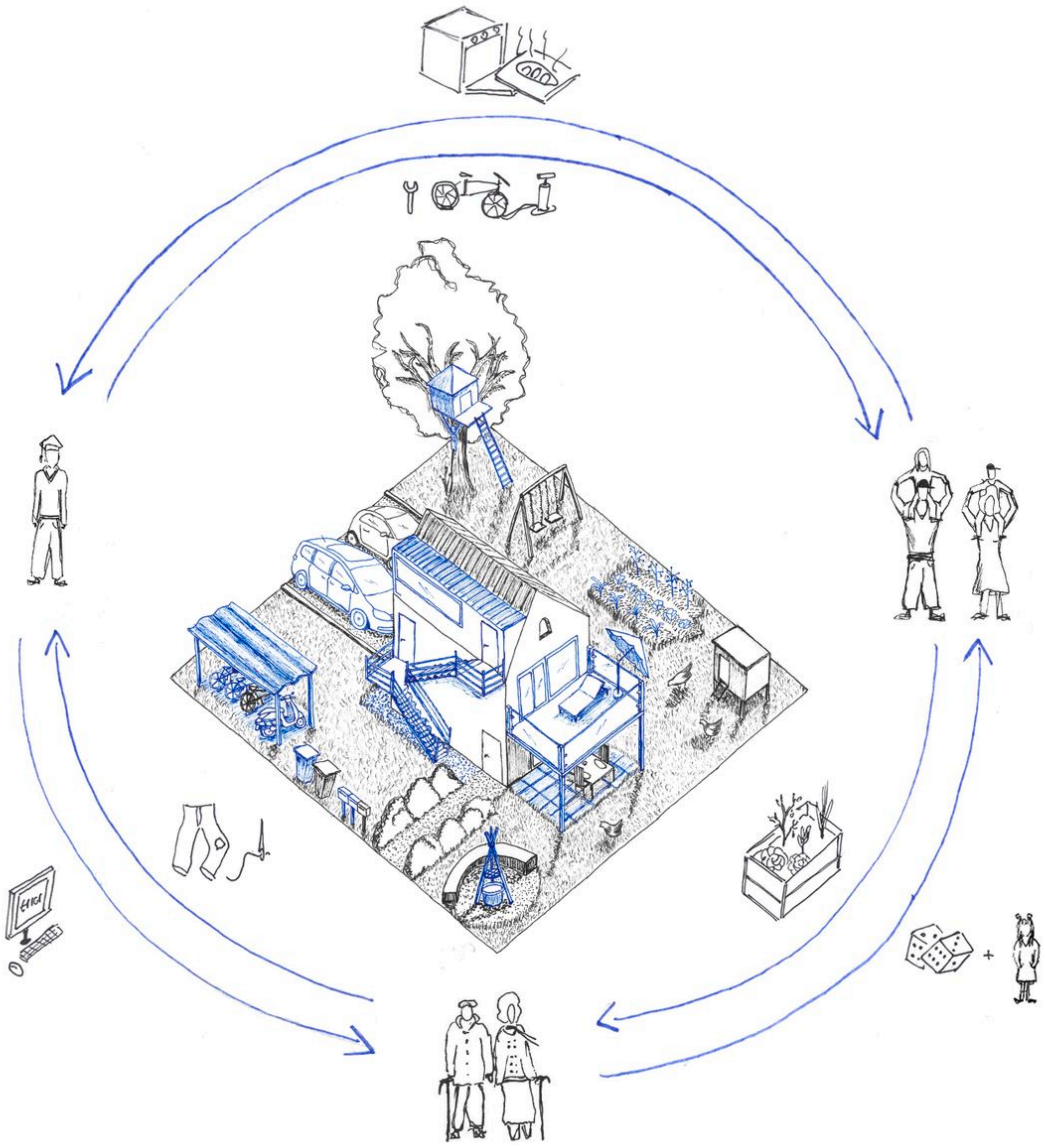
Live Circle,
Inhabitants in a single-family house.

If we look on a life circle of a building with its inhabitant, we think that both should get a second spring. Usually people are moving together, they start a family, at some point the children are adults and move out. The next thing that happens is what we have seen with Verena, the remaining time this big house that is meant to be for four people is being occupied only by two and sometimes only by the widow. This is nothing unusual as 96 percent of the pensioners in Switzerland are lasting at home and only four percent moves to the retirement home. In this last season we don`t see the end of the circle, but rather the possibility for a second spring with a second family.



