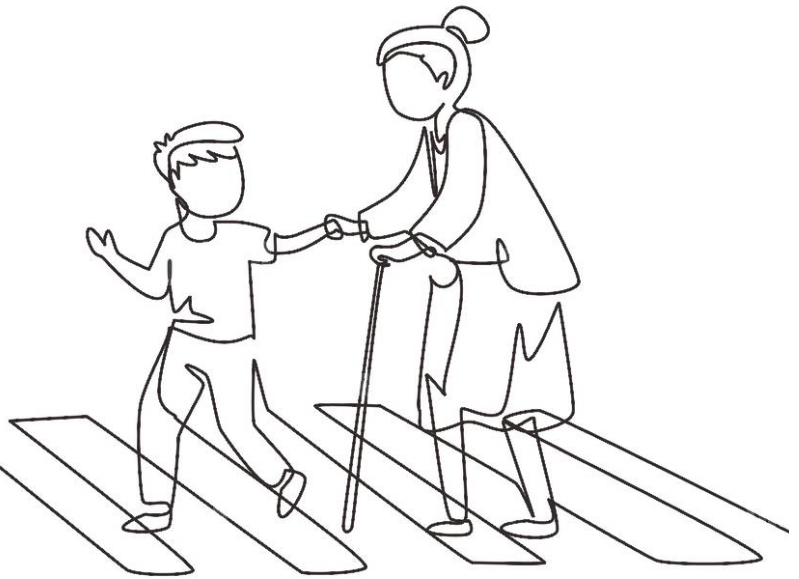




BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN YOUNG AND OLD

An Research To An Intergenerational Build Environment in the
Tarwewijk, Rotterdam

Jasper Holtus

Delft University of Technology
AR3AD110 Dwelling Graduation Studio
Designing for a Care in an Inclusive Environment
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01 - Problem Statement

The Tarwewijk, an urban neighborhood in Rotterdam, faces several challenges that strain its livability and social cohesion. The neighborhood struggles with a growing divide among its residents, including elderly individuals increasingly facing isolation, youth lacking sufficient educational opportunities, and inhabitants who not comfortable in their surroundings. The three core issues emerging in this neighborhood are the inaccessibility of housing for the aging population, the presence of a significant number of low-educated youth, and the lack of social safety and cohesion.

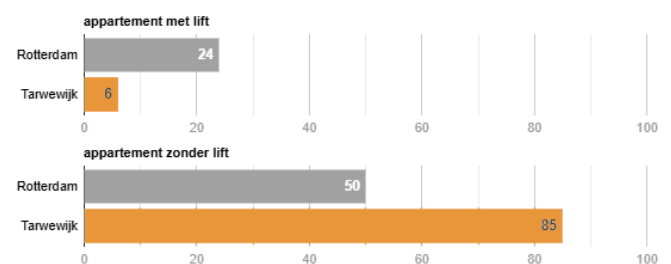
1.1 Increasing Number of (Lonely) Elderly in the Tarwewijk

In the Tarwewijk, there are relatively few elderly residents. Many homes are apartments with high thresholds at the front door or are accessed through staircases with steep steps. Despite the prevalence of apartment buildings in the Tarwewijk, only 6% of the homes are accessible by elevator (Figure 1). However, the elderly population is growing rapidly, and by 2070, more than 25% of the Dutch population will be 65 years or older (Figure 2). Statistics show that the Netherlands ranks fourth globally in the number of elderly individuals living alone (Beta Office, 2023), a trend also evident in the Tarwewijk, where more than 50% of households consist of single-person dwellings (Kadastralekaart, 2023). Data from the municipality of Rotterdam indicate that loneliness is particularly prevalent among those living alone (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2022). According to a neighborhood profile created by the municipality of Rotterdam in 2024, 55% of residents aged 65 and older feel lonely, with 15% reporting severe loneliness (Figure 3).

