

Reflection

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Dwelling Graduation Studio: Designing for Care in an Inclusive Environment
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1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

In my graduation project, I focus on how the built environment can be designed to support the well-being of both young and elderly residents in the Tarwewijk. This aligns closely with my Master's track in Architecture, which emphasizes the critical role of the built environment in shaping human experiences. At the same time, my graduation project is strongly connected to the thematic framework of the Dwelling Graduation Studio: Designing for Care in an Inclusive Environment. Within this context, I concentrate on promoting active aging by fostering interaction between elderly residents and children. This approach fits within the broader objective of creating a caring and healthy living environment that encourages intergenerational connection.

2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

My research resulted in sixteen design guidelines, organized into four thematic categories: being, caring, learning, and playing. These guidelines provide a framework for designing an intergenerational living environment for both elderly residents and children. I summarized them in a clear and concise poster (Figure 1), which I kept next to me throughout the design phase. The influence of these guidelines is particularly evident in the design of the indoor and outdoor courtyards, which serve as key spaces for intergenerational interaction. To ensure a strong connection between research and design, I also incorporated the guidelines from my poster into my final design presentation (Figure 2), making the integration of research-based recommendations within the architectural design process explicit.



Figure 1: Design Guidelines

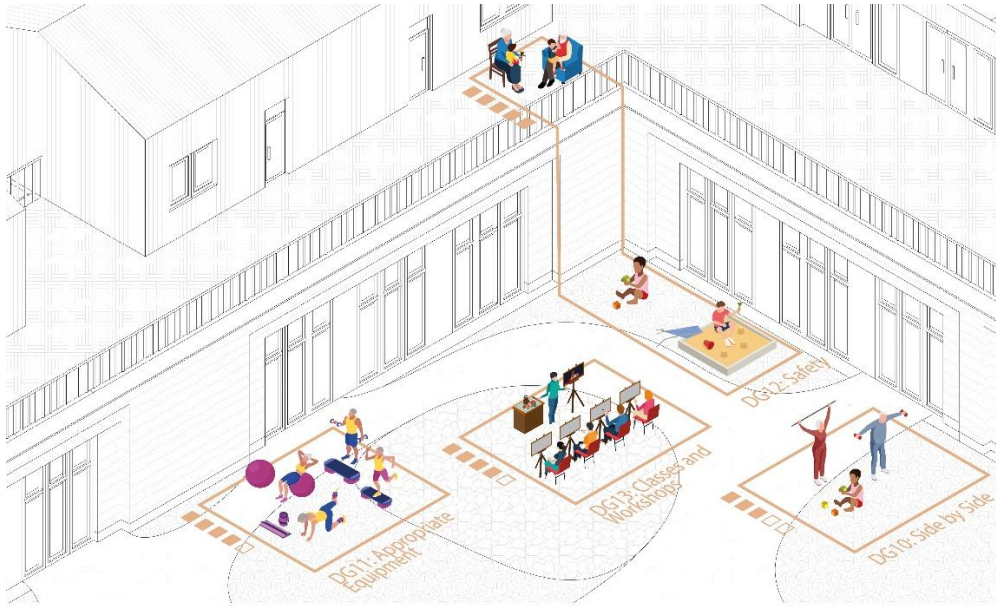


Figure 2: Design Guidelines into design

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

Throughout my graduation project, I aimed to gather information through a diverse and comprehensive approach. I combined qualitative fieldwork with literature research to gain a well-rounded understanding of the context, stakeholders, and themes central to my project. This included visits to an active elderly center (De Linde), a local primary school, and the Tarwewijk neighborhood itself, where I engaged directly with residents to understand their lived experiences. In addition, I conducted conversations with practicing architects to gain professional insights and perspectives. Alongside this fieldwork, I studied relevant literature on intergenerational living, aging, child development, and inclusive design. By triangulating these different sources of information—on-site observations, user engagement, expert interviews, and academic research—I was able to formulate grounded and context-specific design guidelines. This multifaceted methodology not only strengthened the validity of my design choices but also allowed me to develop a deep and empathetic understanding of the social and spatial dynamics at play. I believe this integrated and iterative way of working added significant value to both my research and design process, and ultimately led to a more thoughtful and responsive architectural proposal.

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

My graduation project addresses both academic and societal challenges by exploring how intergenerational living environments can be designed to foster well-being, social inclusion, and active engagement for both elderly residents and children. Academically, the project contributes to the field of architecture by developing a set of evidence-based design guidelines grounded in interdisciplinary research, including urban sociology, gerontology, and pedagogy. These guidelines offer a methodological framework that can inform future studies and design practices related to inclusive and care-oriented architecture.

From a societal perspective, the project responds to pressing demographic and spatial issues, such as aging populations, loneliness among the elderly, and the increasing segregation of age groups in urban environments. By proposing spatial strategies that encourage intergenerational encounters, the project aims to strengthen social cohesion and promote mutual care within dense, diverse neighborhoods such as the Tarwewijk.

Ethically, the project acknowledges the importance of designing with and for vulnerable user groups. My approach emphasizes empathy, participation, and inclusivity, ensuring that the voices and needs of both children and elderly residents are considered throughout the design process. By doing so, the project advocates for a more equitable and caring urban future, where architecture actively contributes to human dignity and quality of life.

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

The value of the transferability of my project lies in the fact that the core principles and design guidelines I developed are not limited to the specific context of the Tarwewijk, but can be adapted to a wide range of urban neighborhoods facing similar demographic and social challenges. The sixteen guidelines, categorized under the themes of being, caring, learning, and playing, are intentionally formulated in a way that makes them applicable to different spatial and cultural contexts, while still allowing for site-specific interpretation.

The methodology I used—combining field research, stakeholder engagement, expert consultation, and literature study—offers a replicable process that can be applied by other designers, researchers, or municipalities aiming to create inclusive, intergenerational environments. While the architectural form may vary from one location to another, the underlying values of connectivity, inclusivity, and well-being remain relevant and universally desirable.

In this way, the project offers both conceptual and practical tools that can inform future designs beyond the scope of this particular site, contributing to a broader architectural discourse on care, aging, and community.

6. How is your graduation project prepared for the future?

My graduation project is prepared for the future in several ways. First, it addresses long-term societal trends such as aging populations, increasing urban density, and the growing importance of inclusive and intergenerational living environments. By focusing on the integration of elderly residents and children within a shared architectural framework, the project anticipates future demands for social cohesion, care-oriented design, and multifunctional urban housing.

Second, the design is based on flexible spatial strategies that can adapt to changing needs over time. For example, communal areas are designed to support a variety of uses and age groups, allowing the building to evolve alongside its residents. The developed design guidelines are intentionally formulated to be transferable and scalable, making them applicable to other urban contexts and future developments. Lastly, the project promotes a design attitude rooted in empathy, participation, and care—values that are increasingly essential in facing future challenges in architecture. It encourages future architects and policymakers to consider not only functionality and aesthetics, but also emotional and social well-being as integral aspects of sustainable design.