

Reflection report

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Relation between graduation topic, master track and master program

The Advanced Housing design spring studio within the Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences master track consists of the topic of housing crisis and its related theme urban densification. My interpretation from the studio topic and theme follows that within the housing crisis, not only is there a shortage of housing, but most of the new residents for this housing will consist of migrants. This comes from the fact that almost all annual increase in population in the Netherlands are migrants. Within the urban densification theme, these migrants will mainly be housed and integrated in the existing neighbourhoods in densely urban areas. My own focus on the migration topic relates to this by the problems in the current neighbourhoods and housing which are generally not designed for this target group. This affects the social integration and the feeling of being at home for these migrants, which adversely affects the liveability of neighbourhoods for other target groups. Moreover, this fits within the master track architecture in that the track is closely linked to solving societal and social problems that prevail.

Research and design influences

Research findings and structure

The study first examined the meaning of social and functional integration to identify what is currently being done socially to integrate migrants. This found that, in a general sense, family migrants and refugees receive help in learning the language and getting housing. However, the progression of integration in neighbourhoods and housing is not taken into account, leading to problems such as segregation and residents not feeling at home. For this, I looked at how social integration can be encouraged by the architect with the associated factors. This revealed that social integration can be promoted in particular by encouraging inter-ethnic contact and sense of belonging. This is also referred to in the literature as social bridges (between migrants and non-migrants) and social ties (between migrants themselves). Here, fostering inter-ethnic contact is encouraged both formally (through shared activities and facilities as well as commonality and equality) and informally (through fleeting encounters). Here, there are a number of ingredients that stimulate these two aspects, which have been determined both in the literature, through case studies, interviews and project visits. These are described as follows:

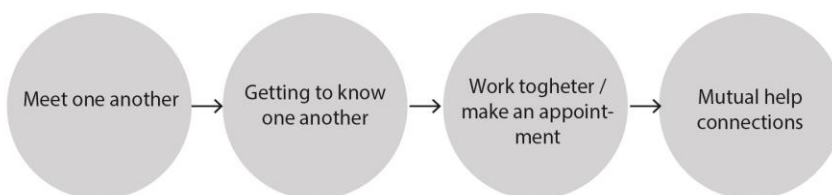


Figure 1 - Bindingladder (by author)

Influence of the design by functional ingredients

The study revealed that inter-ethnic contact is stimulated by ensuring positive contact, as well as commonality and equality. Here, positive contact is distinguished by the intensity of contact, referring to the bonding ladder. This bonding ladder starts with the least intensive contact, i.e. fleeting encounters, and rises to the most intensive contact, i.e. receiving help from the other person. In between fall cooperation and engaging in activities. It was found that, in general, the more intensive the contact, the more effective promoting inter-ethnic contact is, but the least intensive contact already creates public familiarity, which is also important for social integration. Literature, case studies and own interviews have shown that there are many different types of activities and interventions that encourage inter-ethnic contact, but no activity or intervention is considered to be the most effective. Nonetheless, it can be said that facilitating such spaces can already ensure that social integration is stimulated, which was also shown in the interview with Carla Huisman, who researched social integration at the Startblok project housing refugees with students or starters. By then looking at what works in the literature, case studies, interviews and site visits and what is

needed, a proposal is made for the type and amount of common or shared spaces or places in the neighbourhood. From this, at least the following ingredients emerged that work well in practice:

1. **Communal living room:** Referring to the housing of Turkish elderly, the communal living room provides a place for the elderly, which in turn makes them feel at home and easier to keep in touch with other residents. In addition, such a living room is included in Startblok projects where students and status holders come together to meet and help each other in areas such as education or business. Interestingly, Little C and Le Medi lacked the communal living room, but there was a need for this to have a place to get together.
2. **Shared kitchen and dining room in a building block:** This provides a place where residents can make food for each other, which interviews, among others, revealed a need for this. The view here is that this should take place on a block scale, where a cluster includes a shared kitchen because residents including migrants generally feel the need to retreat to their private homes, but do feel the need to make food for the neighbourhood at festivities such as Ramadan, Christmas and Easter, for example.
3. **Activity spaces that can be arranged flexibly:** This provides a place where residents including migrants can do activities together such as sports activities, workshops, tea evenings, sewing courses as there is a need for this and stimulates social integration. For students and status holders, there is also a need for a place where joint activities such as language activities, game nights and eating together.
4. **Religious spaces:** This provides a place where residents feel the need for a place to practice religion together, which is a desire among different types of migrants.
5. **Collective gardens:** this ensures that the children of residents including migrants can play, which in turn provides a meeting place among the elderly. In addition, collective gardens provide a place to grow fruit and vegetables together among, for example, status holders and students which also promotes social integration.

