
FROM SHELTER TO STRENGTH

Assessing the Impact of Dutch Housing Policies on
Status Holders' Social Integration

Auas Bamarni
5739632



Master thesis | P5 Report
Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
Track: Management in the Built Environment



(Page intentionally left blank)

From Shelter to Strength: Assessing the Impact of Housing Policies on the Social Integration of Status Holders.

Msc graduation thesis | P5 Report

Author: Auas Bamarni
Student number: 5739632

June 2024
Delft, Netherlands



Master of Science

Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
Track: Management in the Built Environment
Graduation theme lab: Social Sustainability in Urban Contexts:
Towards Inclusive and Just Human Habitats

Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

First supervisor: Ir. E.H.M. (Ellen) Geurts
Second supervisor: Dr. D.K. (Darinka) Czischke
Delegate of the Board of Examiners: Mr. dr. H.D. (Hendrik) Ploeger

Cover image: edited by author, original from: OSCE, (2023) <https://www.osce.org/odihr/538964>

FOREWORD

This thesis marks the end of my Master's journey in Architecture, Urbanism and Building sciences with the track Management in the Built Environment at the Delft University of Technology. The journey to this point has been both challenging and rewarding, filled with numerous learning experiences and invaluable insights into the complex world of housing policies and their impact on social integration.

The focus of this research is on understanding how Dutch housing policies affect the social integration of status holders. This topic is of significant relevance in today's society, where migration and integration pose both opportunities and challenges. Through this study, I aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on how housing policies can better support the integration of status holders, thereby fostering more inclusive communities.

I observed the changes in the housing situation and their impacts on diverse communities over the past few decades since I was raised in the Netherlands in a household that had been affected by migration. Despite not having any housing problems when they arrived more than 30 years ago, my parents set out on a journey to build a new home and a sense of belonging, a journey marked by resilience and determination that left a lasting mark on my perspective. Since my parents' arrival in the Netherlands, the housing environment has undergone notable shifts and is still changing. There has never been a more pressing need for understanding housing concerns and how they affect vulnerable groups, which requires a more thorough investigation of the current situation.

Given the complexity of these issues, a more in-depth analysis of the existing housing allocation process and spatial dispersal of status holders is necessary. The goal of the research, "From Shelter to Strength: Assessing the impact of Dutch housing policies on status holders' social integration," is to better understand the complexities of housing policy challenges within the country and municipalities. My goal is to provide sustainable housing possibilities that specifically cater to the demands of status holder refugees in the present housing environment. The urgent need to solve the housing problem that affects vulnerable populations, especially refugees, is what inspired me to conduct this research. In order to significantly improve the lives of refugees looking for stability, research on fair housing possibilities is currently an ongoing effort.

This study represents a significant academic and personal objective, a sincere desire to support the development of a more equitable and efficient housing allocation system that recognizes and tackles the obstacles that refugees encounter in their efforts for stability and social integration in the Netherlands.

The research presented in this thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many individuals. Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis mentors, Ellen Geurts and Darinka Cziske, for their critical and insightful feedback throughout the research process. Their expertise and guidance have been instrumental in shaping this work. I also want to thank Gerard van Bortel for making time to have thesis meetings and providing useful feedback for my research. I am also thankful to the various stakeholders who participated in the

interviews of this research for their availability and willingness to share their perspective on this topic. Their willingness to share their experiences and perspectives has enriched this study immensely.

Lastly, I am also grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement. Their belief in me has been a constant source of motivation. Special thanks to Aaditi for her motivational boosts before every deadline.

I hope this thesis provides valuable insights and sparks meaningful discussions. Enjoy the read!

Auas Bamarni
Delft, June 2024

ABSTRACT

The sustainable development of cities depends significantly upon the effectiveness of housing policies, particularly in fostering social integration and inclusive communities. Within this context, the integration of status holders, poses a multifaceted challenge for Dutch housing policies. Beyond the provision of shelter, successful integration entails fostering harmonious relationships, reducing social disparities, and promoting a sense of belonging among status holders within their newfound communities.

This thesis investigates the impact of Dutch housing policies on the social integration of status holders, focusing on how housing allocation systems, spatial dispersal policies, and municipal decision-making processes influence social integration outcomes. Through a combination of literature reviews, case studies in Utrecht and Westland, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, the research provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and strategies associated with housing refugees.

The study reveals that Dutch housing policies prioritize status holders through centralized allocation systems, quota-based distribution, and collaborative initiatives aimed at increasing affordable housing and community integration. Spatial dispersal policies, designed to prevent segregation and promote diversity, present challenges related to individual preferences and potential isolation. Municipal decision-making is influenced by factors such as social housing scarcity, community resistance, and the need for greater input from status holders.

Social integration is found to be closely linked to housing's connection to employment, education, health, and community support. The research highlights the importance of place attachment, access to (familiar) amenities, and public transportation in facilitating integration. Additionally, the role of community attitudes and political environments significantly impacts the social integration process.

The findings underscore the need for flexible and informed housing policies that balance practical considerations with the well-being of migrants. Recommendations for future research include exploring community-based support initiatives, understanding local residents' perceptions of refugees, and utilizing AI algorithms to improve housing placement decisions. The study contributes to the broader discourse on refugee integration and offers insights for policymakers, housing authorities, and community stakeholders. It seeks to offer valuable insights into the dynamics shaping inclusive communities and resilient cities in the Netherlands and beyond.

KEYWORDS | *housing policies, housing allocation, spatial dispersal, status holder refugees, social integration, place attachment.*

CONTENT

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY	12
1. INTRODUCTION	19
1.1 Political and societal context	19
1.2 Problem statement	21
1.3 Research aim and research questions	21
1.4 Relevance	22
Societal	22
Scientific	22
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	23
2.1 Housing allocation strategies	23
Different methods	23
Europe	23
Dutch context	24
Definition	28
2.2 Spatial dispersal policies	30
Dutch dispersal policies over time	30
Comparison with other countries	32
Definition	33
2.3 Social integration	35
Place attachment as a theoretical framework	36
Challenges of place attachment and their consequences	37
Existing strategies for improving social integration	38
Definition	40
2.4 Conceptual framework and hypothesis	41
3. RESEARCH DESIGN	42
3.1 The research questions	42
3.2 Research strategy/design	43
3.3 Research methods	44
3.3 Case studies	45
3.3 Research output	47
3.4 Limitations	47
3.5 Planning	48
3.6 Validity and generalizability	48
3.7 Research ethics and data management plan	49

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	50
4.1 Introduction to the case study	50
4.2 Case 1: Utrecht	52
Case description	52
Perspectives of the stakeholders involved	53
DECISION MAKING	53
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	62
4.3 Case 2: Westland	68
Case description	68
Perspectives of the stakeholders involved	68
DECISION MAKING	68
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	75
4.4 Perspectives not case-related (own findings)	81
4.6 Cross-case analysis	84
Decision making: housing allocation strategies	84
Decision making: spatial dispersal policies	85
Factors influencing decision making processes	87
Social integration: integration support and place attachment	87
5. DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION	91
5.1 Comment on methodology	91
Strengths	91
Limitations	91
Validation	92
Areas for Improvement	92
5.2 Comment on results and hypothesis	92
Impact of spatial dispersal on social Integration	93
Place Attachment in urban vs. rural Contexts	94
Current housing policies	94
5.3 Practical implications	95
6. CONCLUSIONS	97
6.1 Sub questions conclusion	97
6.2 Main question conclusion	101
6.3 Further research	102
REFERENCES	103
APPENDIX	107
Appendix 1: Consent form	107
Appendix 2: Interview protocol stakeholders	110

Appendix 3: Asylum procedure scheme	115
Appendix 4: Coding scheme	116
Appendix 5: Links to the initiatives/parties mentioned in this research	117

LIST OF FIGURES

- FIGURE 1: News headings, edited by author, original from NOS Nieuws (2022) & RTL Nieuws (2023).
- FIGURE 2: Number of status holders housed by municipalities in the Netherlands per half year (Rijksoverheid, n.v.t. via NOS Nieuws, 2022).
- FIGURE 3: All actors involved during the asylum procedure in the Netherlands (own work).
- FIGURE 4: The asylum procedure in the Netherlands (own work).
- FIGURE 5: Pestoff model (1992), actors involved in housing status holders (own work).
- FIGURE 6: Timeline housing and dispersal policies implementations, for enlarged figure see appendix (own work).
- FIGURE 7: The core domains of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008)
- FIGURE 8: Place attachment dimensions according to Van der Graaf (2009).
- FIGURE 9: Conceptual model, (own work)
- FIGURE 10: Research methods/phases, (own work)
- FIGURE 11: Research timeline, (own work)
- FIGURE 12: Coding scheme and the connections of most used codes from the transcripts, for enlarged version see appendix (own work)
- FIGURE 13: Share of immigrants with problems in daily life due to the home in which they live. (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024).
- FIGURE 14: Housing status holders in Utrecht, 2015-2024, red is the municipal target and orange is the amount of the housed status holders (COA, taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)
- FIGURE 15: A global view of where the status holders are housed in Utrecht during the acceleration campaign, (AD, 2022)
- FIGURE 16: Share of immigrants with problems in daily life due to the feeling of not belonging. (Survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)
- FIGURE 17: Integrators and Utrecht residents on average about their neighborhood (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)
- FIGURE 18: Share of people integrating and Utrecht residents on average who can contact people (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey residents (2021) and survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)
- FIGURE 19: Share of immigrants and Utrecht residents on average who have a lot of contact with neighbors (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey residents (2021) and survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)
- FIGURE 20: Housing status holders in Westland, 2015-2023, red is the municipal target and orange is the amount of the housed status holders, for enlarged figure see appendix (Utrecht in Cijfers, 2024)
- FIGURE 21: Westlandse Flexroute, (AD, 2022)

LIST OF TABLES

- TABLE 1: Research methods per sub-question, (own work)
- TABLE 2: Interviewees general and stakeholders case 1 and 2 for the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees arced in gray participated in interviews which were more exploratory (own work)
- TABLE 3: Comparison cases, decision making, housing allocation strategies (own work)
- TABLE 4: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on decision making , housing allocation strategies (own work)
- TABLE 5: Comparison cases, decision making, spatial dispersal policies (own work)
- TABLE 6: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on decision making , spatial dispersal policies (own work)
- TABLE 7: Composition of housing stock (ownership unknown), Utrecht and Westland, (Waarstaatjegemeente, 2022)
- TABLE 8: Evaluation of the factors influencing the decision making processes of housing status holders.
- TABLE 9: Comparison cases, social integration (own work)
- TABLE 10: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on social integration (own work)
- TABLE 11: Evaluation of the social integration indicators of status holders in Case 1 and Case 2, (own work)

Introduction

Political and Societal Context

The housing crisis in the Netherlands, especially concerning status holders (recognized refugees), has become a critical issue. Historically, the Netherlands has provided protection and safety to refugees, but the recent surge in refugee numbers has made it increasingly challenging to find suitable housing for them (Van Liempt, 2023). Consequently, efforts are being made to ensure status holders receive stable housing as they integrate into Dutch society.

The housing and migration crisis is a hot topic in Dutch politics, particularly in the current elections. Politicians are debating whether status holders should be prioritized for social housing. This debate gained prominence after the previous cabinet collapsed due to an inability to reach a consensus on this matter. The situation is further complicated by the overcrowding of asylum seeker centers, exacerbated by the continuous influx of refugees (NOS Nieuws, 2023; RTL Nieuws, 2023).

Problem Statement

Housing plays a vital role in the sustainable development of cities, contributing to social sustainability by fostering harmonious relationships and reducing social disparities. For refugees, achieving social sustainability extends beyond providing shelter to ensuring their integration into society. However, the housing crisis and continuous refugee influx in the Netherlands result in an acute scarcity of suitable accommodations. Additionally, policies favoring the spatial dispersal of refugees lack empirical support and can lead to isolation, weak social networks, and delayed integration (Arnoldus et al., 2003; van Liempt, 2020).

Status holders often have little say in where they are housed, and families may be separated under current dispersal policies. The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) primarily considers work, study, family presence, or medical circumstances when allocating housing, but personal preferences are often overlooked (van Liempt et al., 2020). To address these challenges, a reevaluation of housing policies, focusing on the social integration of status holders, is necessary.

Method

To address the sub-research questions, a deductive approach was utilized, starting with a literature review to form hypotheses tested empirically. This research employs a qualitative approach which was conducted in three phases: the theoretical phase (literature review + exploratory interviews), the empirical phase (case studies: reports and semi-structured interviews) and the conclusion phase (+ discussion + validation interviews).

Case studies

The case studies aim to provide an in-depth understanding of how local factors influence refugee integration experiences. Utrecht and Westland were selected for the case studies to represent contrasting urban and rural settings, respectively, each with distinct characteristics and integration dynamics. Utrecht is a proactive urban municipality, while Westland presents a rural scenario with

unique challenges. This selection aims to uncover contextual factors affecting integration and to inform tailored policy recommendations.

The case studies involved conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including municipalities, housing associations, refugee councils, and COA. Additionally, the research incorporated recent data to deepen the understanding of the impacts of housing policies on social integration.

Literature review findings

Housing Allocation

Housing allocation refers to the processes and mechanisms through which housing accommodations are assigned to individuals or households, focusing particularly on status holders in this research.

Key Points:

- **Centralized Allocation Systems:** Managed by housing authorities or government agencies, prioritize individuals based on criteria like vulnerability, family size, or residency duration in temporary shelters.
- **Priority Allocation:** The Dutch system prioritizes status holders through various mechanisms, ensuring timely housing support for vulnerable groups.
- **Quota-Based System:** Allocates refugees across municipalities based on population size, promoting socio-economic balance.
- **Collaborative Initiatives:** Partnerships between government entities and other stakeholders increase affordable housing availability and support community integration.
- **Spatial Distribution Policies:** Aim to disperse status holders across different areas to foster integration and prevent social isolation.

Spatial Dispersal Policies

Spatial dispersal policies aim to distribute status holders across different geographic locations to promote social integration and alleviate the burden on urban centers.

Key Points:

- **Evolution of Policies:** Historical development of Dutch dispersal policies, starting with the “Spreidingswet” in the 1990s.
- **Philosophy and Objectives:** Distributes responsibility and costs fairly among municipalities to foster integration and prevent segregation.
- **Challenges and Criticisms:** Concerns about proportional distribution effectiveness, social integration impact, and status holders' preferences and needs.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparison with strategies in other countries provides insights into governance models and social welfare systems.
- **Ethical and Practical Considerations:** Emphasizes equity, social cohesion, and community engagement in designing dispersal policies.

Social Integration

Social integration involves the participation of individuals in various social relationships and their sense of belonging, critical for understanding status holders' integration into new environments.

Key Points:

- Definition and Domains: Covers sectors like employment, housing, education, and health, involving social connections and addressing barriers (integration framework).
- Place Attachment framework: Emotional connections to environments contribute to a sense of belonging and satisfaction.
- Challenges: Financial, legal, and mobility barriers, and absence of cultural markers can hinder integration and sense of belonging.
- Strategies for Improvement: Supportive social networks, inclusive societies, and tailored approaches to refugees' individual circumstances.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

The conceptual framework hypothesizes that housing policies facilitating stronger place attachment lead to better social integration outcomes, encompassing economic participation, cultural adaptation, and social connectedness.

Hypotheses:

- Urban vs. Rural Contexts: Place attachment is stronger in urban contexts compared to rural contexts.
- Municipal Prioritization and Allocation: Effective housing strategies by Dutch municipalities significantly influence social integration, leading to better social cohesion and community engagement.

Case study findings

CASE 1: UTRECHT

Utrecht focuses on rapid housing and integration of status holders within a diverse urban environment.

Key Points:

Housing Allocation:

- Challenges in providing enough social housing.
- Strategies include a realization team, home sharing, and high-quality temporary housing.
- Prioritized refugees for social housing in 2022, exceeding targets.

Community Resistance:

- Opposition to flexible housing projects.
- Mitigated through community participation and spatial planning.

Mismatch in Housing Needs:

- Family-sized housing often mismatches single-person households.
- COA advocates splitting family homes.

Social Integration:

- Three-year support period by the Refugee Council.
- Language initiatives and community workshops aid integration.

- Strong neighborhood attachment and accessibility to local facilities.

CASE 2: WESTLAND

Westland, a small municipality, struggles with local resistance and limited housing for status holders.

Key Points:

Housing Allocation:

- Temporary housing in a hotel before transitioning to permanent homes.
- Low turnover in social housing and local resistance.

Community Resistance:

- Strong opposition to flexible housing solutions.
- Political resistance impacts decisions.

Social Integration:

- Initial support from the Refugee Council and municipal integration programs.
- Frequent relocations hinder stability.
- Mixed community support and lack of familiar amenities.

Cross-Case Analysis

Both Utrecht and Westland face unique challenges and employ different strategies for housing and integrating status holders, reflecting their urban and rural contexts.

Decision-Making:

- Utrecht experiences more livability challenges and challenges in avoiding concentrations of social housing neighborhoods.
- Westland encounters more local resistance challenges and the flow of status holders to permanent housing.

Approaches to Housing Status Holders:

- Both Utrecht and Westland exceeded housing targets in 2022 and face challenges with flexible housing solutions.
- Utrecht focuses on shared housing and proactive integration efforts, while Westland uses temporary housing to meet immediate needs.
- Utrecht clusters status holders in social housing areas; Westland disperses them more widely.
- Westland lacks asylum seeker centers (AZCs), posing unique placement challenges.

Common Issues:

- Both municipalities struggle with neighborhood composition, integration, and aligning housing preferences with realities.
- Prejudices and the need to integrate status holders into communities are shared hurdles.
- Balancing individual preferences with practical housing considerations is a common challenge.

Social Integration and Place Attachment:

- Utrecht has a stronger sense of place attachment compared to Westland.
- Both municipalities offer strong integration support.
- There is a stark contrast in place identity between the two regions.

- Westland lacks a sense of familiarity and community involvement in housing processes, unlike Utrecht.
- Utrecht's urban density presents housing challenges but fosters higher place attachment due to diversity.
- Westland's rural setting has fewer housing challenges but lower place attachment due to its strong village identity.

Comparison of Utrecht and Westland:

- Utrecht embraces diversity and supports integration through various initiatives and longer-term support from organizations like the Refugee Council.
- Westland's integration efforts are hindered by a strong village identity and resistance to newcomers, despite some support for refugee initiatives.
- Utrecht provides familiar facilities and fosters community engagement, whereas Westland's efforts are limited by entrenched local attitudes.

Insights and Strategies:

- Effective integration requires access to amenities, fostering place attachment, and leveraging public transportation.
- Comprehensive strategies aligning housing policy with integration goals and considering diverse resident needs are crucial.

Conclusion

Dutch housing policies significantly impact the social integration of status holders by employing mechanisms such as priority housing programs, quota-based distribution, and centralized allocation. These policies aim to ensure socio-economic balance and avoid concentration by promoting diversity through spatial distribution. Despite these efforts, challenges such as limited individual preference consideration, potential isolation, scarcity of social housing, and community resistance remain significant. Effective integration is further influenced by connections to employment, education, health, local community initiatives, and proximity to essential amenities. The varying urban and rural settings also play a crucial role in shaping the integration experiences of status holders.

The proactive approaches seen in municipalities like Utrecht, which emphasize community engagement and longer-term support, contrast with areas like Westland, where a strong village identity and resistance towards newcomers pose additional hurdles. Both regions face common challenges in fostering a sense of belonging and overcoming negative perceptions within local communities. Addressing these issues requires flexible and informed housing policies that prioritize practical considerations and the well-being of migrants.

Recommendations

- Housing Policy Refinement: The findings suggest a need for more nuanced housing policies that account for the diverse needs and preferences of refugees. Policies should balance between dispersal and clustering to optimize social integration and community cohesion.
- Performance Agreements: Enhanced performance agreements between municipalities and housing corporations can lead to better-coordinated efforts, ensuring that integration support is consistent and comprehensive.
- Enhanced Community Engagement: Community initiatives like 'Welkom Huis' and 'Buddy to Buddy' in Utrecht demonstrate the positive impact of localized support. Similar programs should be expanded and adapted to different contexts to foster social connections and reduce isolation.
- Combating Prejudices: Addressing negative perceptions through education and awareness campaigns is crucial. Promoting stories of successful integration and contributions by refugees can help shift public opinion.
- Tailored Support: The need for tailored support services, including language classes, employment training, and mental health resources, is critical. Such services should be easily accessible and designed to address the specific challenges faced by refugees.
- Place Attachment: Fostering place attachment by improving access to amenities, creating welcoming public spaces, and encouraging community participation can enhance refugees' sense of belonging and stability.
- Linking Skills with Opportunities: Identifying and linking refugees' skills with local employment opportunities can facilitate economic integration. For instance, connecting those with horticultural backgrounds to areas like Westland can improve employment outcomes.
- Transportation and Accessibility: Ensuring that refugees have access to reliable public transportation is vital for their employment and overall integration. This includes considering transportation costs and commute times in housing assignments.
- Continuous Monitoring: Ongoing data collection and analysis on refugee integration outcomes can inform policy adjustments and ensure that strategies remain effective and responsive to changing needs.
- AI and Technology: Utilizing AI algorithms for housing placement decisions can improve the matching process, ensuring that refugees are placed in locations that best meet their needs and facilitate quicker integration into the labor market.
- Urban Focus: Urban areas often provide better access to services, employment, and social networks, making them more favorable for refugee integration. Policies should consider facilitating secondary migration from rural to urban areas when necessary.
- Rural Support: In rural areas, targeted strategies are needed to overcome isolation and provide adequate support. This includes creating opportunities for social interaction and addressing specific challenges like limited access to services and employment.
- Supporting Mobility: Recognizing that mobility can be a part of refugees' integration journey, support mechanisms should be in place to assist those who move in search of better opportunities or stronger social networks.

- *Encouraging Bonding and Bridging:* Policies should encourage both bonding (within-group) and bridging (between-group) social capital to enhance overall well-being and integration.
- *Supporting family reunification:* There is a need for a more nuanced approach to housing decisions concerning family reunification. There is a dilemma whether status holders should settle alone first or wait until their entire family can join them, which requires better processes and considerations.
- *Promoting collaboration:* There is a need for stronger collaboration among stakeholders such as municipalities, housing associations and COA. This includes sharing knowledge and resources between different regions (like Utrecht and Westland) to find a balance between rural and urban housing preferences and develop localized versions of successful integration initiatives like the 'Welkom Huis'.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Political and societal context

The housing crisis and difficulties in providing appropriate residence for status holders have become a pressing issue in recent years. While the Netherlands has a duty to offer these refugees protection and a dignified existence, it has consistently provided safety and protection to them through its history. However, as there is a great influx of refugees, the challenge of finding suitable housing for these individuals becomes more complex. Thereafter, efforts are being made to address this issue and ensure that status holders can access safe and stable housing as they rebuild their lives in their new country (Van Liempt, I., 2023).

Besides, the issue of migration and the housing crisis has been a central focus for politicians in the current Dutch elections. These politicians are engaging in extensive debates on whether status holders should be given priority in social housing (NOS Nieuws, 2023). This topic has gained significant attention due to the collapse of the previous cabinet where they were unable to reach a consensus on this matter. Moreover, the increasing influx of refugees and the filling up of asylum seekers' centers have further exacerbated these concerns (RTL Nieuws, 2023).

Voorrang statushouders woningmarkt verdeelt politiek

VVD vreest voor nog meer huizen voor statushouders

15 February 2023, 08:53 uur

NOS Nieuws • Donderdag 20 oktober 2022, 07:43 •
Aangepast donderdag 20 oktober 2022, 10:03

Overheid schiet tekort bij huisvesting statushouders, zegt Adviesraad

Rutte hoopt op woningen voor statushouders: 'Heb ze ook nodig op arbeidsmarkt'



NOS Nieuws • Dinsdag 31 mei 2022, 22:16

Kamer worstelt met voorrang voor statushouders in tijden van woningnood

Figure 1: News headings, edited by author, original from NOS Nieuws (2022) & RTL Nieuws (2023).

Some politicians believe that status holders should be given priority over social housing, because many status holders are still staying in asylum seekers centers due to the housing shortage (RTL Nieuws, 2023). As a result, the integration of these people slows down and the new influx has no place in the AZCs, which means that many people have to sleep outside, as was the case in Ter Apel. Living conditions in the AZCs themselves are not exactly pleasant, and status holders have the right to a house outside of the AZC (ACVZ, 2022).

On the other hand, some believe that priority should not be given to status holders when allocating social housing to people, especially because of the housing shortage. They believe that there are also other people in the Netherlands who have difficult circumstances and are not given priority for social housing. They believe that everyone should go to the back of the waiting list and that status holders put pressure on the social housing market and that the migration influx should be stopped (RTL Nieuws, 2023). But the housing crisis is not caused by them. More than 90% of social housing is

allocated to other groups of home seekers. Status holders, just like Dutch citizens, are affected by the housing crisis. So there is an endless discussion in politics (ACVZ, 2022).



Figure 2: Number of status holders housed by municipalities in the Netherlands per half year (Rijksoverheid, n.v.t. via NOS Nieuws, 2022).

Figure 2 shows that municipalities are not doing too badly in housing status holders. In 2021, municipalities have seen an improvement in housing efforts for status holders, with more than 10,000 additional individuals housed compared to the previous year. After the high influx in 2015, municipalities housed 40,000 status holders in one year, but after that the attention of all governments waned. The figures show that relatively few status holders received a home in 2018 and 2019. Despite this progress, around 17,500 status holders are still awaiting housing, mostly residing in asylum seeker centers (NOS Nieuws, 2022). Urgency remains high, with calls for municipalities to move quickly on housing initiatives in order to reduce the need for temporary shelters. While some municipalities have made significant steps, others still face considerable challenges in meeting their housing obligations.

This has to do with the housing crisis but also the corona pandemic. But also with the fact that in 2017 the Cabinet abolished the obligation for municipalities to assign status holders as an emergency category. Additionally, municipalities have always been behind on the task for housing status holders, except for 2017. However, it is not the case that municipalities do nothing, they do carry out their tasks, but often with delays (ACVZ, 2022).

In this context, providing adequate accommodation for status holders becomes a critical issue. Aligning housing alternatives with the specific needs and capacities of these status holders is still a difficulty, despite the Dutch character embedded practice of offering shelter (De Hoon et al., 2020). The concept of 'shelter to strength' strikes a deep connection in this journey, representing a transformational transition for this vulnerable group from inadequate housing towards full integration into Dutch society.

However, despite its intended purpose, the existing housing allocation system often suffers from practical issues. Status holders are often not given the concern that they require, which makes it difficult for them to get the facilities, chances for education, jobs, and social networks that they need. As a result, this fragmented allocation system causes a delayed integration, which hinders status holders from actively contributing to Dutch society (Van Liempt & Miellet, 2020). These challenges are part of the larger picture of the Netherlands' increasing housing problem. This is a complex issue that requires a demanding reevaluation of current housing allocation policies due to the lack of suitable housing in the context of an increasing refugee population.

1.2 Problem statement

In the sustainable development of cities housing has an important role, as a crucial part of the built environment. A dimension of sustainable development is social sustainability, which emphasizes the importance of fostering harmonious relationships, reducing social disparities, and promoting social cohesion within housing systems (Chiu, 2004). However, a challenge for Dutch policies is to realize this especially for disadvantaged groups such as refugees, which extends beyond the provision of shelter. The reason behind this is the prevailing housing crisis and the ongoing refugee influx, which results in an acute scarcity of suitable accommodations. Besides, these policies often have prevailing assumptions about the benefits of the spatial dispersal of refugees, but it lacks empirical support. Studies show that spatial dispersal of status holders has impacts beyond housing challenges which contribute to anti-migrant sentiments, can lead to isolation, a lack of social networks and secondary migration (Arnoldus et al., 2003; van Liempt 2020). It results in a delay of their social integration, which is a component of social sustainability, preventing them from actively contributing to their newfound communities.

With regard to placement in a municipality, status holders have little say in where they are housed and that families are sometimes housed far apart under the dispersal policy. Besides, the COA does not take personal wishes into account, but does look at work, study, the presence of first-degree family or medical circumstances (van Liempt et al., 2020). To address these complex challenges, there is a need to reevaluate the housing policies, incorporating a comprehensive understanding of status holders' social integration. There is an uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of housing policies in promoting successful integration for refugees. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a nuanced evaluation of the impact of these housing policies, including the housing allocation and spatial dispersal, on refugees' social integration.

1.3 Research aim and research questions

The aim of the research is to provide a nuanced evaluation of the impact of Dutch housing policies, including housing allocation and spatial dispersal, on the social integration of refugees. By doing so, this research aims to bridge the gap between shelter and strength, whereby shelter represents the initial provision of housing and strength signifies empowerment and integration into the host society. The overarching goal is to offer policymakers future housing recommendations for fostering successful social sustainability and integration of status holders.

Therefore, the main research question guiding this research is:

"In what ways do the Dutch housing policies impact the social integration of status holders?"

SRQ 1: *How does the Dutch housing allocation system prioritize status holders?*

SRQ 2: *What are the spatial dispersal policies for status holders in the Netherlands?*

SRQ 3: *What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders?*

SRQ 4: *What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this?*

These research questions will be answered by means of literature review and empirical research. The research methods will be further elaborated in section 3.

1.4 Relevance

The proposed research holds an important role in the domain of social sustainability, drawing together both societal and scientific perspectives.

Societal

There are often political global debates about the refugee influx and the housing of them. Refugees are seen as a burden who have to be spread across Europe but also within the Netherlands and within municipality level. The failure of integration of refugees contributes to anti immigrant sentiments, and to the need to 'spread the burden' through dispersal (Arnoldus et al., 2003; van Liempt 2020). Besides, good life opportunities are important for both refugees as well as for society.

Scientific

Though there is often research on asylum seekers and irregular migrants, there is a lack of studies about status holders as they are considered less pressing. Besides there is limited research on the decision making of municipalities and housing associations about the housing allocation and dispersal policies, as these are related. Besides, trends have changed, so any existing research is easily outdated. This literature gap and practical mismatch highlights unexplored areas where the system may fall short or fail to address the diverse concerns of these refugees adequately.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Housing allocation strategies

In this first part of the literature review, an exploration of the housing allocation system concerning status holders is given, encompassing various methods employed in Europe before focusing on the specific context of the Netherlands and it ends with the definitions of housing allocation for this research.

Different methods

Europe

According to Ruonavaara (2020), housing allocation systems in Europe differ significantly due to varying historical contexts, housing policies, and social welfare models. Generally, European countries have a mix of social housing, private rentals, and homeownership, each with its own allocation methods. These systems often blend social need-based criteria, market mechanisms, and government regulations to ensure fair housing access.

Kemeny's theory (1995) distinguishes between dualist and unitary rental systems, which shape housing allocation. Dualist systems, seen in countries with distinct private and social rental sectors, base housing allocation on income, social need, and eligibility, affecting affordable housing availability and resource distribution. Conversely, unitary systems, where all rental housing operates under similar principles, prioritize market competition and affordability, focusing on housing preferences, location, and quality. In practice, European housing allocation aims to balance social objectives like affordability and inclusion with market dynamics. Government regulations, housing policies, and social welfare programs are crucial in ensuring equitable housing access.

Internationally, according to Jim Kemeny (1995) housing allocation ranges from market-driven systems to government-led initiatives. For example, the UK's dualist system relies on market principles, leading to spatial inequalities and concentrated poverty. In contrast, Sweden's interventionist approach employs allocation methods that promote social equity and spatial integration, with municipalities allocating social housing to achieve socio-economic balance. Sweden's unitary rental system operates on market competition and affordability principles, making renting a viable alternative to homeownership.

However, according to Smith (2016), Europe is not building enough social housing for low-income people, leading to increasing waiting lists and higher prices in many areas. Housing Europe highlights the housing crisis in Europe, particularly focusing on the challenges faced by the social housing sector. It points out disparities in housing prices, rental costs, and the availability of social housing across different European countries. The UK, for example, is experiencing rapid house price growth, making homeownership unattainable for many and leading to inflated rental costs. The British government's Housing Bill is criticized for potentially reducing the supply of social housing.

