

# REFLECTION PAPER

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The aim of this paper is to shortly summarise the process of this graduation project, starting from the methodology that was used for the initial-, as well as for the developed research, and ending with future intentions for its finalisation.

## Project Description

The current social housing situation in Amsterdam will continue to contribute to an increase in societal segregation on the long run. This will clearly manifest itself on our site where social housing is primarily occupied by the elites. These areas (such as Oud-Zuid and Zuidas) collide with Buitenveldert - a comparatively neglected urban environment, where more disadvantaged groups can still have access to affordable housing solutions. As a group, we expect that Zuidas will rapidly and aggressively extend by 2050 as a consequence of Brexit and local economic advancements. Therefore the latter affordable blocks will inevitably be affected, bringing about the forceful displacement of lower middle-class residents to the peripheries of the city. The resulting intensified spatial segregation only allows elite groups in areas of power, opportunity, procedures and culture. Precedents of other world cities show that this inevitably leads to frustration and social conflicts, and is therefore unsustainable.

The question then arises: can the process of increasing socio-spatial segregation be reduced through a new collective and collaborative housing typology that shifts the power relationships between the elites and lower middle-class people towards a more equitable arrangement? Instead of forceful displacement, could the residents of Buitenveldert stay in their area as Zuidas extends, and can a cooperative living and working arrangement be applied new arrivals that is mutually beneficial for the original residents as well as for the newly arriving elites?

The brief concentrates on working out the actualisation of a design where lower middle-class groups are given the opportunity to take control of their living environments through the implementation of a flexible design for dwellings. This way, they can stay in their original place of residence, and work in the developing highly lucrative areas around them. Meanwhile, elites can take advantage of the services they provide and the functions they upkeep, as well as the dwelling opportunities they provide and manage.

The framework mixes public and semi-public amenities on the ground floor with adaptable housing solutions on the upper floors. Semi-public areas get an important role in the design, as the economic and social success of this project heavily relies on residents interacting and collaborating with one another. It is a scheme that questions the socially segregated housing solutions of today, and proposes an alternative that puts the social process of integration at the forefront of the design in order to achieve social and economical sustainability.

## The relationship between the topic of the graduation project, the topic of the Complex Projects Studio, and of the Architecture master track- and programme

The topic of the studio focuses on design solutions that will be suitable for the conditions of Amsterdam in 2050. This multi-faceted subject takes into account issues such as mobility, sustainability, governance, economics, social inclusion, and quality of life. This particular graduation project points out risk factors that might decrease the sustainability of the city on a societal level, and proposes a scheme that could reduce the damage. The end product is a detailed architectural design solution supported by different lines of theoretical and practical research that fits within the framework of the Architecture master track and master programme.

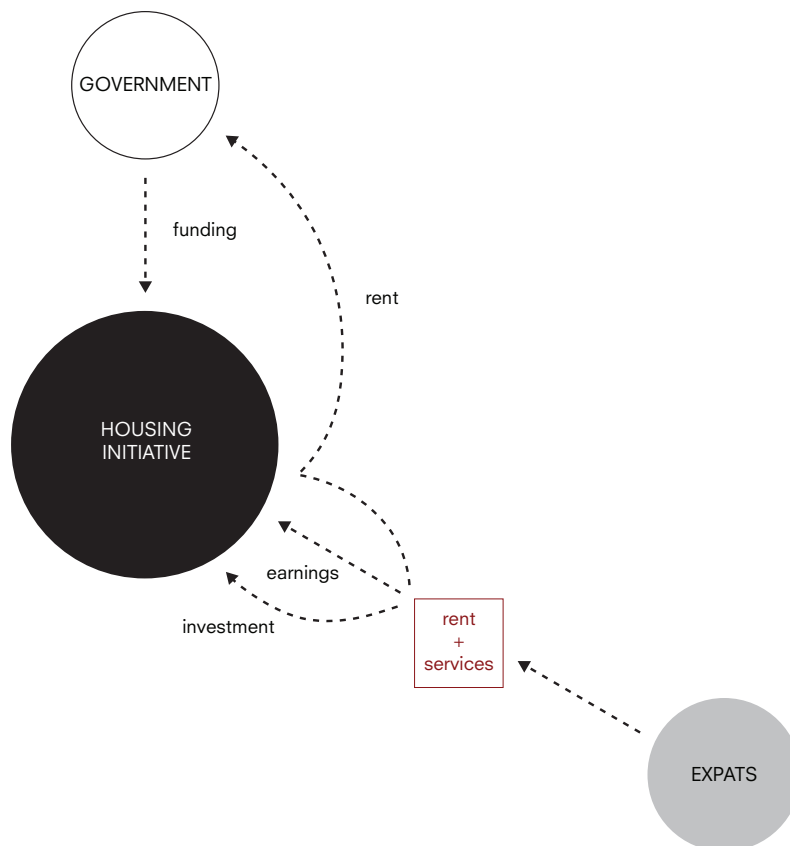
## Research methods and approaches

In this section, I would like to address the methodologies I have used in the framework of the research methods encouraged by the Complex Projects Graduation Studio. During the first semester, research was at the forefront of the project, with mapping and typological research highly encouraged, executed in groups. Apart from producing books of detailed analysis of the architectural and urban qualities of our site - which comprises of the Oud-Zuid, Zuidas, and Buitenveldert areas - we each developed our own fascinations too. These were investigated primarily through practical means, such as drawings and models. Additionally, we carried out several site visits to help along these processes. This personal graduation project is also heavily founded on resources that are text-based, expanding on the practical aspects of the overall group research. The aim is to place the findings of our groups in a wider socio-spatial context. Mixing hands-on research with theory, the design fuses tangible and intangible, looking to achieve a balance between interdisciplinary fields of sociology, economics and architectural/urban design. This has allowed for the development of a whole new theoretical scheme for 2050 with an

emphasis on the relationship between architectural and urban spatial conditions, and the socio-economic forces that will drive urban changes in the upcoming years.

