

# Integration and Navigating Through a New Society: The Opportunities and Barriers for Social Capital in a Co-Housing Environment

A case study of co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam



**By:** Eva Halverhout

**Student Number:**  
1048921

**Supervisor:** Joost  
Jongerden

Wageningen  
University, The  
Netherlands

## Abstract

This thesis examines the process of integration inside co-housing facilities. Co-housing facilities have emerged as a relatively cheap solution in which housing is provided for refugees as well as non-refugees during the pressing housing crisis, while simultaneously integration is enhanced through the establishment of social networks. This thesis approaches integration not only through measurable components such as access to employment, health, education and housing but rather through the social dimensions of integration, which are often neglected. This will be done guided by the Integration framework of Agar & Strang (2008). In order to do so this thesis uses a case-study of co-housing facilities in Amsterdam, in which refugees live alongside non-refugees. Concretely this thesis focusses on the lived experiences and narratives of inhabitants of co-housing facilities themselves, in order to create a holistic understanding of the types of networks that are established, the facilitators that create access to these networks and the opportunities and barriers experienced in doing so.

**Keywords:** Integration, Co-housing, Social Capital, Social Bridging, Social Bonding, Social linking

## Table of Content

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Refugee integration in co-housing facilities.....                             | 4  |
| 2. The context and history of integration in the Netherlands.....                | 6  |
| 3. Multi-level governance, co-housing and integration: a conceptualization. .... | 8  |
| Multilevel-governance .....  | 8  |
| Co-housing.....  | 9  |
| Integration.....   | 10 |
| 4. Theoretical framework: Unpacking integration .....                            | 11 |
| Defining integration .....   | 11 |
| The integration framework.....   | 12 |
| 5. Methodology .....   | 18 |
| Literature study and Policy review .....   | 19 |
| Case study.....  | 19 |
| Semi-structured interviews.....  | 20 |
| Participant observation.....   | 21 |
| Analysis.....  | 22 |
| Limitations .....  | 22 |
| 6. The projects and their participants .....                                     | 23 |
| 7. Accessing social capital in a co-housing environment .....                    | 26 |
| Accessibility .....  | 26 |
| Physical environments.....   | 27 |
| Activities.....  | 27 |
| Initiators.....  | 28 |
| Safety and stability.....  | 29 |
| 8. Barriers for the establishment of social capital.....                         | 31 |
| COVID-19.....  | 31 |
| The lack of Autonomy.....  | 32 |
| Language .....   | 33 |
| Different backgrounds .....  | 34 |
| Time.....  | 35 |
| 9. Type of networks inside the co-housing projects.....                          | 37 |
| Social bridging .....  | 37 |
| Social bonding.....  | 40 |
| Social linking.....  | 43 |
| 10. Discussion .....   | 43 |
| 11. Conclusion .....   | 48 |
| 12. Final reflections .....  | 51 |
| Bibliography.....  | 52 |

## 1. Refugee integration in co-housing facilities

For a long time, the importance of integration has been absent on the political agenda of the European Union. However, since the rise of people seeking protection and asylum within the European Union starting from 2015 (Czischke & Huisman, 2018), integration has become a relevant topic of political debate. In this ever globalizing world, questions on how to settle people seeking protection and asylum, where to settle them, and which rights and obligations we offer them, are hotly debated (Korac, 2003). The concept of integration is used frequently in mass media, by politicians and societal organisations. However, concrete definitions on what the concept of integration means and when someone is integrated remains vague, limited, and highly dependent on the context in which the concept gets used and produced (Korac, 2003). Despite the lack of a unified definition, the concept of integration gets used in various policy outcomes. Within this perspective, integration is generally approached through measurable components such as the access an individual has to housing, work and education. What is problematic about this perspective, is that social components such as social networks - which are proven to be of high influence on the integration process - are often neglected in policy outcomes (Korac, 2003). Additionally, focussing only on the measurable components of integration, in a systemic way with pragmatic outcomes, fails to acknowledge the human side of integration and the influence social networks can have on the integration process of an individual.

In the Netherlands, when refugees have successfully permitted asylum, they get assigned to a municipality, which is obliged to provide social housing. Municipalities have been meeting these requirements for several years, however due to the current 'housing crisis' characterized by an extreme lack of adequate and affordable social housing facilities (Boelhouwer, 2020). Housing refugees has become a challenge and waiting lists on housing opportunities for refugees have become longer.