Smith (2016) also discusses innovative solutions from The Netherlands, such as the *Energiesprong* cooperative that refurbishes houses to Net Zero Energy levels and the conversion of empty office spaces into temporary accommodation for migrant workers. These initiatives demonstrate a proactive approach to addressing housing issues and promoting sustainability.

Dutch context

In the Netherlands, housing allocation methods have evolved over time in response to changing socio-economic dynamics and policy priorities. Historically, the country has maintained a strong tradition of social housing provision, with a significant portion of the housing stock owned and managed by housing associations. Housing allocation in the Netherlands often involves a combination of waiting lists, income-based criteria, and priority allocation for specific target groups, such as low-income households or individuals with special needs. It features a points-based allocation system that considers factors such as income, household size, and housing preferences. This system aims to ensure fair and equitable access to affordable and quality housing for a diverse range of income groups, reflecting a commitment to social inclusion and sustainable urban development.

The study by Jonkman and Janssen-Jansen (2015), examined access to the owner-occupied housing market for lower-middle-income households in the Netherlands. It finds significant regional disparities, with some areas offering very limited affordable housing options. For households earning €34,000, access is particularly constrained in regions with high housing prices, such as Greater Amsterdam, where affordable units are often found in less desirable neighborhoods. Conversely, regions like Zwolle offer better access to affordable housing. Furthermore, the study also suggests that the perceived lack of affordable housing partly results from a mismatch between available housing and household preferences, with many avoiding low-livability areas. It also highlights the potential benefits of regionalized housing policies, as national approaches may not adequately address local market conditions.

A specific set of allocation methods has shaped the landscape of urban development and social housing provision in the Netherlands. These methods include centralized allocation systems, priority housing programs, collaborative initiatives, housing vouchers or subsidies, and spatial distribution policies. One of these methods are centralized allocation systems that are often managed by housing authorities or government agencies, prioritizing individuals based on specific criteria such as vulnerability, family size, or length of residency in temporary shelters (van Liempt et al., 2020). Priority housing programs expedite access to suitable accommodations for status holders with specific needs, such as families with children or individuals with medical conditions.

Other methods are collaborative initiatives involving partnerships between government entities, housing associations, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders. These efforts aim to increase the availability of affordable housing units, provide support services, and facilitate community integration (Nagtzaam, 2017). Besides, housing vouchers or subsidies may be provided to status holders to assist them in securing housing in the private rental market. These financial incentives help offset rental costs and offer individuals flexibility in choosing accommodations.

Furthermore, spatial distribution policies are implemented to disperse status holders across different neighborhoods or regions. These policies promote social diversity, prevent the concentration of status holders in specific areas, and facilitate their integration into local communities (Huizinga & van Hoven, 2018).

The Dutch approach to housing allocation reflects a commitment to promoting social cohesion and spatial diversity within urban areas. Efforts to address spatial inequalities and prevent the concentration of disadvantage are embedded within broader housing policies, emphasizing the importance of mixed-income neighborhoods and inclusive urban development. While challenges persist, including the affordability of housing and the availability of suitable accommodation, the Dutch model represents a notable example of how housing allocation methods can contribute to more equitable and sustainable urban environments.

Upon arrival in the Netherlands, refugees must first report and register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) in Ter Apel. Thereafter, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) investigates their background and determines whether they have relatives in the Netherlands (ACVZ, 2022). The COA is also responsible for referring them to a specific asylum seekers' center pending whether they are allowed to stay in the Netherlands. If they were accepted to stay and got their (five year) residence permit they are eligible for a (social) rental home. In accordance with legal regulations, the COA also determines which municipality in the Netherlands these refugees fit the best to live in (Miltenburg, 2020). Besides, every six months, all municipalities have the obligation of providing houses to as many status holders as possible. This target is imposed by the Ministry of the Interior and depends on the number of inhabitants in a municipality, whereby the principles and formula of the target setting is laid down by the Dutch Housing Act (2014). The Dutch government uses a quota-based system to allocate refugees across municipalities. Each municipality is required to accommodate a set number of status holders, based on their population size. This system aims to ensure proportional distribution of refugees across the country (de Hoon et al., 2020).

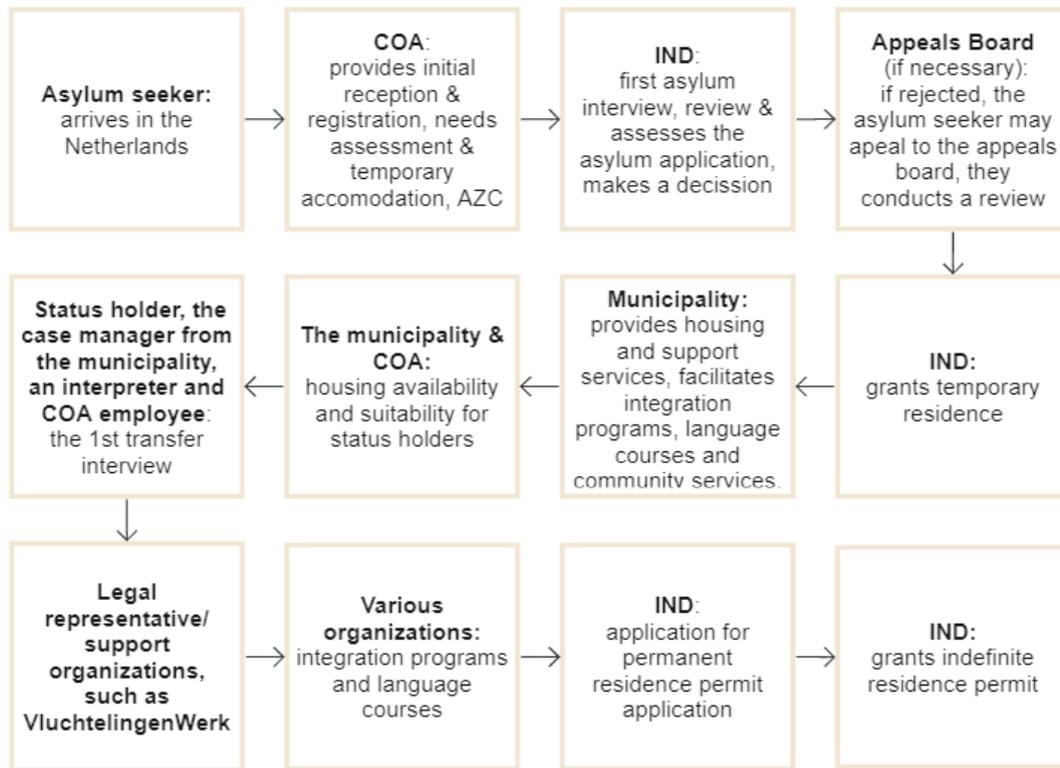


Figure 3: All actors involved during the asylum procedure in the Netherlands (own work).

In controversy with the normal asylum procedure, resettled refugees have a different procedure. These refugees are nominated by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and who, due to their vulnerability or threatened persecution, cannot find sufficient protection in the (neighboring) country to which they have fled (Van Liempt, 2020). The Netherlands invites approximately 500 of those refugees to settle in the country every year and are housed directly in municipalities. However, municipalities are not obliged to accept resettled refugees, but if they do so, this will count towards achieving their target (taakstelling) (Kis, 2020). After their allocation to a municipality, they receive a one-time housing offer by COA. The refugees can also find housing independently, but that would be difficult in practice due to the tight housing markets, the lack of social networks and 10-year-long waiting list when they refuse this offer (Van Liempt, 2023). However, four criteria could affect the housing offer in exceptional cases, which are the following (Arnoldus et al., 2003):

- The location of close family members in the Netherlands;
- A job offer that a permit holder has received in a particular municipality;
- The admission to an educational institution;
- Any particular medical needs a person may have.

These are also aspects which could improve their social integration, which will be elaborated in section 2.3.

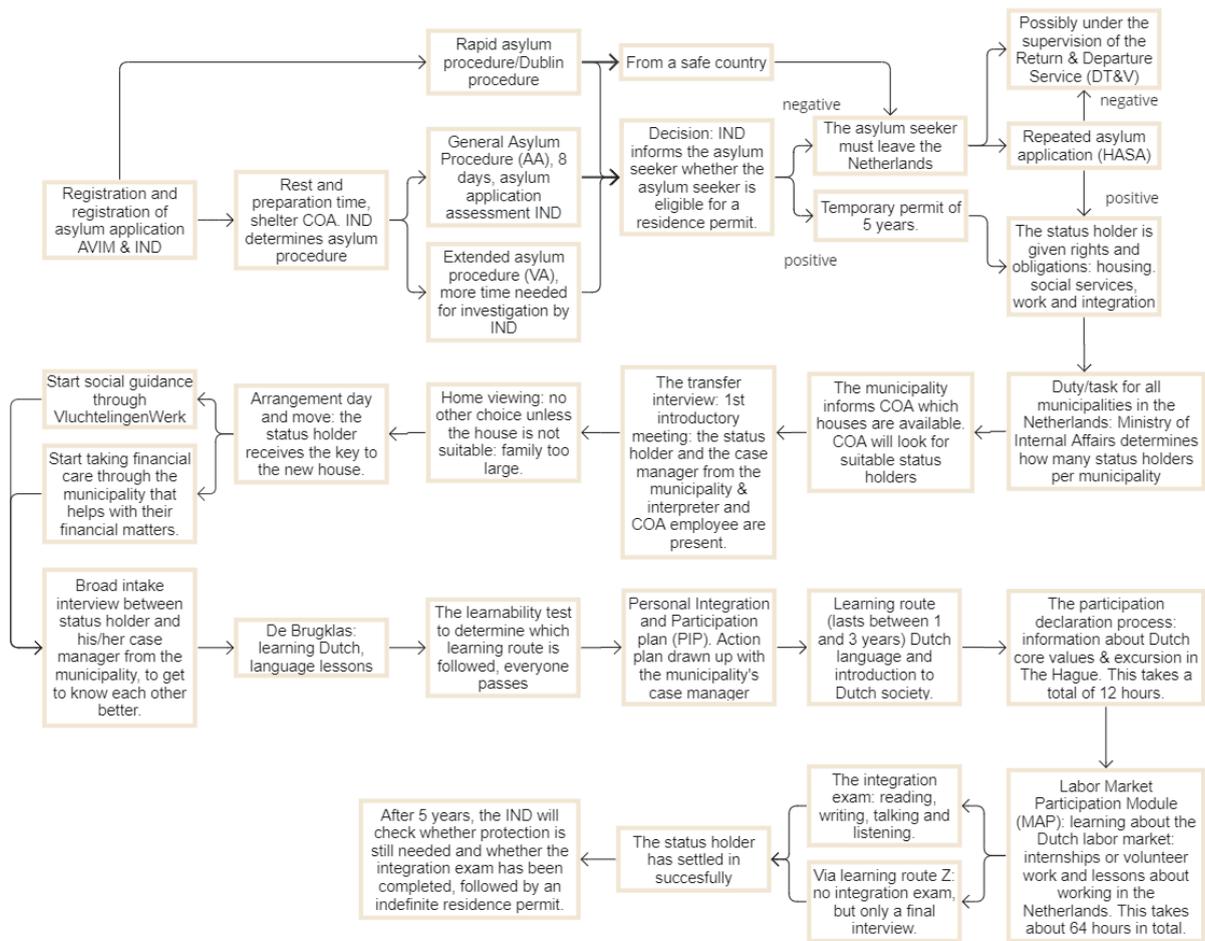


Figure 4: The asylum procedure in the Netherlands (own work).

After the asylum procedure, accepted asylum seekers receive an offer for housing, in one of the approximately 400 municipalities. These municipalities decide for themselves what type of housing they offer. It can be an independent (rental) home, flex housing or a shared home with more people. Municipalities often rely on social housing from housing associations. A municipality itself determines whether people with a residence permit are entitled to priority access to social housing. The municipality regulates this in a housing ordinance (Rijksoverheid, n.b.).

Nevertheless, refugees need to adjust to their new surroundings after moving into a permanent private home. At this point, municipalities should act as a supportive actor by helping with the "integration procedure," which comes before the mandatory integration that must happen within three years. Asylum seekers were given a point of contact for assistance with decentralized government tasks, such as processing social welfare applications, during the first six months of their residency. Because certain municipalities have far more experience than others in delivering social housing and other social services, there is a significant variance in the quality of these services (de Hoon et al., 2020).



Figure 5: Pestoff model (1992), actors involved in housing status holders (own work).

In some municipalities it proves difficult to make suitable housing available on time for (resettled) refugees to prevent housing from being available when these refugees arrive in the municipality, housing is available at an early stage in some municipalities. For such localities, this is not desirable as the COA only covers a month's worth of vacancy; hence, the municipality will be responsible for any further expenses. In addition, the housing association and municipality are obligated by social duty to ensure that the home is not left unoccupied for an extended period of time. This is due, for instance, to the limited number of houses in the municipality, which implies that there is no support for the house. Therefore, Schol et al. (2013) pointed out that it's important to strike a balance between the disadvantages of having a vacancy and the possibility that there won't be any homes available when the refugees arrive in the municipality. The housing association's function is crucial to a home's timely availability. According to their research, many families frequently move into the municipality at the same time, necessitating the arrangement of multiple residences with a minimal amount of vacancies. There are situations when a home needs to accommodate unique needs, such as for large families or people with physical restrictions. This is aided by the housing association and municipality having good interaction and the transfer file being available on time.

Definition

This chapter provided the answer to the first sub question: “How does the Dutch housing allocation system prioritize status holders?” (RSQ 1)

The housing allocation system refers to the processes and mechanisms through which housing accommodations are assigned to individuals or households. In this research the focus is particularly on how this system operates for status holders, as a disadvantaged group.

The conclusion drawn to answer the sub question on spatial dispersal policies encompasses several key points:

Priority Allocation

- The Dutch housing allocation system prioritizes status holders, including refugees and resettled refugees, through various mechanisms. For instance, priority housing programs expedite access to suitable accommodations for status holders with specific needs, such as families with children or individuals with medical conditions. This prioritization ensures that vulnerable groups receive timely housing support, reflecting a commitment to social equity and inclusion.

Quota-Based System

- The Dutch government uses a quota-based system to allocate refugees across municipalities. Each municipality is required to accommodate a set number of status holders, based on their population size. This system aims to ensure proportional distribution of refugees across the country, preventing the concentration of status holders in specific areas and promoting socio-economic balance.

Centralized Allocation Systems

- Centralized allocation systems, often managed by housing authorities or government agencies, prioritize individuals based on specific criteria such as vulnerability, family size, or length of residency in temporary shelters. By centralizing the allocation process, the system can effectively target resources to those in greatest need, including status holders seeking housing support.

Collaborative Initiatives

- Collaborative initiatives involving partnerships between government entities, housing associations, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders play a crucial role in prioritizing status holders. These efforts aim to increase the availability of affordable housing units, provide support services, and facilitate community integration, addressing the unique needs of status holders in the housing market.

Spatial Distribution Policies

- Spatial distribution policies are implemented to disperse status holders across different neighborhoods or regions, promoting social diversity and preventing the concentration of disadvantage. By distributing status holders across various areas, the housing allocation system seeks to foster their integration into local communities and prevent social isolation.

Overall, the chapter illustrates how the Dutch housing allocation system prioritizes status holders through a combination of priority programs, quota-based allocation, centralized systems, collaborative initiatives, and spatial distribution policies. These mechanisms aim to ensure fair and equitable access to housing for status holders while promoting social cohesion and sustainable urban development.

2.2 Spatial dispersal policies

In this second part of the literature review, an exploration of the Dutch dispersal policies over time is given and it ends with the definitions of spatial dispersal policies for this research.

Dutch dispersal policies over time

Originating from the 1990s, the dispersal policy in the Netherlands, known as de Spreidingswet, evenly distributes status holders across the country's municipalities (ACVZ, 2022). This distribution depends on how many people live in a municipality. Larger municipalities must offer more permit holders housing than smaller municipalities. However, in the Dutch context, refugee dispersal only applies to the allocation of housing to refugees after they completed their asylum procedure. In other countries, for example in the UK, dispersal starts earlier, when asylum seekers are still going through the asylum procedure (Bakker et al., 2016; Arnoldus et al., 2003; van Liempt & Miellet 2020). This means that in the Netherlands housing might be offered in yet another part of the country to where they stayed in reception centers and might be a new and disorienting experience (van Liempt, 2023).

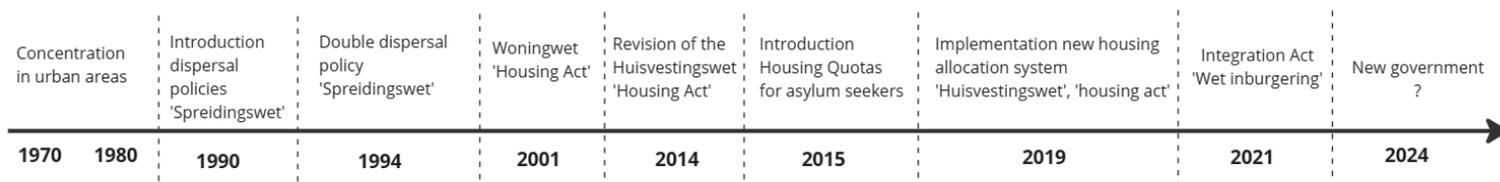


Figure 6: Timeline housing and dispersal policies implementations, for enlarged figure see appendix (own work).

Besides, the general philosophy behind the Dutch dispersal policy for refugees is to 'spread the burden', which refers to sharing the responsibility for and the financial costs of housing refugees between municipalities in a fair, objective and transparent manner through a dispersal key. This distribution is also a way to depoliticise the presence of refugees and to avoid the risk of political contestation (van Liempt 2020). Efforts are also being made to spread the refugees within the municipalities, because of the idea that stepping outside one's own circle promotes integration (van der Linden, 2020).

Due to the fact that foreign migrants have been settling in the nation's cities for many years, they are almost four times more likely than native-born people to reside in one of the four largest cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht) (Klaver & van der Welle, 2009). So-called concentration neighborhoods arose inside these cities. Thus, the worry that the concentration of migrants in larger cities would lead to segregation and deprivation has historically prompted the concern with "fair burden-sharing" (Van Liempt & Miellet, 2020). A double dispersal policy for asylum seekers and refugees was implemented in 1994 in response to these problems, governing both the reception of individuals during the process and the placement of those who are granted (temporary) permission to stay in social housing. (Arnoldus et al., 2003). Such policies are often underpinned by the assumptions that refugees remain in dispersal locations and that they will benefit from 'integration' opportunities offered there.

In general, Dutch people are free to go wherever they want. These individual housing preferences, but also the options that people have, lead to segregation. For residents of social housing, the government and housing associations are trying to intervene by focusing on mixing. For status holders specifically, the distribution policy is still dominant, with virtually no room for individual preferences. Even if the profile of the status holder is already taken into account, the matching is still done by an official. Moreover, these attempts at matching are still in their infancy and the transfer often seems to be based on arbitrariness (Huizinga, 2019).

According to de Hoon et al., (2020), the question is whether preventing this segregation and excluding individual preferences leads to the best integration opportunities. From established refugee groups it is known that a significant number still move from sparsely populated areas to cities over the years. By taking the regional labor market and other individual preferences into account in advance when relocating, the number of relocations may be limited. It may therefore be better to adopt a more relaxed perspective on the relocation of status holders, in which the proportional distribution policy is partly abandoned. However, phasing out the proportional distribution key across the Netherlands will not be easy: support for including status holders may decrease if certain areas feel that they have to accommodate a disproportionate number of status holders; a proportional distribution is generally seen as more fair (de Hoon et al., 2020).

A balance between a completely random distribution policy and a policy that leaves housing completely free will probably lead to better opportunities for status holders to find work and to feel at home in the new environment. There are increasing indications that random distribution is not good for the socio-economic opportunities of a status holder in the long term. Attention must also be paid to public support, as well as to careful coordination of housing preferences, ambitions and characteristics of the status holders. A good match at the first accommodation is therefore crucial, because the status holder is then likely to be more stable, and many moves in the first years can only disrupt the mandatory integration process. Due to the new Integration Act, in which the municipality is given an important management role (intake, personal integration plan and participation) to allow status holders to participate in Dutch society as quickly as possible, it is extra important to connect status holders to municipalities carefully (Miltenburg, 2020).

In a study by Razenberg et al. (2014) it was stated that the allocation procedure through which refugees are 'matched' with municipalities has been adjusted to incorporate additional matching criteria, such as the refugees' fields of work experience. However, the dispersal system still hardly takes into account the concerns of refugees, such as their desire for an urban or suburban setting or the presence of an established social network in a particular location.

Besides, recently (2023-2024) the new asylum deal of the Spreidingswet (Smaling, 2023) receives a lot of criticism because it contains a number of perverse incentives. Municipalities that take in many asylum seekers receive a financial bonus of 2,500 euros per person. There is a risk that poor municipalities in particular will respond to the financial incentive to provide more shelters. The rich municipalities can sit back. This does not change the unequal distribution (whereby traditionally most refugees are accommodated in Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe). There is even a good chance that this inequality will increase. Currently, the poorest 25% of municipalities host 11,000 refugees,

while the richest 25% host only 3,300 refugees. By distributing refugees according to the carrying capacity of municipalities, there will be a truly fair distribution.

Comparison with other countries

The examination of spatial dispersal policies in the Netherlands warrants a comparative analysis with strategies implemented in other countries grappling with similar urban challenges. By juxtaposing Dutch approaches with those of other nations, valuable insights emerge regarding the effectiveness, adaptability, and transferability of dispersal strategies across diverse contexts.

European nations exhibit a spectrum of approaches to spatial dispersal, influenced by varying governance structures, socio-political landscapes, and historical trajectories. For instance, countries like Sweden have pioneered policies aimed at decentralizing social housing and promoting socio-economic mixity within urban areas (Andersson & Turner, 2014, Robinson et al., 2013). In contrast, countries like France have adopted more centralized approaches, with a focus on suburban renewal and the creation of new urban centers to alleviate spatial concentrations of poverty (Kaufmann, 2004). Comparisons with these European counterparts offer nuanced insights into the role of governance models and policy legacies in shaping dispersal initiatives.

Beyond Europe, North American experiences provide additional points of reference for evaluating spatial dispersal policies. In the United States, initiatives such as the Moving to Opportunity program have sought to relocate low-income households to areas with greater economic opportunities, albeit with mixed success (Goetz & Chapple, 2016). Canada, meanwhile, has pursued strategies like the Housing First approach, which prioritizes stable housing as a platform for addressing social and economic challenges (Gaetz et al., 2013, Robinson et al., 2003). Examining these approaches offers perspectives on the role of federalism, housing market dynamics, and social welfare systems in shaping dispersal efforts.

A global perspective expands the comparative lens to include diverse urban contexts across continents. For instance, countries like Brazil have implemented innovative policies such as the Minha Casa, Minha Vida program, which aims to provide affordable housing and combat spatial inequalities in rapidly urbanizing areas (Perlman, 2010, Robinson et al., 2013). Similarly, initiatives in South Africa, such as the Breaking New Ground strategy, have focused on integrating marginalized communities into the urban fabric through inclusive housing and infrastructure development (Berrisford et al., 2011). By drawing lessons from these global experiences, policymakers and practitioners can glean insights into scalable and contextually relevant approaches to spatial dispersal.

While comparative analysis elucidates promising practices and policy innovations, it also underscores the challenges inherent in transferring strategies across national and cultural contexts. Variations in institutional frameworks, socio-economic dynamics, and historical legacies necessitate careful consideration of local conditions when adapting dispersal policies. Moreover, ethical considerations regarding equity, social cohesion, and community engagement underscore the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development.

According to Bakker et al. (2016), who compared the asylum systems in the UK and the Netherlands, the Dutch system does make integration more difficult. As they wait for the outcome of their asylum request, refugees are housed in isolation at institutions for asylum seekers located in the more isolated regions of the Netherlands. According to Engbersen et al. (2015), refugees are placed in a state of uncertainty during this time and are not permitted to work, study, or even acquire Dutch language skills. After being officially recognized as refugees and given a temporary residency permit, these individuals, many of whom have little to no familiarity with Dutch language and culture, are distributed among Dutch municipalities and frequently reside in white-majority villages or neighborhoods.

Definition

This chapter provided the answer to the second sub question: *“What are the spatial dispersal policies for status holders in the Netherlands?” (RSQ 2)*

According to this literature review, the term "spatial dispersal policies" refers to governmental strategies and initiatives aimed at distributing individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, as status holders, across different geographic locations within a country. These policies are designed to mitigate the concentration of migrants in specific areas, promote social integration, and alleviate the burden on densely populated urban centers.

The conclusion drawn to answer the sub question on spatial dispersal policies encompasses several key points:

Evolution of Dutch Dispersal Policies

- The review outlines the historical development of Dutch dispersal policies, highlighting the origins of the "Spreidingswet" in the 1990s and its objectives of evenly distributing status holders across municipalities to share the burden and promote integration.

Philosophy and Objectives

- The overarching philosophy behind Dutch dispersal policies is to distribute the responsibility and financial costs of housing refugees fairly among municipalities, thereby depoliticizing the presence of refugees and fostering integration. Efforts are also made to disperse refugees within municipalities to encourage integration and prevent segregation.

Challenges and Criticisms

- Despite the intentions behind dispersal policies, challenges and criticisms persist. These include concerns about the effectiveness of proportional distribution, the impact on social integration, and the limited consideration of individual preferences and needs of status holders.

Comparative Analysis

- The review compares Dutch dispersal policies with strategies implemented in other countries, such as Sweden, France, the United States, Canada, Brazil, and South Africa.

Comparative analysis provides insights into the role of governance models, housing market dynamics, and social welfare systems in shaping dispersal initiatives.

Ethical and Practical Considerations

- The conclusion emphasizes the importance of considering ethical considerations, such as equity, social cohesion, and community engagement, when designing and implementing dispersal policies. It also underscores the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development that take into account local conditions and cultural contexts.

Overall, the conclusion suggests that while Dutch dispersal policies aim to promote integration and alleviate spatial concentrations of refugees, there are ongoing challenges and criticisms that require careful attention and consideration in policy development and implementation.

2.3 Social integration

In this third part of the literature review, the concept of social integration in this research is defined. To operationalize this concept better the concept is further defined with the concept 'place attachment', following with the challenges and consequences of place attachment and the existing strategies to improve social integration.

Brisette (2002) defined the term 'social integration' as the degree to which an individual participates in a broad range of social relationships. However, other studies define it as a 'long-term, two-way process of change (ECRE 1999b: 4, cited from Ager and Strang, 2008). This process relates to both the conditions for and the actual participation of refugees in all aspects of life in the country of durable asylum, as well as to refugees' own sense of belonging and membership in European societies. Ager and Strang (2008), among others, divide the integration concept into several domains to shape the understandings of the concept as can be seen in figure 6. Across the sectors of employment, housing, education, and health, the domains cover achievement and access. In addition, they include social connection processes both inside and across community groups as well as obstacles to these connections, especially those resulting from fear and instability as well as from a lack of language and cultural competency. Besides, it also involves assumptions and practices regarding citizenship and rights.

Ager and Strang (2008) further describe social integration as a fundamental aspect of the integration process. It specifically refers to the process through which individuals or groups build social relationships, networks, and connections within a community. It involves the inclusion of individuals from diverse backgrounds into social structures, fostering a sense of belonging, acceptance, and participation in social activities. Social integration aims to create cohesive and inclusive communities where all members feel valued and connected.

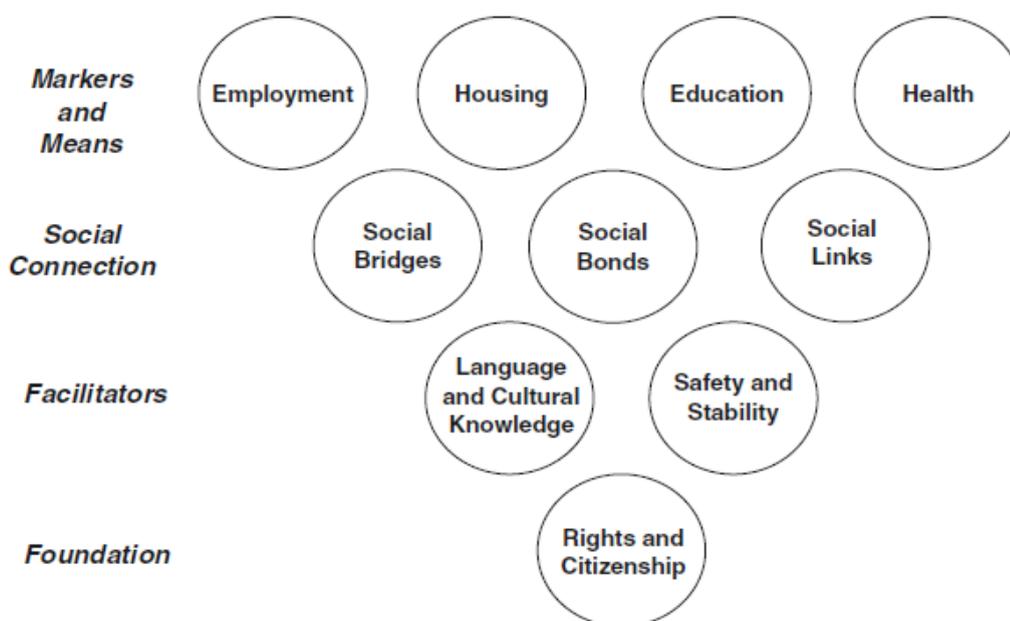


Figure 7: The core domains of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008)

Place attachment as a theoretical framework

While social integration focuses on the active participation of refugees within their host communities, place attachment delves deeper into the emotional connections and sense of belonging individuals develop with their residential environments (Scannell and Grifford, 2010). Place attachment can therefore be used in the context of this research as a theoretical framework to define and operationalize social integration more.

Van der Graaf (2009) defines Place Attachment in 7 variables: place identity, sense of place, place affiliation, locus of place identity, community satisfaction, social participation and community involvement (see figure 7). He states that with the different dimensions of place attachment the emotional ties of residents particularly in urban renewal areas can be studied. He emphasizes how these dimensions shape individuals' perceptions of their surroundings and influence their sense of belonging within their communities.

Dimensions of Place Attachment	
Place Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they feel at home? • Belong to the neighbourhood
Sense of place (How do you feel at home?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rootedness or Physical Attachment: plan to stay in the neighbourhood • Bonding or Social Attachment: talk regularly with neighbours, local friends mean a lot, advice obtainable locally
Place affiliation (Why do you feel at home?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-related, why good neighbourhood: long standing connection, feels safe • Family-related: why good neighbourhood: family • Friend-related: why good neighbourhood: friends • Community-related: why good neighbourhood: neighbours, people and community • Organization-related: why good neighbourhood: employment • Dwelling-related: why good neighbourhood: house
Locus of Place Identity (Where do you feel at home?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwelling-based: importance of owning their house • Community-based: neighbourhood is a good or bad place to live. • Willing to improve the neighbourhood • Region-based
Community satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with house/flat • Suitability of area for raising children • Standard local schools • Standard of local leisure services • Standard of local medical services • Standard of local transport • Standard of local shopping
Social participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often visit friends/family • How often do activities with others • How often attend local groups
Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active in tenants' group • Active in other community group • Active in social group • Member of tenants' or residents' group • Member of other community group • Member of social group

Figure 8: Place attachment dimensions according to Van der Graaf (2009).