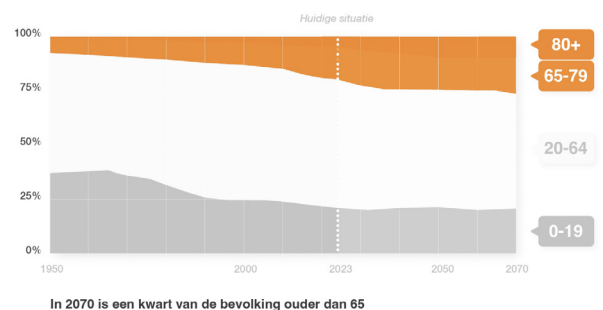
1.2 No Place for High Number of (Low-Educated) Youth

The primary demographic in the Tarwewijk consists of young people up to the age of 24. Nearly 1 in 3 residents (32%) falls within this age group, with half of them being under the age of 14 (Figure 4). Although the neighborhood features a lot of schools for children, there is a significant need for additional volunteers in these areas, the teacher shortage is also evident in the district and the percentage of low-educated people (Figure 5) in the Tar-

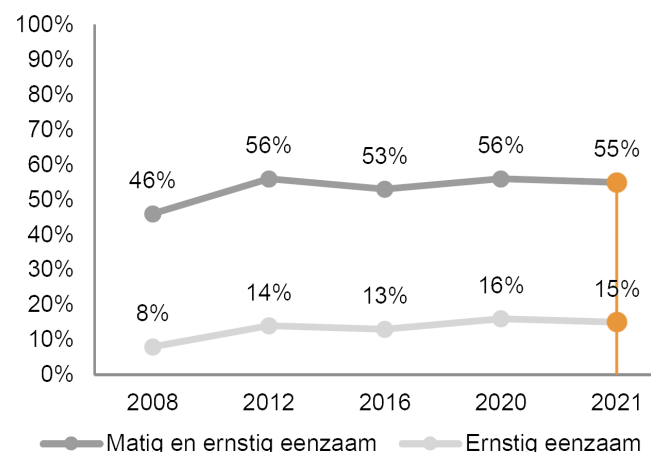
1 Figure 1: Accessibility Elevators
Source: Gemeente Rotterdam (2024)



2 Figure 2: Growing Number of Elderly
Source: CBS (2024)



3 Figure 3: Loneliness in Rotterdam
Source: Gemeente Rotterdam (2022)



wewijk is relatively high (40% in the Tarwewijk compared to the national average of 25% in the Netherlands. (Van Der Mooren & De Vries, 2022)). In a study conducted in the Tarwewijk young people expressed feeling unwelcome in the remaining community centers and reported that there are insufficient indoor and outdoor facilities available to them (Doff et al., 2024). Due to budget cuts, there are fewer meeting spaces available for youth in the Tarwewijk.

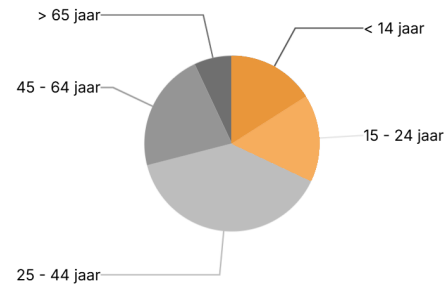
1.3 Lack of Social Safety and Cohesion

During visits to the Tarwewijk, it became evident that social cohesion in the neighborhood is limited. Many people walk alone on the streets, and there are few spaces where different generations can gather. Additionally, some residents mentioned that they prefer not to walk outside at night because they do not feel comfortable. Statistics also show that 75% of residents do not allow their children to play outside unsupervised (Figure 6). Therefore, the sense of safety and social cohesion in the neighborhood could be significantly improved.

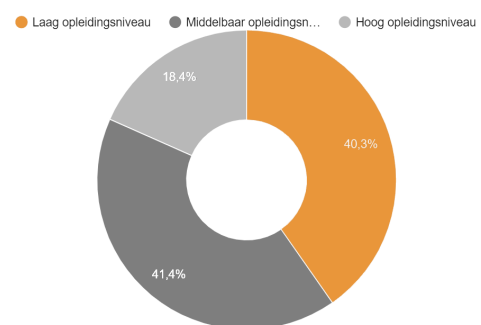
1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing the well-being of elderly and children in the Tarwewijk requires targeted research into the specific physical, mental, and social challenges facing these groups (Figure 7 & 10). Strengthening a sense of belonging and enhancing social cohesion and safety within the neighborhood is essential.

4 **Figure 4: Age and number of households in the Tarwewijk**
Source: KadastraleKaart (z.d.)