The challenges the Netherlands, but especially bigger cities such as Amsterdam, are facing in housing, and consequently housing refugees, call for innovative, creative and rapid responses. One of these responses is the sudden rise and popularity of co-housing initiatives, in which mostly temporal housing arrangements are used to house both 'students' or non-refugees alongside refugees (Tinnemans et al., 2019). The temporal nature of these projects and the innovative ways it creates housing opportunities, results in co-housing being a relatively cheap opportunity to arrange a temporary solution to both the housing crisis, as well as the challenges municipalities face to house refugees. Simultaneously these co-housing initiatives use this opportunity in which refugees and non-refugees are brought together to enhance the idea of 'integration' (Czichske & Huisman, 2018).

Co-housing facilities mainly aim at enhancing integration through the creation of a community, in which social relationships are established and social networks are expanded. As explained earlier, social networks and their influence of refugee integration are often neglected, even though they are deemed useful in providing non-material assets such as information flows and access (Korac, 2003; van Uden & Jongerden, 2021). Co-housing in this sense offers an applicable case study to assess the meaning of social networks and the barriers and opportunities created when accessing these social networks. In order to assess how social relationships are established and what their perceived benefits and barriers are, this

thesis will be guided by the integration framework of Ager & Strang (2008) in which the concept of social capital plays an important role to assess possible effects on the integration process of refugees.

Research into the effects of co-housing initiatives has already been conducted by several other scientists (Czischke & Huisman, 2018; Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020; Oliver et al., 2020). However, a wide perspective on how social capital gets created and accessed - and more importantly the opportunities and barriers this offers - remains limited. Moreover, as Korac (2003) argues, most of the studies that dive into the topic of integration aims at understanding the structural and institutional side of integration. Empirical research that focusses on the voices of refugees themselves continues to be lacking.

The intention of this thesis is to understand how co-housing initiatives are perceived by the inhabitants and what the perceived effects of these initiatives are on the social dimensions of refugee integration. It is not the aim of this study to concretely define integration and measure its effect in practice but rather to understand the perspectives participants have on co-housing initiatives, the types of networks established inside these initiatives and mapping these experiences into barriers and opportunities. By doing so, this thesis contributes to the public and academic debate surrounding integration.

Academically this thesis will contribute to the research surrounding integration initiatives and their effects on refugee integration, by specifically focussing on co-housing initiatives. In order to facilitate a broader understanding of the complex debate surrounding integration and the influence co-housing has on the integration process of refugees, this thesis will incorporate the voices of refugees themselves and look at integration beyond measurable components, by focussing on social networks.

Furthermore, this thesis will have a societal contribution by providing insights into the barriers inhabitants of co-housing initiatives face and the opportunities co-housing offers. By doing so, this thesis aspires to provide insights on how co-housing can be organized in the future and how to enhance opportunities and diminish the amount of barriers.

In order to create a better understanding of how co-housing facilities are experienced and what role social networks play in the complex interplay of integration, the following main question has been formulated:

*What are the experienced effects of co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam on the creation of networks of refugees in the Netherlands?*

To answer this question, the following sub questions have been posed:

- *How is co-housing organized in Amsterdam?*
- *How are these networks facilitated and accessed?*
- *What kind of barriers do inhabitants experience when encountering these networks?*
- *What kind of social networks are established within co-housing initiatives?*
- *What kind of opportunities do inhabitants experience when accessing these networks?*

Within this thesis I will specifically focus on refugees within the Netherlands. I use the term refugees to describe asylum seekers that have obtained an official status in the Netherlands and are thus granted specific rights and obligations. I focus on this group as they are obliged to enter the integration trajectory. In order to assess the possible effect of co-housing on the integration process, I therefore limit myself to refugees that have legally obtained their status, and thus exclude illegal immigrants or asylum seekers that are still in the procedure of obtaining an official status.

In order to get a complete understanding of how the experienced effects of co-housing are visible in Amsterdam, this thesis will firstly provide background information on the policies and general debate surrounding integration within the Netherlands. Secondly, the used methods to collect data will be discussed. Thirdly, the academic debate surrounding integration and the importance of social capital that serves as the underlying theoretical structure of this thesis will be elaborated in the theoretical framework. Fourthly, the analyses of the collected data will be presented and finally a discussion and conclusion will be given with the theoretical and academic relevance of this thesis specified. In addition to this, a subchapter which includes a reflection on myself as a researcher and the research itself is included.