Challenges of place attachment and their consequences

Navigating the landscape of place attachment is not without its challenges. Financial constraints, legal barriers, and mobility issues can delay refugees' ability to fully engage with their surroundings and cultivate a sense of belonging (Huizinga & van Hoven, 2018). **Moreover, the absence of familiar cultural markers or community resources in urban spaces may exacerbate feelings of isolation and disconnection, hindering refugees' integration efforts (Huizinga & van Hoven, 2018).** It seems to be overlooked as a desirable result of integration policies, despite the fact that belonging is recognized as a human need that is frequently associated with feeling at home, feeling safe, and being free to develop and maintain an identity of one's own (Duyvendak, 2011, cited from Huizinga & van Hoven, 2018). All of these factors are especially important to people seeking refuge from suffering experienced as a result of political hardship or war (van Liempt, 2023).

Besides, consequences of these challenges can be onward residential trajectories of refugees. It's critical to realize that mobility continues even after moving abroad. Within national borders, migrants frequently stay on the move or migrate again, usually returning to their place of origin. Residential trajectories differ significantly between origin groups and are connected with the household condition. Refugees are likely to continue traveling in search of advancement, and acquiring a permanent residency visa does not guarantee a permanent, stable place to live. **A study by de Hoon et al. (2020) found some evidence that social networks and transitions to home ownership are associated with rural to urban movement. Unemployment, prejudice, and social exclusion are a few other reasons why refugees move or even flee their country of asylum.** Therefore, it is possible to see refugees' continued movement as a means of resolving dissatisfaction with the results of their initial migratory journey.

In addition, a study by Klaver et al. (2014) shows that **the multicultural atmosphere in larger cities benefits intercultural contact.** In Van Liempt's (2020) study, about the resettlement of refugees in The Netherlands in small towns, it was found that **many refugees who were interviewed had the feeling that they were far away from what they need and who they need. The lack of resources and assistance accessible to them in their dispersed places is the primary cause of this feeling. Nonetheless, their new home and direct surroundings made them feel secure and at peace. However, they also favor possibilities found elsewhere, such as in larger cities and towns. According to Van Liempt (2020), bridging and bonding ties were shown to be equally essential and to be strongly connected with the general well-being of refugees.**

We can look beyond the architecture of bureaucracy and legalistic logics and practices by starting with the question of how refugees themselves attempt to make connections and navigate a new city. This allows us to examine all the variables that are involved in starting somewhere new (van Liempt, 2023). Beyond arrival neighborhoods, arrival infrastructures identify key urban locations that are crucial to the arrival process from the perspective of refugees. Thus, by adopting this perspective, we can better understand the ways in which the various layers of arrival infrastructures are interconnected and experienced, ranging from top-down approaches implemented by supranational, national, or local authorities to bottom-up initiatives created by citizens, volunteers, activists, and

civil society (van Liempt, 2023). According to van Liempt and Staring's (2020) research, **a significant number of refugees encountered unequal power dynamics when interacting with Dutch citizens. They provided an example of this by stating that the Dutch frequently used stereotypes to convey their attitudes and ideas about refugees, portraying them as ignorant and backward people. Refugees feel less at home because of these unequal power relations or implicit acknowledgment of prejudice (van Liempt, 2023).**

Existing strategies for improving social integration

Based on studies successful social integration and social sustainability strategies for refugees are realized and developed in the Dutch context and in other countries. According to research by Aedes, a Dutch representative of housing associations, there is a rise in the number of tenants experiencing issues in numerous Dutch streets and areas (Nagtzaam, 2017). Neighborhoods' carrying capacity is dwindling. This is caused by societal developments as well as the strict social housing allocation guidelines. **Municipalities have been required to 'allocate appropriately' since 2016. The lowest income groups should primarily be able to obtain cheaper social housing, which promotes the clustering of vulnerable households.** Stakeholders, such as housing associations and non-governmental organizations occasionally, sometimes launch an action plan aimed at improving the transition of residents of sheltered housing and social shelters to independent life. To achieve this, housing options and approaches are needed that match different points in people's housing careers and can be sustainable housing solutions, such as the 'Housing First approach'. They look at how they can expand these types of housing options and what else they need. An absolute condition is that guidance is properly arranged in these approaches. The parties must make agreements about this. Collaboration could be improved in many Dutch municipalities, according to the Aedes Corporation Monitor (Nagtzaam, 2017). Sometimes it is not possible to intervene, or only at a late stage, because parties find it difficult to exchange information with each other. Many corporations miss the directing role of the municipalities in this.

Besides, **it is challenging to offer suitable homes for disadvantaged households due to the strict housing allocation regulations. People may receive residences that are either too big or little, or the municipality may allocate properties in a way that is difficult for them to comprehend** (van Liempt & Miellet, 2020). Furthermore, there is no denying the validity of the link between housing and income, but it's also critical to consider the social context. In certain cases, it may be advantageous to put slightly wealthier households in an area that is vulnerable (Nagtzaam, 2017).

In addition, it is critical to take into account the complex nature of status holders' experiences as well as the variables influencing their patterns of movement in order to better match existing housing and distribution policies with their concerns. According to Ott (2013) **a tailor-made approach would better cater for the various concerns of status holders.** Status holders no longer regard themselves as outlanders or in this manner when they are involved in creating their own action plan; instead, they see themselves as participants who can, with some assistance, handle their own problems. When assigning accommodation, this may include taking into account family dynamics, ties to the community, and the unique needs of refugees from various places of origin. Resettlement requirements and expenses for refugees may be decreased by recent policy reforms that permit greater participation in the home allocation processes by the refugees themselves. Furthermore, the

findings of the study by Nagtzaam (2017) indicate that individual circumstances, such as family issues and mental health, are quite important. The new civic integration policy will also need to take account of those who are not ready, psychologically, to study and absorb new information. These people cannot integrate quickly, and there is a risk that they may end up in the self-reliance route, a route that is actually intended for people who are unable to meet their obligation to participate in any of the other two routes of civic integration. Taking personal circumstances into account remains an important point of attention. The new civic integration policy will need to tailor support according to different needs and be more sensitive towards variations in timing (Nagtzaam, 2017).

Initiatives for community-based support make it easier for status holders to settle into their new surroundings. To improve the wellbeing and sense of belonging of status holders, this may entail creating supportive social networks, encouraging inclusive societies, and offering cultural openness. Individual 'placement plans', created by the Swedish employment service in collaboration with permit holders, municipalities, and perhaps other pertinent entities, have been in use in Sweden for a few years now. This plan comprises agreements on civic integration, language training, and work-related, educational, or entrepreneurial preparation activities including internships, qualification evaluation, and acknowledgment of learned abilities (Ott, 2013). Every status holder is required under the new civic integration policy to have a personal Integration and Participation Plan. Nonetheless, there should be enough room for refugees to express their own goals and advantages (van Liempt et al., 2020).

Living in the host society is influenced by social integration in the sense that it makes it easier to obtain social capital, which in turn makes it possible to take advantage of better job opportunities, a stronger sense of belonging to the community, improved health, and improved language proficiency. Van der Linden (2020) argues that, from a pragmatic perspective, administrators would be well-served by concentrating more of the intra-municipal distribution policy on arranging meeting opportunities that accommodate status holders' preferences. Only in this way does the neighborhood, as a social gathering place, seem to support social integration. Status holders must be willing to connect with these groups in addition to meeting chances with local groups. This implies that lowering the social threshold in favor of particular groups would need greater effort. In these situations, further programs aimed at fostering interpersonal relationships could be successful. Furthermore, **it is significant to remark that social integration will be fostered through education and (voluntary) labor the longer status holders reside in the Netherlands. It also cuts both ways: both parties must contribute to social integration.** It is the responsibility of the status holders and the established group to desire to interact and work together to build a more inclusive society.

Furthermore, Jones (2018) recommends a **two-sided matching system for allocating refugees in the UK. This approach matches refugees with areas that** respect their objectives and capacities using a mathematical framework that gives both locals and refugees the ability to express preferences. Like school choice systems, it makes use of a central clearinghouse where municipalities and refugees may input their choices. After that, a computer algorithm is used to provide a result that places refugees in areas based on their needs and future goals. According to Jones (2018) the method improves the chances of effective integration and a better quality of life for refugees by accounting

for the complexity of refugee resettlement. In contrast to systems that consult refugees and then return decisions, it also allows refugees some degree of influence over their life.

Definition

This chapter revealed a multifaceted and dynamic concept critical to understanding how status holders integrate into their new environments. Social integration, as defined by Brisette (2002), involves the participation of individuals in various social relationships. It is further conceptualized by Ager and Strang (2008) as a long-term, reciprocal process involving both the participation of refugees in societal life and their sense of belonging. Key findings highlight several dimensions and challenges of social integration:

Definition and Domains of Social Integration

- Social integration encompasses both the conditions for and actual participation of refugees in their host societies, covering sectors such as employment, housing, education, and health.
- It involves social connections within and across community groups and addresses barriers like fear, instability, and lack of language or cultural competence.
- Social integration also includes citizenship and rights assumptions and practices.

Place Attachment as a Theoretical Framework

- Place attachment refers to the emotional connections individuals develop with their environments, contributing to a sense of belonging and satisfaction.
- Van der Graaf (2009) identifies variables such as place identity, sense of place, and community involvement as key components influencing residents' perceptions and attachment to their surroundings.

Challenges of Place Attachment

- Refugees face financial, legal, and mobility barriers that can delay or hinder their integration and sense of belonging.
- The absence of familiar cultural markers or community resources can exacerbate feelings of isolation, as noted by Huizinga and van Hoven (2018).

Consequences of Challenges

- Continued mobility and residential instability are common among refugees, driven by unemployment, prejudice, and social exclusion.
- Studies by Klaver et al. (2014) and Van Liempt (2020) highlight the benefits of intercultural contact in larger cities but also point out the isolation felt by refugees in smaller towns.

Strategies for Improving Social Integration:

- Effective strategies involve creating supportive social networks, promoting inclusive societies, and offering cultural openness.
- Tailored approaches that consider refugees' individual circumstances, such as family dynamics and personal needs, are crucial.
- Community-based support initiatives and personal integration plans can facilitate refugees' settlement and integration.

From this chapter it can be concluded that the indicators for social integration (integration and place attachment) for the empirical research are the following: integration support, sense of place identity and neighborhood characteristics, social participation, community satisfaction, social networks, community involvement and residential stability.

Overall, the literature underscores that successful social integration involves addressing both structural and personal dimensions, ensuring that refugees not only participate in societal life but also develop a deep sense of belonging and place attachment. This comprehensive understanding informs the development of policies and strategies aimed at fostering cohesive and inclusive communities for status holders.

2.4 Conceptual framework and hypothesis

Drawing from these insights, the conceptual framework proposes a hypothesis regarding the impact of housing policies on the social integration outcomes of status holders. The hypothesis posits that policies and strategies that facilitate stronger place attachment are associated with more positive social integration outcomes, encompassing economic participation, cultural adaptation, and social connectedness. There is a mismatch between the housing policies and social integration of refugees, where opportunities are missed in social integration. Besides, my hypothesis is also that place attachment is stronger in urban contexts compared to rural contexts and that the prioritization and allocation of housing to status holders by Dutch municipalities significantly influence their social integration, with effective housing strategies leading to better social cohesion and community engagement.

The conceptual model in figure 8 shows how the variables of the research questions are connected. Housing policies regarding status holders are about their housing allocation and spatial dispersal decision making within the country and within the municipalities. Social integration is operationalized through the 'integration framework' and 'place attachment framework'. There are assumptions about the advantages of the current housing policies in housing status holders on their social integration, but it lacks empirical research.

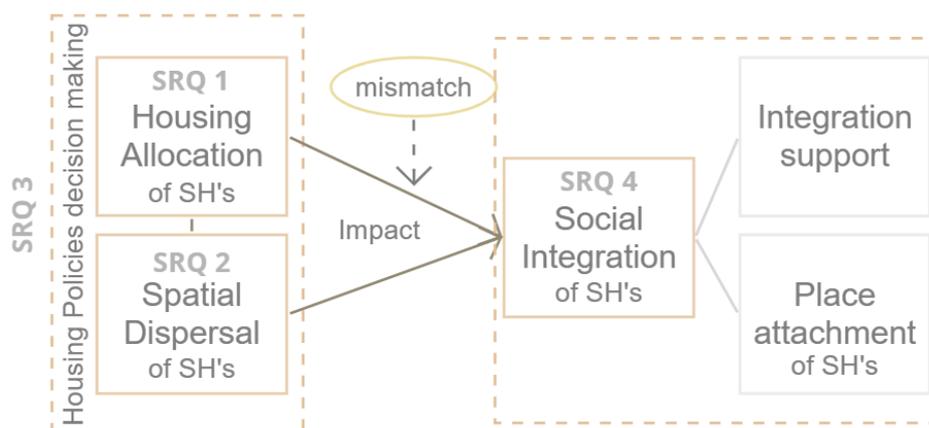


Figure 9: Conceptual model, (own work)

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 The research questions

The main research question of this research is as follows:

"In what ways do the Dutch housing policies impact the social integration of status holders?"

To answer the main question the following sub questions were formulated:

SRQ 1: *How does the Dutch housing allocation system prioritize status holders?*

Type of Question: Descriptive

This question seeks to describe the specific mechanisms and policies within the Dutch housing allocation system that give priority to status holders. It involves detailing the criteria, processes, and legal frameworks that ensure status holders receive housing before or more preferentially compared to other groups.

SRQ 2: *What are the spatial dispersal policies for status holders in the Netherlands?*

Type of Question: Descriptive

This question aims to describe the policies and strategies used in the Netherlands to spatially disperse status holders across various municipalities. It involves explaining how these policies are formulated, implemented, and the goals they aim to achieve in terms of refugee distribution and integration.

SRQ 3: *What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders?*

Type of Question: Explanatory

This question aims to explain the underlying reasons and mechanisms behind the decision-making processes in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders. It involves examining how various factors such as local housing market dynamics, political pressures, resource availability, community attitudes, and legal requirements influence these decisions. By identifying and understanding these factors, the research seeks to explain why municipalities adopt specific housing policies and practices for status holders.

SRQ 4: *What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this?*

Type of Question: Explanatory

This question aims to explain the concept of social integration specifically in the context of housing for status holders. It involves defining social integration, describing how housing influences this process, and identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder social integration. This concept will be defined through the integration framework and for a deeper understanding and operationalization through the place attachment framework. The factors which make social integration specific for the social sustainability and place attachment of status holders are being explained.

3.2 Research strategy/design

In order to answer the sub research questions a deductive approach was applied, whereby literature review was made in order to come up with a hypothesis, a speculation which is tested empirically. Additionally, this research is a mixed-method research, since it includes both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. According to Blaikie and Priest (2019) a qualitative approach has a focus on the subjective social actors' meanings and interpretations and may result in an evaluation of the current organizational process and new theories or concepts. In contrast, a quantitative approach makes use of statistical instruments, which makes the study objective or tangible in terms of the likelihood that a conclusion may be drawn. This will be used to get data from the different neighborhoods inside the selected municipalities. With this information people's experiences and behavior in the real world were analyzed, which happens in a specific context and varies over time, since it examines the influence of housing policies on social integration, which is difficult to assess precisely by numbers. The combination of the qualitative and quantitative strategies will provide a comprehensive understanding of the case studies.

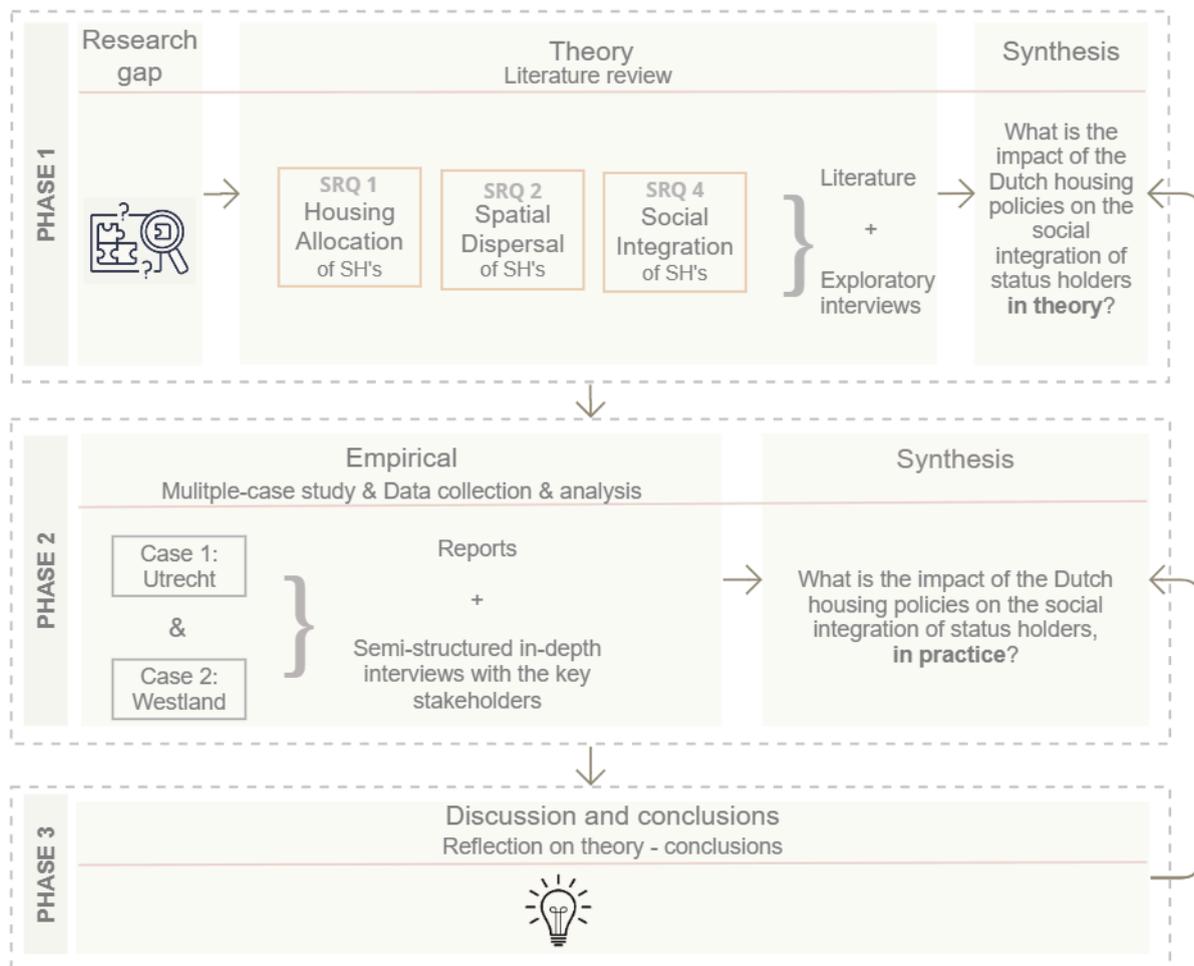


Figure 10: Research methods/phases, (own work)

3.3 Research methods

Data collection

The research design includes 3 phases/methods (figure 9); the theory phase, the empirical phase and the conclusion/outcome phase. The first phase started with an explorative literature review about the topic on housing policies and social integration to make the problem statement clear and find out the research gap. Thereafter the literature review was made and exploratory interviews were done, which led to an analysis/synthesis from the theory about the impact of the Dutch housing policies on the social integration of status holders in theory.

Thereafter, a multiple-case study is done by semi-structured in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders to see whether the hypothesis of the theoretical framework (section 2.4 'Main findings and hypotheses') relates to the cases of the empirical phase. This primary data provided a deep understanding of the stakeholders' perspectives on the impact of the Dutch housing policies on the social integration of status holders. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with the parties involved in the two cases, which will be elaborated further in section 3.3 'Case studies'.

In addition, there was the availability to also draw on very recent existing research of WODC (including data about South-Holland and Utrecht), Utrecht in Cijfers and Westland in Cijfers, and monitoring data from the Municipality of Utrecht on the satisfaction of status holders and their neighborhood, which provided a valuable addition to the analysis. These data provided insight into the perceptions and experiences of status holders themselves, providing a deeper understanding of the interaction between housing policy and social integration in this context.

Data analysis

During the third phase the empirical data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed through the qualitative analysis tool Atlas Ti. This way the reappearance of the coded texts and the interdependencies between the codes could be analyzed. Since the data came from different sources, such as news articles, journal articles and interview transcripts, triangulation was needed to cross check the justifiability of the findings. Thereafter, the empirical data is reflected on the theory, the conclusions could be made and recommendations/advice for policymakers were written.

In table 1, the research methods are summarized per sub-question. The different variables from the research questions, indicators (from the literature review), data collection and data types of this research per sub research question are explained.

Sub research questions	Main content	Data collection methods	Data types and analysis
1. How does the Dutch housing allocation system prioritize status holders?	Decision-making, methods and approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review about the different methods and approaches in Europe and in the Dutch context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secundaire data: academic sources Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.
	Collaboration of different key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review about the collaboration in the Dutch context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secundaire data: academic sources Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.
2. What are the spatial dispersal policies for status holders in the Netherlands?	Dispersal/concentration strategies and choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review about the evolution of spatial dispersal policies in the Dutch context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secundaire data: academic sources Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.
3. What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing allocation decision making Spatial dispersal decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies: case studies: semi-structured interviews with Municipality, Housing associations, VluchtelingenWerk, COA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.
4. What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this?	Integration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social relationships and networks Access to community resources and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review about the definition of social integration including social relationships and networks of statusholders Case studies: case studies: semi-structured interviews with Municipality, Housing associations, VluchtelingenWerk, COA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secundaire data: academic sources Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.
	Place attachment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> place identity, sense of place, place affiliation community satisfaction, social participation, community involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review about the definition of place attachment framework, how it is part of the social integration concept and the challenges and consequences of PA. Case studies: case studies: semi-structured interviews with Municipality, Housing associations, VluchtelingenWerk, COA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secundaire data: academic sources Primaire data: (perspectives) from the in-depth interviews.

Table 1: Research methods per sub-question, (own work)

3.3 Case studies

The integration of refugees into host communities is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by multiple factors, including local governance structures, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural contexts. In the literature review, it became evident that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to refugee integration, and the outcomes vary significantly depending on the characteristics of the host municipality. As such, conducting multiple or comparative case studies offers a valuable methodological approach to understand the nuanced differences in integration experiences across diverse contexts.

The main purpose of the case studies is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how local contextual factors influence the integration experiences of refugees. By examining the policies, practices, and challenges faced by Utrecht and Westland, the aim is to identify key drivers of

successful integration as well as barriers that hinder the process. Furthermore, the case studies aim to generate insights that can inform evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at improving refugee integration outcomes in diverse urban and rural settings.

Rationale for Multiple Case Studies

The decision to employ multiple case studies arises from recognizing the diversity of refugee integration experiences and the importance of reflecting this variety in research. By examining multiple cases, researchers can explore how different factors in different urban and rural contexts influence integration outcomes. This allows us to identify patterns, trends, and specific challenges faced by refugees in different settings. Additionally, multiple case studies enable contrast between different municipalities, offering insights into the effectiveness of integration policies and practices. It is important to note that the case studies are not meant to be comparative case studies, but multiple case studies, as there are too many factors influencing the differences between the cases which makes it impossible to compare.

Case Selection

The selection of cases for this study was guided by the desire to capture an urban and a rural context within the Netherlands, each with its own distinct characteristics and integration dynamics. Utrecht and Westland were chosen as case studies due to their divergent profiles and approaches to refugee integration. Utrecht represents a large urban municipality with a proactive stance on housing and integrating status holders, while Westland presents a contrasting scenario with its rural setting and challenges in accommodating refugees. By researching these two municipalities, the aim is to uncover the contextual factors that influence integration outcomes and inform policy recommendations tailored to different local contexts. These case studies selection aims to explore the impact of local contextual factors on refugee integration outcomes and identify key differences that may influence refugees' social, economic, and cultural integration trajectories.

Executing the Case Studies

The execution of the case studies followed a systematic approach and triangulation, including an exhaustive review of pertinent documents and semi-structured interviews. The primary objective was to gain a comprehensive understanding of refugee integration experiences in the municipalities of Utrecht and Westland, with a focus on identifying key factors influencing successful integration.

Through the network of the research tutors, snowball sampling, and various efforts of the researcher through the online network platform LinkedIn, the interviewees were contacted. For each case, interviews were conducted with the key stakeholders: municipalities, housing associations, refugee councils, and COA. Besides, before and during the case studies, general insights were also gained from interviews with a postdoctoral researcher at the UvA and stakeholders such as Aedes, Movisie, and the Refugee Council of Westland.

To get the required data, semi-structured interviews were carried out. Because the interviews are conducted using a qualitative methodology, the respondent can provide his or her perspective on the issue, but this insight is limited to the researcher's specific areas of interest (Bryman, 2012). A total of twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted and five exploratory interviews, with the goal of

including as many participants from various parties as feasible. The stakeholders who were contacted are shown in chapter '4.1 Introduction to the case studies'.

There was a wide selection of respondents at the second level, their function, due to the topicality of the research subject. In this approach, respondents with a range of positions, from a status holder/researcher to an alderman, were questioned in addition to a variety of stakeholders.

Due to a lack of time and generalization, there was no preference to interview status holders themselves. However one status holder/researcher was still interviewed, because Movisie had referred to this status holder to interview since she is also a researcher with them in the field of refugees. This made it easy to make contact with her. In the analysis on page 39, more has been explained about this interview.

The interview with the status holder/researcher from Movisie was about her own perspective but also her findings from her own research. She participated in a project by Movisie that was about highly educated foreign women who are invisible, because usually men can quickly join the labor market. According to her, that is why they wanted to make invisible women more visible and she was one of the women who took part in the study. A year later she went to work for them to do research and currently she has her own research into refugees and their integration process in the Netherlands and what success factors and failure factors there are.

In addition, there was the availability to also draw on very recent existing research of WODC (including data about South-Holland and Utrecht), Utrecht in Cijfers and Westland in Cijfers, and monitoring data from the Municipality of Utrecht on the satisfaction of status holders and their neighborhood, which provided a valuable addition to the analysis. These data provided insight into the perceptions and experiences of status holders themselves, providing a deeper understanding of the interaction between housing policy and social integration in this context.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. The analysis involved coding and categorizing the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and discrepancies across the interviews. Themes related to housing, employment, social connections, challenges, and opportunities were systematically identified and analyzed, which is described further in the chapter '4.1 Introduction to the case studies'.

3.3 Research output

The research output of this study offers an analysis of the impact Dutch housing policies have on the social integration of status holder refugees. This could assist in improving the decision making in housing status holder refugees in the Netherlands, ensuring better alignment with refugees' concerns.

3.4 Limitations

A limitation of the case study is that only 2 cases will be used for the case study due to limited time. Besides, the refugees themselves are not involved in this research due to limited time. In addition, urban housing policies and socio-economic conditions change over time.

3.5 Planning

The process of the research is in line with the three phases of the research design. In the first phase (P1-P2) is the theory phase through literature and exploratory interviews. The second phase (P2-P4) is the empirical phase where an analysis of the different perspectives of the key stakeholders will be made on the impact of housing policies on the social integration of refugees. This will be done by interviewing the key stakeholders. During the third and last phase (P4-P5) conclusions will be made from the results of the analysis and the results will be compared to literature. And lastly recommendations will be written to policy makers. Figure 10 shows an overview of the planning of the research process

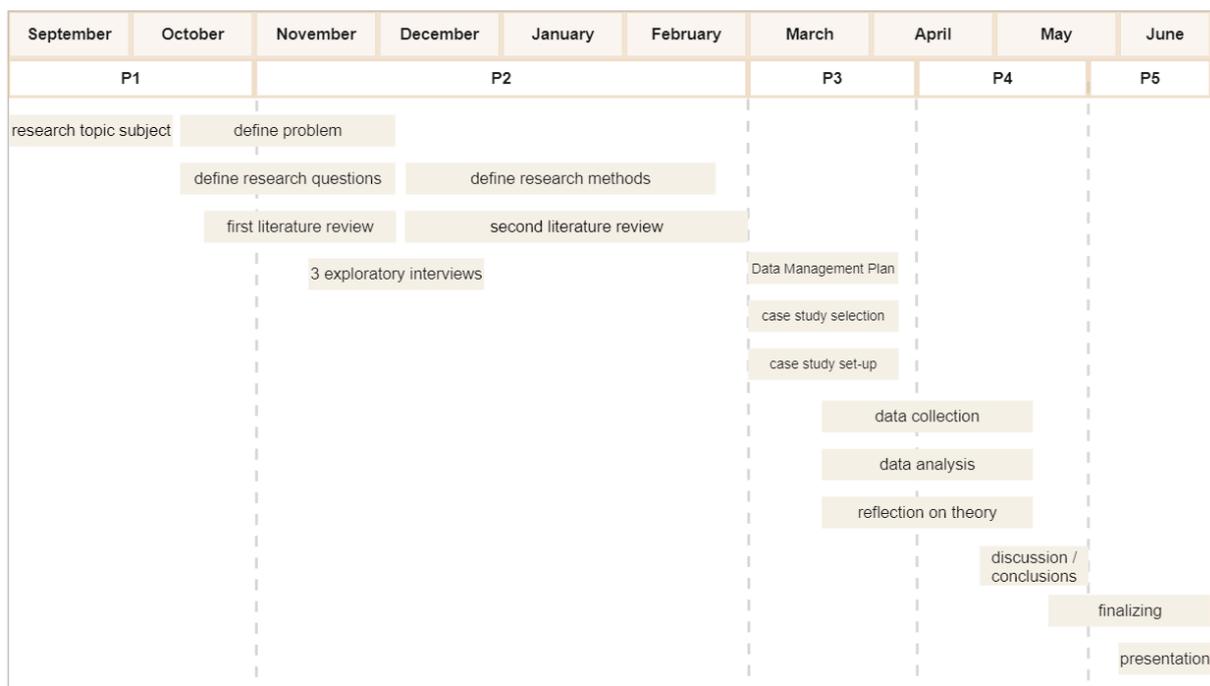


Figure 11: Research timeline, (own work)

3.6 Validity and generalizability

Ensuring the validity and generalizability of research findings is essential to draw meaningful conclusions and make informed recommendations. Validity can be divided into internal and external validity. The internal validity refers to the degree to which the research accurately measures the concepts it intends to study. A method for measuring the internal validity of this research is triangulation of data sources and methods to confirm findings and minimize bias. By triangulating information from multiple sources, including interviews, official documents, and existing literature, the research findings are strengthened and more robust. Besides, the findings and conclusion are also validated through extra conversations with the interviewees of the Municipality of Utrecht and refugee council of Westland.

3.7 Research ethics and data management plan

Ensuring adherence to ethical principles and implementing a robust data management plan will be paramount in the conduct of the research. This section will outline the ethical considerations guiding the research process and detail the strategies that will be employed to manage and protect the collected data.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting interviews, informed consent will be obtained from all interviewees. The consent process will include clear explanations of the research purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality. Participants will be informed that their identities will be anonymous in any subsequent reporting or publications arising from the research. Besides, measures will be implemented to safeguard the confidentiality of participants' information. All collected data, including interview transcripts, will be securely stored and accessible only to the authorized researcher. Identifying details such as names, addresses, and contact information will be redacted from transcripts to ensure anonymity. In addition, participation in the research will be entirely voluntary, and interviewees will be free to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. No force or undue influence will be exerted to encourage participation, and participants will be assured of their right to decline or discontinue participation. Furthermore, throughout the research process, participants' dignity, autonomy, and well-being will be prioritized. There will be a respectful and non-judgmental demeanor during interviews, fostering an open and trusting environment for participants to share their perspectives and experiences. The same questions will be asked to all the participants to avoid the risks that the interviewer will affect the interviewee's answer.