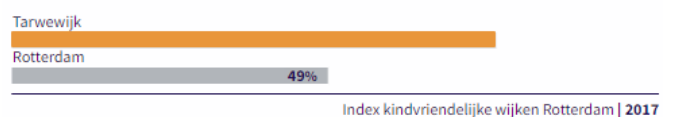


5 **Figure 5: Level of Education inhabitants**
Source: AlleCijfers (2024)

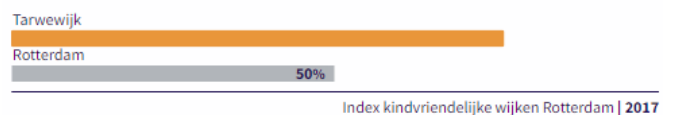


6 **Figure 6: Safety in the Tarwewijk**
Source: Gemeente Rotterdam (2024)

Niet alleen buiten spelen in de buurt



Onveilige plekken in de buurt om te spelen



7 **Figure 7: Physical, mental and social Challenges**
Conclusion Problemstatement

	Physical	Mental	Social
Elderly	No suitable and accessible houses	Living alone creates high level of loneliness	No offer for this growing population to live in the neighborhood.
Children	Unsafe environment to play alone outside	Feeling unwelcome and unsafe	No place for social interaction in the neighborhood

02 - Theoretical Framework

In light of the pressing demographic and social challenges faced by the Tarwewijk neighborhood, it is crucial to explore innovative approaches that can foster a sense of belonging and enhance social cohesion among its residents.

2.1 An Intergenerational Program

Policy scientist Julia O'Hanlon studies issues related to older adults, including mobility, aging in place, demographics, emergency preparedness and social isolation. She emphasizes that intergenerational interactions promote physical health by exercising both small and large muscles, stimulating blood flow to the brain, and practicing motor skills (O'Hanlon, 2017). Furthermore, this interaction provides opportunities for expressing emotions, exercising cognitive abilities, and enhancing self-esteem. Her research (O'Hanlon, 2017) has shown how interactions between elderly and youth can foster positive emotions and coping, strengthen social bonds, and increase personal growth and development. Children provide a form of companionship to elderly (Bradley et al., 2013). When seniors interact and play with children, they are less at risk for social isolation, which improves overall quality of life and life satisfaction and allows them to learn new skills. Intergenerational interaction also helps seniors recall memories from their own childhood and replay nurturing roles (Davis et al., 2002). Intergenerational environments for both young and old are therefore an interesting approach to addressing the mental, physical and social challenges in the Tarwewijk.

2.2 Foundation of the Intergenerational Programs

To understand the foundations of intergenerational engagement, it is essential to recognize the pioneering work of Sally Newman (1997), who laid the groundwork for intergenerational programs as a legitimate and academically supported practice. Newman was a tenacious visionary and pioneer in the early days of the emerging intergenerational field. She was determined to set the standards and develop the framework to take intergenerational programs from a soft practice to a legitimate approach supported by academic research. She emphasize that older adults have a desire to pass on knowledge and values, while children and youth require care, education, and positive role models (figure 8). Intergenerational programs foster care, communication, and collaboration, benefiting both individuals and the broader community. (Newman, 1997).

2.2 Planned Intergenerational Programs

In 2007, gerontologist Shannon Eileen Jarrott conducted research on shared site intergenerational programs (SSIP). Her findings revealed that SSIPs promote valuable interactions between generations, contributing to the development of both older adults and children. Additionally, she developed a daily schedule of

Older adults' needs	Children's needs
To nurture	To be nurtured
To teach	To be taught
To have a successful life review	To learn from and about the past
To share cultural mores	To have a cultural identity
To communicate positive values	To have positive role models
To leave a legacy	To be connected to preceding generations

8

Figure 7: Elderly and Children's needs
Source: Newman (1997)

Time	Activity	Age of Children Involved
10:15	Fall collage	18 months to 2 years
10:15	Loteria (bingo)	4 years
11:00	Making bread	5 to 6 years
11:30	Lunch helpers (adults help in children's room)	18 months to 3 years
12:00	Lunch with neighbors	5 to 6 years
2:00	Infant helpers (adults rock and play with infants)	6 weeks to 18 months
3:30	Music and movement with Molly	2 to 3 years

9

Figure 9: Intergenerational Activities
Source: Jarrot & Bruno (2007)

intergenerational activities (Figure 9) tailored to the needs of different age groups, providing opportunities for learning, increasing social engagement, enhancing sensory stimulation, self-esteem, and socialization (Jarrott & Bruno, 2007). Jarrott also collaborated with Neda Norouzi, a healthcare facilities planner and designer for intergenerational centers, on further research. Together, they demonstrated that older adults in intergenerational environments can share their knowledge through activities such as cooking, science experiments, and storytelling, while children benefit from a nurturing and familial environment (Norouzi, Chen & Jarrott, 2015).