## 2. The context and history of integration in the Netherlands

Integration and migration are recurring themes on the political agenda of the Netherlands. The political debate on if and how to incorporate and facilitate refugees into receiving societies has been changing throughout the years (Entzinger, 2006). In order to understand the role of integration in the Netherlands, it is essential to understand the ongoing debate on immigration and integration. This chapter will provide a short insight into the history and the political debate on integration within the Netherlands.

Until the 1970's, immigration was mostly understood as a temporarily concept, with the idea in mind that most immigrants would return to their country of origin after a certain period of time (for example labour migrants). The concept of integration had thus not yet been applicable. Later on in the 1980's the idea of migrants staying in the Netherlands slowly became more obvious and frequent. Consequently a policy called 'ethnic minority' was developed, which aimed at including migrants into society, while at the same time stimulating them to stick to their own ethnic identity, for instance by offering education in the language of their country of residence (Entzinger, 2003). While the general idea that migrants coming to the Netherlands were not as temporal as first thought, this policy of 'ethnic minorities' was still produced with the idea in mind that migrants would return to their country of residence.

The policy of 'ethnic minorities' did not last for a long time, as Entzinger (2003) describes, there were several contextual factors that might have contributed to this paradigm shift. In the late 1980's, the immigration flow had increased. Where the immigrants living in the Netherlands first consisted mainly out of labour migrants who would return to their county of residence, several geopolitical situations in the world caused an increasing flow of people seeking asylum not solely with the idea of return in mind (Entzinger, 2003). Moreover, children of labour migrants were growing up to be more familiar with Dutch culture, meaning the group of immigrants became more diverse and creating policy aimed at ethnic identities, such as the 'ethnic minority' policy, were not sufficient anymore, as wants and needs differed

over generations. More importantly, it had been noticed that unemployment rates under immigrants kept rising, which can be partly ascribed to the lack of linguistic knowledge. This led to critiques coming from multiple areas to dismiss the policy of 'ethnic minority'. Where the priority first was on maintaining differences, the idea had emerged that 'they' had to become more like 'us' and policies shifted towards strict obligations for immigrants to adjust to the Dutch language and customs (Entzinger, 2003).

Furthermore, the rise of anti-immigration parties had an influence on the way immigrants were perceived and how policies were constructed. Scholars argue that for a long time the concept of integration was depoliticised and formulating a strong opinion on the matter was not done (Rath, 2009). In the early 2000's, this took a strong turn. van Heerden et al. (2014) describe how the Netherlands, while known for its multiculturalism, was one of the first West-European countries in which an anti-immigration party entered the political field, namely the CP (Centrum Partij) in 1982. Whilst this party did not become particularly successful, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in 2002 did. However, due to the assassination of the founder, this party was not able to proceed long. After this, a new anti-immigration party entered the field: the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), which was able to obtain 24 seats (of a 150) of parliament in 2010. Van Heerden et al. (2014) argue that the rise and success of these anti-immigration parties have had an influence on the discourse surrounding immigration and integration. By having a strong opinion in the integration debate combined with electoral success, anti-immigration parties were able to put immigration and integration on the agenda (van Spanje, 2010), and provoke reactions, forcing other political parties to take a stance in the debate.

Van Heerden et al (2014) note that while the position on immigration of many parties was not particularly influenced by the rise of anti-immigration parties, the influence was clearly seen in the discourse of the debate. A clear shift occurred from a socio-economic perspective on integration: focussing on education and access to labour markets, towards a cultural-oriented perspective on integration, in which assimilation (the adaptation of an individual that enters a new society) played a bigger role.

Changes in the immigration and integration debate can therefore be partly assigned to the rise of anti-immigration parties. However, as Van Heerden et al (2014) notes, assigning these changes solely towards these parties is an incorrect generalization, as particular ideas about immigration and integration were already a part of the discourse before the rise of the anti-immigration parties, as described in the first part of this chapter.