Data Management Plan

Data collection methods will encompass semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and literature review. Interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored on a password-protected device to prevent unauthorized access. To uphold participant confidentiality, all identifying information will be removed from interview transcripts, and pseudonyms will be assigned to participants. Any identifiable details mentioned during interviews will be redacted or anonymized in the transcripts. Furthermore, research data, including interview recordings, transcripts, and notes, will be securely stored on encrypted devices and password-protected servers. Access to the data will be restricted to the authorized researcher. Besides, research data will be retained for a specified period in line with institutional guidelines and ethical standards. Upon the conclusion of the research project, data will be securely archived and stored in compliance with data protection regulations. While efforts will be made to anonymize and aggregate data for dissemination purposes, individual participant data will not be shared publicly without explicit consent. Requests for access to research data will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with due consideration for participant confidentiality and privacy.

By adhering to rigorous ethical principles and implementing a comprehensive data management plan, the research will ensure the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality while maintaining the integrity and reliability of the findings.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction to the case study

The primary findings from the case study are covered in this chapter. The interviewees selection and data analysis methods mentioned in Chapter 3.3 are further explained. Desk research has been conducted, and important stakeholders have been interviewed in order to analyze the two cases, Utrecht and Westland. Both cases have been visited and observed. After the case descriptions the interview and reports findings are discussed. Thereafter, a cross-case analysis is made and this is also triangulated with the literature review, to get a comprehensive analysis.

There was a wide selection of respondents at the second level, their function, due to the topicality of the research subject. In this approach, respondents with a range of positions, from a status holder/researcher to an alderman, were questioned in addition to a variety of stakeholders.

General	
Stakeholder	Function
The University of Amsterdam	Postdoctoral researcher
Aedes	Representative of housing associations
Refugee council Westland	Social counselor/volunteer status holders
Movisie	Researcher/status holder in region of Utrecht
COA	Team head of residents logistics (also involved in case 1)
Case 1: Utrecht	
Stakeholder	Function
Municipality of Utrecht	Alderman
	Integration coach/client manager for status holders
	Senior policy advisor/project leader/program management focus groups
Housing association, Woonin	Project leader
Refugee council Utrecht	Senior team leader
Case 2: Westland	
Stakeholder	Function
Municipality of Westland	Project leader customer process
	Coördinator integration
Housing association Arcade	Manager housing
Refugee council Westland	Team leader, program coördinator
	Social counselor/volunteer statusholders
COA	Directorate (regievoerder) resident logistics, South Holland/Zeealand

Table 2: Interviewees general and stakeholders case 1 and 2 for the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees arced in gray participated in interviews which were more exploratory (own work)

All of the interviews with the various respondents covered the same subjects in an effort to get the most comparable collection of responses. The interview subjects were carefully chosen, with the primary goal of achieving the widest possible and relevant variation, a technique known as heterogeneous sampling (Bryman, 2012). Following the introduction, the participant was invited to discuss the following subjects in the order listed:

- A. Their role within the organization;
- B. Housing policies and decision making
 - Housing allocation strategies
 - Spatial dispersal decision making;
 - Collaboration stakeholders;
- C. Social integration and place attachment;
 - Integration support;
 - Sense of Place (rootedness and bonding: sense of home);
 - Place identity (unique characteristics of a neighborhood that create a sense of belonging);
 - Community Satisfaction;
 - Social Participation;
 - Community Involvement;
- D. Measurement policy impact;
- E. Future sketch: trends, developments, and challenges;
- F. Existing research, data, and contacts.

The data gathered through interviewing is analyzed using the Atlas.ti software. This program organizes and structures the data that has been gathered, making it possible to analyze qualitative data. codes, quotations, and notes can be used to emphasize noteworthy comments, characterize key topics, and record the analyst's ideas.

Because the themes were selected in advance to conduct the interviews, it was easier to create and group the codes. These themes were used during coding. A total of 47 codes were found by the researcher. These codes were then grouped again to determine which codes could be combined with each other. This resulted in the following coding scheme (see figure 12), which helped with analyzing the transcripts of the interviews.

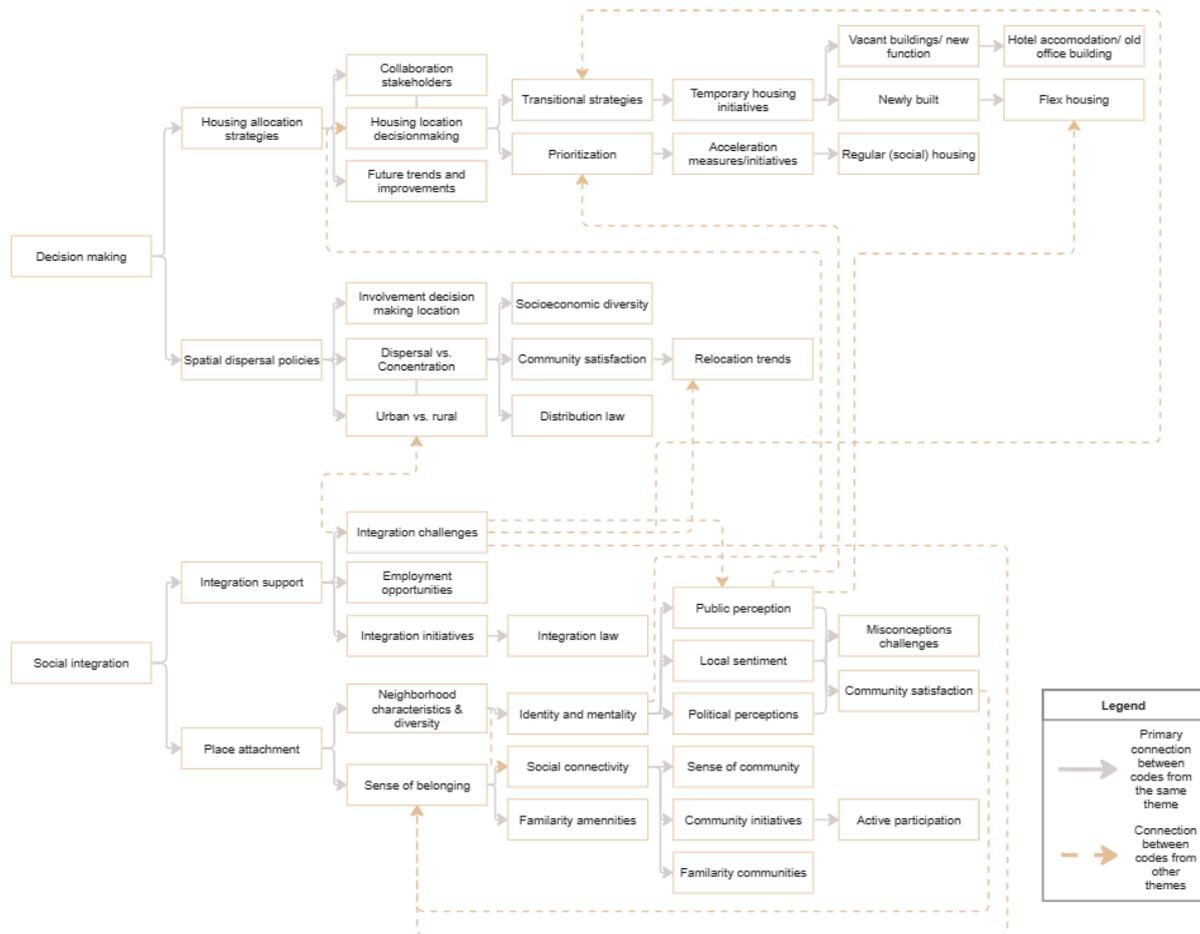


Figure 12: Coding scheme and the connections of most used codes from the transcripts, for enlarged version see appendix (own work)

4.2 Case 1: Utrecht

Case description

The city of Utrecht, situated in the heart of the Netherlands, has been grappling with the challenge of housing and integrating status holder refugees within its diverse urban landscape. This case study delves into the intricacies of the Utrecht housing policies and integration initiatives, shedding light on the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders to address this pressing issue. It is a large municipality that places significant emphasis on effectively housing status holders, more so than some other regions. The municipality has made efforts to accelerate and catch up with the task of accommodating status holders. As one of the major urban centers in the Netherlands, Utrecht offers a dynamic and diverse environment for refugee integration. With a higher population density and greater cultural diversity, Utrecht provides refugees with access to various services, employment opportunities, and social networks. Additionally, the urban setting of Utrecht fosters a vibrant multicultural community, which may facilitate refugees' social integration by offering a supportive environment and cultural resources (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024).

Besides, like all municipalities in the Netherlands, Utrecht faces the task of accommodating status holder refugees who have been granted residency permits. The municipality operates within a

broader framework established by the Dutch government, which determines the number of status holders each municipality must house through biannual quotas. The coordination of housing efforts involves multiple layers of governance, including the national, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as collaboration with organizations such as the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024).

Perspectives of the stakeholders involved

DECISION MAKING

This chapter includes answers from case 1, with own findings of the semi-structured interviews of case 1 and external findings which are not specific case-related, on the following sub question regarding: *What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders? (SRQ 3)*

Housing allocation strategies

Temporary housing strategies

When asked which challenges the stakeholders have regarding housing status holders, the interviewees all mentioned that there are quantitative challenges that require attention to whether there is enough social housing available. These homes should also be suitable for the household's compositions. As a result, many status holders stay longer in the AZCs. According to the housing policy advisor of the municipality of Utrecht, they set up a realization team for a large social stock and they look at, for example, if home sharing is an option, if they can find locations for flexible housing and how they can improve the social stock. Regarding temporary housing, the Team Head of COA mentioned that the idea is that they organize a kind of shelter, which in any case buys extra time to ultimately provide real housing. That is a new phenomenon of which they just started to operate.

“Temporary housing is a good solution, otherwise all asylum seekers' centers are too full. An intermediate step is better than living in an asylum seekers' center, because not all asylum seekers centers are nice to live in and people can not always be productive there, which gives a delay to their integration.”

Citation 1 - Interviewee researcher Movisie/status holder

Besides, according to the alderman of the municipality Utrecht, because the pressure is great and to achieve the target and progress the flow of status holders and asylum seekers, strategies such as flex housing are being implemented. The Alderman mentioned that the municipality's vision is to install high-quality temporary homes that are not noisy container homes where the living environment and living pleasure are really substandard. These flexible homes are intended to be relocated after 10-15 years and used at other locations. That choice to make it high quality also makes it quite difficult to realize locations, because the business case has all kinds of risks. However, which risks were not further discussed during the interview. Nevertheless, the first flexible living locations are now on the way.

Besides, according to the 'Monitor Inburgering' (2024), by the municipality of Utrecht, approximately most people who are integrating have no problem in daily life because of the home in which they live. However the newcomers who have issues are often because of the temporary or suboptimal housing:

As can be seen in figure 13 from the 'Monitor Inburgering' (2024), by the municipality of Utrecht, over a quarter of the newcomers (27%) experience problems related to their housing, with asylum status holders (33%) more affected than family migrants (21%). This group faces challenges due to the broader housing market issues, often resulting in temporary or suboptimal living conditions similar to many Utrecht residents.

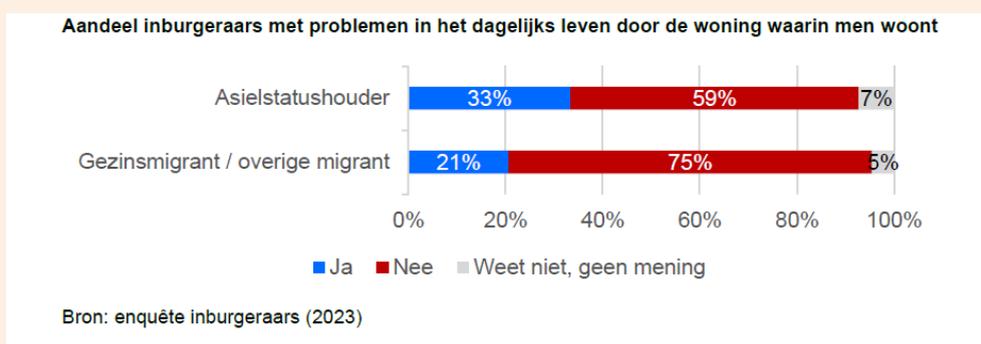


Figure 13: Share of immigrants with problems in daily life due to the home in which they live. (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024).

Resistance local community

However, according to the director of the housing association and the housing manager of the Municipality of Utrecht there are people who are in favor of flexible housing and people who are very much against it and have the 'not in my backyard' mentality. An example where the neighborhood is milder is Pagelaan in Hoograven. And where the neighborhood was initially very negative is in Weteringen South, where the contrast is also very great. The housing manager also mentioned that in the Weteringen Zuid flex zone project, a volume of 450 temporary, layered homes was initially conceived. That was eventually reduced to about 180. So then the volume is adjusted. Besides, the housing manager mentioned that one of the large locations where flex housing could be located is Rijnenburg. That is currently a very large polder with grassland. It is also politically very sensitive to add temporary housing there and that is precisely where partners in the city would like to start. However, according to the director, politicians say that it is still too early and that they first want to create an energy landscape and it is a challenge for them to find the right locations that are feasible.

According to the housing policy advisor, people who have owner-occupied homes in the higher segment and have opted for an unobstructed view and then the unobstructed view is obstructed by a future flex housing project. This results in residents saying that they actually want to preserve that greenery and not have houses built there. The project leaders and policy advisors at the municipality will then properly guide and absorb this and steer it in the right direction through participation and

discussions with the neighborhood, according to the housing policy advisor. They also go through the normal working method in spatial planning and decision-making to express opinions. However, the directors have to be quite sure of themselves and not bend too much to negative sentiments when they have an entire neighborhood against them. In an enlightening city like Utrecht, densification, whether it is a flexible living project or permanent construction, always encounters a lot of resistance. The director of the housing association mentioned that they are working on flex housing projects with less local residents in the area, so that will also lead to less local resistance.

Acceleration action

In addition, one of the decisions made in 2022 was the acceleration action. According to the alderman of Utrecht and the director of the housing association, the vulnerable group of status holders was given priority in housing for available social housing for 4 weeks. This ensured that the target was overtaken. It can also be seen in figure 14, that in 2022 there were more status holders housed compared to all other years and the target was reached. The initiator of this project came from the housing association. According to the director, they

“Actually, it started and was over before anyone notices (...) of course, this is always a bit of a political play, so there were also people who said “scandalous that status holders always come first”, but in Utrecht that was not a very strong sound. I think there were more supporters than people who thought it was bad.”

Citation 2 - Interviewee director housing association in Utrecht

were able to do this through mutation vacancy, whereby the housing association always has empty houses as people move. During that time they had just come out of the Corona pandemic period, so the so-called mutation vacancy rate was slightly higher than normal. This way they could accommodate a lot of status holders in a short time to all those homes and they achieved the entire task in housing status holders of the year. In addition, the director also mentioned that during the process of the acceleration action there were no notable challenges related to community resistance against the prioritization of the status holders as the citation also indicates.

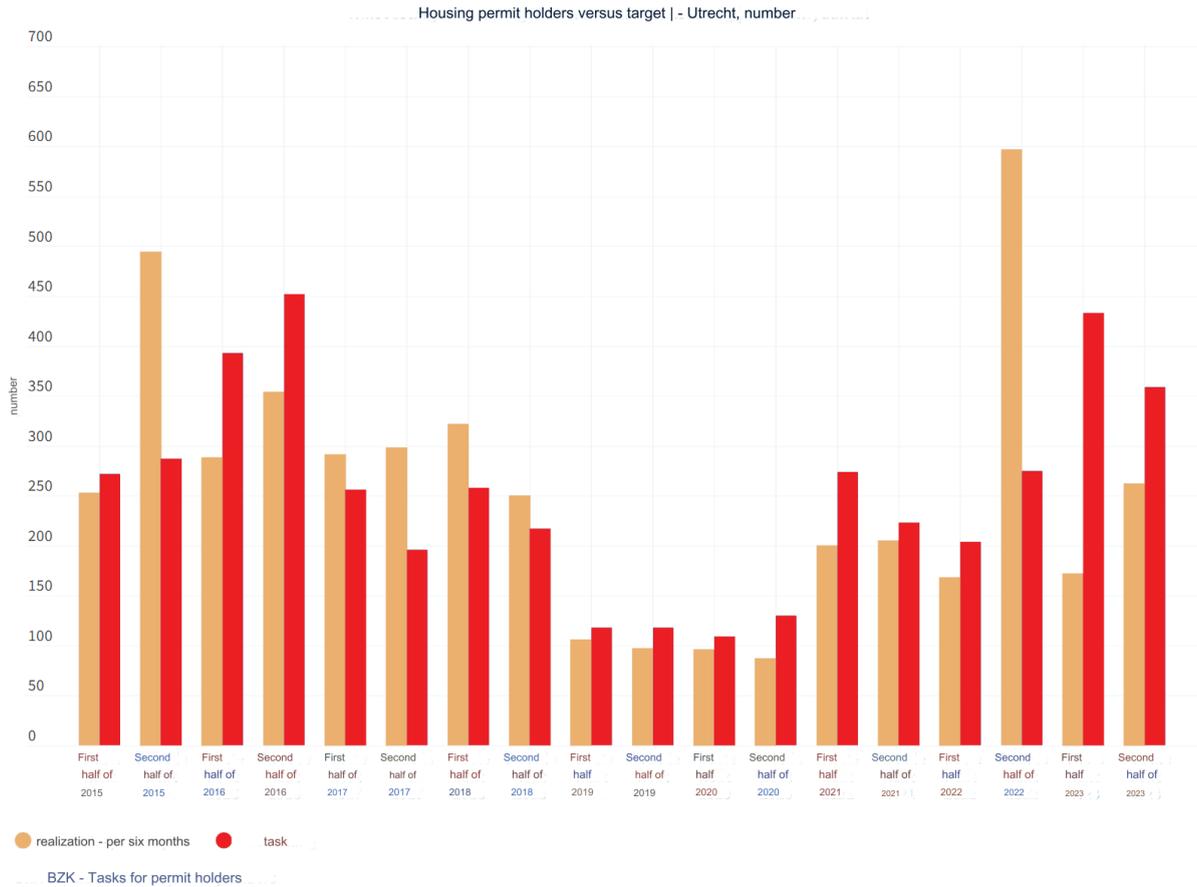


Figure 14: Housing status holders in Utrecht per half year municipal target, 2015-2024, red is the municipal target and orange is the amount of the housed status holders (Bron: Datawonen, 2024 taken from [Datawonen \(VOIS\) - Huisvesting vergunninghouders versus taakstelling](#))

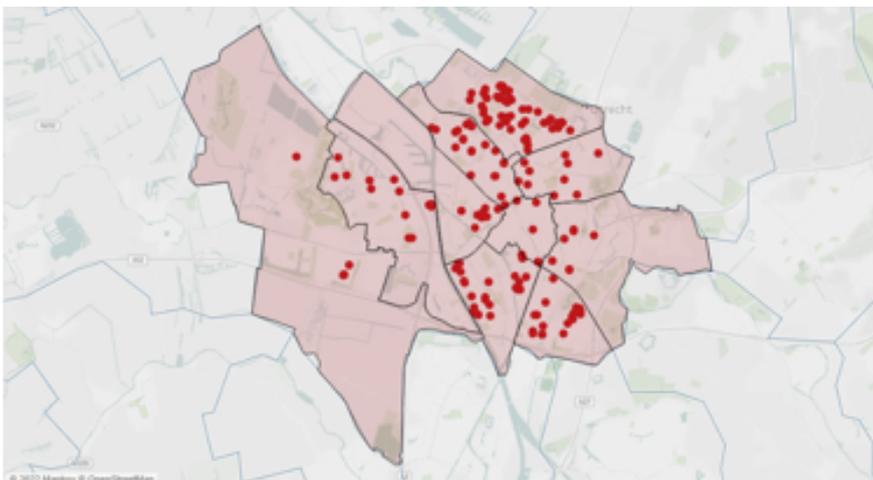


Figure 15: A global view of where the status holders are housed in Utrecht during the acceleration campaign, (AD, 2022, [De meeste statushouders die met voorrang een sociale huurwoningen kregen, zijn in Overvecht komen wonen | Foto | AD.nl](#))

As can be seen in figure 15, during the acceleration action most status holders were housed in the neighborhood Overvecht, as there is a lot of social housing and social housing is not spread evenly across the municipality.

Mismatch between availability houses and the target group households

However, according to the Team Head of COA, in recent years there have been a lot of single people who need to be housed and the houses of the housing associations usually have around 3 rooms, so there is a mismatch. The team head of COA and the housing manager of the municipality also mentioned that status holders mainly consist of 85% single-person households. To the question if the acceleration action was successful the team

head responded that it was successful but he had a critical point: during the acceleration action the housing association mainly focused on housing for families, instead of for example single-person households. The team head of COA also mentioned that they urge the municipality and corporations to implement more suitable housing based on income and household size, to prevent uneven growth. However, if the group consists of a large majority of single people, they cannot simply place them in a family home, that is why the COA advocates that they split up family homes.

“A critical point from our point of view is that they mainly focused on housing for families, because they had actually reversed the model. Now, it is the case that a status holder is looking for a home and during that period they switched it around to a home looking for a status holder.”

Citation 3 - Interviewee team head of residents logistics COA

However, according to the report by WOCD (2024), some status holders experience that the home was not suitable for the family size, and was too small, which is often related to an ongoing family reunification procedure.

According to the housing policy advisor of the Municipality of Utrecht, even though Utrecht is strong in working on housing strategies for status holders, it is still a big challenge to not get far behind with reaching the target. For the municipality it is important to house all target groups fairly. They also have a task to house, for example homeless people. The housing policy advisor mentioned that the process of housing this vulnerable group looks very similar to the process of housing status holders. Both groups start with nothing and belong to an urgent group for social housing and all vulnerable groups get support during the first period.

Other strategies: homesharing

However, according to the team head of COA, even though the municipality has a challenge again to reach the target of housing status holders, they are not thinking about doing the intervention again where all the social housing supply was available for status holders in a period of 4 weeks. The council and political principal decided on that. The acceleration action was in the time when there was a national crisis and an enormous pressure on Ter Apel with asylum seekers getting over full, and a lot of people had to sleep outside. However, the housing backlog is increasing again. Therefore, according to the housing policy advisor, they are thinking about new

“Well, if you look at the housing, it’s actually not going very well at all. Now they have to take an acceleration action again, because they have been reprimanded by prevention for being too far behind, so that is now being rigged again”

Citation 4 - Interviewee team head of resident logistics COA

strategies to accelerate the process by, for example, home sharing. The housing manager mentioned that during this initiative the idea is that COA looks in the asylum seekers centers into who wants to continue together as a duo sharing a home, where they share facilities in a way that they don't make each other's lives difficult, but great neighbors. That is a new way to allow people to flow from the AZC to be housed and integrated with the limited number of houses available. The duo can also have a 'friends contract' where they share the responsibilities, such as paying the rent, together. Nevertheless, according to the housing policy advisor, housing corporations find this tense, as there is a chance the duo can decide to separate. Then the question is who is then responsible and who can pay the rent. In addition, if one of the duo gets a relationship, then the question is how they will avoid overcrowding in the houses. In the past Utrecht worked with these kinds of contracts more, however recently, in other cities the housing corporations are more willing to work with friends' contracts.

Furthermore, the housing policy advisor also mentioned that there are also other initiatives made such as Place2BU, which is an initiative at Leidsche Rijn where a kind of container has been converted into youth housing, with Dutch young people and young status holders mixed there. Various things are also organized for the young people, including drop-in game evenings. There is also a kind of caretaker who monitors everything a bit.

Collaboration stakeholders

All stakeholders respond that they are satisfied with the collaboration between the stakeholders regarding the housing of status holders and their integration. However, they also agreed that it is a very intensive process. The municipality and housing associations obviously bear the same challenges when it comes to housing for vulnerable groups, but also for all other target groups. During the interviews with the housing policy advisor and the alderman of the municipality of Utrecht, it became clear that they are very positive about the collaboration and the way they approach their housing strategies to different groups as status holders. They are proud of the way they collaborate and really want to serve the task and give these people a good landing and sustainable housing even though the scarcity is a challenge and the good use of the different interests and roles of the parties for the joint task. Besides, according to the housing policy advisor, there are different teams where stakeholders collaborate with each other, such as 'Utrecht voor iedereen', where they are responsible for the collaboration with COA and the Integration department. There is also a team 'Thuis voor iedereen', which is about housing all vulnerable groups.

However, according to the housing policy advisor, there is also a call for collaboration improvement in coordination around specific cases or because parties are waiting for each other to receive answers, such as if there will be a family reunification or not and if someone has a BSN number or ID card. It is an intricate work process in which so many parties contribute, but also have an interest in ensuring that it runs smoothly. The housing policy advisor further stated that there are many micro steps that can contain many bottlenecks and they would rather not have that.

Spatial dispersal vs. concentration

According to the housing policy advisor, the municipalities and housing associations mainly try to house the status holders evenly across the municipality. However, with more social housing than other neighborhoods with different types of housing as well as different backgrounds of people.

According to the director of the housing association, an example is the neighborhood of Overvecht where there is more social housing compared to other neighborhoods in Utrecht. That leads to a more density of low-income and vulnerable groups in that neighborhood. According to the housing policy advisor and the director of the housing association, the municipality and housing association are trying to find out how to have more mixed neighborhoods. For example, 'Together for Overvecht', mentioned by the alderman of the municipality of Utrecht, is an approach by the municipality of Utrecht to increase the quality of life and resilience of Overvecht. They work to create a neighborhood where residents live comfortably together and that is attractive to new residents, visitors and entrepreneurs and in which the resilience of residents is strengthened and everyone can participate. However, the director also looks very positively at the neighborhood of Overvecht, he says that it is also a very beautiful neighborhood with lots of greenery and enormous diversity with many beautiful social connections that are very powerful. According to the director, all neighborhoods have a different identity.

The housing policy advisor mentioned that for the implementation of flex housing the municipality of Utrecht has a vision that they want to have a mix of target groups on the one hand, student starters and on the other hand, people who are vulnerable or special and then status holders are also one of the target groups. Furthermore, they want to turn them into mixed neighborhoods, where people with different backgrounds will live. Besides, they also opted for space to meet each other, because the flex housing is relatively small. In that way they ensure that the indoor areas and communal space are also of quality so that people can meet each other.

Another example mentioned by the housing policy advisor is that in new construction projects in the municipality, they also want to specifically target social rental housing in neighborhoods where there are few social rental properties, so that these mixed neighborhoods are served even further. In terms of policy, it is going well, however in practice it is still difficult, because the land positions of these new construction projects are often in the hands of market parties and they cannot push very hard for social rent, or not in the amount that the municipality would like. According to the housing policy advisor, that is a negotiation situation that takes a lot of energy and there are successful projects where it works. There will be more opportunities for distribution, also for status holders, however, it's really a kind of vision that you try to implement into practice and that doesn't happen without challenges.

According to the housing policy advisor, the contrast between residents should not be too great. But that is not just about whether you are a status holder or have a certain income level, but also about what kind of lifestyle you adhere to. She further mentioned that concentration is not good, because it contains too few new influences from all elements of the Netherlands. However, in a neighborhood where all highly educated residents with high incomes are not tolerant, they do not necessarily want a status holder to live there, because then the contrast is too great.

According to the integration coach at the municipality of Utrecht, the opinions of the status holders themselves differ from person to person. There are status holders who enjoy living near people with the same background and get a social connection quickly. But there are also many status holders who say that they find it very difficult to speak or practice Dutch, because they do not meet people who speak Dutch with them. This is can also be seen in the perspectives from some status holders in

the report by WODC (2024) (it is not known if this is related to the city of Utrecht), one example is the following:

According to the report by WODC (2024), a respondent living in a large city in the Randstad feels very at home in her neighborhood and building, partly because other Muslims live there. This shared community contributes significantly to her sense of home and belonging.

Living near asylum seeker center

The director of the housing association in Utrecht mentioned that they are looking into properly accommodating status holders in their neighborhoods and complexes. When asylum seekers are placed in an asylum seeker center, this does not mean that they are also housed in that municipality. These are disconnected processes. During the acceleration action, an attempt was made to ensure that status holders who were in an asylum seeker center in Utrecht would also be linked in Utrecht for regular housing after receiving a status. According to the director it is important that they actually house as many people as possible who have already lived in Utrecht for a while, because then they often already built a network in the city. Besides, the transition to a regular living situation would go better. So they are making every effort to make that happen. It is a challenge if, for example, they have just lived in Utrecht for two years and know their way around there and then are housed somewhere on the other side of the Netherlands. The team leader of the Council for Refugees in Utrecht also notices this among status holders who have been living in Utrecht for a few months. In line with these perspectives the findings from the report of WODC (2024) also indicate this, whereby the respondents are status holders from all over the country:

According to the study by WODC (2024), The dispersal policy of status holders leads to individuals forming friendships with other Syrians during their time in asylum seekers' centers, only to later find themselves living in different parts of the Netherlands. The location of the asylum center where one stayed for a longer period can significantly influence the process of starting and building a life in the Netherlands, as revealed through their focus groups and interviews.

Many respondents described the benefits of living near an asylum seekers' center in the Netherlands. They found it easier to adapt and build social networks, which made them feel more at home and integrated. One respondent mentioned that the friends she made in the Asylum center were now dispersed across the country, highlighting the impact of the dispersal policy. Another felt that her life effectively began at the center, as she learned to navigate the local area and develop connections. A sense of continuity and familiarity was important to many, with respondents expressing reluctance to move to new areas where they knew no one. One respondent shared frustration about being relocated to a distant asylum center, feeling that the move disrupted their adaptation process and hindered language learning opportunities.

However, not all respondents wanted to stay near their asylum center, citing limited work opportunities and poor access to shops and public transport as drawbacks.

However, because of the housing scarcity according to a Team Head of COA there are not a lot of choices in where to place the status holders. Every spot that becomes available, that is random in the country. If people leave and places become available, having shelter is more important than placing based on the advice. It has always been a problem that a lot of people actually end up in places at a great distance from their linked municipality.

Involvement decision making

According to the Alderman, they have experiential groups, where people who are already integrating or have been integrated also sit in a platform where all policies are tailored or considered to them or their voice is actually heard. They sit in many meetings in which they help with the municipality and think about how things can be done differently and better. And sometimes they are people who are still integrating under the old law. The 'Einstein' model, living together, living together, learning together, is another similar initiative. According to the alderman, status holders are very involved in what the municipality does and what the status holders can contribute to or what their wishes are. However, they cannot participate in decisions about the location of their housing.

This is important as in the report by WODC (2024) the status holders (it is not known in which municipality) indicate that they are often not listened to and that they had little to no say in the location of their assigned housing:

In the study by WODC (2024) the findings showed that respondents often felt their preferences and personal situations were overlooked in housing assignments. One Syrian noted they were assigned housing without being asked for their input. Another respondent, who preferred living in a village, was placed in a city, while a single person received a larger home than needed. However, some respondents did have their preferences considered. A woman from Eritrea and two others were housed in their preferred cities, which they attributed to luck. Additionally, some found their assigned locations suitable, even if the housing itself was not ideal.

However, according to the report by WODC (2024), the status holders also understood that there should be a housing provision policy among status holders:

Despite the challenges, there was understanding among status holders for the need to have a housing provision policy for status holders. However, they also provided suggestions like taking individual situations more into account during placement, better information provision and expectation management, and discussing the obligation to accept assigned housing versus more freedom of choice (WODC, 2024).

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

This chapter includes answers from case 1 (own findings interviews) on the following sub question regarding: *What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this? (SRQ 4)*

Integration support

According to the team leader of the Refugee Council in Utrecht, they support the status holders for the first three years, while in most other municipalities the Refugee Councils give support in their first and a half year only. The municipality of Utrecht changed it to three years, so that the integration period is also three years. The team leader mentioned that, this way they can follow and support the status holders on their integration journey and check when they complete their integration. However, it also depends on how long the status holder needs support, as some can integrate quicker than others. According to the housing policy advisor of the municipality of Utrecht, the municipality also uses an interesting product, the housekeeping booklet, in which status holders can find everything about integrating, adapting and the system in the Netherlands and in the municipality.