2.3 Spontaneous Meetings in an Intergenerational Environment

This prompted Norouzi to conduct further research on designing intergenerational living environments, providing insights into how inviting common spaces, carefully designed with attention to the proximity of different age groups, can positively influence relationships between them. This is a crucial aspect of design in the built environment, as it directly impacts participant outcomes (Norouzi et al., 2015, 2019). Norouzi's research also demonstrated that a centrally located multifunctional space, equipped with observation windows, creates a welcoming atmosphere for individuals of all ages and abilities (Norouzi et al., 2023). These spaces offer participants various options for engagement: they can observe from outside, make visual contact through the windows, or enter the space to actively participate in intergenerational interactions. Such flexible designs foster meaningful interaction between generations by allowing individuals to engage at their own pace and in a manner that suits them (Norouzi et al., 2015, 2019).

2.3 Spontaneous Meetings in an the Build Environment

The built environment significantly influences spontaneous intergenerational interactions. Amsterdam-based architecture firm Beta Office explores this through research and design, including their multigenerational housing project and the book *'Meergeneratiewonen'* (Beta Office, 2023), which examines spatial

strategies for fostering resident interaction. Similarly, Platform31, a network of policymakers, professionals, residents, and entrepreneurs, addresses these issues in their book *'Ontwerpen voor Ontmoeten'* (Platform31, 2021), aligning with Beta Office's focus on promoting community through design. A existing design that fosters interactions between elderly and children is the first integrated child and elderly center (IKOC) in the Netherlands, located in Noord-Scharwoude. This project, designed by LIAG Architects, is currently still in the design phase but can be very interesting to analyse.

2.4 Stimulating Social Cohesion in the City

On the more urban scale, the Danish architect and urban planner Jan Gehl began to rethink cities differently, influenced by his wife Ingrid, a behavioral psychologist. In his books, Gehl emphasizes the human experience in cities, offering design principles and recommendations on how urban areas can be designed at a more human scale (Gehl, 1980, 2010). David Sim, partner and creative director at Gehl, further explores these ideas in his book *'Soft City'* (Sim, 2019), illustrating how cities can be designed to be more people-friendly—places where people feel at home and part of a community. Urban sociologist Wenda Doff (2024) conducted research on the needs of young people in the Tarwewijk to feel more at home in their neighborhood. The findings indicate that young people primarily desire an outdoor space (19%), a sports area (16%), and a place with organized activities (12%).

2.5 Research Gap

This theoretical framework demonstrates that substantial research has already been conducted on intergenerational environments for the elderly and children. This research primarily focuses on how these target groups can live together and what activities and programs can be organized to promote intergenerational interaction. However, relatively little attention has been given to how these intergenerational environments can also contribute to the physical, mental and social wellbeing, and how this should be reflected in architectural design. It is essential to address this research

gap in order to gain a better understanding of the architectural and design principles that can assist in creating inclusive and supportive living environments in the Tarwewijk.

2.6 Hypothesis

In light of the demographic and social challenges in the Tarwewijk, an intergenerational environment may foster greater social cohesion and mutual support for both young and older residents, addressing their diverse physical, mental, and social needs. By creating shared spaces designed to facilitate spontaneous and structured interactions, younger residents gain access to positive role models and a supportive environment that offers both companionship and educational opportunities. Older residents benefit from reduced social isolation, enhanced physical engagement, and an increased sense of purpose through their interactions with children and youth. This environment, supported by well-designed spaces for a variety of activities, can strengthen social bonds, improve life satisfaction, and contribute to a safer, more inclusive community fabric in the Tarwewijk.

03 - Research Question(s)

There is a research question formulated to test this hypothesis. The main research question is: ***“How can an intergenerational environment be designed to promote planned activities and spontaneous meetings between very young and old people to improve their physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** To answer this primary question, the research is divided into several sub-questions (Figure 10).

3.1 Sub-question 1: Spontaneous Meetings in an Intergenerational Environment

The first sub-question focuses on the ‘intergenerational environment’, ‘designing’, ‘spontaneous meetings’ and ‘improving physical, mental and social well-being’ parts of the main research question. That leads to the question: ***“How can the build environment be designed to promote the types of spontaneous meetings in an intergenerational setting to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** This question first aims to determine how the built environment influences spontaneous interactions among residents. The study explores these various influences across different spatial scales (Figure 10). Additionally, it examines which of these interactions contribute to the physical, mental, and social well-being of residents. By understanding these aspects, potential adjustments or additions to the built environment in the Tarwewijk can be identified to encourage spontaneous interactions and improve the well-being of the residents.

