This research paper is not a guide to happiness. You will not find here instructions of how to achieve joy in life but a critical reflection on the humans’ biggest desire and its’ shades. Moreover, the paper outlines the condition of nowadays society across European countries. Issue of intolerance, the focus point of this thesis, is a main opponent in living a happy life.

The ABC of Happiness project is aiming to find a solution for problems faced by immigrants in the Netherlands by developing architectural tools, program and looking through the lenses of positive psychology dogmas. First part of research paper explains the notion of happiness and the situation of discrimination in the EU, as well as outlining the goal of my design. In the next part a concrete research is being introduced by showing facts and figures on immigration, education and health care. Interviews and specific case studies are giving an indication for a possible programmatic answer. The concept of polarities’ reconciliation is described in the design section, where research key findings are being implemented in the concept design strategy for the urban architectural merger.

"[...] it is important to the future existence of the human race that we understand the importance of the individual and the reality that we are all different, all individuals, all changing and all contributing to the ‘whole’ as individuals, not as groups or products of ‘mass-identity’, ‘anti-individual’, stereotyped groups of humans with the same goals, ideas and needs”

KEITH HARING JOURNALS
The ABC of Happiness

INTRODUCTION
Happiness is the greatest desire of mankind. It is a condition evaluated already in Aristotle times (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and neglected in a study throughout centuries. As a matter of fact, for hundreds of years we had one thing in common, a mutual aim, yet so differently described and experienced across the globe. Happiness, a very vague and complex term, needs a certain definition. For some people it may be a short, intense and elusive feeling – an emotion extremely hard to explain. It can be also a synonym of a ‘good life’, sometimes closely interrelated to the financial status and social class or a moment of child’s joy emerging during its playtime.

Nowadays, the researchers prove that circumstances such as high income, social status, place where you live or age, constitute only to 10% of one’s life’s happiness. The level of ‘good life’ experienced is our choice and responsibility.

Circumstances, such as high income, social status, place where you live or age, constitute only to 10% of one’s life’s happiness. The level of ‘good life’ experienced is our choice and responsibility.

Experiencing happiness is easier than one can imagine. Developing hobbies, doing sports, spending time with friends or in the nature should become daily exercises, which bring unconditional satisfaction influencing our life forever.

A new offshoot of psychology goes in hand with the recently born theories behind happiness. Positive psychology, standing in opposition to psychiatry, is focusing on understanding and promoting well being, as well as supports people in their development, strengthening health, optimism, resilience and creativity. (Holder 2012)

What stands on the way to live a happily is lack of tolerance towards multiple differences. Nowadays, discrimination is the major reason of problems among minorities met on daily basis. Here, injustice is what causes depression, sadness, withdrawal - obviously the opposite emotions to well-being.
The Netherlands is one of the top scoring countries in the World’s Happiness Report. Dutch citizens seem to be generally pleased with the financial status, housing conditions, safety or freedom to make life choices. (World Happiness Report 2015) Innovative health care facilities are being introduced and children attend well-equipped educational facilities. As long as growing up in Holland can be an idyll for natives, what we see in World’s Happiness Report is a hoax for many immigrants facing discrimination on the regular basis. Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is rising in strength across the European Union. (ENAR 2015) Indigenous citizens are scared to take the moral high ground, cannot accept and do not try to understand different cultures, which causes rapidly increasing misunderstandings on variety of fields and minorities’ seclusion. In the light of current events, the challenge will be not only to welcome the ‘cultural individualism’ but also (and most importantly) create a supporting background bridging the gap between natives and migrants.
In order to use the unveiling potential of positive psychology it was significant to look for the childhood-related problems in the Netherlands. Within the shades of happiness, education and health care, on a social level, became a rational field for investigation.

Although Holland is said to be one of the most child-protective countries, there are several negative elements influencing kids’ well being. As previously mentioned, the issue of immigration causes an increasing level of discrimination. The most dramatic are religion and race based, especially towards Muslim children and refugees. Immigrants and asylum seekers are facing increasing difficulties in the Dutch realm. Hampered access to health services and education contributes to health complications among children and lowers their chances for a successful future. Discrimination and violence causes rejection from society, a feeling of seclusion, which affects children’s development, and might contribute to apathy or even depression. (Fau 2011)

The ABC of Happiness aim is to translate the positive psychology dogmas into the language of architecture.

Architecture is a field, which gives the possibility to achieve a goal in improving particular situation on a social level; it creates a framework and guidelines for appropriation. (de Botton 2007) Within an ensemble interwoven with Dutch and immigrant district there is a possibility to create a new platform for meeting, interaction and a mutual understanding for children and their parents.
Immigration is a consequence of certain historical events and governmental decisions. [fig. 4.01.] There are several types of migration, such as labor migration, family reunion, and migration from former colonies or asylum seekers.

The biggest influx of people appeared shortly after the Second World War with the incoming migrants from former colonies (Indonesia, Surinam, Dutch Antilles Islands in the Caribbean) and when the Netherlands had invited blue-collar workers from Moroccan and Turkish regions in order to sustain country’s needs while rebuilding and growing in economic power.

In the early 70-ties, due to the introduction of Family Reunification law, the amount of ethnic minorities (especially woman with children rejoining their male head of households) continue to grow. Since the 80-ties till today vast number of refugees is approaching the Netherlands trying to escape the inhuman conditions they are facing in their country of origins. Lots of them are coming illegally to the European Union, working on the black market trying to make ends meet. (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport Ministry of Education, Culture & Science 2000)

Foreigners live mostly in Randstad area. The biggest amount of ethnic minorities’ population made its way to Amsterdam, however Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht stand just behind the capital in the statistics. [fig. 4.06.] Almost one fourth (around 3.5 million) of citizens living in the Netherlands are non-western and western immigrants. [fig. 4.07.]