“Utrecht is better for status holders than for example Zeist, because of the integration support that status holders receive. In Utrecht status holders receive support from refugee work for 3 years, while in Zeist it is 1.5 years. But it depends on the status holders how much support they need, as some status holders need a support person longer than others.”

Citation 5 - Interviewee researcher Movisie/status holder

However, challenges were also mentioned regarding the integration support, during the interviews. According to the housing policy advisor, the Council for Refugees presents a challenge in finding volunteers. While the volunteers are the links that are crucial for status holders to find their way. So the municipality relies on volunteers and they are difficult to find. According to the housing manager, another obstacle is the sentiment of taunting or bullying towards refugees, in the street or on the porch, which makes status holders feel unwelcome. This can happen in any municipality, but it could become more prevalent in the future due to the election results and frustration in society about too few homes. The housing policy advisor also mentioned that if budget cuts are introduced and care with community centers, care and support, volunteer organizations and welfare are all adjusted downwards, this could mean that the warm welcome that is now organized will slowly lose or will lose its strength, which will also make social integration more difficult.

Place attachment

Identity, mentality and characteristics neighborhood

The housing policy advisor stated that the identity of Utrecht can be described as that the people work very much from trust, have the best interests of the people at heart and do their extra best to organize things well. The housing manager further mentioned that this is partly due to the history of Utrecht as a Human Rights city and the mantle of Maarten, which is also in the Utrecht logo. Truly supporting and helping people who are vulnerable, that is in the genes of the people who work for Utrecht.

The director of the housing association, also indicated that it is a multicultural city and due to the density and diversity of Utrecht, there are also many local neighborhood facilities, community centers, neighborhood welfare workers and community workers. Furthermore, also if the status holders want to do volunteer work, they always have something nearby in their street. They are not swallowed up by the big city where they can't find their way. Besides, the neighborhoods have a very close-knit network with facilities that can certainly contribute to this and that status holders will feel at home in their neighborhood or a district. However, according to the housing policy advisor they will have to take their own initiative to do this and they really have to make that walk themselves to facilities such as a community center.

"(..) we had registered for social housing and we were still lucky that we could move to Zeist, as it is near Utrecht and the people are nice. I had no hope of integrating well into Dantumadiel, because I could not find work there, and other people could not easily help us. Refugees can find work more quickly in Randstad and the environment and the approach of the neighbors is important to feel at home. I know status holders who would prefer to move to Utrecht, as it is a big multicultural city, with a lot of work opportunities."

Citation 6 - Interviewee researcher Movisie/status holder

According to the study by WODC (2024), some respondents expressed reluctance to move due to their attachment to their current living environment. One respondent who had relocated within the same area emphasized their emotional connection to their place of residence, finding it difficult to leave because of their sense of belonging there. This highlights the significance of place attachment in shaping their identity and sense of belonging.

Sense of familiarity

Furthermore, according to the integration coach at the Municipality of Utrecht, the city has a lot of familiar amenities for status holders such as Muslim butchers or supermarkets and the status holders know their way around easily. According to the integration coach it differs per person on the preference of familiar amenities nearby their house. Some status holders prefer familiarity and others prefer a quiet place more even though there might be less familiar amenities. The integration coach further mentioned that if people can relax and they can really settle down, then with the necessary relaxation they will be more open to integration, education, work, upbringing, neighbors, contacts. This is in contrast if they are placed in the wrong place where they are looked away, because then that can cause a lot of negativity and then people are not happy. Besides, the integration coach stated that because Utrecht is a large city, there are many primary schools, public, Catholic, Christian and Islamic. In that sense, there are many options for status holders and there is

"(..) Most status holders want to live in the 'Randstad' and also want to have well-known facilities and shops nearby to feel at home."

Citation 7 - Interviewee researcher Movisie/status holder

also good accessibility, which is important for people who have less money, due to travel costs. It was also noted by the study of WODC (2024):

According to the study by WODC (2024), several respondents, primarily from Syria, noted that having nearby shops was beneficial for building their lives in the Netherlands.

Sense of social connection and community initiatives

In addition, according to the integration coach of the municipality of Utrecht and the team leader of the Council of Refugees, there are many initiatives and language buddies, such as the buddy to buddy initiative. With these initiatives status holders can improve their language skills, which is very important for their social connection in the community, according to the integration coach. This also became clear from the findings of the 'Monitor inburgering' (2024) of the municipality of Utrecht:

According to the 'Monitor inburgering' (2024), feeling comfortable speaking Dutch is crucial for integration. A significant majority (92%) of the newcomers find language lessons helpful in making contacts or engaging in activities. Specifically, asylum seekers note that language classes facilitate independent activities more than family migrants (96% vs. 85%).

The status holders are referred to the initiatives, by the Council of Refugee, and introduced to various initiatives that provide integration help and guidance. Furthermore, almost all interviewees from Utrecht and even the team leader of the Refugee Council of Westland, mentioned the initiative by the municipality of Utrecht 'Het Welkomhuis'. It is located in a multifunctional building close to the station, which includes other organizations that are major in Utrecht, such as neighborhood teams and Dock. According to the integration coach of the municipality of Utrecht, this is also an organization that does all kinds of initiatives such as activities for children, cooking workshops, painting workshops or other workshops. The integration coach further described that it's a place for everyone, where everyone can meet each other. However, according to the "Monitor Inburgering" (2024), newcomers in Utrecht are more likely to dislike their neighborhoods compared to the average Utrecht resident:

The "Monitor Inburgering" (2024), found that one in six newcomers finds their neighborhood unpleasant, compared to one in ten Utrecht residents (see figure 15). Safety concerns are a significant reason for this dissatisfaction. Additionally, 24% of newcomers feel excluded or not at home, with no significant difference between family migrants and asylum status holders, though more asylum status holders were uncertain or didn't answer this question. Cultural factors and a sense of gratitude may prevent some from expressing negative feelings. The survey couldn't determine if these feelings are temporary or indicative of deeper issues, requiring further

research. Despite these challenges, many newcomers expressed gratitude for the support they received during their integration.

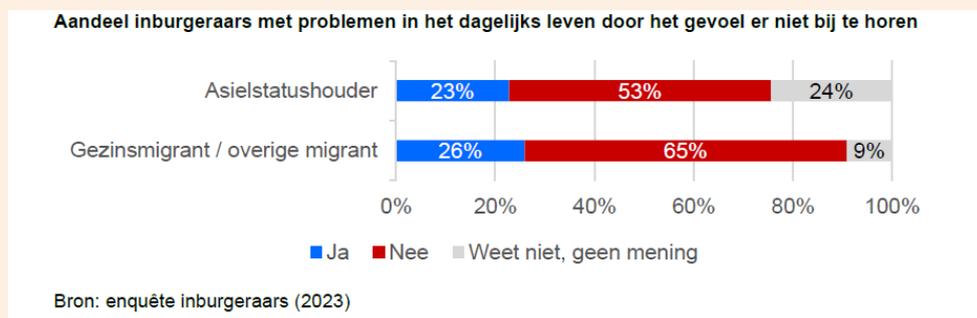


Figure 16: Share of immigrants with problems in daily life due to the feeling of not belonging. (Survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)

Besides, the integration coach also stated that there are different experiences of status holders regarding their contact with their neighbors. Some status holders don't want to have social contacts and are more introverted and some have negative experiences with their neighbors. The integration coach further mentioned that there are status holders who have a lot of contact with their neighbors and want to learn the language this way. However according to the the 'Monitor Inburgering' (2024) report of the municipality of Utrecht, newcomers, who are integrating in Utrecht, mostly are satisfied with their connections in the neighborhood:

According to the "Monitor Inburgering" (2024), having a strong social network is crucial for newcomers to feel at home, as it provides opportunities for exchange and support. A survey compared the experiences of newcomers in Utrecht to the average Utrecht resident. The findings indicate that status holders in Utrecht are generally satisfied with their living environment. Specifically, 85% of newcomers feel comfortable with the people in their neighborhood, compared to about two-thirds of the general Utrecht population. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of newcomers believe that people in their neighborhood get along well, a sentiment shared by the average Utrecht resident.

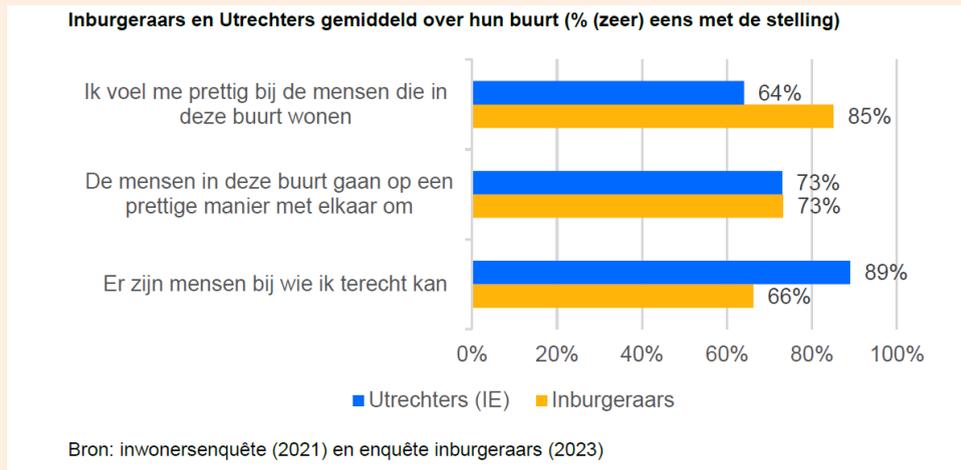


Figure 17: Integrators and Utrecht residents on average about their neighborhood (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)

Figure 16 also shows that newcomers in Utrecht have a smaller social support network compared to the average Utrecht resident. Despite feeling comfortable in their neighborhoods, newcomers experience weaker social bonds compared to the broader population.

Newcomers in Utrecht have a smaller social safety net compared to the average Utrecht resident, as can be seen in figure 17. While two-thirds of newcomers have people they can rely on, 18% do not, in contrast to 89% of Utrecht residents who do have such support. Asylum status holders are particularly vulnerable, with only 54% having a support network, whereas 77% of family migrants have a network, approaching the Utrecht average. This disparity is partly because family migrants often join someone who already has an established network.

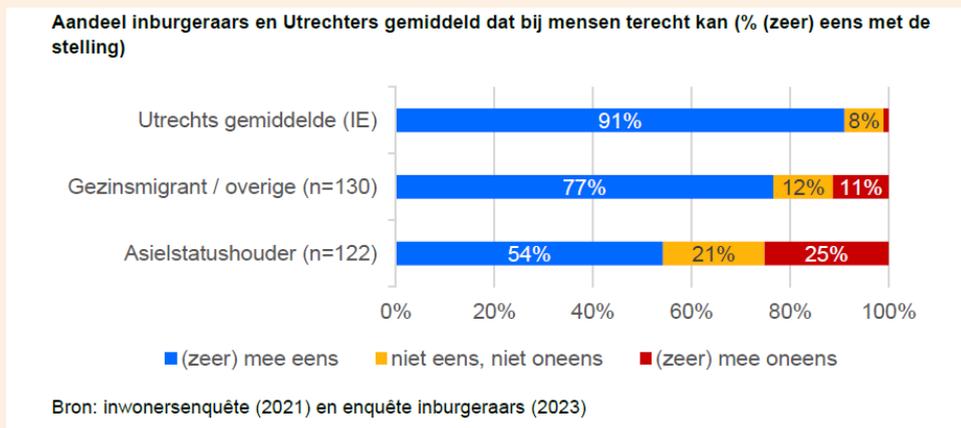


Figure 18: Share of people integrating and Utrecht residents on average who can contact people (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey residents (2021) and survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)

The housing policy advisor mentioned that she hears from the housing associations that status holders land relatively well, pick up things quickly and have a good tenancy. They also hardly have any conflicts between neighbors in which status holders are the target or part of and that things run

quite well. She also said that she knows examples where status holders are very proud and happy to be part of Dutch society and to live in Utrecht. According to her, there are also several podcasts where people are highlighted as having a great time.

Despite the fact that immigrants are relatively satisfied with the people in their neighborhood and that there are not many conflicts, many immigrants have no contact with their neighbors. This can be seen in the following figure of the findings of 'Inburgering Monitor' (2024), from the municipality of Utrecht:

The satisfaction of the contacts with their neighbors were further measured, by the "Monitor Inburgering" (2024). In figure 18, it can be seen that contact with neighbors among status holders is highly variable: 37% have pleasant interactions, while a similar proportion of 44% do not.

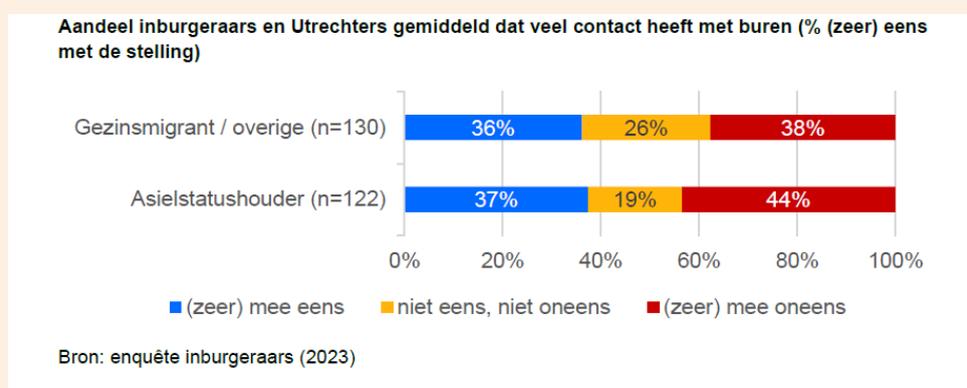


Figure 19: Share of immigrants and Utrecht residents on average who have a lot of contact with neighbors (% (strongly) agree with the statement). (Survey residents (2021) and survey newcomers (2023), taken from the monitor of the municipality of Utrecht, 2024)

Besides, according to the team leader of the Council of Refugees in Utrecht, even though Utrecht is very diverse, there are always people who think negatively about refugees. The team leader further stated that for that reason Utrecht joins the national initiative 'Bekend maakt bemind', where schools or organizations can apply for and then a refugee can talk about their own personal experiences to the employees or students. The team leader also described that it makes people feel more of a social connection and that the experience is often that when they come in contact with someone they can empathize better and that almost everyone experiences this initiative positively.

4.3 Case 2: Westland

Case description

In contrast to Utrecht's urban setting, Westland is a small municipality and one of the most unwelcoming communities for outsiders. Westland Verstandig (2024) reiterates the challenges associated with the compulsory housing of status holders in Westland. Urgent actions are required to alleviate the strain on the social housing supply. The municipality of Westland is mandated to house hundreds of status holders annually, a number that has been steadily increasing. Failure to comply would prompt intervention by the Province. Despite Westland's reluctance to accommodate asylum seekers, cooperation is deemed necessary to fulfill this obligation. However, prioritizing status holders over local residents waiting for social housing is perceived as unjust.

Perspectives of the stakeholders involved

DECISION MAKING

This chapter includes answers from case 2 (own findings interviews) on the following sub question regarding: *What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders? (SRQ 3)*

Housing allocation strategies

Hotel accommodation

According to the housing manager of the housing association, Westland has 8 village cores and according to the team leader of the Refugee Council Westland, based on the size of this municipality, more than 300 status holders should actually be linked to this municipality. According to the team leader, until recently, people only came from an asylum seeker center to the municipality of Westland if a home was available. However, now there is the hotel accommodation arrangement (HAR) in the Fletcher Hotel in Naaldwijk, for temporary housing of, according to the housing manager of the housing association, 160 people who urgently need housing, including Dutch people, Ukrainians and status holders. According to the team leader of the Refugee Council in Westland, the status holders who are linked to Westland can come to the hotel very quickly from the AZC. The team leader further described that as soon as they have a BSN number, they can go there if there is room in the hotel and they cannot yet get a regular home within the municipality.

Besides, the housing manager of the housing association mentioned that, if there is a transition dwelling available from the housing associations then the status holders can be transitioned to those dwellings after staying at the hotel and when there is no availability yet for a regular social housing. Furthermore, the director of COA region South-Holland mentioned that mainly because of the hotel arrangement it is going well with housing status holders in Westland for the last two years and that they reach the target. This can also be seen in figure 19. In 2022 more status holders were housed compared to the other years. The figure also shows that from 2015 till 2023 it went well with housing status holders and they housed more status holders than the municipal target. The director further described that the Fletcher hotel as a transition accommodation helps to have a better flow of the status holders who after getting their permit still live in the asylum seekers centers.

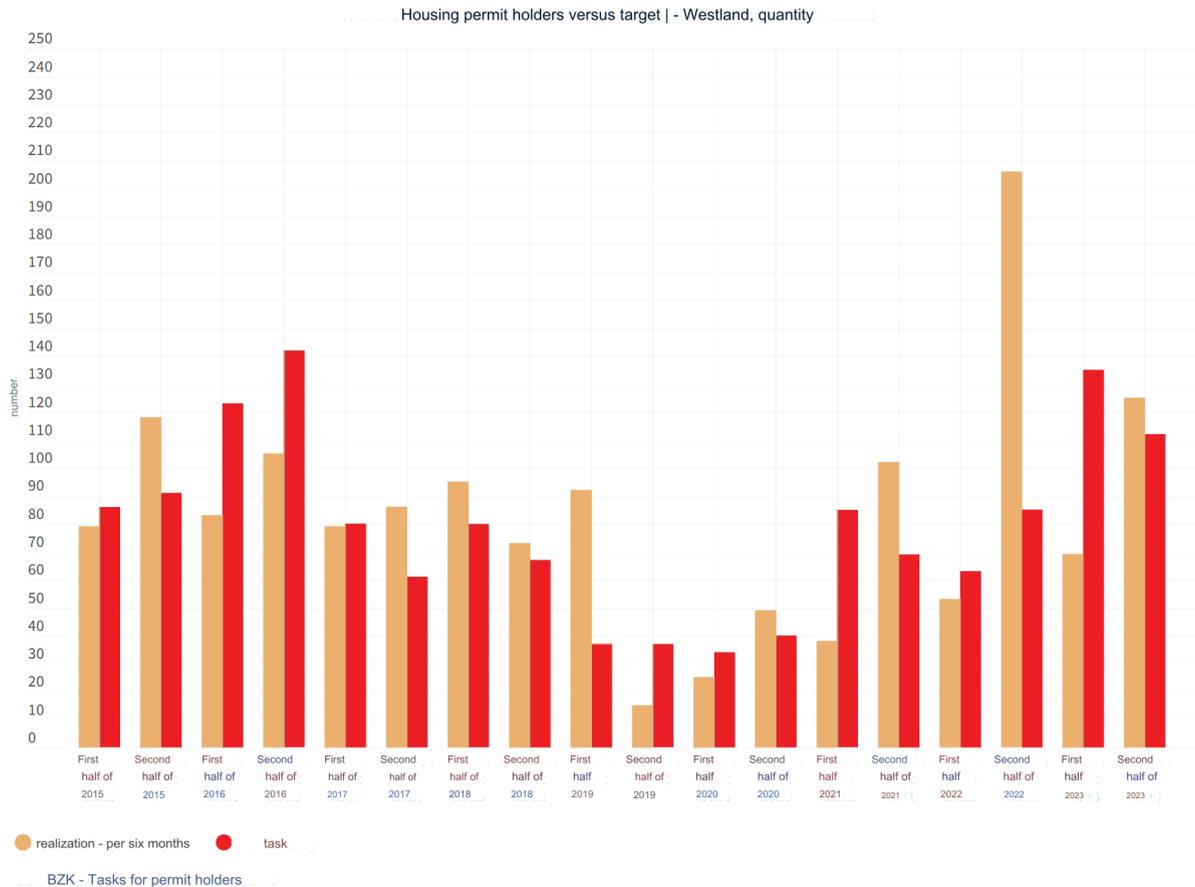


Figure 20: Housing status holders in Westland, 2015-2023, red is the municipal target and orange is the amount of the housed status holders, for enlarged figure see appendix (Bron: Datawonen, 2024 taken from [Datawonen \(VOIS\) - Huisvesting vergunninghouders versus taakstelling](#))

WESTLANDSE FLEXROUTE

De Flexroute haalt de Westlandse woningmarkt van het slot en zorgt dat Westlanders eerder een woning krijgen

- ✓ Versneld bouwen vanaf begin 2023 voor onze jongeren en starters
- ✓ Altijd onderdak beschikbaar voor woningzoekenden met spoed
- ✓ Meer voorraad sociale en betaalbare woningen, koop én huur, voor jongeren en starters
- ✓ Effectieve bijdrage van Westland aan huidige asielcrisis, landelijk en regionaal
- ✓ Intensievere begeleiding statushouders voor betere integratie in Westland
- ✓ Steunverklaring ministerie van BZK voor Flexroute

1500

Afspraak met provincie Zuid-Holland: Versneld bouwen van 1500 betaalbare woningen, betaalbaar, sociaal, koop én huur, voor met name jongeren en starters.

permanente woning

flexwoning

hotel

Spoezoekers

Statushouders ±150
Oekraïense vluchtelingen ±10

Figure 21 Westlandse Flexroute, (AD, 2022 [Westland wil woningmarkt van slot halen met 1500 extra huizen: 'Snel bouwen voor de Westlanders'](#) | Foto | [AD.nl](#))

Challenges

However, according to the housing manager of the housing association in Westland and the project leader of customer processes at the municipality of Westland, the vacant mutation rate for social housing in Westland is also very low, because the local community hardly relocates. The team leader of the Refugee Council in Westland mentioned that the reasons that the local community don't move are because they are satisfied with their own house, there is a lack of availability of houses or they can not afford to relocate. The team leader further describes that the target in housing status holders in Westland has also increased in recent years. This creates more pressure and challenges with few choices and opportunities. He further described that the villages in Westland all have horticultural companies and many owner-occupied houses. According to the housing manager of the housing association, 'the Westlanders' have the feeling that they do not need the corporation at all. The housing manager agrees with that, because there are many more owner-occupied homes and private homes there than rental properties. However, the housing manager also mentioned that at the same time, when the housing association completes a project somewhere or when an advertisement is placed, there are actually many responses. This means that the need is there, but it is not always fully recognized.

In addition, according to the team leader of the Refugee Council in Westland there are almost no vacant office buildings which could be available for transformation to housing. Furthermore, the housing manager of the housing association mentioned that if there are regular social houses available for the status holders, they are most of the time single-family homes, compared to other municipalities, while most status holders are individuals. The housing manager further mentioned that they want to find the balance between housing all target groups fairly. Besides, there is not a lot of space for alternative housing, such as flex housing. This results in for example the problem that there are still people who live in that hotel since the hotel was opened to status holders in November 2022. The housing manager explained that these status holders didn't get a home yet, they are still waiting and they no longer receive support from COA (after 6 months), but they receive a benefit from the municipality.

Furthermore, according to the housing manager of the housing association, the hotel still functions as a kind of hotel, where everyone has their own room which is also cleaned for them, without a kitchen and the hotel restaurant cooks for them. The housing manager mentioned that some status holders really enjoy being cared for there, while not everyone necessarily needs that. If they then move on to the transition home of the housing associations, they have to do the shopping themselves, cook themselves, make their own bed and clean their own house. The housing associations are sometimes told that people are a bit resistant to this and that people actually thought it was fine in the hotel, while the hotel was actually only intended by the municipality to relieve the burden on the AZC. However, the housing manager also stated that some of them have been in the hotel for so long that it is no longer an interim solution, but actually more of a kind of semi-permanent residence. The problem is not that the hotel is becoming full, but the problem is that the flow is not stagnated from the hotel to permanent housing or to other transitional housing.

Resistance local community and cancelation temporary/transition housing strategies

According to all the interviewees from Westland, another problem that may be more prevalent in Westland than in some other municipalities is that a large part of the local residents in Westland are against refugees. According to the team leader of the Refugee Council in Westland, there is always resistance in this municipality's local council and also from politics, and that influences the decision making regarding housing all target groups and the target number. The team leader further stated that if someone has a creative idea, such as that there is an empty building somewhere and whether they can convert it so that it can accommodate single status holders, there is a lot of criticism.

For example, according to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, in 2022, the municipality tried to develop flex housing for the young local community who are searching for housing and vulnerable groups such as status holders as temporary transition solutions. The idea of these flexible homes was that people would live there mixed, including Dutch people, Ukrainians and status holders. According to the housing manager of the housing association, there has even been a plan for this in a number of places. This idea was immediately objected to by local residents, who would then live opposite it; it resulted in that it was no longer allowed to proceed and no flex location had been created. According to the team leader of the refugee council of Westland this means that there are not many housing options for many Dutch young people, because they have the 'not in my backyard' perception, where they are against several aspects such as that it would ruin their view if they look out of the window. However, according to the team leader, the biggest reason why the local community is against flex housing is that they have the perception that these flexible homes are mainly for refugees. The local community wants prioritization on housing before newcomers. According to the housing manager of the housing association, the political climate in the municipality is 'not in my backyard' and 'mood-making' is somewhat driven by fears and unfamiliarity.

In addition, according to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, as the temporary hotel accommodation is also getting full, another idea of the municipality was to renovate the vacant office building next to the hotel as another temporary transition place for status holders. The idea behind this was that status holders who had to stay in the hotel for too long could move on to the next temporary accommodation. The team leader mentioned that this would make the flow of new status holders smoother. However, the city council again came up with many critical questions, which means that this idea will probably also be canceled according to the team leader. Furthermore, according to the housing manager of the housing association, the housing association had another dwelling in mind to use as a transitional home and accommodate 4 individuals in that home. They had applied for a permit for this and the municipality has now withdrawn it, because the procedure would then not have gone well. The housing manager also mentioned that they wonder whether that is really the case, or whether it was simply the local residents who objected to it. Furthermore, according to the housing manager of the housing association, because of the local perceptions things are not going well in terms of what they actually achieve, they are lagging behind with the municipality's task. The housing associations find that a very difficult position.

Collaboration stakeholders

All interviewees mentioned that the collaboration is going well between them regarding the housing of status holders. The housing manager mentioned that all actors involved try to provide as many

people as possible with a place. Even though the cooperation is difficult due to the political climate, things are going well on the work floor and for those who are really working on the assignments and mutual cooperation. While the housing association does not pay much attention to integration support to status holders, the housing manager is satisfied with the refugee council, which puts in a lot of effort.

Future trends and improvements

According to the municipality of Westland and the housing association, the most important improvement for the future is the ability for more temporary housing as a solution, without the local resistance. According to all the stakeholders from Westland who were interviewed, the best solution is to build more houses, and that is a big challenge on a national level. However, all of them also mentioned that it is also a big challenge with for example the 'not in my backyard' mentality of the local community.

According to the director of COA South Holland, it is a good way and also a good solution for other municipalities if they focus on transitional housing, as is already largely done in the municipality of Westland. The director also mentioned that if the waiting time for obtaining a home were to be halved from one year to six months, status holders would be able to move on more quickly. This would promote integration and participation. The director also said that it would be very good for municipalities to invite status holders to see what their plans and experiences are and what they are already doing at the asylum seekers center, even though there is a risk that a status holder will quickly start talking about wanting a house and not wanting to talk about work.

Spatial dispersal policies

According to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, most status holders end up living in social housing areas, such as the gallery flats behind the municipal office in Naaldwijk, as these are the affordable housing options available to them. This can lead to a concentration of vulnerable groups such as status holders in certain streets and neighborhoods with density of social housing units. The team leader further explained that this can lead to more nuisance in those types of streets. However, he mentioned that there are also many prejudices or lack of awareness about those with different ethnic backgrounds. If there is a nuisance or waste somewhere it is very quickly pointed out to refugees, because local residents sometimes don't know whether someone who has a different skin color is a refugee or not. In practice, according to the housing manager of the housing association, they often hear many people say that status holders are the cause of nuisance 9 out of 10 times, while studies have been done and it is not shown at all that this really has a one-to-one connection. Housing associations therefore try to provide guidance as best as possible to prevent unpleasant situations from arising. However, even though these situations do arise, in practice they are not too bad, according to the housing manager.

In addition, the team leader of the refugee council of Westland also mentioned that when the new dispersal policy (2023) came into effect, someone from a local Westland party joined a talk show the same evening to say that they did not want to participate in the dispersal policy ('Spreidingswet'). The team leader stated that it is typical something residents in Westland would do and that the climate in Westland surrounding such themes is very complicated. According to the housing manager of the housing association of Utrecht they are also concerned about how the neighborhood and local

residents will react if status holders come to live nearby. Whether they get a fair chance to find their place or whether they are given the cold shoulder.

However, the team leader of the refugee council mentioned that while some larger towns, such as Naaldwijk, have more status holders, there are also smaller villages where only a few status holders reside, leading to them being a notable minority in those areas. All the stakeholders from Westland which were interviewed, also made clear that even though there are places with more social housing, there are no neighborhoods in Westland with more status holders living there. According to all of them, they are still mainly spread out. The housing manager of the housing association mentioned that they try to distribute vulnerable groups evenly across the municipality and they see it as successful in practice. The housing manager further stated that distributing families is easier, because there are more single-family houses than single-person houses, this results in the individuals being more concentrated in the social housing areas.

Besides, according to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, many non-Dutch people also live in Westland, for example about 1100 Ukrainians and expats, where many migrant workers work in horticulture. The team leader also stated that it is more diverse than people might think and yet it feels less multicultural than when they are in a city. This is due to the different centers and some centers such as Naaldwijk are a bit larger, but there are also some small centers where very few refugees live and then they become a little different from the others.

Furthermore, according to the director of COA region South Holland, the Netherlands is not that big at all and people can easily travel within the country. The director mentioned the example that the distance from Groningen to The Hague is 2.5 hours, which, according to her, is not that people can no longer see each other and now with technology, having contact with family will also be easier. On the other hand, the director also mentioned that not all status holders will be able to travel by car and public transport is expensive. Besides that, the fact that they are linked to certain municipalities does not mean that they have to live there for the rest of their lives, according to the director. They create a social network at the beginning and certainly when they can find work it will often turn out that people are fine there and don't have to leave if necessary, while initially there was a lot of resistance. Then they first thought that it was a small village and there was nothing there, but in the longer term they saw that it was not so bad. However the director also noted that it differs per person. That can also be seen in the findings of the study by WODC (2024), whereby the respondents were status holder from all over the country:

According to the study by WODC (2024), some respondents expressed a desire to move to a city to be closer to employment opportunities and are actively searching for social rental homes in urban areas. One respondent emphasized wanting to be self-reliant and avoid dependence on state support, seeking a city with more job prospects. A young man from Eritrea living in a remote northern town mentioned difficulty finding local employment and cited high public transport costs and long travel times as barriers to working in nearby cities. Another respondent appreciated living in a quiet area, preferring it over a busy city due to his background in a war zone. However, he faced challenges with employment opportunities and missed out on a job because of the long

commute. Additionally, he felt less safe in his neighborhood due to anti-Muslim sentiments and related incidents.

Future improvements and involvement decision making

Regarding improvements in the placement of status holders at Westland, the team leader of the refugee council in Westland responded that COA could look more at the background of the status holders. The team leader mentioned the example that Westland is more horticulture, whereby money is earned by farmers and by gardeners, for that reason they could look more at status holders who have a background in horticulture and then link them to Westland, since that work is common there. According to the team leader then there would be more of an underlying idea about why certain people are linked somewhere.

Another point for improvement, according to the housing manager of the housing association, is that the people have no input unless, for example, they have their own family living somewhere. The housing manager further stated that despite the numbers of status holders and the housing shortage, more customization could still be provided when choosing the placement of status holders in a specific location. The status holders are offered the home where they will live, and get the keys, then they have to sign the rental contract, without being involved in the decision. Then they have to hope that the person who made that match paid some attention to their family composition. The housing manager further mentioned that it would be nice if there could be more involvement from status holders to increase the chance of success and feeling at home, even though it would be impossible, because there isn't much to choose from. The findings of the study by WODC (2024) also show that:

According to the study by WODC (2024), many respondents shared that their preferences and personal situations were largely ignored by the COA. They felt that COA employees often promised one thing but did another. For example, one respondent noted that despite providing a preferred location due to a part-time job, this was not considered. Another mentioned that the COA claimed to prioritize family connections, but she was not placed near her relatives, although others were. Additionally, a respondent was told she could choose her location, but this did not happen in practice.