3.2 Sub-question 2: Planned Activities

The second sub-question focuses on the ‘planned activities’, ‘very young and old people’, and ‘improving physical, mental and social well-being’ parts of the main research question. The aim is to answer the following question: ***“In what ways do elderly and children prefer to have planned activities in an intergenerational environment to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being in the Tarwewijk?”*** This section explores the activities that each age group envisions doing together and how these should be shaped and structured. In addition to identifying their needs, the study examines how each group can contribute to enhancing physical, mental,

and social well-being within this environment. By approaching the age groups separately, the results can then be compared side by side. Additionally, sociological research has already been conducted on the needs of young people in the Tarwewijk. These findings will help define what an intergenerational living environment should look like for both young and older residents in the Tarwewijk.

10 Figure 10: Scales to investigate the stimulation of spontaneous encounters Source: Platform31, 2021



Neighborhood



The Route Home



Residential Block



Threshold Zone



Dwelling

3.3 Sub-question 3: Case Study

The last sub-question focuses on a case study that addresses the ‘designing’, ‘very young and old people’, and ‘improving physical, mental and social well-being’ parts of the main research question. The last sub-question will be: ***“What can be learned from a case study to promote activities between very young and old people to enhance their physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** The first Integral Child and Elderly Center (IKOC) in the Netherlands is currently being designed in Noord-Schar-

woude by LIAG Architects. This project is interesting to investigate and to compare with the results of the first two research questions in order to identify similarities and differences.

3,4 Conclusion

With the answers to these sub-questions, a conclusion can be drawn in response to the main research question: ***“How can an intergenerational environment be designed to promote planned activities and spontaneous meetings between very young and old people to improve their physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** All the sub-conclusions should contribute to a clear overall conclusion to the main research question. This conclusion will provide essential design principles and guidelines for an intergenerational environment focused on elderly and children. This can be used by the designer in the next phase of the research: the research by design phase.

04 - Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to address the main research question and its subcomponents. Each sub-question focuses on a specific aspect of the study, necessitating distinct research methods tailored to the target groups and the built environment. A combination different approaches will be applied (Figure 10). The following sections will elaborate on the methodology used for each sub-question, providing a detailed description of how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to generate meaningful conclusions.

3.1 Sub-question 1: Literature Research

The first sub-question involves a literature review to address the following question: ***“How can the build environment be designed to promote the types of spontaneous meetings in an intergenerational setting to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** To address this question, a **literature research** will be conducted. This provides insights from various perspectives (see Figure 11). Each spatial scale will be examined to understand how the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals can be improved through the (re)design of the urban environment. This analysis will help identify key elements and design principles that can foster better interactions and enhance the quality of life for different age groups within the community.

3.2 Sub-question 2: Qualitative Research and Mapping

The second sub-question focuses on understanding the target groups. The aim is to answer the following question: ***“In what ways do elderly and children prefer to have planned activities in an intergenerational environment to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being in the Tarwewijk?”***. Literature from gerontologists and designers provides valuable insights that can be utilized for activities involving elderly and children. Literature from a sociologist provides insights into the needs of young people in the Tarwewijk. Additionally, **qualitative research** will be conducted through visits to a primary school in Nijmegen (de Verbinding) and an elderly center in Hilversum (Liv Inn). At both locations, **interviews**

will be conducted, and a **workshop** will be held to identify the activities participants envision for collaboration with the other target group, aiming to uncover overlapping preferences (See setup in Appendix 1). The target groups will also be **observed** to understand their daily activities and habits, which will be **mapped** out, illustrating their daily routes through the building and the time schedules of the day. All these outcomes can be compared and analyzed to assess whether they can potentially be integrated with the other target group.

4.3 Sub-question 3: Case Study

There is a interesting case study that can help address the question: ***“What can be learned from a case study to promote activities between very young and old people to enhance their physical, mental, and social well-being?”*** This case study from LIAG Architects will incorporate two research methods. Initially, **qualitative research** will be conducted to explore the thought processes and design philosophy of the architects. Following this, the focus will shift to the **case study** itself, examining how the design of this integrated child and elderly center has been established.

Problemstatement Tarwewijk

	Physical	Mental	Social
Elderly	No suitable and accessible houses	Living alone creates high level of loneliness	No offer for this growing population to live in the neighborhood.
Children	Unsafe environment to play alone outside	Feeling unwelcome and unsafe	No place for social interaction in the neighborhood



Research question

Intergenerational Environment

“How can an intergenerational environment be designed to promote planned activities and spontaneous meetings between very young and old people to improve their physical, mental, and social well-being?”