Inconsistencies occur among the distribution of immigrants, which is often unbalanced within districts. When on the one hand, in Holland’s capital and Utrecht newcomers are evenly allocated, in The Hague and Rotterdam there is a tendency to create almost restricted areas for migrant population. The Dutch avoid districts where there is a predominance of foreigners and choose to live in neighborhoods purely created with natives. (CBS Statistics Netherlands 2001) (CBS Gemeente Rotterdam 2014) If the process continues in this manner, there is a serious risk that the country may quickly face a real danger of ghettos.

Surprisingly, the Netherlands houses over 3.6 million children. 22 percent of this group has parents with
foreign background. Majority of those kids live in the four biggest Dutch cities, where a growth in number of children between 0-5 years old was recently noted. (fig. 4.04, 4.05.) CBS Statistics Netherlands 2006) Rotterdam – a European melting pot – is a home to 166 nationalities from all over the world. Researches say there will be an influx of citizens to this already very densely populated city. (Hamamatsu Report) In Rotterdam – South is mostly inhabited by foreigners, predominantly with non-western immigrants. (fig. 4.08.-4.10.) Rotterdam Zuid is experiencing variety of complications when it comes to handling migrant uneven situation. For example, Feijenoord has the lowest Social Index Level among South districts. (fig. 4.11.) The capacities within the district are inadequate when it comes to health care services, income and language. Residents of this area do not have a regular possibility to take part in social and cultural activities and experience little social bonding. Thus, it is not surprising that population participation in work and education is relatively insufficient. (Rotterdam Sociaal Gemeente 2009)
Needless to say, seclusion on the social aspect is influencing nearly every part of immigrants’ life. Citizens with foreign background have limited access to labor market; mothers constitute to the highest number of unemployment in the Netherlands. (fig. 5.01, 5.03.) Recruitment procedures by the employees are often unjust and are not based on one’s curriculum and achievements. This type of racism is hardly recognized or reported, which only strengthens the division between the superior groups and ethnic minorities. (Vasta 2006)

Clearly, poor labor market situation contributes to poverty among foreigners. Statistics prove that significant number of low-income households are non-western immigrants. (fig. 5.05.) (CBS Statistical yearbook of the Netherlands 2014) Disadvantaged families struggle to support their children and are often unable to create an inspiring environment. Uneducated and bored youth is facing a serious challenge whether to fight for their future or choose the ‘easy path’ and contribute to crime. (fig. 5.04.) (Arts, Nabha 2015)
System of education for pre-primary and primary schools and its evolution is complex. First nursery schools appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century through a private initiative and were addressed to kids from families of a low economic status allowing mothers to find a job. By the twentieth century the government increased its involvement through setting child protection legislations as well as financial support. In the late 60-ties and early 70-ties, due to women emancipation process, modern educational units were introduced: pre-school, child-care centers and out-of-school care appeared. Those were oriented mostly towards families’ needs providing a mother a free choice about the labor market. At a certain time nursery and primary schools were merged into one provision supporting 4-12 years old kids. Although, for years the government provided variety types of children centers there was a trend for women to stay at home in order to take care of youngsters because they failed to see relevance in the message carried by early childhood education. Nowadays, Dutch society is changing the public opinion reassured that sending their offspring to schools is not destructive but contributes to a happy and stimulating childhood. [fig. 6.01.] (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport Ministry of Education, Culture & Science 2000)

In theory, Holland provides freedom of education regulated by the Dutch Constitution, which is financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and private funds. The attendance is high, although compulsory education starts from the age of 5, 95-98% of children enter primary school when they turn 4. (Thijs, van Leeuwen, Zandbergen 2007)

One of The ABC of Happiness directions is to focus on children till the age of 12, as well as their parents. Till the moment a kid turns 12, parents have a range of educational provisions to choose. [fig. 6.02.] For a child from 0-4 years old they can select a day nursery, which allows its pupils to meet and play with their peers. Playgroup and pre-school are targeting children from 2-6 years. They give a possibility to have fun and interact with others. However, they are mostly oriented towards preparation for primary school through language and cognition classes. (Broekhof 2006)
In the Netherlands, general practitioners (GP) are the first ‘cells’ in Dutch health care system. They hold crucial role to monitor the patient and identify its needs for a further treatment. Children and adolescents shall have an easy access to GPs within a small proximity from their households (by registering in a clinic at the neighborhood). The therapy costs are reimbursed within the Dutch health insurance. (Zwaanswijk, van Dijk, Verheij 2011)

Although, general practitioners are reachable with ease and regularly visited it turns out that many health related problems are left neglected and unnoticed. For example, when it comes to troubled kids, uncertainty, lack of proper knowledge or engagement into patient’s interview leads to delays in sending the sick person to a specialized care center. (Zwaanswijk, van Dijk, Verheij 2011)

In fact, in a substantial number of cases, problems were diagnosed and help was found through relatives or teachers. (Zwaanswijk, van der Ende, Verhaak, Bensing, Verhulst 2005)
Several programs worldwide took action in order to bridge the gap on the social level. For example, Head Start (created in 1965 by United States Department of Health and Human Services) focuses on a complementary approach for children raised in low-income households. This provision does not only limit itself to higher education skills but also supports kids with nutrition, health and requires parental involvement. (Wikipedia) Although, preliminary improvements in children’s well being were noticed, the initially envisioned long-term effects were observed to quickly disappear after pupils had left the school. (Lee, Loeb 1995) These outcomes show a certain setback and call for an innovative, multidisciplinary planning. In the Netherlands, one of the most socially conspicuous problems of “black” and “white” schools is currently gone over with a fine-tooth comb. Concentration of non-western immigrants (allochtonen) reaches at least 50% in each of so-called “black” schools. The term “black” refers only to non-western immigrants, which strengthens stigmatization within the society. Polarization between native Dutch and ethnic minorities began in 1980’s when immigrants started to move into the four biggest cities. Dutch citizens intentionally secluded themselves from the newcomers, changing the neighborhood where they could send their offspring to Dutch schools. Lack of interaction with the poorly educated, low-income migrant families contributes to isolation and leaves them as ‘underclass’. According to the 1999 Report on Minorities from the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, by the end of primary school there are significant delays in education between indigenous and immigrant children. (Arts, Nabha 2015) Johan Bosma, a principal of public school De Panda in Utrecht (a “black” school, with only one Dutch pupil), confronts the issue using additional funding from the government in order to higher the educational goals. He puts major effort into Dutch language classes and dedicates plenty of time to the youngest with extra curriculum classes. Despite principal’s efforts there is still a gap caused by fear of communication and engagement from parents’ side. He states that there is a need for a strategy overcoming environmental differences. (Arts, Nabha 2015)
De Verre Bergen organization focuses on multidisciplinary approach. A short interview with Program Manager gives an overview of their goals and programs’ effects.