In addition, according to the housing manager of the housing association, it would also be difficult for status holders themselves to estimate where they would like to end up, because they have no knowledge of the area, village or city at all and everything is still unknown to them. In addition, the director of COA region South-Holland, mentioned that the housing wishes of status holders can also be unrealistic and unfeasible. The director also mentioned that they do take them into account when considering the choice of placement, but the status holders certainly have no say in it. The director further explained that wishes are not always very realistic as for example some people say they want to go to the west of the country, because there is more work, while, according to the director, there is actually work everywhere.

The focus groups and interviews, of the study by WODC (2024), reveal that many respondents, or refugees in general, initially did not think much about where they would live, focusing instead on the journey, obtaining a residence permit, and family reunification. They often had little knowledge of housing or different places in the Netherlands. However, they did have some preferences before being offered a home. Generally, they wished for a private space, with some specifically wanting their own toilet, to avoid sharing facilities with other asylum seekers. Additionally, several respondents preferred living in a city, with one Syrian man emphasizing the importance of living in a city, even if it wasn't a large one.

According to the COA director of region South-Holland, the COA is currently working with a new innovative solution with technology, AI algorithm, which is also being used in countries such as Switzerland. The information data in the algorithm comes from CBS and UVW. They look at the backgrounds, ages, gender, but also their work experiences, to use it as advice and improve their placement to a certain municipality. This way the status holders can get work quicker, suitable with their own experience. Then, according to the director, the COA can decide if they will use it or not with the decision making of the placements.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

This chapter includes answers from case 2 (own findings interviews) on the following sub question regarding: *What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this? (SRQ 4)*

Integration support

According to the social counselor of Refugee Council in Westland, they support the status holders in the first year, however **most of the status holders are not integrated yet after a year**. Some of the status holders are in a way traumatized that they don't have time to integrate yet. The interviewees from the Refugee Council in Westland mentioned that they encourage people to participate, such as doing volunteer work. They are very focused on strengthening their self-reliance. Besides, they mentioned that they also encourage parents to, for example, join their children to a football club or to join a chess club where you do not have to talk but can make contacts. According to the team leader, it is very popular with refugees and also with the local residents in Westland. Besides they mentioned that when the status holders arrive in the municipality they often don't speak Dutch or English yet, which leads to difficulty doing most volunteer work. Besides, organizations often say that it is therefore too complicated for them to hire them, according to the team leader.

The team leader further mentioned that while the Council for Refugees supports them in the first year in Westland, the Municipality helps with the further integration, such as with language courses. In addition, since the new integration law, municipalities and partners have provided more support to people and make tailor-made advice to look much more at what someone can do and what they have time for. It is very intensive to supervise that. In the past, the municipality was much more

remote and people had to arrange and figure out a lot themselves. According to the team leader the municipality is now much more involved in integration and participation.

Besides, during the interview with the housing manager of the housing association, it was made clear that it is not always possible on the corporation side to provide the guidance in such detail, even though it is actually necessary to be able to do it. While the Council for Refugees does this on a voluntary basis. According to the housing manager, that is a bottleneck, whereby they want to see how these things can be improved in the future.

Place attachment

Sense of social connection

According to the integration coördinator at the municipality of Westland, the biggest challenges for all status holders are the lack of speaking the Dutch language, understanding the system and having a social network, which are also the first steps to social integration. These social connections are important to get a sense of community.

“Language plays a major role in the integration of status holders. And if the status holders can speak English, then that is a big advantage. Language is the first, most important and most difficult step for refugees.”

Citation 8 - Interviewee researcher
Movisie/status holder

In addition, according to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, not only status holders but everyone tends to always look for people who understand them and what they are talking about, with whom it is easy to communicate, who are interested in them and who have the same experiences. The team leader further mentioned that living near people with the same background and who speak the same language as the status holders, would give them more confidence to participate in the community.

Besides, as mentioned before the hotel accommodation is a facility where people live under one roof and start their integration in the center of Naaldwijk. According to an integration coordinator at the municipality of Westland, the people who live there have more contacts with each other in the hotel, including peer-to-peer contacts, than when they are placed in a center where a few other status holders live. However, she also stated that it should not be limited to that, as the connection with the local community, people with a Dutch background, is also very important for social integration. Municipalities and housing associations try to make the neighborhoods more mixed with socioeconomic diversity and find a balance, so the livability in the neighborhoods and social connection between the residents improves and so also the social integration of status holders.

“My research shows that networking and work are also really important. And that if asylum seekers already receive good assistance, support and living conditions during their stay in the asylum seeker center it would benefit their integration. However, their own motivation is also very important for their integration. Asylum seekers and even status holders now sometimes live in an asylum seekers center for more than a year or longer and that must be put to good use.”

Citation 9 - Interviewee researcher Movisie/status holder

According to all the interviewees from Westland, **the connection with the neighbors** was stated as very important for the integration of status holders. The housing manager of the housing association mentioned that if they are lucky and the neighbors are friendly then the sense of community and belonging can already be more positive. According to a social counselor at Refugee Council in Westland, most of the time the neighbors are friendly to the status holders even though the general local sentiment is negative there, because they got to know each other better. According to the team leader of Refugee Council in Westland there are also status holders who notice that some neighbors are not that interested in getting to know each other better and that most Dutch people in general live quite separately from each other in sort of bubbles. The team leader further stated that the effort has to come from both sides, on the part of the refugees and the part of the neighbors. They help with giving advice on how the status holders can better cope and adapt into the environment.

According to the study by WODC (2024), some respondents formed close bonds with their neighbors due to a lack of nearby family. A Syrian man living with his family in a small village outside the Randstad referred to his neighbor as 'grandpa,' who taught them Dutch and became like family. However, others had negative experiences living in villages or small towns. A man in his thirties who moved to a city found it difficult to connect with people his age, as the village he lived in was mainly populated by elderly people. Similarly, a young Eritrean woman in a small village noted that most residents were elderly and unable to offer her support.

Relocation impact

In addition, according to the housing manager of housing association in Westland, as there are no asylum seekers centers in Westland, all status holders come from outside of the municipality and have to get used to the new environment after they are placed in Westland. A challenge for the status holders is that they have to relocate each time, since there are a few transitions they have to make before they can get to regular social housing in Westland. According to an integration coordinator of the Municipality of Westland the hotel accommodation is more like a shift instead of a solution. Besides, it still doesn't give them the stability and peace to feel at home.

"I think that in reality, for the person in question, from the asylum seeker center to a hotel room to a transfer home to a final home, there are many steps in which you have to get used to a new setting every time."

Citation 10 - Interviewee housing manager of the housing association

Identity and mentality of the neighborhood

According to all the interviewees from Westland, most challenges in Westland also start with the identity of the neighborhood and the local sentiment and mentality. All of them described the same for the identity and mentality of Westland. It has a village mentality, so all the cores have their own communities. There are a lot of associations where most of the local community already know each other in the core. And that is more difficult for newcomers to become part of, as also cited (citation 11). Besides, all interviewees also mentioned that it is an agricultural

"(...) and I think, because they are all communities, to be included there is not easy"

Citation 11 - Interviewee team leader Refugee Council Westland

village community where most people have been successfully earning their money in horticulture for several generations with greenhouse horticultural companies that are very successful. The team leader of the refugee council in Westland mentioned that these are often family businesses where young people who start working at their parents company as a cashier from the age of 12 and will take over later. They have a completely different way of looking at the world and everything that comes from outside is a bit strange for them, according to the team leader. The team leader also stated that it is not a very inviting climate for any newcomer and the municipality and all partners still have a lot of work to do there.

However the housing manager of the housing association mentioned that if you compare the city with a village. Then you would think that the city would be more difficult to land in because it is much more anonymous. However, for a status holder that actually offers more opportunity, because the village can really work against you. If the community picks you up, you'll be happy with that. In contrast, if the community turns against you a bit, then that can really bother you. Nonetheless, it is also often framed that way, especially politically. According to the housing manager, in reality it no longer happens that, for example, status holders are bullied away. It is more the fear and sentiment that lives and is fed from all kinds of stories, while it is not really expressed in that way. However, the team leader of the Council of Refugees mentioned that the status holders themselves also notice the presence of the identity of the environment where they live. They often get the feeling that they don't belong. This also applies to citation 13.

According to the Team Leader at Refugee Council in Westland even the people who work to help the refugees integrate sometimes have difficulty with people who make strange comments to them, saying that they are once again helping the refugees. There is also a notable difference in the number of employees who help refugees in Westland compared to other municipalities such as Leiden, which is approximately the same size as Westland.

"If status holders live somewhere where it is very multicultural, they can integrate better as the residents are already used to foreigners. For example, in Assen and in the north of the Netherlands there is less diversity and we have done research on Dantumadeel, where about 90% are natives and they are not common for foreigners. It is difficult to be included there as a status holder."

Citation 12 - Interviewee researcher
Movisie/status holder

"We recently had a family from Maasdijk, (..) which is also part of Westland, the woman with a headscarf was looking at geese at a pond, and a Dutch man immediately came and said: "what are you doing here?", the woman said: "I live here." "No, I don't believe that you live here, that's impossible, you have no business here." Well, the woman was completely upset of course. You just don't believe that. Yes, then you feel ashamed that that happens to your clients. Those things happen, people find out about them when they live here."

Citation 13 - Interviewee team leader Refugee
Council Westland

According to the study by WODC (2024), the attitudes of other residents towards status holders varied among different locations. Despite protests against status holders in another village, a respondent highlighted the positive impact of a meeting organized by the housing association in fostering better relations. However, negative experiences were shared by others. A man who moved from a village described minimal contact with residents who seemed unwilling to engage with his family, the only foreigners and refugee family in the village. Another status holder in a northern village reported experiencing racism and feeling isolated as the first Syrian family in the area.

Neighborhood characteristics

Moreover, the Team Leader of Refugee Council in Westland mentioned that due to the village identity of Westland there are **no familiar amenities** for different ethnic backgrounds, such as Turkish or Arabic supermarkets. However, the team leader also mentioned that the status holders themselves don't mention that they miss these amenities, because they are too busy with integrating and they appreciate the fact that they get a place to live. Besides, according to the team leader, the community in Westland also thinks that for these familiar amenities the status holders can travel to, for example, The Hague which is nearby. However, the team leader also stated that if those familiar amenities are nearby it could help the status holders with their sense of home. This is in line with the findings from the report by WODC (2024):

According to the study by WODC (2024), a Syrian respondent who relocated with their family from a city to a small village noted that while supermarkets were available in the village for basic needs, they had to return to their previous city for other shopping. However, this wasn't problematic as they could travel by car, often visiting on weekends or during commutes to work. Some respondents emphasized the importance of nearby shops selling Syrian or halal products, which were lacking in their new location. One respondent mentioned the challenge of not finding such shops nearby, having to travel twenty minutes by tram to buy Syrian bread.

Many respondents emphasize the importance of having access to public transportation near their homes, with some considering it the most crucial aspect for building their lives. Public transport is particularly vital during the initial period after arrival in a municipality, as stated by participants in Syrian focus groups and a woman from Eritrea. This need is especially pronounced for those placed in villages, where access to public transportation may be limited. Besides, public transport can have high costs.

Community initiatives

Nevertheless, according to the team leader at Refugee Council not everyone thinks this way in Westland. A few years ago there was a toy campaign for refugee children, whereby at a number of Catholic schools they received a lot of toys, including new toys. The team leader stated that that is the other face of the local community in Westland, where people can also be very generous for a good cause and that that mentality comes from the church. Another example mentioned was that

they also swim through the canal for a good cause and raise a million euros. Besides, when they explain the situation of status holders to the local community, they say that they didn't know it was so complicated. According to the team leader, this shows that it also has to do with ignorance. The team leader also mentioned that initiatives have also been created for this purpose, such as the national initiative 'Bekend maakt bemind', which was also mentioned before by stakeholders from Utrecht. The team leader explained that by using the initiative, the local community gets to know more about these newcomers and they might get a different perception about them, which makes the community more cohesive and inclusive. In Westland these initiatives were used 5-6 years ago, but not anymore, however, the team leader stated that this is a great idea to do again in the future. The study by WODC (2024) also shows that the experiences of living in a village are not always negative:

According to the study by WODC (2024), While some respondents living in villages or small towns have negative experiences with interactions with other residents or attitudes towards status holders, not all share this sentiment. One respondent expressed that living in a village facilitated rapid Dutch language acquisition due to ample interaction with Dutch people, suggesting a positive aspect of their experience.

Furthermore, the team leader also mentioned that they once organized a kind of meal for Dutch people together with the centers, where a number of refugees had prepared the meal. People could sign up for that and then they could taste some of their food and also make contact with people right away. Furthermore, all stakeholders from Westland mentioned that there are activities such as city walks and workshops which are organized by Vitus Welzijn. Although, according to the team leader, most people from the local community who want to participate in such activities are around the age of 60. The team leader stated that the younger people are more busy with their own career and don't have time, while this group also has a lot of prejudices about newcomers. In addition, the status holders also have a lot of integration obligations because they have to go to school three and a half days a week. Therefore, it's quite a challenge for them to also join the community initiatives, as they often have a busy life during integration, especially with children and also volunteer work, according to the team leader.

Besides, according to the team leader of the refugee council in Westland, if the status holders feel at home in a certain municipality can be different per person. People who are out-going and people who stayed for a longer time in the municipality would feel more at home as they can get used to the neighborhood easier, according to the team leader. However, there are status holders who like to have a quiet neighborhood, for example in Wieringen. The team leader further stated that especially families with children would probably like a more quiet living environment compared to single young people who can be bored of that kind of environment.

"I am an open person and not so introverted and therefore I can adapt quickly, as this is the same for some other status holders."

Citation 14 - Interviewee researcher
Movisie/status holder

4.4 Perspectives not case-related (own findings)

This chapter contains an analysis of the stakeholder perspectives that are not directly related to the cases. These were more exploratory interviews. This concerns the interviews with an advocate from Aedes (housing corporations perspective) and a Team Head from COA.

Perspectives COA & Aedes & researcher UvA

Decision making involvement status holders

According to the Team Head of COA they had tried for a while to allow status holders to register for the accommodation offered, as corporations do. However, they received, for example, 100 responses to one home, which meant they had to disappoint 99 people. He stated that it was not productive and it would cost a lot of energy for municipalities to make housing available and ultimately they would not achieve the target. Then the status holders also had more scope to inform the municipality that they were looking for a home. According to the team head, they often did this at multiple municipalities, to increase their chances, however, that meant that all those municipalities were working with the same person and ultimately only one municipality could accommodate them. A lot of time and energy went into that too, that is why it changed in 2012. The COA now does the file creation in which they make the link to municipalities. With the agreement that they only accommodate status holders who are on the list of their municipality and not of other municipalities and municipalities adhere very closely to this.

When people are in the AZC, they look together with the AZC employee at what suitable housing is given the household composition and what is their preferred city to live in. This is registered on the waiting list and then a status holder is told with the refugee work supervisor which address has been reached. The status holders cannot refuse this, there is a heavy penalty, because then their housing rights lapse. A very exceptional case is when it turns out that the home is not suitable, but the professionals also look into this. An example is when someone has difficulty walking and due to inadequate information in the work process, that person has received a home on the 3rd floor without a lift. Then refugee workers say that this is not suitable and that they have to look for another home. However, it really must be an objective argument that it is not suitable and not a housing requirement. The scarcity and affordability ensure that they cannot take their housing needs into account.

According to the researcher from the University of Amsterdam, it is often said that the background of the status holders is taken into account and that the best location is chosen on that basis, however, in practice this does not actually happen. According to the researcher, the reason for this is that when homes become available, they want to fill them as quickly as possible and they do not have time to really install suitable ones. She further mentioned that all the good ideas are there and the policy is there, but in practice not all of them are actually implemented. The researcher also mentioned that if the government were to provide more guidance from above about housing status holders, there would be more collective action among the municipalities. If the government provides less guidance, the municipalities will look at each other and the housing of status holders will be taken less seriously.

More decision making challenges

The Team Head of COA also mentions that they have already started promising linking that focuses mainly on labor market opportunities. This is also in relation to the point that asylum seekers are now also allowed to work all year round, which also affects housing. There are currently very long waiting times for the asylum procedure. There is a good chance that asylum seekers will already start work during that period. Then there is a good chance that after a while they will be able to earn an income of more than the minimum wage. And that is an important factor for COA to take into account. They have a dilemma about whether they will place the status holders on the basis of the legal targets or whether they consider the participation of the status holder to be more important, even though the targets must be achieved. The more status holders are already working, the greater the challenges for COA in placing status holders to certain municipalities.

Future decision making strategies

According to the Team Head of COA work is being done on all sides to build additional houses, but that is not something for the short term. It will take years before the social rental sector is back in order and offers sufficient space again. Decisions must be made for other strategies. The Team Head also mentioned that there are various strategies to tackle the challenges surrounding housing status holders, which some municipalities are already implementing. For example, to split houses or use transfer locations. But he also mentioned that the commercial market would also be looked at. There are market parties that can make business cases based on renting out living space, for example by converting office buildings. Besides, according to the Team Head of COA, there are many seniors who live in homes that are too large because there is no alternative. If something can be arranged in the context of hospitality for this group, then that could also be a good solution for a large part of the younger groups of people.

The advocate for Aedes, the representative of housing associations, mentioned that almost always the status holders live in the houses of the housing associations and that it is almost never the case that they come into homes owned by municipalities or private investors. Besides, the advocate also stated that the social stock of housing available in certain places and the pressure on the housing market are not taken into account while assigning the status holders to municipalities. He further explained that it is not taken into account which types of homes are more common to accommodate suitable households. According to the Aedes advocate, this can be made more tailor-made to improve it even further.

Regarding finding solutions to these problems, the advocate stated that, for example, the housing associations can adjust the rent, but that sometimes saves two or three hundred euros per month, which will be bad for their business case, because it often does not fit within their rental policy. According to the advocate it could be examined whether a municipality or a government could also contribute to such a better distribution, for example by partly contributing to those costs or by relaxing the rules. He also mentioned that they have to be realistic, because in this enormous housing shortage, not everyone can get their housing wishes achieved. According to the advocate, sometimes status holders also refuse homes that many other home seekers in the Netherlands would be very happy with.

And the sentiment that when status holders concentrate and in neighborhoods where things are not going well, those people are also vulnerable to, for example, coming into contact with crime, which leads to more problems. However, not every status holder is necessarily someone who is disadvantaged or vulnerable. Besides, the advocate also mentioned that there is an assumption that other groups of home seekers, who also desperately need a home, but who happen to have no urgency, will not get their turn. According to the advocate, it is not certain whether this assumption is correct, as it has not been proven.

The researcher explained that the idea of the dispersal policy is that if they disperse the refugees, the refugees cannot cluster together, which the municipalities believe prevents ghettos from emerging, for example. However, migrants generally cluster together, because they derive support and knowledge from clustering. Moreover, she also stated that migrants generally want to look for places where employment is available, as most people in general. However, according to the researcher, employment is also not spread evenly across the country, for example in the Randstad there is more work. In the large cities of the Randstad there are also relatively more cheap rental properties in general and there are more owner-occupied homes in villages. The policy of spreading them out to spread out refugees is generally seen as a kind of obvious common sense idea. However, according to the researcher that is not necessarily the case, because at a certain point when people are in the Netherlands for a little longer, there is also secondary migration. People then move to the city and to those places with more employment opportunities and with more people and with the same migration background as them. She also mentioned that in Utrecht they want to spread the status holders more in the municipality, while the municipality of Amsterdam, for example, is more working on strategies to also cluster the status holders.

Innovative initiative improves decision making

The COA is currently developing a planning tool for the flow through process of placement in an AZC and also after the asylum procedure has been completed. They try to include elements in the planning tool, such as available places and labor market region advice. If it then turns out that there is a place available in an asylum seekers' center that corresponds to that advice, the system will follow that. The intention is for it to become active during the course of this year. There is already discussion within the organization about expanding this further in many aspects, but they are now initially trying to get the system in order. Then they can add all kinds of details later. With such a tool, the COA also tries to remain meaningful when it comes to aspects such as future integration and that the asylum stay is not a waste of time.

The Team Head of COA also mentioned that municipalities which are successful have also included performance agreements in agreements they make with corporations, which is the housing regulation there. When municipalities make these performance agreements for all target groups, including status holders, it is quite possible to organize this housing. If they do not make that agreement, a corporation will feel less committed to the task at hand. The municipality of Domain Living also has all contacts with corporations and other landlords. Municipalities also sometimes choose to bring the housing process under the social domain, because they view it as an integration and participation issue. Then you see different results, because if the social domain councilor does not have a good connection directly with the housing associations, it often becomes complicated for them to communicate with the housing associations about this.

4.6 Cross-case analysis

Decision making: housing allocation strategies

While Utrecht and Westland share similarities in their approaches to housing status holders, such as exceeding targets in 2022 and facing challenges with flex housing, each municipality also faces unique circumstances as can be seen in table 3. Utrecht's focus on shared housing initiatives and integration highlights a proactive approach to addressing housing-related issues, while Westland's utilization of temporary housing options underscores adaptability in meeting immediate needs.

	Utrecht - Urban - interviews and reports data	Westland - Rural - interviews and reports data
Decision making - Housing allocation strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One time in 2022, acceleration action: prioritization regular housing to status holders; in 2022 there were more status holders housed compared to other years and the target was reached; • Reaching the municipal target is not going well, except for 2022, (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • Flex housing, sometimes the 'not in my backyard mentality'; Newcomers often encounter problems due to temporary or suboptimal housing. • Shared housing initiatives, duo housing, friends contracts; • Mismatch between availability of houses and the target group. • Integrating individuals generally face no housing-related daily life issues, (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary housing, the flow from the Fletcher Hotel to permanent housing is stagnating which is a problem; • Transition dwellings; • In 2022 more status holders were housed compared to all other years. It went well with housing status holders and they housed more status holders than the municipal target (Westland in cijfers, 2024). • No flex housing, because of the 'Not in my backyard' mentality, mainly against refugees. • Local sentiment and perception influences decision making processes; • Mismatch between availability of houses and the target group.

Table 3: Comparison cases, decision making, housing allocation strategies (own work)

Table 4 shows that both cases also share common challenges such as exceeding targets and flex housing issues and they exhibit unique strategies tailored to their circumstances. Additionally, non-case-related perspectives shed light on broader changes in housing assignment procedures and the need for considerations beyond immediate housing needs, such as family size and market pressures.

	General reports	Not case- related perspectives data
Decision making - Housing allocation strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some status holders face housing unsuitability due to family size issues, often linked to ongoing family reunification procedures (WODC, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COA shifted from allowing status holders to choose housing to managing file creation and linking with municipalities. • Status holders are assigned housing based on municipal lists, with penalties for refusal. • COA now manages file creation and linking with municipalities to streamline housing assignments. • The social stock and pressure on the housing market are not always considered in housing assignments. • Performance agreements between municipalities and housing corporations enhance housing organization.

Table 4: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on decision making , housing allocation strategies (own work)

Decision making: spatial dispersal policies

Both Utrecht and Westland grapple with issues of neighborhood composition, integration, and the alignment of housing preferences with realities. However, as most status holders are housed in social housing and social housing is not evenly spread in both municipalities, there are neighborhoods with a higher concentration of low-income groups or vulnerable people. As Utrecht has an urban setting and is bigger compared to the rural context of Westland, Utrecht has more of these neighborhoods. Additionally, the absence of AZCs in Westland presents unique placement challenges compared to Utrecht. However, both municipalities face common hurdles in addressing prejudices, integrating status holders into communities, and balancing individual preferences with practical considerations in housing placement.

	Utrecht - Urban - interviews and reports data	Westland - Rural - interviews and reports data
Decision making - Spatial dispersal policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are neighborhoods with more social housing, such as Overvecht, which leads to a concentration of vulnerable groups, such as status holders; • Housing associations and COA try to locate status holders in Utrecht which come from AZC in Utrecht. • Differing perspectives among status holders, with some preferring to live near individuals with similar backgrounds for social connection, while others find it challenging to practice Dutch without interaction with Dutch speakers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups are more evenly spread out in the municipality. However, there are some streets with more social housing; • No AZC in Westland, so all status holders come from outside the municipality, a lot of transitions till regular social housing. • Prejudices and lack of awareness about different ethnic backgrounds contribute to blaming status holders for nuisance. • Initial resistance to living in certain areas may diminish over time as individuals establish social connections and find employment opportunities. • Status holders currently have limited input in their placement, not much involvement or consideration of their preferences. • COA could consider linking those with horticulture backgrounds to areas like Westland where such work is common. • Housing wishes of status holders may sometimes be unrealistic, such as preferences based on perceived job availability in certain areas.

Table 5: Comparison cases, decision making, spatial dispersal policies (own work)

The case analysis, general data, and non-case-related perspectives provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies related to housing placement and integration. While Utrecht and Westland represent different approaches to addressing these challenges, broader trends such as the tension between dispersal policies and clustering tendencies, as well as the importance of considering individual needs and preferences, emerge across various contexts. These insights highlight the need for flexible and informed approaches to housing policy that prioritize both practical considerations and the well-being of migrants.

	General reports	Not case- related perspectives data
Decision making - Spatial dispersal policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispersal policy leads to individuals forming friendships in asylum centers, then living in different parts of Netherlands. Proximity to asylum center aids adaptation and social network building (WODC, 2024). • Dispersal disrupts continuity and familiarity for some respondents (WODC, 2024). • Some don't want to be placed near azc due to limited work opportunities and poor access as drawbacks (WODC, 2024). • Housing assignments often disregarded preferences, leading to mismatches. Many felt their personal situations were overlooked in the housing allocation process (WODC, 2024). • Some recognize the necessity of housing policy but suggested considering individual needs and providing better information (WODC, 2024) • Some respondents express a desire to relocate to urban areas to access better job opportunities and reduce reliance on state support. • Challenges related to employment, including high transportation costs and long commutes, hinder the ability of newcomers living in remote areas to secure employment in nearby cities. • While some appreciate the tranquility of rural living, others face difficulties in finding employment and feel less safe due to anti-Muslim sentiments and related incidents in their neighborhoods. • Initially, refugees focused on obtaining a residence permit and family reunification rather than housing considerations. While they had limited knowledge about housing, some desired a private space and urban living, prioritizing convenience over city size. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispersal aims to prevent clustering, but migrants often cluster for support and employment opportunities. • Varied approaches among municipalities: Utrecht aims for dispersion, while Amsterdam considers clustering. • Secondary migration often occurs as migrants seek areas with more employment opportunities and community support. • COA is exploring innovative solutions using AI algorithms to improve placement decisions and facilitate quicker access to suitable work opportunities: planning tool for placement, considering available places and labor market regions.

Table 6: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on decision making , spatial dispersal policies (own work)

In table 7 it can be seen that the share of social rent is higher in Utrecht (31.4%) than in Westland (23.5%). This means that the pressure on housing for status holders in rural areas is greater and the burden experienced by the local population may also be higher.

	Utrecht (%)	Westland (%)
Buy	44.4	68.8
Private rental	24.2	7.7
Social housing	31.4	23.5

Table 7: Composition of housing stock (ownership unknown), Utrecht and Westland, [Samenstelling woningvoorraad \(excl. eigendom onbekend\) 2022 \(waarstaatjegemeente.nl\)](#)

Factors influencing decision making processes

FACTORS DECISION MAKING		
Indicators (rating: how much did it influence the decision making)	Case 1: Utrecht (urban)	Case 2: Westland (rural)
Scarcity housing	+++	+++
Social housing is not evenly spread	+++	++
Reaching the municipal target every half year	+	+++
Resistance local community	++	+++
Livability demand	++	+
Political sentiment	++	+++
Mismatch availability houses & target group households	+++	+++
Collaboration stakeholders	+	+
Placing near asylum seeker center	++	-
Involving status holders in decision making	++	+++
Vacancy rate houses/office buildings	++	++

Table 8: Evaluation of the factors influencing the decision making processes of housing status holders.

The evaluation table above is based on the interviews and reports, whereby similar factors were found and used as indicators to analyze. In table 8 the factors in both municipalities are shown which have influence on the decision making regarding the housing of status holders. These factors can also apply in other municipalities and even in other countries. They are evaluated, whereby the red color stands for more influence on the decision making and the green color less. The table also shows that the urban context of Utrecht has more decision-making and livability challenges than the rural context of Westland. However, Westland has more local resistance challenges which have an influence on the decision making processes.

Social integration: integration support and place attachment

In comparing Utrecht and Westland, Utrecht appears to have a more proactive approach to embracing diversity and supporting integration through various initiatives and longer-term support from organizations such as the Refugee Council. However, both regions face challenges in fostering a sense of belonging and overcoming negative perceptions, particularly within the local community. While Utrecht focuses on providing familiar facilities and fostering community engagement, Westland's efforts are hindered by a strong village identity and resistance towards newcomers, despite underlying support for refugee initiatives.

	Utrecht - Urban - interviews and reports data	Westland - Rural - interviews and reports data
Social integration - Integration support and place attachement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity, used to newcomers; • A lot of familiar facilities for status holders; • Initiatives such as 'Welkom Huis' and 'Buddy to buddy'; • Integration support 3 years Refugee Council. • Language proficiency is essential for integration, with 92% of newcomers finding language lessons helpful for making contacts or engaging in activities, particularly asylum seekers (96%), (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • 1 in 6 newcomers find their neighborhood unpleasant, often due to safety concerns. (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • 24% of newcomers feel excluded or not at home, (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • Status holders in Utrecht are generally satisfied with their living environment. (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • Newcomers in Utrecht have a smaller social support network compared to the average Utrecht resident (The municipality of Utrecht, 2024) • Contact with neighbors among status holders is highly variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village identity and mentality, not used to newcomers; • There is diversity, but not really a sense of diversity; • Job opportunities mainly in horticulture; • No familiar facilities for status holders; • Community initiatives; Various activities, including city walks and workshops organized by Vitus Welzijn, provide opportunities for community engagement, although participation, tends to skew towards older individuals due to time constraints and prejudices, as noted by the team leader • Integration support 1 year Refugee Council; • Mainly negative local sentiment, public perception. • Hotel accommodations, although temporary, fail to provide stability and a sense of home for status holders • Despite challenges, the local community in Westland has shown generosity and support for refugee initiatives;

Table 9: Comparison cases, social integration (own work)

The case analysis and general data provide insights into the complexities of fostering integration and a sense of belonging in different contexts. While Utrecht's proactive approach and focus on community engagement yield positive outcomes, challenges persist in both regions due to entrenched attitudes and socio-cultural dynamics. The significance of access to amenities, place attachment, and the role of public transportation in facilitating integration are underscored across various perspectives. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that align housing policy with integration goals while considering the diverse needs and preferences of residents.

	General reports	Not case- related perspectives data
Social integration - Integration support and place attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a 'Randstad' city residents feels at home due to same background presence, enhancing belonging (WODC, 2024) For some having nearby shops was beneficial for building their lives in the Netherlands (WODC, 2024). Positive: strong bonds with neighbors due to the absence of nearby family, Negative experiences: particularly in villages or small towns, where limited social connections and support networks were noted, especially among younger residents. Some respondents were hesitant to move, citing emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to their current living environment, emphasizing the significance of place attachment in shaping identity. Despite protests against status holders in another village, positive impact of a meeting organized by the housing association in fostering better relations. Village: some faced isolation and racism, particularly in areas where they were the only foreign or refugee family. Many respondents emphasize the importance of having access to public transportation near their homes, with some considering it the most crucial aspect for building their lives. Some respondents relocated from cities to villages, noting the convenience of nearby supermarkets but highlighting challenges accessing specific products in villages or small towns reported negative interactions or attitudes towards status holders, contrasting with others who found living in a village accelerated their Dutch language learning through frequent interaction with Dutch locals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in aligning housing policy with integration goals due to scarcity and affordability.