Besides the changing political debate, integration policies have changed as well. As Mahieu & Caudenberg (2020) describe, in the earlier years of integration policy, the focus has always been state-centred, regarding the nation-state as the main actor within the process of integration. Within this view, concepts such as national identity and national community dominated the discourse (Mahieu & Caudenberg, 2020). However this idea has shifted over time, broadening the definition of integration and gaining increasing recognition for the complexity of the integration process and the micro-levels of integration. Within this broadening definition, the idea of civil-society, which is expected to play a big role in the integration process through day-to-day interactions, becomes more prominent (Lippert & Pyykkönen, 2012).

In combination with the general decentralization of the social domain (Hooghe & Marks, 2003), it is thus not surprising that the governance of integration in the Netherlands is taking a decentralizing shift, towards local politics of integration. As is happening in the latest policy: Wet Inburgering 2021 (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022). The main idea of this new policy is to decentralize the responsibility of integration more towards municipalities. In the new integration policy, municipalities are obliged to guide refugees in their integration process, in which accessing the labour market and knowledge of the Dutch language and culture play a dominant role. By doing so the Dutch government aims at providing a more fitted and personal road towards integration for each newcomer.

The political debate on integration in the Netherlands and the new integration policy that has been implemented in 2022 are of great importance for understanding the background in which co-housing takes place. In the next chapter, this background knowledge will be expanded by the explanation of theories surrounding multi-level governance, co-housing and integration.

### 3. Multi-level governance, co-housing and integration: a conceptualization.

In order to understand and unpack the establishment of social relationships within co-housing and consequently the barriers and opportunities facilitated within, it is important to understand the underlying theoretical approaches. In this chapter, theoretical concepts that are of value for understanding the outcomes of this study will be discussed. First, in order to understand the background of co-housing it is important to unpack the concept of multi-level governance. Second the concept of co-housing will be discussed. Finally, the concept of integration will be introduced, serving as a base for the theoretical framework which will be introduced in the following chapter.

#### Multilevel-governance

As this research will dive into the effects of locally organised initiatives towards integration, it is important to understand its governance framework. I will do so by unpacking the concept of multilevel-governance. In the earlier days, governance was understood as an action solely conducted by the state, however, over the years, especially with the growing decentralisation in the Netherlands, this idea has drastically changed (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Subjects such as policing, schooling but also integration are sometimes argued to be more effectively governed where it is implemented, thus on the municipal, or even local level. Multilevel-governance in that sense touches upon the outsourcing of autonomy, taking away full sovereignty of the nation-state and dividing this horizontal as well as vertical over different levels and scales, from supranational, national, or local level, involving state as well as non-state actors (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Schakel et al., 2014).

Integration is a good example of a topic that is being governed throughout different governmental levels. Integration begins at migration, touching upon the borders of nation states, but when looking at the European Union, it is also concerned with supra-national borders and governance. Moreover, when migrants are permitted residence in the country of arrival, the process of integration starts (Scholten, 2013). Integration is a process which is likely managed from the national level, while implemented on the local level, involving various state and non-state actors (Caponio & Borkert, 2010). Penninx & Garcés-

Mascareñas (2016) furthermore describe that cities implement integration strategies that fit to their particular local situation, promoting different aspects of integration such as housing, or intercultural relations. The new integration policy implemented in 2022 within the Netherlands, fits in this example of outsourcing national integration governance to the local level, as autonomy for the integration process is outsourced from national governments towards municipalities, which in their turn works together with local organizations to guide the integration process.

What is most important here to acknowledge is that different actors over horizontal as well as vertical dimensions are involved in the process of what we call 'integration'. This is highly applicable to the case of co-housing, where not only municipalities are involved, but also civil society. In order to create a better understanding of the lived experiences inside co-housing facilities, the next chapter will create a broader understanding on the theoretical background surrounding 'co-housing'.

### Co-housing

Research into communal housing initiatives have existed throughout history and addressed the concept of co-housing in various ways (Tummers, 2016). Communal housing initially started as bottom-up projects, initiated by civil society in order to enhance social cohesion and relationships (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). More recently the positive impact of communal housing is recognized widely and co-housing is implemented more often to combat social barriers such as loneliness and inequality (Tummers, 2016). As described in chapter 1, co-housing in the context of integration in contemporary society is often established as a cheap solution to the housing-crisis, while using the positive impacts co-housing can have to enhance 'integration'.