**Interview with Program Manager of DE VERRE BERGEN**

organisation based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

This interview took place on 8th of May 2015

author: Barbara Jakubowska

**BACKGROUND**

BJ: Can you please give me an insight on the three major programs you have developed in DE VERRE BERGEN?

PM: One of the first programs started in 2011 is TODDLER COLLEGE. It is focused on helping children in the age of two to three years old that have a language disadvantage. Its specificity is oriented with respect to the Dutch language but also with regards to social skills and development. The concept allows children to start elementary school without a disadvantage compared to Dutch kids. The initiative came from a teacher, who signaled the problem that lots of children have language disabilities, and with no action taken this issue results in even greater disadvantages through years. Our program is quite intensive: four and a half days a week of classes with higher educated teachers than in regular pre-schools. They have a specific methodology developed and they do a lot with the involvement of parents. Parents are obliged to be involved when they send the kids to TODDLER COLLEGE. What is different from regular pre-schools is that they make a lot of excursions in order to expand the vocabulary of the kids. This program runs for about 3 years. It is still in development but we are thinking about scaling it up and implementing it on a broader scale.

Another program is CHILDREN FACULTY initiated by a local community from Pendrecht, which wanted better education for their kids. It is an afterschool program for the children, who get totally different types of classes: sport and fun classes, art, language lessons etc. Initiative started one and a half year ago with strong support of the community. There is a professional organization set up, and we are strategically involved as mentors in South.

The third program is the MENTORS IN SOUTH, which is an initiative of Hogeschool Rotterdam, University of Applied Sciences with an intention of letting their students being mentors to children from South helping them with homework, learning how to plan, and get more self-confidence. The Hogeschool has the ambition to scale up the program; currently they have around hundred fifty students and their goal is to extend the amount to two thousand students in five years. They aim to make a large impact, but for that we need to develop a good methodology and make sure that the quality of the tutoring is really high and meets certain standards. So far we have completed the first year of this program and it is going quite well. The students are very enthusiastic about the program and so are the scholars. This program does not work with volunteers – students get ECTS points for the contribution.

**STRATEGY**

BJ: In what way are the thematic classes chosen for children? Is it a decision done by parents or do you have a board encouraging particular children to take part in classes based on their interests and talents?

SG: We can judge with the people’s evaluation and enthusiasm from the participants and their parents. MENTORS IN SOUTH have just won National Educational Prize for an innovative program. This fact gives certain recognition about the program but for now it is difficult to state something about the effects. For example we do not know yet if the children who are getting a mentor receive better results in school. It is quite hard at this point of program implementation to state about the effects and prove the significances. However, research companies and universities are researching all programs in order to say something about the effectiveness of the intervention.

**FEEDBACK**

BJ: Is DE VERRE BERGEN ready to evaluate the results of programs implemented? Do they give a positive effect and do you receive feedback from parents?

Are you happy with the results?

SG: We can judge with the people’s evaluation and enthusiasm from the participants and their parents. MENTORS IN SOUTH have just won National Educational Prize for an innovative program. This fact gives certain recognition about the program but for now it is difficult to state something about the effects. For example we do not know yet if the children who are getting a mentor receive better results in school. It is quite hard at this point of program implementation to state about the effects and prove the significances. However, research companies and universities are researching all programs in order to say something about the effectiveness of the intervention.
firstly with activities mostly focused on fun. Then the researchers indicated that if the program wants results on the cognitive capabilities of the children we also need to implement classes, which are serious, and this is how they started with the idea of tutoring. I can imagine that now the project leaders are asking children whether they want to participate in certain classes.

BJ: Are you addressing the health care issues in the programs? Do you consider it to be a significant element, which should be intertwined with education?

SG: In a lot of programs it is being addressed. For example ROTTERDAM VAKMANSTAD (Rotterdam Skill City) is a project we support as well, and it takes place in a couple of schools in the South of Rotterdam. It focuses on building skills within the children. It is a very complex program, where the leaders truly believe in healthy food and exercise, build up self-esteem and self-confidence. They have also philosophy classes. So as you see, it is quite an integrated program with a lot of elements where health is a very significant component.

IN MARCH WE HAVE APPROVED AN INVESTMENT IN PROGRAM CALLED MOTHERS OF ROTTERDAM. IT LIES ON THE EDGE OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. IT FOCUSES ON PREGNANT WOMAN THAT ARE IN VULNERABLE POSITION AND HEALTH OF THEIR CHILDREN IS IN DANGER. IN THIS PROGRAM THE MOTHERS ARE BEING SUPPORTED IN A PRACTICAL WAY – FIRST OF ALL WE HELP THEM FIND THE RIGHT HEALTH CARE AND ALL HEALTH-PATHS, WHICH ARE ALREADY IN THE SYSTEM, AS WELL AS TO REDUCE THEIR STRESS LEVEL.