Table 10: Comparison cases with general reports and not case-related perspectives data on social integration (own work)

SOCIAL INTEGRATION STATUS HOLDERS		
Indicators (positive/negative)	Case 1: Utrecht (urban)	Case 2: Westland (rural)
Integration support	+++	+++
Integration support duration	+++ (3 years)	++ (1,5 year)
Accessibility services	+++	++
Sense of place/ sense of home	+++	++
Place identity/ neighborhood characteristics	+++	++
Place affiliation/ sense of familiarity	+++	+
Sense of connection	+++	++
Social participation	+++	++
Community involvement	++	+

Table 11: Evaluation of the social integration indicators of status holders in Case 1 and Case 2, (own work).

In table 11 the indicators from the 'Integration framework' and 'Place attachment framework' are shown on the social integration of status holders in both cases. According to the interviewees and reports, Utrecht has a stronger place attachment than Westland. In both cases there is a strong integration support, however in Utrecht the support by the Refugee Council is 3 years and in Westland (as many other municipalities) it is 1,5 years. Besides, there is a strong contrast between the place identity of the two cases. Utrecht has a multicultural urban identity and Westland has a more village identity with their own core communities. The sense of familiarity for the status holders is higher in Utrecht compared to Westland because of the absence of familiar amenities and facilities for status holders such as diverse ethnic shops. However, the presence of the Hotel where status holders (temporarily) live with other groups of people in the same building, makes it not only a transitional accommodation but also a social hub. The Hotel initiative benefits the interactions and social connections of all the people living there. Lastly, there are more initiatives (such as Het Welkomhuis) for community involvement and sense of belonging in Utrecht than in Westland.

5. DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

5.1 Comment on methodology

The methodology employed in this research exhibits several strengths and limitations, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing refugee integration in the municipalities of Utrecht and Westland. Here are some detailed observations on the methodology:

Strengths

The study utilized a diverse array of data sources, including detailed case studies, extensive literature reviews, and general data reports. This multifaceted approach facilitated a thorough understanding of the varied aspects of refugee integration across different contexts. By focusing on specific municipalities like Utrecht and Westland, the research was able to delve deeply into the unique challenges and strategies employed by each locale. This comparative analysis illuminated the nuances of policy implementation and the status holders' perspectives, providing valuable insights into effective integration practices.

The use of established concepts such as social integration and place attachment provided a robust theoretical foundation for the study. These frameworks helped in systematically categorizing and interpreting the data, making the analysis more structured and meaningful. Combining qualitative data from interviews and reports on housing and integration outcomes allowed for a well-rounded analysis, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the research questions from multiple angles.

The methodology also benefited from triangulation through the use of multiple data sources and methods (e.g., literature review, case studies and secondary data analysis). This approach enhanced the validity of the findings by cross-verifying the data, thereby strengthening the reliability of the conclusions. Additionally, defining and operationalizing key concepts such as social integration and place attachment facilitated a systematic analysis and comparison of the data, ensuring consistency and precision in the research. Providing detailed descriptions of the data sources, selection criteria for case studies, and analytical frameworks ensured transparency and reproducibility of the research, enhancing the study's credibility and reliability.

Limitations

While the case study approach offers in-depth insights, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other municipalities or regions with different socio-economic conditions and demographic compositions. The unique characteristics of Utrecht and Westland might not reflect broader national or international contexts. However, through secondary reports perspectives of status holders living through the whole country were gained. This way the research was not only relying on municipal reports, which could introduce bias, as these documents may reflect the perspectives and priorities of the reporting entities.

The research primarily focused on the integration of refugees within specific municipalities, potentially overlooking broader national or international perspectives. This limitation might restrict

the understanding of systemic issues and best practices in refugee integration beyond the local context. Furthermore, the data represents a specific timeframe, and changes in policies, socio-political contexts, and refugee flows could impact the relevance and applicability of the findings over time. A more dynamic approach might be needed to capture ongoing developments in refugee integration.

An important note is that during the conduct of this research, nothing had changed in the political situation in the Netherlands. However, at the end of the research, a new coalition agreement was reached, which also influenced the introduction of the dispersal law. This dispersal law will no longer be implemented, meaning that the proportional reception of asylum seekers by the country is no longer a rule and is not given priority. However, this did not influence the results of this study, although it was not discussed during the interviews, for example. The distribution law would have introduced a uniform policy for the distribution of status holders across municipalities. Waiving this law means that the responsibility and approach to housing can again differ greatly per municipality. This can lead to variations in policy and implementation, which is important to document and analyze in the study.

Validation

The findings are validated through a validation interview for the Westland case (The social counselor participant of Refugee Council in Westland) and a validation interview for the Utrecht case (Policy advisor at the Municipality of Utrecht). Through these interviews the findings and conclusions of both cases are validated.

Areas for Improvement

Incorporating more direct input from refugees through interviews or focus groups could provide richer, first-hand insights into their experiences and challenges. This would add depth to the analysis and ensure that the perspectives of the primary stakeholders are adequately represented. Besides, expanding the case study approach to include additional municipalities with varying approaches to refugee integration would enhance the robustness of the comparative analysis, providing a broader understanding of different strategies and their outcomes.

Furthermore, if there was more time to do this research, conducting a longitudinal study to track integration outcomes over time would offer a deeper understanding of the long-term effectiveness of various integration strategies. This approach would highlight trends and changes in integration experiences, providing a more comprehensive picture. Integrating perspectives from other disciplines such as sociology, urban planning, and public health could offer a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing refugee integration, enriching the analysis by incorporating diverse viewpoints and expertise.

5.2 Comment on results and hypothesis

The hypothesis proposed in this research was that spatial dispersal significantly impacts social integration and that place attachment is stronger in urban contexts. My hypothesis on this research is that spatial dispersal significantly impacts social integration negatively, that place attachment is stronger in urban contexts compared to rural contexts and that the prioritization and allocation of

housing to status holders by Dutch municipalities significantly influence their social integration, with effective housing strategies leading to better social cohesion and community engagement. The analysis of Utrecht and Westland, supported by insights from the literature review, provides a comprehensive understanding of these relationships.

Impact of spatial dispersal on social Integration

In the theory it was mentioned, by Van der Linden (2020), that a lot about the fact that social integration is important for the integration and that there are assumptions that status holders are seen as 'a burden' and should be spread more. Through the empirical research it can be confirmed that this is also the way the stakeholders think and work in practice. However, the Council of Refugee and the status holders themselves see it differently and that all status holders are different in the way they can integrate better. Besides, in the theory it was also mentioned that spatial dispersal of status holders has impacts beyond housing challenges which contribute to anti-migrant sentiments, can lead to isolation, a lack of social networks and secondary migration (Arnoldus et al., 2003; van Liempt 2020). It results in a delay of their social integration, which is a component of social sustainability, preventing them from actively contributing to their newfound communities. Through the results of the empirical research this theory can be confirmed.

According to the literature a challenge for Dutch policies is to realize social sustainability especially for disadvantaged groups such as refugees, which extends beyond the provision of shelter. The reason behind this is the prevailing housing crisis and the ongoing refugee influx, which results in an acute scarcity of suitable accommodations. This also became clear through the empirical data of this research.

The findings from Utrecht and Westland illustrate the complexities of spatial dispersal policies. In Utrecht, the clustering of status holders within established social housing areas, coupled with robust support services, has facilitated social integration. The availability of community engagement initiatives and assistance from organizations like the Refugee Council has been crucial in promoting a sense of belonging and active participation in community life. This approach aligns with the literature that highlights the importance of balanced dispersal policies, ensuring that refugees have access to necessary resources and support systems to foster integration (Van der Linden, 2020; Van Liempt, 2020).

Conversely, in Westland, the dispersed distribution of refugees in a region marked by a strong village identity and resistance to newcomers has posed significant challenges. The lack of centralized support and community resistance has often led to isolation and slower social integration. This scenario reflects the concerns raised in the literature about the potential drawbacks of dispersal policies when they are not accompanied by adequate support mechanisms and community engagement efforts (Klaver et al., 2014). However, in Westland the Fletcher Hotel as a temporary accommodation for status holders impacts their social integration positively according to the interviews. The hotel becomes a multicultural hub where a lot of people can support and meet each other and conversations and language lessons are given. That way the status holders feel more sense of belonging.

These contrasting cases highlight that while dispersal aims to avoid the concentration of refugees and promote balanced integration, its success heavily depends on the local context and the presence of supportive infrastructure. Without sufficient support, dispersal can lead to negative outcomes such as social isolation and hindered integration.

According to Van Liempt et al. (2020), with regard to placement in a municipality, status holders have little say in where they are housed and that families are sometimes housed far apart under the dispersal policy. Besides, the COA does not take personal wishes into account, but does look at work, study, the presence of first-degree family or medical circumstances. This was also in line with the empirical data of this research.

However, it has to be noted that in all municipalities the decision making can be done differently and it also depends on the local politics.

Place Attachment in urban vs. rural Contexts

The research findings indicate that urban environments are more conducive to fostering place attachment among refugees. In Utrecht, the diverse population, well-developed infrastructure, and availability of amenities contribute to a stronger sense of place attachment. Refugees in Utrecht benefit from access to public transportation, employment opportunities, and community resources, which enhance their sense of belonging and facilitate their integration into the host society. This supports the hypothesis and aligns with the literature that emphasizes the advantages of urban settings in promoting place attachment and social integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Van Liempt, 2023).

In contrast, the rural and village settings in Westland present greater challenges for developing place attachment. The limited social connections, lack of support networks, and community resistance make it difficult for refugees to feel a sense of belonging. The experiences in Westland echo the literature's concerns about the difficulties faced by refugees in rural areas, where isolation and limited resources can hinder integration efforts (Van Liempt & Miellet, 2020).

On the days I conducted interviews on location in Westland and Utrecht I could also observe the municipalities even though I already expected what I had observed. In Utrecht I also visited the 'Welkom Huis' as the team leader of the refugee council in Westland referred me to it and a few stakeholders from Utrecht also mentioned it. The initiative is meant to bring different groups of people together, especially status holders, to have a sense of community and connection. I immediately saw that they were having activities in the hall and outside with different groups of people. This already gave me an impression and confirmation of the perspectives on these initiatives from the interviewees. However, Westland was more a quiet place as it is a village and as I expected.

Current housing policies

A lot has happened when it comes to integration and also the former government of a new government (2024). At the end of this research, a new coalition agreement was reached, which also influenced the introduction of the dispersal law. This dispersal law will no longer be implemented, meaning that the proportional reception of asylum seekers by the country is no longer a rule and is

not given priority. The distribution law would have introduced a uniform policy for the distribution of status holders across municipalities. Waiving this law means that the responsibility and approach to housing can again differ greatly per municipality. This can lead to variations in policy and implementation.

Besides, integration was part of social affairs but now it is included with the State Secretary responsible for justice and security who is also responsible for prisons, terrorism and transgressive behavior etc. and who is part of the political party PVV (NRC, 2024). This shows as if the whole country will be regulated as the municipality of Westland is regulated now. From this it can also be concluded that new housing policies can have an influence on the decisions made in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders, which also affects the integration of status holders, as there can occur negative local and political sentiments.

5.3 Practical implications

By understanding and addressing implications, the stakeholders can create more effective and humane integration policies that benefit both refugees and host communities, fostering inclusive, cohesive and prosperous societies. The implications are:

- Housing Policy Refinement: The findings suggest a need for more nuanced housing policies that account for the diverse needs and preferences of refugees. Policies should balance between dispersal and clustering to optimize social integration and community cohesion.
- Performance Agreements: Enhanced performance agreements between municipalities and housing corporations can lead to better-coordinated efforts, ensuring that integration support is consistent and comprehensive.
- Enhanced Community Engagement: Community initiatives like 'Welkom Huis' and 'Buddy to Buddy' in Utrecht demonstrate the positive impact of localized support. Similar programs should be expanded and adapted to different contexts to foster social connections and reduce isolation.
- Combating Prejudices: Addressing negative perceptions through education and awareness campaigns is crucial. Promoting stories of successful integration and contributions by refugees can help shift public opinion.
- Tailored Support: The need for tailored support services, including language classes, employment training, and mental health resources, is critical. Such services should be easily accessible and designed to address the specific challenges faced by refugees.
- Place Attachment: Fostering place attachment by improving access to amenities, creating welcoming public spaces, and encouraging community participation can enhance refugees' sense of belonging and stability.
- Linking Skills with Opportunities: Identifying and linking refugees' skills with local employment opportunities can facilitate economic integration. For instance, connecting those with horticultural backgrounds to areas like Westland can improve employment outcomes.
- Transportation and Accessibility: Ensuring that refugees have access to reliable public transportation is vital for their employment and overall integration. This includes considering transportation costs and commute times in housing assignments.

- Continuous Monitoring: Ongoing data collection and analysis on refugee integration outcomes can inform policy adjustments and ensure that strategies remain effective and responsive to changing needs.
- AI and Technology: Utilizing AI algorithms for housing placement decisions can improve the matching process, ensuring that refugees are placed in locations that best meet their needs and facilitate quicker integration into the labor market.
- Urban Focus: Urban areas often provide better access to services, employment, and social networks, making them more favorable for refugee integration. Policies should consider facilitating secondary migration from rural to urban areas when necessary.
- Rural Support: In rural areas, targeted strategies are needed to overcome isolation and provide adequate support. This includes creating opportunities for social interaction and addressing specific challenges like limited access to services and employment.
- Supporting Mobility: Recognizing that mobility can be a part of refugees' integration journey, support mechanisms should be in place to assist those who move in search of better opportunities or stronger social networks.
- Encouraging Bonding and Bridging: Policies should encourage both bonding (within-group) and bridging (between-group) social capital to enhance overall well-being and integration.
- Supporting family reunification: There is a need for a more nuanced approach to housing decisions concerning family reunification. There is a dilemma whether status holders should settle alone first or wait until their entire family can join them, which requires better processes and considerations.
- Promoting collaboration: There is a need for stronger collaboration among stakeholders such as municipalities, housing associations and COA. This includes sharing knowledge and resources between different regions (like Utrecht and Westland) to find a balance between rural and urban housing preferences and develop localized versions of successful integration initiatives like the 'Welkom Huis'.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter addresses the main conclusions of the research by answering the research questions. The four sub-questions collectively answer the main question of this research:

"In what ways do Dutch housing policies impact the social integration of status holders?"

To answer the research questions, literature review and case study research were conducted. The qualitative research included exploratory and semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders and available data on the cases and perspectives of status holders themselves. Through the interviews, more insight was gained into the stakeholders' perspectives on decision-making and the ways of housing status holders, as well as the social integration of status holders. Additionally, a status holder/researcher was interviewed, who provided perspectives on how status holders themselves experience social integration.

As there was an uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of housing policies in promoting successful integration for refugees, this research provides a nuanced evaluation of the impact of these housing policies, including the housing allocation and spatial dispersal, on status holders' social integration. By doing so, this research aimed to bridge the gap between shelter and strength, whereby shelter represents the initial provision of housing and strength signifies empowerment and integration into the host society. The overarching goal is to offer policymakers future housing recommendations for fostering successful social sustainability and integration of status holders. The conclusion of this study is descriptive in nature and reflects the experiences of the respondents. Reality is dynamic, and everyone has their own valuation and experience. The empirical analysis encompasses the perspectives that actors have on decision-making and the successes and challenges regarding the housing of status holders and their social integration. Gaining insights into what actors perceive allows the municipality to anticipate deviations. This way, the municipality will be better able to respond to the perceptions of actors and the status holders themselves, enabling more effective management.

6.1 Sub questions conclusion

1. *How does the Dutch housing allocation system prioritize status holders?*

The housing allocation system encompasses the processes and mechanisms through which housing accommodations are assigned to individuals or households. This research focuses particularly on how this system operates for status holders, a disadvantaged group. In the Netherlands, status holders, including refugees and resettled refugees, are prioritized through various mechanisms. Priority housing programs expedite access to suitable accommodations for status holders with specific needs, such as families with children or individuals with medical conditions, reflecting a commitment to social equity and inclusion.

The Dutch government employs a quota-based system to distribute refugees across municipalities, ensuring proportional distribution and socio-economic balance. Centralized allocation systems, often

managed by housing authorities or government agencies, prioritize individuals based on vulnerability, family size, or residency length in temporary shelters. Collaborative initiatives involving partnerships between government entities, housing associations, and community stakeholders play a crucial role in prioritizing status holders. These efforts increase the availability of affordable housing units, provide support services, and facilitate community integration.

Spatial distribution policies are implemented to disperse status holders across different neighborhoods or regions, promoting social diversity and preventing the concentration of disadvantage. By distributing status holders across various areas, the housing allocation system seeks to foster their integration into local communities and prevent social isolation. Overall, the Dutch housing allocation system prioritizes status holders through a combination of priority programs, quota-based allocation, centralized systems, collaborative initiatives, and spatial distribution policies, aiming to ensure fair and equitable access to housing while promoting social cohesion and sustainable urban development.

2. What are the spatial dispersal policies for status holders in the Netherlands?

Originating in the 1990s, the Dutch dispersal policy, known as *de Spreidingswet*, evenly distributes status holders across the country's municipalities. This distribution is based on municipality population sizes, with larger municipalities required to house more permit holders. However, unlike in some other countries, such as the UK, where dispersal starts during the asylum procedure, in the Netherlands, it occurs only after the asylum process is complete. Consequently, refugees may find themselves relocated to entirely new areas, which can be disorienting.

The overarching philosophy of the Dutch dispersal policy is to 'spread the burden' of housing refugees among municipalities fairly and transparently. By distributing refugees within municipalities, integration is encouraged, and segregation is mitigated. However, challenges remain, including concerns about proportional distribution effectiveness and the limited consideration of individual refugee preferences.

Comparative analysis with other countries reveals diverse approaches to spatial dispersal influenced by governance structures, socio-political landscapes, and historical trajectories. European nations like Sweden emphasize decentralization and socio-economic mixity, while France adopts more centralized approaches focused on suburban renewal. In North America, initiatives like the Moving to Opportunity program in the US and the Housing First approach in Canada offer insights into diverse strategies for addressing urban challenges.

Global perspectives, including examples from Brazil and South Africa, highlight innovative policies aimed at combating spatial inequalities and integrating marginalized communities into urban areas. While these examples provide valuable lessons, challenges in transferring strategies across contexts underscore the importance of considering local conditions and engaging communities in policy development.

Critiques of the Dutch system suggest that it may hinder integration by isolating refugees during the asylum process and limiting their opportunities for work, study, and language acquisition. Furthermore, the distribution of status holders in areas where they are a striking minority in a local (Dutch) community raises concerns about social cohesion and inclusion.

3. What factors impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders?

There are various factors which impact the decision making in municipalities regarding the housing of status holders. For example, scarcity in the availability of social housing is a challenge which many municipalities have. The targets for housing status holders are based on the number of inhabitants in a municipality. Status holders almost always end up in social housing if they are housed in a municipality. The participating social housing is not evenly spread across the municipality and the country. In Utrecht, more than 31.4% social rent applies, while in Westland it is 23.5% (Waarstaatjegemeente.nl, 2022). Because the target is based on the number of inhabitants and not on the amount of social housing in the municipality, relatively more of status holders in Westland need to live in social housing because the stock is smaller. This combined with the fact that the flow is very low, makes that the pressure on the social housing stock in Westland is then higher than in Utrecht.

This further leads to a lack of diverse houses which suit different households, as in some municipalities, as in Westland and Utrecht there are more family houses. In addition, because of this the priority of the municipality and housing associations are most of the time that status holders should be housed instead of prioritizing also their preferences and wishes.

Besides, if the vacancy mutations are not high, other strategies have to be implemented, such as sharing/splitting dwellings. However, this also depends on the willingness of status holders to share a home with others. Furthermore, if the municipal target to house status holders gets higher, then it also impacts the decision making in housing and new strategies have to be thought of, such as the hotel accommodation in Westland and the acceleration action in Utrecht.

Another factor is the resistance of the local community through the local council and the local inhabitants. If there is a lot of resistance it can influence the decision making of housing, by canceling the plan or not even making such strategies. The local community can protest because of the 'not in my backyard' mentality, unfamiliarity with the situations of newcomers and the idea that they want to have the prioritization before newcomers, as in Westland. This also depends on the local sentiment and the identity of the neighborhood, as for example, Westland has a village mentality and Utrecht is more multicultural and is known as the first 'human rights' city of The Netherlands. It is internationally known that Utrecht has a long history of diversity, committed residents and strong social organizations and initiatives. It has been calling itself the Human Rights City for 10 years (Academie van de Stad, 2022).

The political sentiment in the municipalities has also influenced this local resistance, which further leads to the decisions which are made regarding housing of status holders.

Furthermore, the livability demand in the city or village is also important for the decision making processes. If there are problems in certain neighborhoods, the housing associations try to make the neighborhoods more mixed to improve the social cohesion and safety. However, this also depends on the availability of social housing in certain neighborhoods, as in most municipalities these are not evenly spread.

Moreover, status holders most of the time have no input in the decision making processes of the housing location. This influences the decision making about where they will be housed, as the decisions are only made by power authorities such as COA. However, if they would take the wishes into account, it would not be realistic according to the amount of work it would give to the stakeholders to organize it. Besides, there could be a chance that the wishes of the status holders are not realistic.

4. What is social integration of status holders in the context of housing, and which factors influence this?

In this research social integration is defined and operationalized by the 'integration framework' and the 'place attachment framework'. All the core domains from the integration framework by Strang and Anger (2006), mentioned in the literature review, were very common in the research. In this research it became clear that the most important core domain for this research is the 'housing' domain, as housing connects to all the other domains: employment, education, health, social bridges, social bonds, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability and rights and citizenship. Besides, these domains were linked to the place attachment framework by Van der Graaf (2009) to operationalize social integration: sense of identity, sense of place, place affiliation, community satisfaction, social participation and community involvement. There are a few factors influencing the social integration of status holders.

It differs per status holder what their preferences are, however most statusholders prefer to live in an urban context instead of a village. The identity of the municipality where the status holders are placed has most of the time influence on their social integration. There are municipalities like Westland which have a strong village identity and mentality, whereby it is difficult for status holders to get included. However, not all status holders experience it that way and in the long term they can be used to it.

The integration support includes the support which is given to the status holders during their integration period, from getting the permit to completing their integration. This also includes their housing procedure. There are many parties involved in the Integration support. The most important party is the Refugee Council, as they support them for a long time and put in effort. Integration support influences social integration as this helps status holders to find their way in the country. All status holders experience it differently; some need more integration support than others. In Utrecht the support through Refugee Council is 3 years, which has a positive outcome on the status holders, while in most municipalities such as in Westland it is 1,5 years.

However, the local sentiment and political situation in the municipalities, such as in Westland, can also lead to more isolation and it can impact the sense of belonging of the status holders. While in Utrecht it is more multicultural and the people are more used to newcomers, which makes a positive impact on the sense of belonging of the status holders.

Furthermore, community initiatives have a positive influence on the social integration of status holders as they get the sense of connection and community, such as the initiatives as 'Het Welkom Huis'. Establishing social networks is crucial for newcomers to feel a sense of belonging. Initiatives that foster connections with neighbors and the broader community play an important role. Besides, initiatives like 'Bekend maakt bemind' aim to bridge the gap between newcomers and the local community, fostering understanding and cohesion. However, sustaining such initiatives requires ongoing effort and support.

Moreover, another factor which impacts social integration is the proximity of familiar amenities, such as ethnic shops and public transportation. They contribute to a sense of familiarity and ease of integration. However, especially in rural areas such as Westland, their absence can pose challenges. Besides, another factor which could influence their social integration is the proximity to familiar people, such as family and friends, to which they can feel more confident with. This also gives a sense of familiarity.

Another factor which influences social integration is the placement near the asylum seekers center where they lived. Some status holders prefer to get more stability in life instead of moving to other places often. However, some status holders prefer to move because of lack of employment opportunities and sense of community, mostly in the village where they live. Besides, most status holders tend to search for.

6.2 Main question conclusion

Through the sub questions, the main research question can be answered: *"In what ways do Dutch housing policies impact the social integration of status holders?"*

Dutch housing policies play a crucial role in shaping the social integration of status holders by intertwining various factors and mechanisms that influence their experiences within communities. At the core of these policies is the prioritization of status holders through allocation programs and quota-based distribution systems. This ensures equitable access to accommodations across municipalities, while spatial dispersal policies work hand in hand to prevent segregation and promote integration by evenly distributing status holders. However, while status holders are largely dependent on social housing, the share of these housing is not taken into account in dividing the municipal target among municipalities. In large cities, the share of social rent is often higher than in more rural areas. This means that the pressure on housing for status holders in rural areas is greater and the burden experienced by the local population may also be higher.

Moreover, housing policies facilitate community engagement and support services, fostering connections between status holders and their neighbors. Collaborative initiatives involving government entities, housing associations, NGOs and community stakeholders provide essential

support networks, integration assistance, and access to resources, enhancing the social fabric of neighborhoods.

Besides, the availability of resources and amenities in housing areas also plays a pivotal role in shaping the social environment for status holders. Proximity to essential services, education and work, public transportation, ethnic shops, and community facilities fosters familiarity and ease of integration, contributing to a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the location and quality of housing accommodations significantly impact the sense of place and belonging experienced by status holders. Factors such as the place identity and characteristics of the municipality, community initiatives, and access to familiar people and amenities shape the social environment and integration outcomes.

Local attitudes and the political landscape further influence social integration. Supportive environments characterized by multicultural acceptance and community engagement foster positive outcomes, while resistance and isolation hinder the process, highlighting the importance of fostering inclusive communities.

Lastly, housing policies within municipalities create opportunities for social participation and engagement within communities. Access to community events, volunteering opportunities, and social networks fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging, ultimately promoting integration and cohesion.

6.3 Further research

The discussion on my methodology, results and conclusion provide tools for further research in to the following points:

- Study the effectiveness of community-based support initiatives such as ‘Welkom Huis’ and ‘Buddy to Buddy’ in Utrecht, in facilitating social integration and building a sense of belonging among status holders.
- Study of the effectiveness of facilities such as the Fletcher Hotel as a transition accommodation can contribute to the integration of status holders, as such accommodations can also serve as a multicultural hub.
- Exploring the perceptions and attitudes of local residents towards refugees and newcomers in both urban and rural settings, identifying factors that contribute to positive or negative sentiments and how these can be addressed.
- Examining the role of place attachment in influencing the mobility patterns of refugees within the country, and how this mobility impacts their integration process
- Asses the potential of innovative solutions, such as AI algorithms for placement decisions, in improving the match between refugees’ needs and available resources, and their subsequent impacts on integration outcomes
- Studying the implications of new policy changes that remove priority status holders in housing, thoroughly to ensure they do not hinder housing and integration efforts.

REFERENCES

- Academie van de Stad, (2022). Utrecht voor de Mens. Retrieved from: <https://academievandestad.nl/projecten/utrecht-voor-de-mens/#:~:text=Utrecht%20Mensenrechtenstad,staat%20de%20gemeente%20hierom%20bekend.>
- ACVZ, (2022). Een huis voor statushouders. Advies over knelpunten bij het huisvesten van statushouders in gemeenten. Adviescommissie voor vreemdelingenzaken. ISBN: 978-90-8521-106-8.
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191.
- Arnoldus M, Dukes T, Musterd S, Robinson V, Andersson R, Musterd S., (2003) Dispersal policies in the Netherlands. In: *Spreading the "Burden"? A Review of Policies to Disperse Asylum Seekers and Refugees*. Bristol University Press; 2003:25-64.
- Bakker, L., Dagevos, J., Engbersen, G. (2017) Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labour market participation of refugees in the Netherlands, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43:11, 1775-1791, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251835](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251835)
- Blaikie, N. & Priest, J. (2019). *Designing Social Research* (3rd edition). Polity Press.
- Brissette, I., Cohen, S., & Seeman, T. E. (2000). Measuring social integration and social networks. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists* (pp. 53–85). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780195126709.003.0003>
- Coates, D., Anand, P., & Norris, M. (2013). Housing and Quality of Life for Migrant Communities in Western Europe: A Capabilities Approach. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 1(4), 163-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241300100403>
- Chiu, R. L. H. (2004) Socio-cultural sustainability of housing: a conceptual exploration, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 21:2, 65-76, DOI:10.1080/14036090410014999
- CPB, (2018). Sluit aan bij individuele situatie. Big data biedt kansen. Regionale plaatsing vergunninghouders en kans op werk. Centraal planbureau. Policy brief.
- Czischke, D., Huisman, C., (2018). Integration through Collaborative Housing? Dutch Starters and Refugees Forming Self-Managing Communities in Amsterdam. Vol 3, No 4: *European Cities Planning for Asylum*. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i4.1727>
- Datawonen, (2024) Huisvesting vergunninghouders versus taakstelling. Datawonen (VOIS). Retrieved from: [Datawonen \(VOIS\) - Huisvesting vergunninghouders versus taakstelling](https://www.datawonen.nl/vois/huisvesting-vergunninghouders-versus-taakstelling)
- De Hoon, M., Vink, N., Schmeets, H., (2020) On the move again? Residential trajectories of refugees after obtaining asylum in the Netherlands. *Popul Space Place*. 2021;27:e2386. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2386>
- De Hoon, M., Vink, N., Schmeets, H., (2020) A ticket to mobility? Naturalisation and subsequent migration of refugees after obtaining asylum in the Netherlands, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:7, 1185-1204, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2019.1629894
- De Jong, S. (2018). A window of opportunity? Refugee staff's employment in migrant support and advocacy organizations. *Identities*, 1–18. doi:10.1080/1070289x.2018.1533192 .
- Engbersen, G., J. Dagevos, R. Jennissen, L. Bakker, and A. Leerkes. (2015). No Time to Lose. From Reception to Integration of Asylum Migrants. Policy Brief 4. The Hague: The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy.

