

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Personal information	
Name	Komal Krishnanand Nayak
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Studio		
Name / Theme	MBE Grad Lab: Theme 3 – Inclusive Communities	
Main mentor	Ellen Geurts	Urban Development Management
Second mentor	Michael Peeters	Real Estate Management
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Over the first year of MBE, I developed an interest in social sustainability and wanted to pursue a research project in the field of social value. Theme 3 – Inclusive Communities seemed an apt fit for this research interest since social sustainability is one of the focuses in this theme.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Bridging a Path to Social Value: Integrating End-User Well-being into Housing Providers' Strategies
Goal	
Location:	NA
The posed problem,	<p>The Netherlands’ rental housing sector faces increasing challenges in addressing the needs of end-users, with tenant satisfaction experiencing a notable decline over the past decade. Housing associations and private investors, who play pivotal roles in the sector, often fail to fully incorporate end-user considerations into their planning and operations. This shortcoming points to a critical gap in the creation of socially sustainable housing developments that prioritize end-user well-being and inclusivity.</p> <p>Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks, increasingly employed by investors to guide sustainable development, place disproportionate emphasis on environmental factors while often neglecting the social dimensions. Current social benchmarks are limited in scope, focusing narrowly on workplace equality and human rights, leaving</p>

	<p>broader concerns such as community well-being and tenant satisfaction underrepresented. Similarly, housing associations often struggle to fully incorporate tenant needs into their operational and strategic planning. Demonstrating and enhancing social value creation remain complex tasks due to their weak social value strategies.</p> <p>This research seeks to address these challenges by developing a framework to inform strategies that prioritize end-user well-being in housing projects. Building on existing ESG principles, the framework aims to bridge the disconnect between end-user needs and the practices of housing providers, fostering more effective and inclusive planning and operation processes to enhance social value creation.</p>
research questions and	<p>How can Dutch housing providers create more social value in their housing projects by incorporating end-user considerations into their strategies?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which key social value factors are pertinent to end-users in housing projects? 2) What social value strategies do housing providers deploy in housing projects? 3) Which of the social value factors, pertinent to end-users, influence the business model of housing providers? 4) What strategies can Dutch housing providers adopt to bridge the gap between their social value propositions and end-user needs in housing?
design assignment in which these result.	<p>The deliverables of this research will include a refined social value creation framework specifically designed to address end-user well-being. This framework will support housing providers to integrate tenant-focused considerations into their planning and development decision-making</p>

	<p>processes. Additionally, strategy recommendations will be developed to guide housing providers in implementing practices that enhance tenant satisfaction and foster long-term social value creation.</p> <p>If time constraints arise, priority will be given to developing comprehensive strategy recommendations. In such a case, a preliminary version of the social value creation framework will be delivered, accompanied by detailed recommendations for refinement. These recommendations will lay the groundwork for further research and development, ensuring the framework can evolve into a more robust tool over time. The framework will also be adaptable, allowing for future expansion to address other dimensions of social value, such as community development, supply chain practices, economic development, and environmental sustainability, beyond end-user well-being.</p>
Process	
Method description	
<p>This research will be conducted using a Design Science Research methodology. DSR aims to develop an innovative solution to a problem by leveraging existing components of a solution, integrating, refining, and expanding upon established design knowledge (vom Brocke et al., 2020). This methodology is particularly suitable for this study, which employs qualitative methods to address low housing satisfaction among end-users and enhance their well-being. Using literature, industry publications and existing ESG frameworks as a foundation, the study will develop a comprehensive social value creation framework tailored specifically to improve end-user well-being. A DSR project can extend beyond creating design entities, by also contributing to design theory (Chandra Kruse et al., 2019; vom Brocke et al., 2020). Here, the social value framework represents the design entity, while the strategy recommendations for housing providers to enhance end-user well-being constitute the design theories.</p> <p>As outlined by Peffers et al. (2007), six steps comprise the DSR methodology. The first two steps—identifying the problem and defining the solution objectives—have been discussed earlier. The third step involves developing the initial social value</p>	

creation framework. This process includes gathering factors/objectives to improve end-user well-being from literature, industry publications and various ESG frameworks, such as the EU Social Taxonomy, GRESB, WELL Building Standard, and OECD Wellbeing Framework, to compile a comprehensive set of social value objectives relevant to housing project end-users. Some frequently used ESG standards like GRI Standards and ESRS are excluded due to their generalized scope and lack of focus on the built environment or end-users. The collected objectives undergo self-evaluation to ensure consistency, clarity, and alignment with the goal of addressing end-user needs. This approach aligns with Sonnenberg & vom Brocke (2012) concurrent evaluation method, where each stage focuses on different design aspects, providing incremental feedback toward the final design entity and theories. This step answers the first research question.