BJ: Taking into account the statistics showing that discrimination among UE citizens towards immigrants is growing in strength, do you think that programs of DE VERRE BERGEN are helping to decrease racism amongst society?

SG: The programs are not focusing on that, however it might be a side effect. What we see in most of the programs that take place in South is that 80-90% of the children are from migrants’ background. However, I am not sure if the programs are bridging a gap between native citizens and the minorities. Every program has a specific focus. We do recognize existing problems, especially among youth, who for example have problems with their identity. We notice the obstacles, however they are not structurally addressed in the programs. I believe it would become stigmatizing when a program focuses only on immigrants.

BJ: Are you addressing the health care issues in the programs? Do you consider it to be a significant element, which should be intertwined with education?

SG: Definitely not. If we want to generalize, then of course the majority of South inhabitants are immigrants, however there are still 20-25% of native Dutch citizens who are struggling with poverty, lack of employment and some of them do not even speak proper Dutch. Therefore, Dutch people benefit a lot from the programs as well. In Pendrecht we have similar situation. In the neighborhood of CHILDREN FACULTY there live lots of Dutch with low social economic status.

In March we have approved an investment in program called MOTHERS OF ROTTERDAM. It lies on the edge of health and social development. It focuses on pregnant woman that are in vulnerable position and health of their children is in danger. In this program the mothers are being supported in a practical way – first of all we help them find the right health care and all health-paths, which are already in the system, as well as to reduce their stress level.

IMMIGRATION ANGLE

BJ: Are your programs addressed only to immigrants?

SG: Definitely not. If we want to generalize, then of course the majority of South inhabitants are immigrants, however there are still 20-25% of native Dutch citizens who are struggling with poverty, lack of employment and some of them do not even speak proper Dutch. Therefore, Dutch people benefit a lot from the programs as well. In Pendrecht we have similar situation. In the neighborhood of CHILDREN FACULTY there live lots of Dutch with low social economic status.

BJ: In American based HEAD START program for pre-school children researchers say that efforts put during couple of years under the wings of the organization are fading away when children get out from the school and encounter home environment. Will your programs have a follow up so the progress worked through years will survive?

SG: In TODDLER COLLEGE there is cooperation with elementary schools. There are organizations involved and we focus multidisciplinary and among different children’s age so we believe that we have a chance to continue and spread the good effects further.

BJ: Have you ever thought about looking through the lenses of positive psychology principles in order to support the programs?

SG: We are not conducting research on that and it is quite an unknown topic for us. However, we have a program called CHALLENGE 010, which is focusing on sport participation and has a link to health. It tries to involve children in sport by including fun element. They are very successful in that.
European Network Against Racism (network of European NGOs) describes itself as a voice of the anti-racism movement in Europe. ENAR Shadow Report launched in 2015 reflects situation on racism crime in Europe. Racial inequality is mostly present among employers who prefer to choose indigenous citizens for their co-workers instead of at least considering multicultural applications. Students are often bullied at schools, tend to have obstacles improving their educational skills, getting to a higher standard “white” school, or finding a job after studies. Teachers do not pay too much attention to ethnic minorities pupils and commit more to teaching the Dutch; therefore the rest is simply left behind. Such behavior is rarely considered to be a crime, and in an outcome it peaks with accumulation of irritation, feeling of unfair treatment and leads to turning away from the society. (ENAR Responding to racism in the Netherlands 2013) (ENAR de Kroon 2012-2013)

ENAR’s main goal is to battle racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and to introduce a sense of balance between EU citizens and newcomers. They fight with stereotypes by encouraging acknowledging what racism is and in what way the society ought to fight with it. They strongly believe that EU needs to take action in order to build up a world free of discrimination. (ENAR de Kroon 2012-2013)

On 6th of May 2015 ENAR organized a conference celebrating the release of Shadow Report 2013-2014. The event was held at the European Union Parliament in Brussels. Sarah Isal (chair of ENAR) gave several examples of racism among EU countries and underlined that there should be collaboration implemented between police, NGOs and the society as well as governments should improve legislation and put effort on understanding it. Paul Nemitz (DG Justice at European Commission) introduced an idea where children learn about other cultures, what intolerance is and focus on positives about nations and their history. The general conclusion was that we need civil society standing behind minorities, which is the biggest challenge nowadays. (ENAR Nwabuozu 2013-2014)
Happiness, the common desire of human mankind, is now deeply researched by the scientist around the globe. Positive psychology, as a medium of improving subjective well-being, is an additional path standing next to traditional psychology, neuroscience and psychiatry. The significant difference is that positive psychology focuses on prevention methodology in comparison to regular approach, which orients itself towards treatment. It puts effort on understanding range of emotions (like hope, physical health, resilience, love etc.), which contribute to humans’ life satisfaction level in a long-term effect. (Holder 2012)

In a recent study it has been proved, that happiness is the greatest desire of parents for their children (Diener, Lucas 2004). Youth in age 16-18 can easily describe their level of life satisfaction and reflect how it affects their daily or educational performance. (Proctor 2010) According to MacDonald and Kirkpatrick, kids 8-12 years old are able to judge their feelings with the use of ‘Faces Scale’ (a scheme of 7 simple faces’ drawings that show mouth from downturned to upturned reflecting sadness and happiness). Another method is Experience Sampling Method, which base on estimating well being in particular time of the day. It turns out that children are aware of their feelings indicating for example, that when being alone they appear to be less happy in comparison to when they spend time with their peers. (Csikszentmihalyi, Hunter 2003) Those and many more methods, are proving that children can be happy and are capable of an honest judgment on their life’s satisfaction level. It is clear that there is a need to initiate an empirical research on kid’s well being, a parallel offshoot of analysis on mature persons.