### The relationship between research and design

My research investigates the conditions under which marginalised people live in Amsterdam today, and takes into account future predictions for economic and urban development. After analysing the risks that Amsterdam and in particular the Buitenveldert area on our site will face in terms of socio-spatial fragmentation, I have come up with an alternative living arrangement to today's socially segregated housing situation that in the future would reduce the effects of spatial and social divide between lower-middle class, working class, and the newly arriving elite groups living in Zuidas. The strict framework of the Complex Projects studio helped with the structuring of this task. My research foresees widening social and spatial segregation, and my project has been developed in reaction to this issue. My goal is to increase the sustainability of the city not only in a technical respect, but with regard to social processes too. Marginalisation on an urban scale is a topic that deserves a central role architectural discourse today, and so this project aims to emphasise its importance by offering a spatial alternative. I believe that this topic is crucial for the future development of cities, and that is why I have tried to integrate urban theory, psychology, and sociological fields into the practical methods encouraged by the studio. This has allowed me to develop a broad perspective on the different forces that guide architectural construction in the area today. I consider my project to be successful in having a new take on the way we have been looking at housing and urban zoning in Amsterdam, as it proposes social inclusion on a micro scale as well. In practice, the administrative and policy-related supporting structure for this project needs to become more detailed. One of the really helpful feedbacks I had was with regard to this, and therefore I have been working on developing a more comprehensive arrangement for the management of the proposed housing complex.



The design of the building and its urban surroundings reflects on this theoretical framework developed during the first semester. In its form, it tries to be as innovative as the newly proposed theoretical living arrangement. The emphasis in both the initial research phase, as well as in the design phase is based on evening out the power relationships between residents of different socio-economic backgrounds through creating opportunities for better the interaction and collaboration. As a result of this, the spatial manifestations of the structure have been developed in accordance. Collective space, and the seamless transitioning between private and public are crucial. Opportunities for work, leisure and access to services for all social groups living in the complex are evened out. The basic idea is that people living in social housing in Buitenveldert today will have an opportunity to get government funding for the project. In this scheme they will be offered highly adaptable housing arrangements, so they could take control of their own living environments. They would have the opportunity to stay close to lucrative areas, but also to establish their own businesses in the complex, and to provide services. The newly arriving expats would rent apartments in the complex from them, and would have access to different services and functions for their convenience. This business-like arrangement is supported by the proposed architecture that recognises the need for establishing familiarity and increased empathy between these different social classes. In the spatial arrangement of the building, a new kind of housing typology is present that recognises the importance of social balance in urban contexts in order to achieve sustainable cities. This results in more emphasis being on semi-public in-between zones, and opportunities for spontaneous interaction. This is something that is often disregarded in today's urban developments. This project therefore manages to shed light on some important issues that are often overlooked in profit-driven architectural arrangements in areas such as Zuidas today. The relationship between the research and the design is therefore very strong, as the spatial development and the design process follows the initial brief for the theoretical socio-spatial framework of the new housing initiative. The design is an example of how the newly proposed living arrangement could support latter in a mutually beneficial way for the different social groups living together.



### Ethical dilemmas encountered

As we have established a clear group strategy with my peers, my project fits well with the narrative of the other projects on our site. Our vision is that while the Oud-Zuid area will most likely struggle with a lack of opportunity for development and overcrowding, Zuidas will in response expand rapidly along the A10 and into the neighbourhood of Buitenveldert. This will cause the forceful displacement of people living in social housing in the latter area today, and consequently, I have been looking at alternatives for housing and work from a new perspective. I propose a new housing initiative that uses high levels of community involvement, and that is based on the reliance that different social classes have on each other. This is in response to case studies of other big European cities such as London and Paris, where we have seen how marginalisation on a political, economical, social and spatial scale leads to unsustainable situations. My research shows that there is a danger of these kinds of processes becoming more prominent in Amsterdam as well, due to the gentrification and privatisation of the city within the old city borders, and the rapid development and consequent population growth of the business district. Therefore this project tries to tackle the very real danger of growing marginalisation and the unsustainable social conditions that will likely develop in Amsterdam by 2050. Investigating such a complex topic has resulted in a steep learning curve over the course of this academic year. Although this topic naturally presented itself to me as a very relevant and present issue, investigating it through so many means has been a challenge, and I have therefore learned a lot about the intricacy of the relationship between shaping spaces and the social processes of integration and segregation. Placing this graduation project in a wider scientific framework, its relevance is prominent as a possible example of the fusion of social and architectural development in Amsterdam, but possibly other world cities too.

### The relationship between the graduation project and its wider societal framework

Overall, this graduation project aims to point out the importance of implementing more socially conscious designs in cities. In most urbanised areas today, architectural development is centralised in economically already lucrative areas. This results in spatial barriers, which contribute to marginalisation in physical, and psychological terms as well, and effect big portions of the population of cities. Despite this, the issue of socio-spatial fragmentations gets little attention in architectural practice, as funding for it is scarce, and the traditional way of allocating lower social classes in social housing still prevails. This projects questions this notion, and proposes that we look at housing in a more democratic way. It is crucial that we start questioning traditional housing arrangements on an urban and on an architectural scale, as currently, they lead to destructive social processes. To increase the sustainability of cities, a critical examination of how we actually use and live in cities is necessary, and more attention should be given to the areas that are segregated from economic and social opportunities.