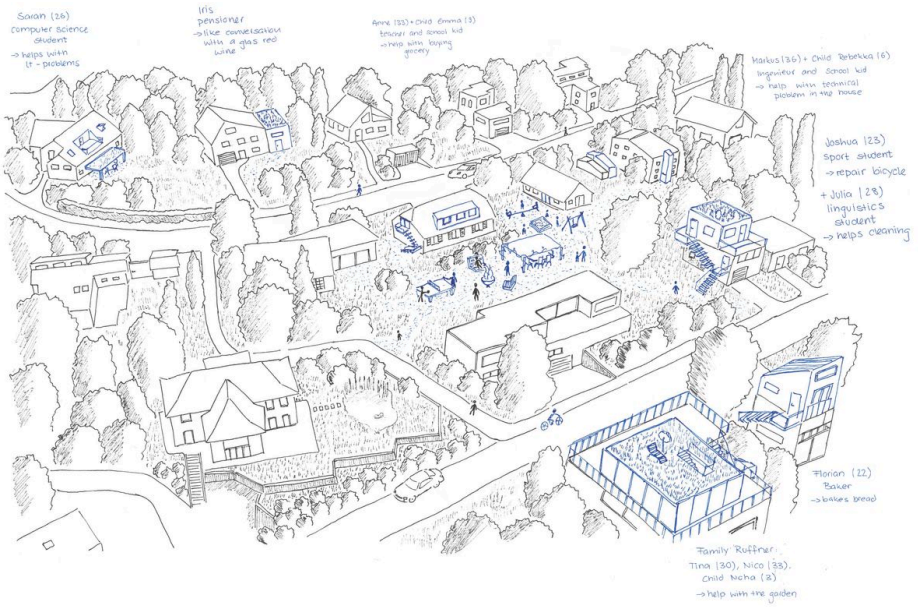
Living Models for over 60 years olds.

There are quite a few new forms how the life from this second spring onwards could look like. Rather than remaining alone in a big house there is the possibility of a retirement community that would also mean being helped later by the Spitex. Moreover, a family or a student could move in, which would lead to more interactions and less isolation.



Concept Sketch Intergenerational Living,
Implemented in a single-family house.

We propose, instead of trying to implement the image of the village architecturally on a spatial level as the settlement Seldwyla did, we pursuit the thought of the social aspect of being a village. This means that the goal should be to reach a social density and so to increase the number of interpersonal interactions. By doing so the village should be seen as a social concept to be implemented in the single family house landscape in Zumikon. Further, we could use the existing building fabric of single-family houses to reactivate the social responsibility that derives from the idea of village life into the new housing model of intergeneration living. This could also be an opportunity to enable people that don´t earn 161,000 francs to live in Zumikon. This means that a social exchange between the inhabitants is happening. The older person could look after the child while the parents work and in return the family would take care of the garden or the student could help out with technical problems while the older person helps out with sewing the clothes.



Neighbourhood with Intergenerational Living.

The effect of intergenerational living would go beyond a single-family house as it increases the social density in the whole neighbourhood and enables an increase of the social mix in the population of Zumikon. New, younger people would join the community and improve its vibrance. This would consequently lead to an involvement of the municipality as the school would need to have enough space for the new arriving students, a new kita could emerge in the neighbourhood as well as a new gathering place for young and older people. The municipality could also provide incentives in the form of financial support for Zumikon residents who want to adapt their homes for this purpose.



Speed-Dating Event,
Social gathering to find a second family.

The involvement of the municipality could go so far that they organise meetings for the older persons with families and students in form of a speed dating. This could facilitate getting in touch with each other, get a first impression, and finding a match.



Verenas blooming garden.



Verena infront of her intergenerational living single-family house.

“I lived all alone for a very long time and then it got better with the students.”

“I had students living with me in the converted attic for 5 years. The first student was also a brass player like me by profession. I had great joy when we played music together.”

“An other student helped me out in the garden and in return could he stay with me for a low rent.”

— Verena (79 years old) from Zumikon

One could question whether the people in Zumikon would really be open for such a change in their lifestyle and accept intergenerational living. As we have seen before, Verena is living in a single-family house, but not anymore alone. She doesn´t feel alone anymore after some students lived with her. She had students that played brass like she does and with whom she could enjoy having a jam. She loves her garden but can´t gardening as much as in the past, so the student can live for a low rent in the converted attic and in return he looks after the garden. An exchange is taking place, not only on a material level, but also on a social level, which enriches their lives. In the end, the house will be made up of a new puzzle and form a new big patchwork family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone for supporting our work: Jan Westerheide, Muriz Djurdjevic and Dorothee Hahn for the many inspiring discussions and the productiv critics during the process, the municipality of Zumikon for their time to answer our questions, especially Julia Hartmann, Marc Bohnenblust and Thomas Epprecht and Sonja Daeniker and Verena Guran Fierz for their willingness to talk to us about their housing and living situation.