One may ask why is it so important to study well being and what advantages stand behind? Well, state of happiness has plenty of long-term effects, which are actually similar for kids and adults. High levels of subjective well being contribute to physical health and a smaller tendency to get sick. (Veenhoven 2008) Exercises performed on regular basis influence optimism: people are less worried, live longer and recover quicker from an eventual illness. (Holder 2012) With a positive state of mind creativity flourishes and you are able to tackle problems with ease, develop originality.
think out of the box. (Baas 2008) Progress at work or school is also determined by positive well being. With feeling of happiness students and employees are able to perform more efficiently and to solve obstacles in a creative way. Moreover, while enjoying type of work assigned they are unwilling to miss days at the office or at school and are eager to achieve more. Referring to Self-Determination Theory, researchers state that an involvement of parents and teachers to increase positive well being between offspring, providing them with an ability to become more autonomous and learn how to gain pleasure from studying, is crucial to speed up and create a background for the emotional and cognitive growth. (Holder 2012) Getting happiness through social relationships lowers behavioral problems among adolescence. Positive well being strengthens resilience and builds personality in order to face challenges and not to give up. (Holder 2012) Needless to say, happiness is linked to a spectrum of benefits. In a nutshell, it is a miraculous component that makes you hungry for life.

But, what happens if you are on a verge of a breakdown and the last remembered thing is a feeling of happiness or joy? Positive psychologists and researchers do not give a defined toolkit on how to become happy, but introduce theories that might give an indication of how to improve well being.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Hungarian based professor and an author of “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience”, describes his famous theory of flow as a state of mind and body where a person is totally engaged with an activity and loses sense of time. Mihaly states that optimal experience is an ecstatic condition, where a person becomes an analogy of a mental state and steps into an alternative reality. There are several indicators of being in a flow [fig. 9.01.]. Flow happens parallel to composing music, making art, doing sports or during any creative activity that stimulates imagination. Flow stands on an edge of feeling of control (comfortable but not exciting enough) and arousal (pushing beyond comfort zone, over-challenging) and is at the opposite pole of apathy, worry and boredom (negative feelings). Although, it sounds complicated the psychologist suggests that feeling of optimal experience is achievable for everybody by fixing our set point and focusing on doing what we really enjoy. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990)

Another great thinker is a French Buddhist Monk - Matthieu Ricard (author of “Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill”) who graduated with a Ph.D. from molecular genetics and is currently a representative of Mind and Life Institute, which collaborates with scientists’ researchers and Buddhists in order to understand what happens in human’s body and mind while meditating. (Wikipedia) He states that happiness is not a mere, pleasurable sensation but a deep sense of serenity and fulfillment. To get into this state of being we need to train our minds. The brain cannot feel two opposite emotions at the same time [fig. 9.02.], thus Matthieu suggest to use brain plasticity in meditation to focus only on positive feelings (love, happiness, altruism) and avoid negative that create a chain reaction to miserable life. (Ricard 2004)

Leisure and social activities, getting contact with nature are the simple and accessible ways to trigger feeling of happiness for most of us. Unfortunately, as easy as it seems some people, especially children with disabilities, need plenty of support to find their life track. To face those challenges scholars of University of Pennsylvania founded the Penn Resiliency Program.

The program is an educational support unit addressed mostly to kids in age 10-14. (Holder 2012) The researchers are aware of states of sadness, apathy or even depression among children struggling with disadvantages. They believe that positive well being should be a part of educational strategy to minimize mental health problems, higher learning skills and creativity among the pupils. (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, Linkins 2009) Children often fall into distressing looped pattern where one failure at school leads to another contributing to loss of self-esteem and confidence. [fig. 9.03.] (Gillham, Reivich 2007) Penn Resiliency Program goals are firstly to look for child’s skills and stamina to further teach how to use them on the regular basis, either at school or at home environment. Preliminary outcomes show that the program is a success in reducing stress level, anxiety, depression and behavioral problems as well as improves educational achievements and interaction on social level among students who took part in the research. (Holder 2012)
In order to design an architectural ensemble that might bridge the gap between multicultural indifferences and provide a positive environment for children and adults, the research led into a brief analysis of a classroom unit and school organization to further examine educational or social provisions and healthcare centers. The investigation was targeted towards relation of programs, inside-outside and private-public space, and circulation.

Traditional schools were rigid in structure with children squeezed in rows always facing tutors at the blackboard. Luckily, XIXth century models of classrooms and school arrangements have radically changed. There is community involvement and teachers' collaboration included. Educational provisions are not self-governing introverted entities anymore; instead, they open to the public realm. Both the mentors and pupils share spaces within a school. [fig. 10.01]

Teachers' control has improved thanks to the new arrangement. [fig. 10.03] The idea is to create flexible spaces and children are allocated within a smaller group of pupils. Classrooms are oriented towards different directions and outside play zones are easily accessible from the inside area. Windows are at full height of vertical partition in order to bring the nature closer to the building. New schools encourage their students to explore and become spontaneous in learning thanks to the flexibility of contemporary designs. There is a growing tendency not to overdesign, to leave space for appropriation and surprising use. The "fixed" spaces are meant to be service zones; the "flexible" ones are to support educational needs. [fig. 10.02] Movable walls, curtains for space division became obsolete. (Dudek 2005)
Design is organized on a modular grid to provide wider flexibility and possibility of extension. Clusters of programs located next to each other that define communication pattern. Idea of street-like corridors turns out to be a maze arrangement, which does not resemble architects’ goal (a feeling of city within a city): failure in choice of materials, scale of internal streets, amount and directions of daylight and points of interaction.
The building’s structure is an example of a ‘city without borders’. Cluster arrangement gave a possibility to a theoretical future expansion. There are two repetitive residential units, which house the program for particular group age of children. Those modular units consist of private and public space, outside play area in-between. Department for younger children is more enclosed, whereas for the older contributes to openness towards exterior area. Separate flows between departments were designed, still allowing a flexible circulation.