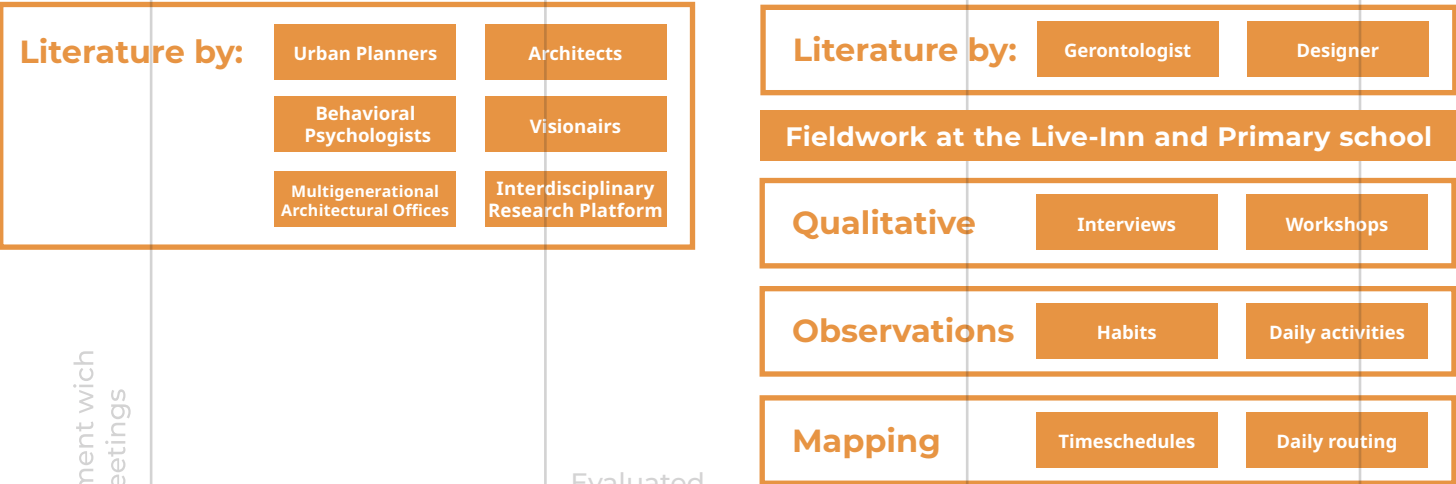
Research

1. Spontaneous meetings

“How can the build environment be designed to promote the types of spontaneous meetings in an intergenerational setting to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being?”

2. Planned Activities

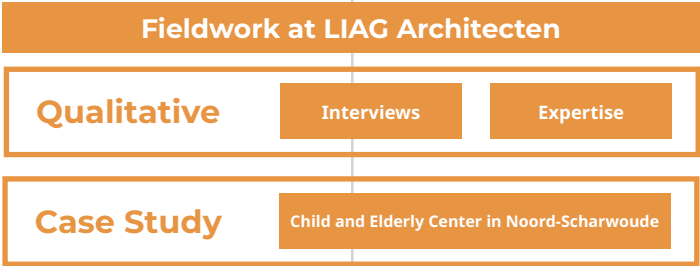
“In what ways do elderly and children prefer to have planned activities in an intergenerational environment to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being in the Tarwewijk?”



Evaluated

3. Case study of Child and Elderly Center

“What can be learned from a case study to promote activities between very young and old people to enhance their physical, mental, and social well-being?”



Gives guidelines for a intergenerational environment wich promotes spontaneous meetings

