

# Reflection paper

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This reflection gives a brief explanation to account for the preliminary results of the research and design in the graduation phase.

## ***What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?***

My graduation topic responds to important topics in today's society, such as food security, health, inclusivity, self-sufficiency and the increasing population. My research and design try to tackle them within the realm of architecture. My goal of designing a community center in Boerhaave, a deprived neighbourhood in Haarlem, aligns with these topics. Architectural engineering, in my opinion, transcends beyond general design, into the integration of all elements that scrape the surface of the architectural realm. Societal aspects for example, play an important role in final use of the building. Designing from a user-orientated perspective has therefore always been very representative of my design language. I find it hard to categorize my design in the different sub-topics (make, flow and stock), however flow would be most suitable considering the focus on urban farming. These will still need to be further developed until the end of the graduation phase in order to show its full potential.

## ***How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?***

The research was aimed to find out how urban agriculture could tackle problems that were evident in post-war neighborhoods (Boerhaave, Haarlem). Physical and mental health as well as community engagement and social interaction were the parameters that were researched. Looking back, while the results were positive and demonstrated the clear benefit of urban agriculture in the specific context, the integration in architecture was missing. Because my design started with an urban vision, the actual building design only started after the research phase in the first semester. Looking back, this is where I struggled finding integrated solutions which could have been explored more in my research.

The findings from the research were demonstrated in the form of design guidelines and were further implemented in the design. Some of them were used as a tool for exploration and research and others were quietly adopted in the overall design, especially with regards to the functions in the building. During the design phase the theme of urban agriculture was enhanced by the overall building massing. This resulted in quite a large surface area that was used for agriculture. In order to justify this, the overall idea of food production needed to reach beyond the scale of the users and actually become a public space.

## ***How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?***

At the very beginning of the semester I was struggling with my choice for the graduation studio. The theme of urban agriculture was something that I wanted to research, but I was not sure which studio would help me with achieving this in the best possible way. The first semester of the graduation studio revolved mostly around thematic research (80%) but also partly around design (20%). In my experience, this division did not work very well for me, especially since I was already focussing on a specific context, without knowing exactly what I wanted to design. This also meant that contextual parameters, which basically make the research more specific, were limiting the possibilities of my research from the beginning. On the other hand, through my research I found that urban agriculture was actually very beneficial in the context that I chose. The used research method was strongly focused on literature reviews and case studies. This approach resulted in various evidence based

design guidelines. Despite its usability in the broad range, the architectural quality and expression as well as the synergetic possibilities were not as thoroughly researched. The importance and relevance of this became more clear during the design phase, especially during the building design. Since my approach started with an urban vision, the actual building design started a couple weeks after I handed in the research paper. Consequently, this gap resulted in a separation between research and design rather than an overlap.

***How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?***

From an academic standpoint, the project contributes to advancing knowledge in the fields of architectural engineering and urban studies by proposing innovative solutions to pressing societal issues. The emphasis on inclusivity, community engagement, and sustainable urban development aligns with contemporary discourse on ethical and socially responsible design practices. Societally, the project holds potential implications for improving urban living conditions, fostering community cohesion, and promoting individual well-being through accessible resources and social spaces. Ethically, the project underscores the importance of equitable access to food, education, and communal spaces, advocating for designs that prioritize the needs of diverse communities.

***How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?***

The masters graduation allows students to really dig deep into a specific topic of choice. Ultimately the transferability of the project results will depend on several factors such as affordability and technical correctness, but also on the thought processes, ethics and goals of the project. In my case, the overall approach towards vulnerable communities and the tools that could empower them and give them a better position in society are the most useful. The all encompassing nature of urban agriculture as well as the general importance of community centers, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, are important results that could be implemented in the real world as well as the academic field.

Finally, I wrote down two reflection questions for myself:

- *How would you approach (methods, design) the project with current knowledge?*
- *How could you justify the large surface area that is dedicated to urban agriculture, looking from the perspective of a developer?*