Following this, a semi-structured interview is conducted with a social value expert. The purpose of this interview is to refine the list of objectives. The expert suggests additional objectives, modifies or eliminates less relevant ones, and conducts the next evaluation stage in which the framework is tested for ease of use, fidelity with real-world phenomena and robustness. This iterative process ensures the framework is rigorous and practical.

Once developed, the framework undergoes the fourth DSR step—demonstration. It is tested for utility and relevance through structured interviews with asset managers of housing providers, including housing associations and private investors like pension funds and insurance companies. The framework guides the interview structure and informs questions. These interviews explore current social value strategies, identifying which framework objectives are included in development strategies, which are absent, and the reasons for any gaps. Additionally, they examine how end-user needs influence housing providers' business models. The second and third research questions are answered through these inputs. This phase evaluates the framework's effectiveness in aligning end-user needs with housing provider strategies. Using an abductive logic of inquiry, the data collected from the interviews will inform the design theory output, i.e. the strategy recommendations for housing providers to address end-user needs, which answers the fourth research question. The potential social value added through the use of these strategies will be theorised, by referring to literature and industry publications on social value, to answer the main research question.

The fifth DSR step, framework evaluation, occurs during the same structured interviews. Feedback from interviewees highlights potential issues in operationalizing the framework's metrics, identifying areas for improvement. These insights refine the social value creation framework, ensuring it aligns with the practical planning and decision-making processes of housing providers. If time constraints limit the refinement process, these inputs can be translated into recommendations for future research to enhance the framework, allowing focus on delivering the design theory outputs.

Literature and general practical references

Literature to be consulted consists of prominent academic and industry publications in the field of social value definition, creation, delivery and measurement, social sustainability, social value in the built environment and housing provider (social housing organizations, investors and developers) practices in implementing ESG issues, to arrive at social value factors supporting end-user well-being.

Data on trends of tenant satisfaction and expectations will be sought out from academic literature, databases like CBS and WoOn, industry reports like BZK reports, think tank & research institute reports, and databases of organisations like the Woonbond, Aedes and housing associations via internal networks.

Reflection

1. My graduation topic focuses on bridging gaps in social value creation by integrating end-user well-being into housing providers' strategies. This directly ties into the theme 'Inclusive Communities', which emphasizes collaborative, participatory urban environments and social sustainability as pathways to address urban inequality and foster justice. By narrowing the focus to housing providers' practices and tenant well-being, my research provides a practical application of the broader theoretical and conceptual goals outlined in the theme topic.

In the field of Management in the Built Environment, my thesis contributes by offering insights, tools and strategies recommendations for housing providers to align their strategies with end-user needs. It addresses management challenges such as integrating qualitative and quantitative data to inform decision-making and creating sustainable business models that support social value creation.

From the perspective of Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Sciences, my work complements technical and design-focused approaches by adding a strategic, end-user-centric lens to housing development. By bridging these disciplines, my research advances socially sustainable practices that align with the overarching goal of creating inclusive and equitable communities.

2. The societal relevance of this research is to help Dutch housing providers understand how to steer their social value creation strategies to better fit the needs of the end-users of their housing projects. By prioritizing tenant well-being and satisfaction, housing associations and investors can address persistent issues such as declining tenant satisfaction and unmet operational concerns. This research supports the creation of housing strategies that foster equity and improved living conditions to improve social value creation. It emphasizes the integration of end-user perspectives into decision-making processes, ensuring that housing projects contribute to a more inclusive and resilient society.

The scientific relevance of this research lies in its contribution to the growing body of knowledge on social sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks in housing. It aims to bridge gaps in current literature by

addressing the underexplored social dimensions of ESG and their application to end-user well-being in real estate. By developing a framework that aims to address end-user needs to enhance social value creation, this study provides actionable insights for housing providers and scholars alike. It advances theoretical understanding of end-user-centered housing strategies while offering practical tools to evaluate and enhance social outcomes effectively.