Comparing the children fieldwork and the elderly fieldwork

Conclusion

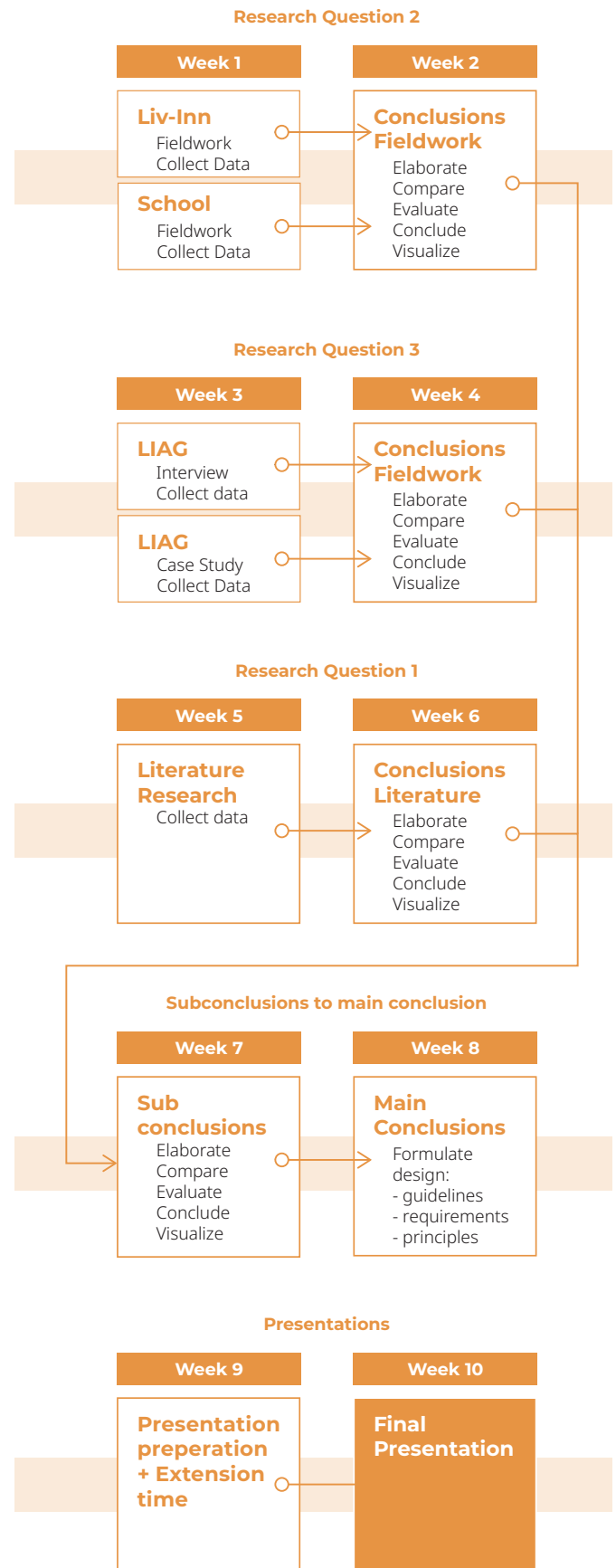
“How can spaces within and around a care facility be designed to promote daily activities and spontaneous meetings between very young and old people to improve their physical, mental, and social well-being?”

05 - Time Planning

To assess the feasibility of this research within the designated 10-week time-frame, a timeline has been developed

5.1 Explanation of Timeline

The research timeline is illustrated in Figure 12. This is a general timeline that still needs further detailing; however, it provides a clear overview of the structure for the upcoming weeks. The figure shows that each sub-research question has a time frame of two weeks: one week for conducting all necessary field-work and collecting data, and one week for documenting and elaborating on the conclusions drawn from this data. After these three periods of two weeks, the research questions will be compared in the following two weeks, leading to an overall conclusion. The final two weeks will be dedicated to preparing for the final presentation scheduled for week 10.



12 Figure 12: Time line

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEW

Vragenlijst aan ouderen:

Activiteiten en Interesses

1. Welke activiteiten zou u leuk vinden om samen met kinderen te doen?
2. Zijn er bepaalde hobby's of interesses die u graag zou willen delen met jongere generaties?
3. Wat voor type activiteiten zou u helpen zich meer verbonden te voelen met de jongere bewoners?
4. Zou u het leuk vinden om deel te nemen aan praktische activiteiten, zoals koken of tuinieren, met kinderen? Waarom (of waarom niet)?
5. Denkt u dat gezamenlijke sportieve activiteiten, zoals wandelen of lichte oefeningen, geschikt zouden kunnen zijn? Welke activiteiten zouden hier geschikt voor zijn?
6. Welke soorten artistieke of ambachtelijke projecten zou u graag samen met kinderen doen, zoals schilderen, knutselen of fotografie?
7. Welke soorten culturele activiteiten zou u graag samen met kinderen doen, zoals acteren, zingen, dansen, theater?