SOURCES

- Article Entwicklungsstrategie Zumikon 2035+. https://www.zsz.ch/meilen/zumiker-sagen-sechsmal-ja-/story/31964646?track
- Article Seldwyla. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/seldwyla-und-der-mut-zum-gemuet-ld.1435851?reduced=true
- Article Special flat-sharing community. Tagesanzeiger. https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/der-student-hilft-im-garten-statt-miete-zu-zahlen-183662979189
- Article Taxes Zumikon. Tagesanzeiger. https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/zuerich/region/was-ist-im-einstigen-steuerparadies-zumikon-los/story/25114551
- Article Village Square. Zolliker-Zumiker Bote. https://www.zolliker-zumiker.ch/2020/10/22/dorfplatz-zumikon-es-bleibt-alles-anders/
- Aus der Geschichte von Zumikon, Robert Epprecht.
- Bongenie Grieder. https://www.bongenie-grieder.ch/de/bongenie-grieder-werbeplakat-fur-s-strandbad-zu-grieder-cie-bunt-wohnen-a229095-uniq?gclid=Cj0KCQjw1tGUBhDXARIsAIJx01kXKpaAiyacLSn8tNSxaDp3PuGv-T9h8q2ic5y6MYYUaIbSg6s08dIaAtgIEALw_wcB
- Elara Fritzenwalden Archiv. https://elarafritzenwalden.tumblr.com/post/156232136515/house-gisel-zumikon-z%C3%BCrich-switzerland-1965-66
- Emuseum. https://www.emuseum.ch/people/51486/ernst-gisel/objects/images
- ETH Library. https://ba.e-pics.ethz.ch/main/galleryview/qsr=zumikon
- Family-owned for generations. Stefan Wülser Architektur. https://www.stefanwuelser.ch/projektliste/haus-in-weesen
- Forchbahn Zumikon. http://www.vhf-egg.ch/bilder/erkunde-die-strecke-der-fb/zumikon.html
- Gemeindeporträt. Canton of Zurich. https://www.zh.ch/de/politik-staat/gemeinden/gemeindeportraet.html
- Generational living. ETH Wohnforum. https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/arch/ncl/eth-case-dam/documents/Publikationen/forschungsberichte/2021/ETH%20Wohnforum%20%E2%80%93%20ETH%20CASE_Dokumentation%20Generationenwohnen.pdf
- Ginesta Zumikon. https://www.ginesta.ch/resources/public/lava3/media/kcfinder/files/Immobilienmarkbericht-2019-Ginesta-Zumikon.pdf
- Golf and Country Club Zurich. https://www.gccz.ch/club
- Housing shortage in the canton of Zurich. SRF. https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/wohnungsnot-im-kanton-zuerich-in-jedem-siebten-einfamilienhaus-wohnt-nur-eine-person
- Intergenerational housing partnerships. Pro Senectute. https://pszh.ch/soziales-und-beratung/wohnen/generationenverbindende-wohnpartnerschaften/
- MaxBill. https://www.maxbill.ch/pagina.php?0,9,0
- 1986 Movement. Luzerner Zeitung https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/kultur/1968-wende-zur-heutigen-gesellschaft-ld.87597
- Municipality Zumikon. https://www.zumikon.ch/
- Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Archive Zurich University of the Arts. https://www.emuseum.ch/people/51486/ernst-gisel/objects
- Platzspitz. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/aktuell/25-jahre-zuercher-platzspitz-platzspitz-chronologie-ld.143466\.
- Statistischer Atlas der Schweiz. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/regionalstatistik/atlanten/statistischer-atlas-schweiz.html
- Students live in the retirement centre. City of Zurich. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/gud/de/index/departement/medien/medienmitteilungen/2019/november/191114a.html
- Swiss Life-Wohnstudie. https://www.swisslife.ch/de/ueber-uns/news-medien/medienmitteilungen/newsfeed-eqs/2019/20191015_0800\.html
- Swiss National Museum. https://sammlung.nationalmuseum.ch/de/list/collection?detailID=100327429
- Wohnort: 8126 Zumikon, 2009.
- Zürcher Kantonalbank. https://www.zkb.ch/de/blog/immobilien/die-alten-bestimmen-das-angebot-von-morgen.html

This work by Manuela Foscaldi and Carla Ringenbach was created as part of the design studio Village Life at ETH Zurich in Spring 2022. The PDF is intended for educational purposes only. Its commercial distribution is strictly forbidden.

© 2025, Architecture of Territory

Architecture of Territory
Professor Milica Topalović

TEACHING TEAM
Muriz Djurdjevic
Dorothee Hahn
Milica Topalović
Jan Westerheide

Prof. Milica Topalović
ETH Zurich
ONA G41
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
8093 Zurich
Switzerland
+41 (0)44 633 86 88
www.topalovic.arch.ethz.ch