AMSTERDAM ORPHANAGE
ALDO VAN EYCK

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The school has been extended in several stages. In the process the building gained separate entrance designated for children for younger age in order not to mix with the youth. The principal decided to close it to allow all the kids to experience the ‘learning street’ similarly. This ‘educational promenade’ is a link between modular L-shaped classrooms, which zones are clearly defined from introverted to extroverted.
In “The Architecture of Hope” Charles Jencks states that “architecture cannot change society ... but it can underwrite and enhance the basic activities of those who work in it.”

Maggie’s Centers, which support patients battling with cancer, are a certain example of this reflection. These small scale health care provisions have a hybrid character. The public space (circulation route) interlocks with communal program – kitchen with living room area and connects to private and more intimate spaces. It is created in such a way that sick person can enter or exit the center without being noticed. Connection to greenery adds value to the building. A mix of possible usage provides a home-like feeling and fights with isolation. This type of architectural design can bridge the ‘functional and symbolic’ and gives a civic meaning to the institution. It might be the future for health care centers, which include entertainment and are simply more human.
The ABC of Happiness

Chapter 10
How Things Work

Figure 10.13: Relation of outside-inside and public-private space & relation of programs

Maggie’s Center Gartnavel – Glasgow – OMA

Cancer Counseling Center – Næstved Hospital – Effect

Figure 10.13: Relation of outside-inside and public-private space & relation of programs
Architects and urban planners tend to neglect children in their design visions. Although, youngsters are users of the city, often more active than adults themselves, designers do not really take into account their presence.

We do experience public space in a certain way, looking from a ‘mature person’ point of view, in a quite predictable manner. What kids do is often surprising because it is not based on cognitive knowledge but on cognitive process. There are no boundaries, thus stairs can become a mountain to hike, railing an item to climb and do acrobatics, abandoned construction site the best sandpit or cut brunches a secret, little hut. Playgrounds are often created to support what cityscape cannot bring to the children, which is tricky, since even the most beautifully designed space will be quickly interpreted by kids in their own way, using a castle structure as a ship, or the other way around. (Dudek 2005) The challenge is not to design supporting infrastructure purely for children, it is to start thinking that children are respectfully as important as adults and to let them safely appropriate our cities.
Experiencing city by children and adults relates to their scale. For a healthy and fit mature person high stairs will not be considered a challenge in opposition to a kid, who sees them (depending on the age) from a totally different perspective. A toddler crawling on all fours has a limited perception visibility (the head height is on approximately 30 cm), whereas a 12 year old boy (with an average height of around 150 cm) can almost fully experience surrounding environment. It is extremely important to keep it in mind in order not to cut the children out from the 'world' around them.

Architects’ task is providing accessibility with ease; for example designing window openings with no constraints towards the outside space (a typical height of a window sill of 110 cm is too high for a couple years old kid in order to see what is behind). Playing with sizes of openings, whether towards the exterior or inside space will trigger their imagination. Supporting furniture is also a gesture towards children needs, they observe and learn how to use certain elements and they do not feel excluded from the adults’ life.

A remarkable architect taking human approach in design was Aldo van Eyck. Within one of his first serious and built projects he managed to balance the relation between main project’s receivers – the children, further the parents and the urban structure of Amsterdam. “Humanist Rebel”, within a proposal for capital reconstruction after WWII (Amsterdam Public Works), designed seven hundreds of playgrounds set in different parts of the city, mostly occupying vacant plots after the city’s destruction. (Lefaivre, Tzonis 1999) Aldo was one of the first who managed to reconcile the urban fabric with newly developed areas in a way that the playgrounds did not appear as separate entities but largely contributed to the rebirth of public space. (Hertzberger 2008)

Aldo’s playgrounds were strategically designed so children in different ages could use it to have fun. One of the examples may be the so-called ‘klimbergen’ (a climbing mountain). (fig. 12.02) It is a hilly composition of concrete blocks with different heights. Tall and dexterous children could reach the top while the youngest offspring was safely playing with the lowest levels. The architect using homogeneous architectural language created design without borders and bridged the gap within the youngest generation.
Within the research paper I set a goal to reflect on term of happiness as well as what stands on the way to achieve it in life. With each step of conducted analysis, surprising pieces of information were revealed. Investigations on happiness lead to a very contrasting term of discrimination and immigration issue in EU countries.

Fascination in structuralism thinking and hybrid programs gave indications for concept design, where social inequalities could be bridged. Outcomes brought me to an idea of a possible architectural solution introduced in the Design chapter. Below, you will find the key findings set as my guidelines for the design process.

**HAPPINESS**

The project is not a guide to find out what easily brings human beings happiness in life. It will provide a background for acknowledging positive well-being. Here, happiness is a condition of mind, body and soul, which supports people development on multiple levels. It is reflecting on what is the most important in life but also shows that becoming satisfied is a process and requires lots of work from each of us.

To prove that money, social status or place where you live are not key determinants to lead a happy life I have researched ideas standing behind positive psychology. In case it was missed - positive psychology focuses on prevention method, understanding and promoting well-being. Researchers prove that enhancement of humans’ flourishing helps decreasing health related problems, boosts creativity, increases school success, and strengthens relationships. Positive psychology principles need to be implemented on the daily basis starting already from the early stage of life.

**IMMIGRATION**

Immigration is a global issue, especially nowadays faced by European countries due to a huge inflow of asylum seekers. The influx of migrants is a process which will not be stopped and in the Netherlands exists since WWII as a result of multiple governmental decisions and colonial policy of the past.

Although Holland is a house to many non-Western and Western nationalities, people are still left behind facing obstacles an indigenous citizen is not familiar with. Those, in a nutshell, are mostly: hampered access to educational provisions and health care, stigmatization within society and income related problems.