Omgeving en planning

8. Hoeveel tijd zou u gemiddeld willen besteden aan activiteiten met kinderen, en op welke momenten van de week zou dit voor u het best passen?
9. Wat voor soort ondersteuning zou u nodig hebben om deel te nemen aan activiteiten met kinderen?
10. Zijn er specifieke feestdagen of seizoensgebonden tradities die u graag zou willen vieren met jongere generaties?
11. Wat zou volgens u een ideale ruimte zijn voor activiteiten met kinderen? Denkt u aan een specifieke inrichting of sfeer? Buiten/binnen

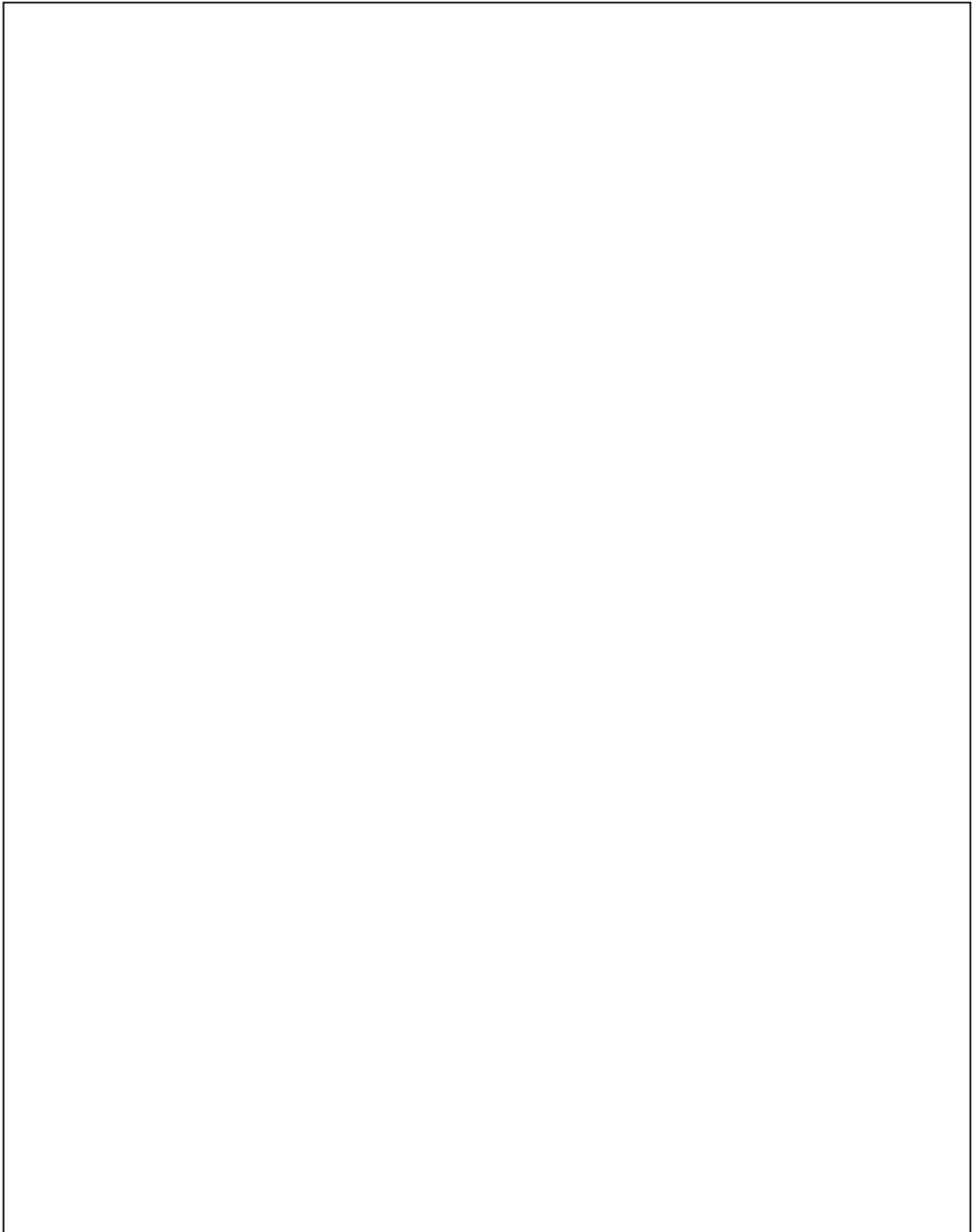
Samen leren

12. Hoe belangrijk vindt u het om leerzame activiteiten te doen met kinderen in de buurt?
13. Zou u openstaan voor het begeleiden of mentoren van kinderen bij bepaalde activiteiten? Welke activiteiten zouden dat kunnen zijn?
14. Zijn er vaardigheden die u van kinderen zou willen leren, bijvoorbeeld rondom technologie of moderne hobby's?
15. Ziet u bepaalde uitdagingen in het samenbrengen van ouderen en kinderen voor activiteiten? Welke oplossingen ziet u hiervoor?

Appendix 1

WORKSHOP

Teken hieronder de ideale omgeving waar u samen met kinderen activiteiten zou willen ondernemen.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or sketch of an ideal environment for activities with children.