- Gerritsen, S., M. Kattenberg, and W. Vermeulen. (2018). Regionale Plaatsing Vergunninghouders en Kans op Werk. The Hague: Centraal Planbureau.
- Hooyman, M., van der Velden, J., (2024). Wat we kunnen leren uit de Utrechtse versnellingspilot huisvesting statushouders. Platform31. Kennis en netwerk voor stad en regio. Retrieved from:
<https://www.platform31.nl/artikelen/wat-we-kunnen-leren-uit-de-utrechtse-versnellingspilot-huisvesting-statushouders/>
- Huizinga, R. P., and B. van Hoven. 2018. "Everyday Geographies of Belonging: Syrian Refugee Experiences in the Northern Netherlands." *Geoforum* 96: 309–317. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.09.002.
- Jones, W. Teytelboym, A. (2018). The Local Refugee Match: Aligning Refugees' Preferences with the Capacities and Priorities of Localities. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. doi:[10.1093/jrs/fex022](https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex022)
- Jones, W., Teytelboym, A. (2016), "Choices, preferences and priorities in a matching system for refugees", *Forced Migration Review*. Destination: Europe. Issue 51. P 80-82. Retrieved from:
<https://www.fmreview.org/destination-europe>
- Jonkman, A., Janssen-Jansen, L., (2015). Het "geperste midden" op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: hoe en waar is dat te vinden? *J Hous en de gebouwde omgeving* 30, 509–528.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-014-9420-7>
- KIS. (2020). Kansen en knelpunten in de opvang van hervestigers. Kennis Platform Inclusief Leven, Vluchtelingen. Retrieved from:
<https://www.kis.nl/artikel/kansen-en-knelpunten-de-opvang-van-hervestigers#:~:text=Nederland%20nodigt%20elk%20jaar%20ongeveer,gemeenten%20gehuisvest%2C%20de%20zogenamde%20hervestigers.>
- Klaver, J. F. I., & van der Welle, I. C. (2009). Vluchtelingenwerk. Integratiebarometer 2009. ISBN nummer 978-90-6937-032-3. Retrieved from:
<https://www.regioplan.nl/wp-content/uploads/data/file/rapporten-1900-1999/ntegratieBarometer-2009.pdf>
- Miltenburg, E., (2020). Een ander perspectief op het spreidingsbeleid voor statushouders. *Beleid en Maatschappij*, 47(4), 405-412.
- Nagtzaam, H. (2017). Waken voor nieuwe probleemwijken: Meer kwetsbare huishoudens. *Sociaal Bestek*, 79(5), 6–7. doi:10.1007/s41196-017-0102-3
- NOS Nieuws, (2023). Kabinet viel over gezinshereniging, dit zijn de aantallen uit 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://nos.nl/collectie/13942/artikel/2482321-kabinet-viel-over-gezinshereniging-dit-zijn-de-aantallen-uit-2022>
- NOS Nieuws, (2022). Overheid schiet tekort bij huisvesting statushouders, zegt Adviesraad. Retrieved from:
<https://nos.nl/artikel/2449076-overheid-schiet-tekort-bij-huisvesting-statushouders-zegt-adviesraad>
- NRC, (2024). Inburgering verschuift van Sociale Zaken naar PVV-staatsecretaris op ministerie van justitie. Retrieved from:
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2024/06/19/inburgering-verschuift-van-sociale-zaken-naar-pvv-staatssecretaris-op-ministerie-van-justitie-a4856905>

- Phillimore, J (2020), 'Refugee Integration Opportunity Structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context', *Journal of Refugee Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa012>
- Razenberg, I. D., N. Rozema, and M. M. Hootsen. (2014). *Evaluatieonderzoek Nieuwe Toewijzingsprocedure Vergunninghouders*. Utrecht: Labyrinth. Onderzoek en Advies. Retrieved from: <https://www.labyrinthonderzoek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Evaluatie-Toewijzingsprocedure-Vergunninghouders-Labyrint.pdf>
- Rijksoverheid, (n.b.) *Huisvesting statushouders, Asielbeleid*, retrieved from: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/huisvesting-asielzoekers-met-verblijfsvergunning#:~:text=Vaak%20doen%20gemeenten%20een%20beroep,de%20gemeente%20in%20een%20huisvestingsverordening.>
- Rosman, C., Klerks, M. (2023). *Geen woonruimte voor 32.000 statushouders, 'het is te veel'*. AD. Binnenland. Retrieved from: <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/geen-woonruimte-voor-32-000-statushouders-het-is-veel-te-veel~aba7b013/>
- Rotte, M. (2018). *Social Ties of Refugees: Does the Housing context matter?* Master's Thesis GEO4-3916. Human Geography. Utrecht University. Retrieved from: <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/32229>
- RTL Nieuws, (2022). *Kabinet zag stroom vluchtelingen niet aankomen en heeft nu een probleem*. Column by Jos Heymans. Retrieved from: <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/columns/column/5310111/woningnood-vluchtelingen-asielzoekers-ter-apel-overvol>
- Ruonavaara, H. (2020). *Rethinking Jim Kemeny's Theory of Housing Regimes*. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 37(5), 519–520. doi:10.1080/14036096.2020.1827626
- Scannell, L., Gifford, R., (2010). *Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework*. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006
- Schmit, M., Boesveldt, N., Jansen, A., (2023). *Housing First as a System Approach: What Does This Require from the Netherlands?* *European Journal of Homelessness*. Volume 17. No. 2023.
- Schol. M, Woestenburg. N, Sibma, A., de Jager, L., Winter, H. (2013). *Directe plaatsing in gemeenten van hervestigde vluchtelingen. Een onderzoek naa de impact van het gewijzigde beleid. Pro Facto*. Retrieved from: <https://repository.wodc.nl/handle/20.500.12832/2005>
- Smaling, E. (2023). *'Door de nieuwe spreidingswet hebben we over vijf jaar een integratieprobleem, en dan krijgen asielzoekers de schuld'*. *Erasmus Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/2023/07/06/door-de-nieuwe-spreidingswet-hebben-we-over-vijf-jaar-een-integratieprobleem-en-dan-krijgen-asielzoekers-de-schuld/>
- Smith, D., (2016) *How does Europe do it?*, *Construction Research and Innovation*, 7:2, 24-27, DOI:10.1080/20450249.2016.11874034
- Stuart-Fox, M., Kleinepier, T., Blije, B. (2023). *Verkenning woonsituatie en instroom urgentiegroepen 'Wet versterking regie volkstelling'*. Onderzoek naar woonsituatie van uitstromers uit instellingen en statushouders. Ministerie van BZK/DGVB en VNG. ABF Research.
- The municipality of Utrecht, (2024). *Monitoring Inburgering 2024*. Inburgeraars en het zich thuis weten in Utrecht. <https://utrecht-monitor.nl/monitor-inburgering>
- The municipality of Utrecht, (2024). *Vluchtelingen*. Utrecht monitor. <https://utrecht-monitor.nl/bevolking-bestuur/bevolking/vluchtelingen#:~:text=Taakstelling%20van%20de%20inburgeraars,de%20inburgeraars%20die%20niet%20inburgeren.>

202023%20hoger%20dan%20voorgaande%20jaren,-Voor%20het%20jaar&text=Utrecht%20heeft%20in%20dat%20jaar.is%20vastgesteld%20op%20384%20statushouders.

Ott, E., (2013). The labour market integration of resettled refugees. UNHCR. Policy Development and Evaluation Service. Retrieved from:

<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5273a9e89.pdf>

Van der Graaf, P. (2009). Out of place? Emotional Ties to the Neighbourhood in Urban Renewal in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. University of Amsterdam. ISBN 978 90 5629 559 2.

Van Kempen, R., Hooimeijer, P., Bolt, G., Burgers, J., Musterd, S., Ostendorf, W., Snel, E., (2000). Segregatie en concentratie in Nederlandse steden: mogelijke effecten en mogelijk beleid. Ruimte voor de Toekomst 2. ISBN 90 232 3604 1.

Van Liempt, I. (2023). Becoming part of the city: local emplacement after forced displacement.

Fennia - International Journal of Geography, 201(1),

9–22. <https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.127425>

Van Liempt, I., & Miellet, S. (2020). Being far away from what you need: the impact of dispersal on resettled refugees' homemaking and place attachment in small to medium-sized towns in the

Netherlands. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(11), 2377–2395.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2020.1845130>

Waarstaatjegemeente.nl, (2022). Lokale Monitor Wonen . Retrieved from:

<https://www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl/mosaic/dashboard/lokale-monitor-wonen>

Westland Verstandig, (2024). Westland Verstandig legt nog een keer uit de problematiek van de gedwongen huisvesting van statushouders in Westland. Retrieved from:

<https://www.westlandverstandig.nl/westland-verstandig-legt-nog-een-keer-uit-de-problematiek-van-de-gedwongen-huisvesting-van-statushouders-in-westland/>

White, R.G., Van der Boor, C. (2021). Enhancing the capabilities of forcibly displaced people: a human development approach to conflict- and displacement related stressors. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* 30, e34, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796021000263>

WODC, (2024). Een passende plek voor statushouders? Ervaringen met de woonomgeving en het huisvestingsbeleid van Syrische en Eritrese statushouders. Cahier 2024-3.

<https://repository.wodc.nl/handle/20.500.12832/3354>

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Consent form



Bijlage: Geïnformeerde toestemming

Delft, 1 April 2024

Geachte heer/mevrouw,

U wordt uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een afstudeeronderzoek genaamd "From shelter to strength". Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Auas Bamarni, een tweedejaars masterstudent, Management in the Built Environment, aan de TU Delft.

Het doel van dit interview is het verkrijgen van diepgaande inzichten over de manieren waarop het Nederlandse woningbeleid impact heeft op de sociale integratie en plaats binding van statushouders en zal max. 45 minuten in beslag nemen. De data zal uitsluitend gebruikt worden voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek. U wordt gevraagd om een aantal open vragen te beantwoorden over uw functie, ervaringen en perspectieven betreffende dit onderwerp. Het interview zal worden opgenomen als geluidsmateriaal mits u daar akkoord mee bent. Dit zal worden vernietigd nadat het is getranscribeerd naar tekst. De gehele transcript wordt niet gedeeld in de scriptie, behalve een aantal anonieme quotes, mits u dat toestaat.

Zoals bij elke online activiteit is het risico van een data breuk aanwezig. Ik zal mijn best doen om uw antwoorden vertrouwelijk te houden. Ik minimaliseer eventuele risico's door alle persoonlijke antwoorden en persoonlijke informatie vertrouwelijk en anoniem te maken. De gegevens worden niet aan derden overgedragen en persoonlijke gegevens worden niet gepubliceerd of opgenomen in het onderzoeksrapport. De gegevens worden op een beveiligde Europese server bewaard met een wachtwoord voor extra beveiliging. Het document waarin ik bijhoud onder welke code uw gegevens worden verwerkt, zal ik ook met een extra password beveiligen en op een andere plek bewaren. Dit sleuteldocument zal na dit afstudeeronderzoek vernietigd worden.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig, en u kunt zich elk moment terugtrekken zonder reden op te geven. U bent vrij om vragen niet te beantwoorden. Als u vragen heeft over dit onderzoek, kunt u contact opnemen via: a.bamarni@student.tudelft.nl

Als u mee wilt doen aan dit onderzoek, wilt u dan de bijgaande verklaring invullen en ondertekenen?

Met vriendelijke groet,

Auas Bamarni
Tweedejaars masterstudent, Management in the Built Environment, TU Delft

	Ja	Nee
(1) Ik verklaar dat ik de informatiebrief d.d. 18 December 2023 heb gelezen of deze brief is aan mij voorgelezen. Ik heb deze informatie begrepen. Daarnaast heb ik de mogelijkheid gekregen om hier vragen over te stellen en deze vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(2) Ik verklaar hierbij dat ik vrijwillig meedoe aan dit onderzoek. Ik begrijp dat ik mag weigeren om vragen te beantwoorden en dat ik mijn medewerking aan dit onderzoek op elk moment kan stoppen zonder opgave van reden. Ik begrijp dat het meedoen aan dit onderzoek betekent dat mijn antwoorden worden bewaard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) Ik begrijp dat het interview zal worden opgenomen als geluidsmateriaal en dat dit zal worden getranscribeerd tot tekst. Ik begrijp dat deze tekst niet zal worden gedeeld in de scriptie.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(4) Ik begrijp dat de opgeslagen gegevens onder een code worden bewaard en anoniem worden verwerkt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(5) Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden, ideeën of andere bijdragen anoniem te quoten in de scriptie.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ik heb dit formulier gelezen of het formulier is mij voorgelezen en ik stem in met deelname aan het onderzoek.

Plaats:

Naam deelnemer

Handtekening

Datum

Ik, **de onderzoeker**, verklaar dat ik de informatie en het instemmingsformulier correct aan de potentiële deelnemer heb voorgelezen en, naar het beste van mijn vermogen, heb verzekerd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar hij/zij vrijwillig mee instemt.

Naam onderzoeker

Handtekening

Datum

INTERVIEW VRAGEN

Afstudeeronderzoek | From Shelter to Strength | Case studies: Utrecht & Westland
MSc Management in the Built Environment | TU Delft

Geïnterviewde	Functie
Interviewer	Auas Bamarni
Datum	
Tijdsduur	ongeveer 45 min

INTRODUCTIE | Bedankt dat u tijd neemt om deel te nemen aan dit interview. Ik ben Auas Bamarni en ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeeronderzoek. Mijn onderzoeksvraag gaat over op welke manieren het Nederlandse huisvestingsbeleid impact heeft op de sociale integratie van statushouders. De case studies die ik heb geselecteerd zijn Utrecht en Westland. Het doel van dit interview is om inzicht te krijgen in uw perspectief en de rol van (...) bij de integratie van vluchtelingen en het huisvesten van statushouders.

Ik wil u nogmaals vragen of ik het gesprek zou kunnen opnemen (consent form is al online ondertekend)?

opname begint

Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen voordat wij beginnen?

A: Achtergrondinformatie:

1. Zou u uzelf kunnen introduceren? Wat is uw rol binnen (...)?

B: Huisvesting van statushouders:

2. Hoe worden beslissingen genomen met betrekking tot de locatie en toewijzing van woningen aan statushouders in Utrecht/Westland en vanuit (...)?
3. Hoe heeft (...) in 2022 bijgedragen aan het versnellen van het huisvestingsproces van statushouders in Utrecht/Westland?
4. Wat zijn de huidige en toekomstige plannen van (...) met betrekking tot de huisvesting van statushouders in Utrecht/Westland?
5. Op welke manieren werkt (...) samen met andere belanghebbenden, zoals de gemeente Utrecht, COA en maatschappelijke organisaties, om de huisvesting en integratie van statushouders te bevorderen?
6. Denkt u dat de plek waar statushouders worden gehuisvest invloed heeft op hun sociale integratie? Zo ja/nee, waarom?
7. Wat zijn volgens u als (...) de voordelen en nadelen van ruimtelijke verspreiding van huisvesting voor statushouders in Nederland en binnen Utrecht/Westland om integratie te bevorderen?
8. Vind u dat statushouders beter en sneller integreren als zij in de buurt van mensen wonen met dezelfde achtergrond of ook statushouders zijn of wanneer?
9. Hoe verloopt bij (...)de besluitvorming met betrekking tot het implementeren van tijdelijke oplossingen, zoals flexwoningen, voor statushouders binnen Utrecht/Westland?

10. Worden statushouders vaak in een andere gemeente gehuisvest dan waar hun asielzoekersopvang was? Waarom? Heeft dit invloed op hun sociale integratie volgens u? Zouden zij ook in dezelfde gemeente kunnen wonen?
11. Welke besluiten rondom tijdelijke/reguliere huisvesting voor statushouders heeft (...) genomen in Utrecht/Westland en wat zijn de overwegingen daarbij?

D: Sociale integratie & Place attachment

12. Hoe ondersteunt (...) statushouders bij hun integratie in de lokale gemeenschap?
13. Kunt u voorbeelden geven van initiatieven of programma's die gericht zijn op het bevorderen van sociale integratie en community betrokkenheid onder statushouders in Utrecht/Westland vanuit het perspectief van (...)?

Sense of Place (Rootedness en Bonding, hoe voelen statushouders zich thuis?):

14. Denkt u dat statushouders zich thuis voelen in Utrecht/Westland? Zo ja/nee, waarom?
15. Op welke manieren werkt (...) aan het creëren van een gevoel van thuis zijn voor statushouders in Utrecht/Westland?
16. Ziet u verschil bij gemeente Utrecht/Westland in vergelijking tot andere gemeentes, als het gaat om uitdagingen bij het huisvesten van statushouders?
17. Ziet u verschil bij gemeente Utrecht/Westland in vergelijking tot andere gemeentes, als het gaat om het zicht thuis voelen van statushouders?

Place Identity (unieke kenmerken van een wijk die gevoel van verbondenheid creëren):

18. Welke specifieke kenmerken van bepaalde wijken in Utrecht/Westland dragen volgens u bij aan het creëren van een gevoel van thuis voor statushouders? Of welke kenmerken dragen daar juist niet aan bij?
19. Hoe zou u de identiteit van de wijken waarin (...) woningen verstrekt aan statushouders omschrijven?

Community Satisfaction:

20. Wordt er door (...) de tevredenheid van statushouders over hun buurt gemeten? Zo ja, hoe gebeurt dit?
21. Ziet u dat er weerstand is naar nieuwkomers/nieuwe huisvestingsideeën toe vanuit de bewoners die al langer in Utrecht/Westland wonen? Zo ja/nee, waaraan ziet u dat?

Social Participation en Community Involvement:

22. Ziet u dat statushouders veel deelnemen aan de initiatieven en contacten met gemeenschappen/buurtten waar (...) woningen heeft? Zo ja/nee, waaraan ziet u dat?
23. Hoe worden statushouders door (...) aangemoedigd om deel te nemen aan sociale activiteiten en betrokken te raken bij de lokale gemeenschap?
24. Worden statushouders ook betrokken bij de besluitvorming van de locatie van hun huisvesting door (...) ? Zo ja, op welke manieren? Zo niet, ziet u dat gebeuren in de toekomst?

E: Impact en beleid:

25. Hoe beoordeelt (...) de impact van haar huisvestingsbeleid en integratiebeleid op het leven van statushouders?
26. Welke successen of uitdagingen is (...) tegengekomen bij de besluitvorming van de vestiging en integratie van statushouders in de gemeenschap?

F: Uitdagingen en toekomstige richtingen:

27. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste uitdagingen of obstakels voor statushouders in hun integratieproces?
28. Zijn er specifieke (innovatieve) benaderingen waar (..) naar kijkt voor de toekomst van de integratie in Utrecht/Westland?
29. Hoe ziet (..) de toekomst van de integratie van vluchtelingen in Utrecht/Westland?
30. Heeft u nog andere belangrijke opmerkingen met betrekking tot de huisvesting en sociale integratie van statushouders in Utrecht/Westland?

G: Bestaande onderzoeken en contacten:

31. Zijn er door (..) tevredenheidsonderzoeken onder bewoners/statushouders uitgevoerd? Zo ja, wat is er al bekend en wat wordt er meegenomen vanuit deze onderzoeken?
32. Heeft (..) data beschikbaar die gebruikt kan worden voor onderzoek naar huisvesting en sociale integratie van statushouders in Utrecht?
33. Heeft u andere contacten waar ik mee in contact zou kunnen komen voor mijn onderzoek?

Afronding:

Bedankt voor uw tijd en waardevolle inzichten. Heeft u nog aanvullende opmerkingen of vragen?

INTERVIEW VRAGEN

Afstudeeronderzoek | From Shelter to Strength | Case studies: Utrecht & Westland
MSc Management in the Built Environment | TU Delft

Geïnterviewde	Functie
Interviewer	Auas Bamarni
Datum	
Tijdsduur	ongeveer 45 min

INTRODUCTIE | Bedankt dat u tijd neemt om deel te nemen aan dit interview. Ik ben Auas Bamarni en ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeeronderzoek. Mijn onderzoeksvraag gaat over op welke manieren het Nederlandse huisvestingsbeleid impact heeft op de sociale integratie van statushouders. De case studies die ik heb geselecteerd zijn Utrecht en Westland. Het doel van dit interview is om inzicht te krijgen in uw perspectief en de rol (...) bij de integratie van vluchtelingen en het huisvesten van statushouders.

Ik wil u nogmaals vragen of ik het gesprek zou kunnen opnemen (consent form is al online ondertekend)?

opname begint

Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen voordat wij beginnen?

A: Achtergrondinformatie:

1. Zou u uzelf kunnen introduceren? En wat is uw rol binnen Movisie?
2. Hoelang woont u in Nederland? Waar heeft u gewoond in Nederland?
3. Hoe werkt Movisie aan onderzoeken? Werkt u ook aan projecten rond het onderwerp over de huisvesting van statushouders?
4. Heeft uw achtergrond als statushouder invloed op uw werk bij Movisie?

B: Huisvesting van statushouders:

5. Wat zijn de uitdagingen die u bent tegen gekomen bij het integreren in de gemeente?
6. Wat zijn de uitdagingen die u bent tegen gekomen bij de buurt en de woning die je toegewezen hebt gekregen?
7. Denkt u dat de plek waar statushouders worden gehuisvest invloed heeft op hun sociale integratie? Zo ja/nee, waarom?
8. Vind u, vanuit uw ervaringen, dat statushouders beter en sneller integreren als zij in de buurt van mensen wonen met dezelfde achtergrond of ook statushouders zijn of wanneer zij verspreid wonen en wonen tussen mensen die al een Nederlandse achtergrond hebben?
9. Wat zijn volgens jou de belangrijkste factoren die het succesvolle huisvesting van statushouders beïnvloeden?
10. Wat vind u van tijdelijke huisvestingsoplossingen die gemeenten bedenken om statushouders/asielzoekers tijdelijke woningen te geven, waarna zij weer moeten verhuizen?
11. Vind u dat statushouders in dezelfde gemeente een woning moeten krijgen waar hun asielzoekersopvang was?

D: Sociale integratie & Place attachment

12. Hoe worden statushouders ondersteunt bij hun integratie in de lokale gemeenschap?
13. Ziet u dat statushouders veel mee doen met initiatieven in de buurt om samen te komen met andere bewoners of andere statushouders?

Sense of Place (Rootedness en Bonding, hoe voelen statushouders zich thuis?):

14. Voelt u zich thuis in Zeist? Denkt u dat statushouders zich thuis voelen in Utrecht? Zo ja/nee, waarom? Hoe zou je jouw gevoel van 'thuis' in Nederland beschrijven?
15. Op welke manieren werkt Zeist/Utrecht aan het creëren van een gevoel van thuis zijn voor statushouders in Westland?
16. Ziet u verschil bij gemeente Zeist/Utrecht in vergelijking tot andere gemeentes, als het gaat om uitdagingen bij het huisvesten van statushouders/zich thuis voelen?

Place Identity (unieke kenmerken van een wijk die gevoel van verbondenheid creëren):

17. Op welke manieren denkt u dat de identiteit van de buurt invloed heeft op de integratie van statushouders?
18. Welke specifieke kenmerken van bepaalde wijken in Zeist/Utrecht dragen volgens u bij aan het creëren van een gevoel van thuis voor statushouders? Of welke kenmerken dragen daar juist niet aan bij?

Place Affiliation (plaats verbondenheid, waarom voelen statushouders zich ergens thuis?)

19. Hoe dragen lokale voorzieningen en sociale netwerken bij aan het gevoel van verbondenheid van statushouders met hun nieuwe buurt?

Community Satisfaction:

20. Ziet u dat er weerstand is naar vluchtelingen toe vanuit de bewoners die al langer in Zeist/Utrecht wonen? Zo ja/nee, waaraan ziet u dat?
21. In hoeverre bent u tevreden met de ondersteuning en faciliteiten die de lokale gemeenschap biedt?
22. In hoeverre bent u tevreden met de buurt waar u woont?
23. Ziet u dat statushouders willen verhuizen naar een andere gemeente? Waaraan ziet u dat?

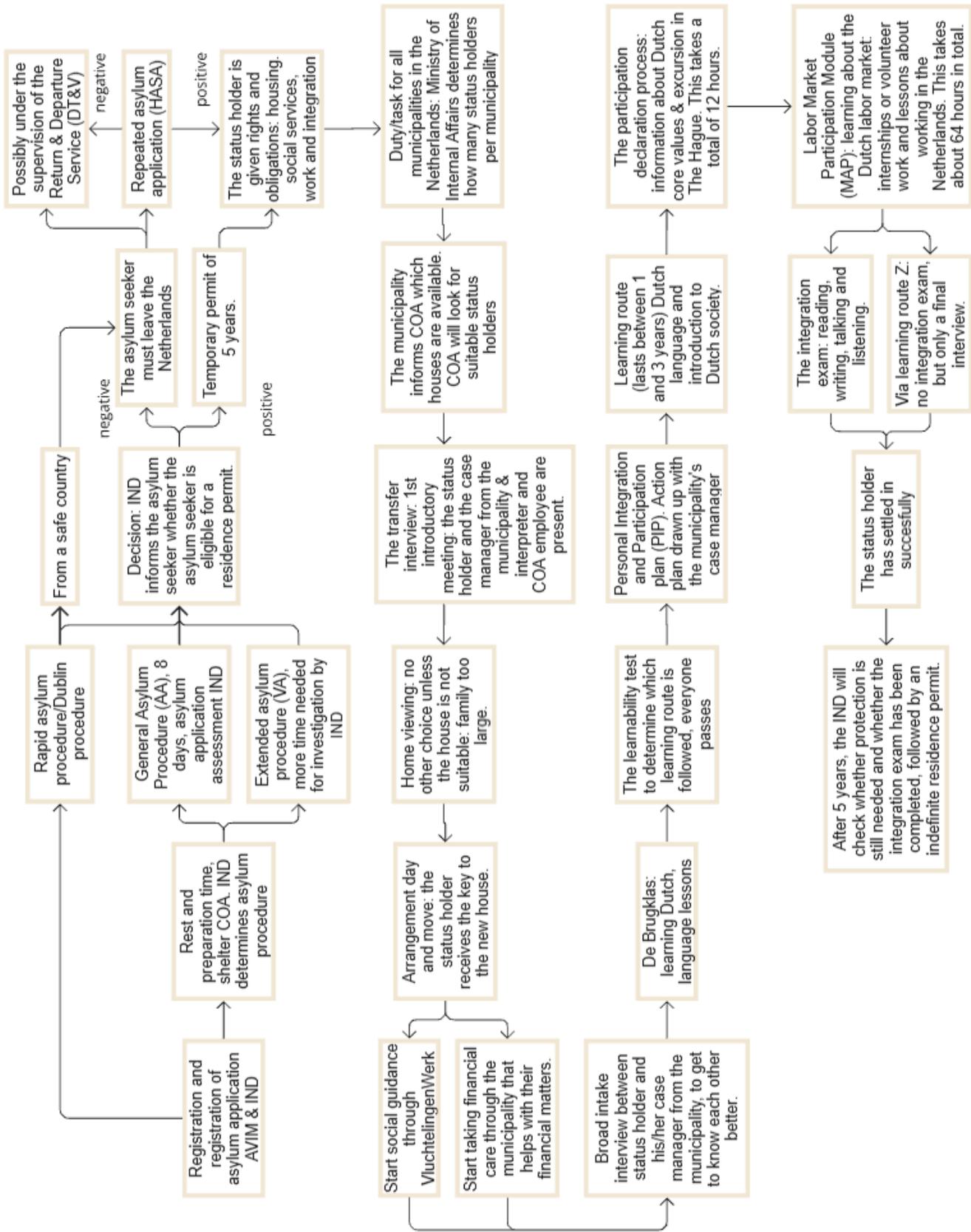
Social Participation en Community Involvement:

24. Krijgen statushouders volgens u genoeg hulp en voorzieningen om zich zo goed mogelijk te integreren en thuis te voelen in Zeist/Westland?
25. Zijn er specifieke activiteiten of groepen waar je bij betrokken bent?
26. Heeft u zelf ook mee mogen beslissen over waar u zou wonen?

F: Uitdagingen en toekomstige richtingen:

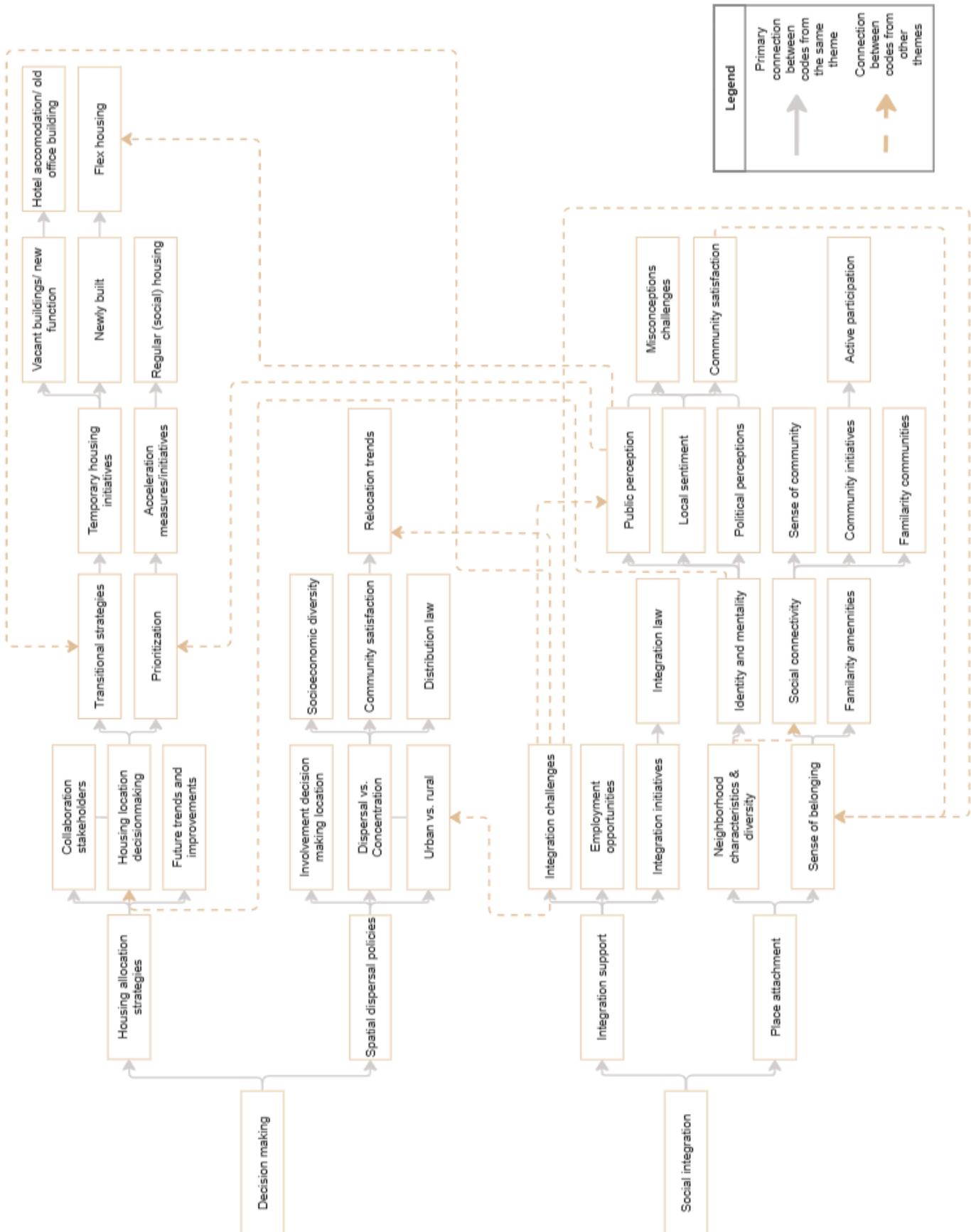
27. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste uitdagingen of obstakels voor statushouders in hun integratieproces?
28. Hoe ziet u de toekomst van de integratie van vluchtelingen in Zeist/Utrecht?
29. Zijn er aspecten van het huidige beleid die verbeterd kunnen worden om de integratie van statushouders te bevorderen?
30. Heeft u nog andere belangrijke opmerkingen met betrekking tot de huisvesting en sociale integratie van statushouders in Zeist/Utrecht?

Appendix 3: Asylum procedure scheme



The asylum procedure in the Netherlands (own work).

Appendix 4: Coding scheme



Coding scheme and the connections of most used codes from the transcripts, for enlarged version see appendix (own work)

Appendix 5: Links to the initiatives/parties mentioned in this research

INITIATIVES MENTIONED IN THIS RESEARCH	LINK
Buddy to buddy	together you discover more - Buddy to Buddy
Welkom Huis	Welkomhuis - Welkom bij DOCK
Bekend maakt Bemind	Bekend maakt Bemind: Voorlichting door vluchtelingen (vluchtelingenwerk.nl)
Place2BU	Place2BU - Woonin
Friendscontracten	Aan de slag met friendscontracten - Platform31 Kennis en netwerk voor stad en regio
Utrecht voor iedereen	Utrecht voor iedereen Gemeente Utrecht - Zorgprofessionals
Thuis voor iedereen	Programma Een thuis voor iedereen Home Volkshuisvesting Nederland
Samen voor Overvecht	Wijkaanpak Overvecht gemeente Utrecht
Plan Einstein Utrecht	Home Plan Einstein (plan-einstein.nl)
Housing First	Housing First Nederland Een recht, een thuis, een toekomst
Vitis Welzijn	Home - Vitis Welzijn
Patijnenburg	Home - Patijnenburg
The use of AI in matching status holders with a housing location	COA - AI zorgt voor betere match statushouder aan gemeente www.coa.nl Met Artificial Intelligence strijden tegen ongelijkheid - Universiteit van Amsterdam (uva.nl)