There is no specific solution to help ethnic minorities, although intolerance is a crime set by law of EU countries. Some NGOs (ENAR) are fighting with discrimination patterns, underline the importance of civil awareness and suggest introduction of tolerance classes on educational levels. Successful programs (De Verre Bergen) provide children a head start and do not focus only on immigrant kids but bring all the troubled together and treat them equally. In some ‘black schools’ (De Panda) people fight with ‘minorization’ and put effort in order to higher educational goal and engage parents in school life.

**DISCRIMINATION**

Every day people face intolerance, whether you have different skin color, are gay, or wear something particularly extravagant. The reason is that people are afraid of the ‘diversities’ and have troubles to understand them. However, as utopian as it sounds, we all have equal rights and this finally has to be executed. We need to try to understand and acquire knowledge about the cultures, seeking for the bright sides of strengthening the relationship between them.

**CONCEPT**

Research outcomes were interpreted into the program, firstly in an urban scale (masterplan concept) to further focus on a chosen fragment of site to develop the urban-architectural merger. The idea is to reconcile the existing polarities between Dutch and foreigners. Within an ensemble interwoven with Dutch and immigrant district there is a possibility to create a new platform for meeting, interaction and a mutual understanding for children and their parents. The program takes into account the needs and scale of both target groups. The school as the primary element of designed ensemble shall be created in a flexible manner, in this way referring to the new design principles of educational provisions. The space should not be overdesigned allowing for free appropriation of the built environment. Pre-primary provision and primary school will be accompanied with supporting program dedicated to all Rotterdam’s citizens. There is a strong believe that a strategic intervention in public realm will be able to engage people of different background, age and social status and will bring homogeneity back to the society.
FEIJENOORD IN THE PAST

Since its early times, Rotterdam was a vibrant port town. The city spread on both sides of River Maas and South was only dedicated to industrial zone and to dwell handworkers (Keeton 2014), who arrived in order to contribute to developing Dutch port economy in the XIXth century. Feijenoord was a nearly self-governing entity with just a few public facilities (shop houses raised for the working class households). The situation changed after the first connection was built in 1878 – the Left Maas Bank (known as Willemsbrug). (Centre for Research and Statistics 2006)

Bridge opening and railway allowed flexible flow of people and goods as well as faster connection between both sides of the river.

Simultaneously to city’s industrial development there was a significant population growth to around 400 thousand of citizens in the XXth century. Although, Feijenoord did not suffer destructions during WWII, the district lost its importance shortly after due to relocation of port facilities and factories.

FEIJENOORD TODAY

In the 50’s post industrial area was turned into residential quarter. City’s planners wanted to house different social groups within the district, which finally resulted in isolation between them. (Rotterdam Vakmanstad 2010) Construction of the Erasmus Bridge in 1996 brought great expectations in rejoining the distant North and South areas of Rotterdam. Indeed, Katendrecht went through major changes thanks to municipality investments to boost the economy. Nowadays, between Rotterdam skyline icons, multiple restaurants, bars, theaters and museums lure young professionals’ elite. Postindustrial lofts are revitalized into hip meeting points and temporary art and culture events are organized.

Parts of the South are gaining from the changes, but Feijenoord is significantly left behind. Crime, feeling of danger, experience of border condition, lack of greenery network are just a few examples of disadvantages needed to be solved in the district with unlimited potential. (Keeton 2013)
chapter 15
SITE

TRAFFIC STRUCTURE

Till 1970 railway was connecting River Maas banks using Rotterdam’s landmark – the Hefbrug. In the late 20th century the municipality ordered changes in traffic structure and an underwater tunnel was constructed. Hefbrug lost its meaning, railway tracks were removed, and a ‘waste-land’ appeared on the map of Rotterdam. (Engel, van Velzen, van de Wal 2013) Newly born strip is still a tabula rasa – a site calling for instant intervention.

BUILDING STRUCTURE

Buildings dated from port industrial times and residential blocks built after WWII were left unchanged till 1990, when majority of blue-collar workers’ housing were demolished and replaced by modern dwelling. This process continues today; there are still badly maintained buildings awaiting demolition.
The first step in the design was to establish rules for the empty plot. Masterplan is set according to a couple of guidelines. The crucial element is to reconnect the historical symbol of Rotterdam – the Hefbrug – and to trace traffic structure directions, which used to join North and South of the city. It shall be a spine for the entire ensemble.

Perpendicular axes unite eastern and western parts of Feijenoord and open more to the citizens. The buildings, with their hybrid program, share the interlocked public space.

Similar programs should join their semi-private functions to create less of an introverted feeling. Private spaces are created within specific program, preferable as interior courtyards or green terraces. The master plan evolves from the inside towards the outside and is accessible with ease to all Rotterdam inhabitants.
MASTERPLAN SKETCHES

The sketches are representing masterplan composition underlining its linearity and a 'city within city' organization. The main axes juggle between the urban blocks and is directed towards the bridge, a landmark of Rotterdam industrial era.
**MASTERPLAN MODEL**

The physical model reflects poetics of urban-architectural arrangement. The bridge is extended with a strong but coherent linear gesture. Building blocks refer to buildings' heights of the nearest neighborhood. There is lots of space available for a free movement.
The ABC of Happiness

Figure 16.08: Physical model photo
Program strategy is based on a cycle of life, especially dedicated to children in their early childhood. (Fig. 16.11.) Since kids would not ‘survive’ without parents I decided to extend the planning with facilities that can be used by children and adults on their own or simultaneously.

Within The ABC of Happiness project, analogy of a hybrid building appears in a variety of fields. After estimating target group the next threefold aspect of the project was established. (Fig. 16.09) Except from taking into account ‘pragmatic’ educational strategy (here, I am referring to top down arrangement of the Dutch educational curriculum) I wanted to implement more holistic approach that includes the coexistence of human beings’ components: “body”, “mind” and “soul”. By “body” I understand the possibility to literally freely express one’s physicality (for example with sport activities) or play (allowing for a short-term sensation of joy). “Mind” element is responsible for cognitive skills, development of creativity and personal strength with extra classes that enhance human development. “Soul” stands for spirituality, setting one’s set point, understanding and tackling encountered obstacles.