Besides the intensity of positive contact through activities and facilities, commonality also stimulates inter-ethnic contact. This is brought about by placing residents with similar interests near each other, including families together, as well as refugees and students. From this, it emerges that clusters are needed to place similar residents together, which then translates into architecture by placing similar housing typologies near each other. Here, it is important to create a mix in housing floor plans to create an inclusive neighbourhood where different backgrounds come together.

Influence of the design by spatial ingredients

Besides the functional ingredients mentioned, the spatial ingredients are also important, stimulating fleeting encounters and thus public familiarity, referring to the first rung of the bonding ladder. The starting point here is the spatial ingredients that, according to the literature, work in a community project. These are partly related to the functional ingredients, including the proximity of flats, but also provide places where residents meet fleetingly, including the stairwell and shared corridors. In addition, spatial ingredients make migrants feel more at home by applying elements that promote privacy. A veranda or patio has been shown to stimulate social contact, referring to the case studies Le Medi, Little C and housing Turkish elderly. Furthermore, housing plans that meet the needs of migrants make them more likely to feel at home. Needs here include a spacious kitchen, corridor and balconies or terraces. In addition, the need among migrants is often to have a garden so they can grow their own vegetables or fruit, which again often refers to their homeland. Furthermore, materialisation such as wood provides a comfortable living environment, which

further stimulates the feeling of being at home.

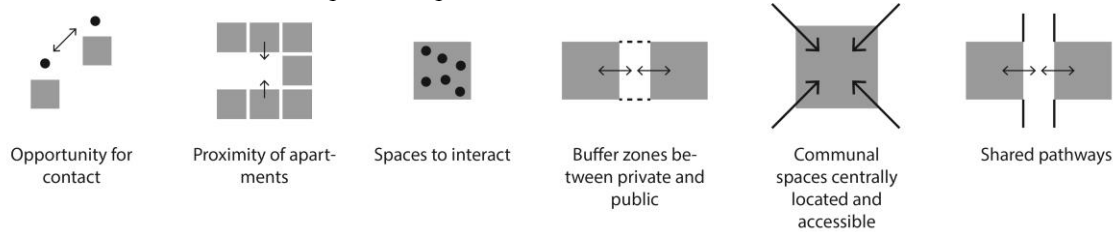


Figure 2 - Spatial ingredients for stimulating fleeting social interaction (by author)

The value of the use of methodology

The methodology for my research consisted of a number of sources that had been consulted beforehand to explore functional and spatial aspects. As the research progressed, however, the research approach was modified several times to form a better picture of what integration entails. Indeed, it turned out that the topic of migration and integration has a very general and often subjective approach, which made searching for the right literature a difficult task. Nevertheless, we managed to form a good picture of what integration means, how it can be promoted and how the architect can contribute to it. The proposed methods like interviews and auto-ethnography did help very much to form a better picture for myself of how it is experienced in practice and among different residents. Finally, the methods used have also helped me personally find out more about my background, which have ensured both a scientific and subjective approach to my subject story.

Academic and social value, scope and implication of the graduation topic

In my opinion, integration is a very under-researched issue, with the current housing crisis and urban densification focusing mainly on housing new residents including migrants as quickly and as much as possible, without giving extensive consideration to whether these homes match needs and social integration. This, as was also seen during site visits, brings about a segregated society, with little contact between different backgrounds. It is therefore important to consider this in every project by looking at what interventions can ensure this as well as the design of these places.

The value of transferability of the project results

The degree of transferability to other projects is high because almost every project does have to deal with housing migrants. This requires looking at what the needs are to make this a reality, where this research and design shows.