The tripartite division follows specificity of program and its use. (Fig. 16.12) Pre-school and primary schools is dedicated only to children, community center is a place for their parents or relatives. Those two groups have an interlocking common program consisting of children library, psychology center support (research center) and sport facilities accompanied with thematic classrooms. The connection is a public, outdoor route that functions differently during the day and night and to which collective spaces belong (an idea of follies on the way). The ensemble lies on the edge of South and North, directly adjacent to River Maas. There is a threefold distance of program accessibility estimated. (Fig. 16.10) Some of the program facilities are mostly oriented towards the closest neighborhood, whereas for example library might be used by Rotterdam citizens. Taking into account research outcomes it is crucial to mention that the program is dedicated to all inhabitants of the city, which allows for interaction between the indigenous citizens and multicultural groups.
The term ABC of Happiness covers a concept of an urban-architectural merger. The design idea involves bringing Rotterdam’s landmark – the Hefbrug – to the ensemble without interfering with its original design. It is significant to pay respect to the historical values it represents in the same time allow citizens to experience it. Although, the bridge is unable to link both sides of the river anymore, I envision it as a place for interaction, where people are allowed to finally access it from both sides of Maas for relaxing purposes, fishing or simply to reconnect with the water. Hefbrug is a starting point for the design – an obelisk on the map of hybrid building program. The main axis is juggling through the buildings towards the bridge and the public buildings are forming a buffer zone for the ones which need more intimacy depending on the program. [fig. 16.13.] The space ‘in-between’ of architectural fabric becomes a public space for city’s inhabitants, which can be used differently according to daytime and during the week. [fig. 16.14] For example, in the morning the public route is used mainly for circulation, but during lunchtime it becomes a place for...
meeting and interaction. In the afternoon I see it as a melting pot for people of the closest neighborhood and the citizens from North side of the river, who come specially to experience children library or during weekend for the market. Generally, the route is not designed purely for circulation and accessibility purposes but to attach to the program, let one’s stay, stop and experience it.

Basing on research key findings specific program was developed. The next step was to find architectural language, which will trigger the changes in Feijenoord neighborhood. In order to relate to existing architectural structure (the bridge) and to finally give this area specific identity system of semi-circular vaults is introduced. Vaults have also a playful meaning, which refer to children’s imagination in a funny way. Those prefab concrete elements give an immense possibility for space organization in both outside and inside spaces. [fig. 16.15] The strategy includes use of ‘scaffolding-like’ structure (concrete load bearing mass) and the ‘infill’ made from wooden elements (glue laminated wood). The wood task is to soften the image of the building and give it a warmer feeling. The space ‘in-between’ the vaults becomes a relation of ‘service’ versus ‘served’ space. It can house plumbing, fixtures, stairs and its’ extension towards outside can appear in the flooring with specific use of material. [fig. 16.16.]
For each of the buildings’ program there are specific, preliminary guidelines set: the accessibility from public route, use of natural light, routing inside the building, connection to nature and visibility within the structure and towards outside space.
Design chapter 16: Concept

- Program attached to street
- Street going through program
- Program housed in a 'container'

Figure 16.17: Design concept sketches
figure 1.01. happiness measured  
made by author  
source: Belic, R. (2011). Happy, USA

figure 1.02. ways to experience happiness  
photo by Carl Mydans. 1935  
source: Library Of Congress. Poor children playing on sidewalk.  
Geeorgetown, Washington, D.C., 25/10/15 12:30  
[http://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997000150/PP/]

figure 2.01. discrimination on the news  
made by author  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 3.01. children climbing Berlin wall  
photo by unknown  
[http://okruchykultury.pl/2014/11/10/nie-tylko-mur-berlinski/]

figure 4.01. immigration history  
made by author  
UCL - History of immigration in the Netherlands. 31/05/15 22:41  

figure 4.02. foreign background and migration motives  
made by author  
source: CBS Gemeente Rotterdam, CBS Statistics Netherlands

figure 4.03. population by age  
made by author  
source: CBS Gemeente Rotterdam, CBS Statistics Netherlands

figure 4.04. 4.05. 4.06. 4.07. 4.08. 4.09. 4.10. 4.11. Rotterdam population  
made by author  
source: CBS Gemeente Rotterdam, CBS Statistics Netherlands

figure 5.01. parents' labor market situation  
made by author  
source: CBS Gemeente Rotterdam, CBS Statistics Netherlands

figure 5.02. 5.03. 5.04. crime and households' income  
made by author  

figure 6.01. education history  
made by author  

figure 6.02. NL education system  
made by author  

figure 7.01. 7.02. health care  
made by author  
Statistics Netherlands Statistical yearbook of the Netherlands 2014

figure 8.01. Head Start opening  
photo by unknown  
[https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/05/18/day-history-creation-head-start]

figure 8.02. toddler college  
photo by Eva Flendrie  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 8.03. children faculty  
photo by Milan Boonstra  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 8.04. challenge 010  
photo by unknown  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 8.05. children faculty  
photo by Milan Boonstra  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 8.06. mentors in south  
photo by Milan Boonstra  
source: [http://www.deverrebergen.nl/]

figure 8.07. ENAR Shadow Report  

figure 9.01. theory of FLOW  
made by author  

figure 9.02. mind training  
made by author  

figure 9.03. depressive loop pattern  
made by author  
Gilham, J., Reivich, K. (2007), the Penn Resiliency Project, University of Pennsylvania

figure 10.01. private - public educational space division  
made by author  

figure 10.02. possible arrangements within a flexible structure  
made by author  
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