Tummers (2016) describes that co-housing initiatives are mainly focused on the idealized intention of striving for inclusive development by creating a housing environment in which variable actors create and maintain an affordable living situation. Co-housing environments are usually related to goals aimed at achieving commitment, accessibility, community and most important social cohesion. While the main objectives of co-housing arrangements mostly correspond, co-housing is interpreted and conceptualized in different ways. In order to create a broader understanding of co-housing initiatives and a general approach towards analysing these projects, Vestbro (2010) suggests to concretely conceptualize the different meanings behind the concept of co-housing. Vestbro (2010) divides the concept of co-housing into 3 main varieties: collaborative housing, collective housing, and co-housing. What is important to note is that these terms are not mutually exclusive and likely overlap in specific cases, however, it helps to guide research that touches upon co-housing to understand the concepts more concretely.

The first conceptualization Vestbro (2010) touches upon is collaborative housing, which is defined as a housing situation which is designed for social interactions, and moreover incorporates a shared vision, but does not necessarily include active participation of its residents.

The second conceptualization Vestbro (2010) introduces is what he calls collective housing. With the term collective housing, he stresses the idea that facilities within the housing environment are established for collective usage, however households are separated from each other and do not necessarily have to live

among each other. This means households use the same facilities but do not necessarily establish a community around this.

Finally Vestbro (2010) addresses co-housing, which is explained as a type of housing in which participants are regarded to actively participate and manage the housing facilities. Vestbro (2010) describes these facilities usually entail shared environments such as kitchens or living rooms. Co-housing typically aims at creating a community with the inhabitants of the facility.

As stated earlier, the current housing crisis opts for creative solutions towards housing refugees. It is therefore not surprising that local governments are taking a turn towards co-housing, which is a relatively cheap solution to the housing crisis and additionally serves social cohesion and integration (Oliver et al., 2020). By providing an environment in which refugees live along-side locals, it provides an environment in which integration can be enhanced through day-to-day interactions (Czischke & Huisman, 2018). Many of these projects are organized from the basic principle of interculturalism, in which interaction between participants with different social-cultural backgrounds can prevent social exclusion and enhance social cohesion (Mahieu & Caudenberg, 2020) and thus consequently contribute the integration of refugees. With this aim of facilitating an active community in which integration can be enhanced through day-to-day practices, the projects approached in this research can be conceptualized according to Vestbro's (2010) definition of co-housing, and will be categorized as such in this thesis.

Additionally, in order to understand the influence co-housing initiatives can have on the integration of refugees, it is important to conceptualize the meaning of integration.

### **Integration**

Integration is a complex concept, which finds itself hard to conceptualize and measure. The main reason for this is the differing perspectives on what integration is and how integration is embodied. In this theoretical framework the concept of integration will be unpacked. In order to do so integration will be approached from different perspectives, starting with the conceptualization of integration in Dutch policy. On top of that, this theoretical framework will conceptualize integration through the lens of social capital, using the framework of Ager & Strang (2008) as a guideline.

#### *Integration in Dutch policy*

Rights and obligations under Dutch integration policy differ according to the background of individuals that want to come and live in the Netherlands, in which a division can be made between those who are obliged to integrate, and those who are exempted from this.

The people who are obliged to integrate in the Netherlands are people that are planning on staying for a longer term in the Netherlands and have obtained a residence permit for this. However, the country of origin and age both have an influence on the obligation to integrate. Integration is obliged for individuals from outside of the European Union, with an exception for people coming from Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. Additionally, individuals that are aged in between 16 and 68, are obliged to integrate. In some specific cases, exemptions are provided, however this is uncommon (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022).

The individuals obliged to integrate are given 3 years to study, and complete an integration exam. The integration exam evaluates whether the individual knows enough about Dutch society and the Dutch language. In order to complete the exam, the individual that is obliged to integrate is expected to follow courses to obtain knowledge of the Dutch society and master the Dutch language. While strict rules, regulations and obligations are clarified in Dutch integration policies, the real definition and conceptualization on what integration entails, remains vague:

“Successful integration requires both taking responsibility, and a society that offers everyone the opportunity to develop their talents. Thus: participation. By learning the language, working, taking an active part in our society and respecting the fundamental freedoms and equality enshrined in our Constitution.” (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022)

While this definition touches upon key skills that are deemed important to integrate such as language and participation, it lacks concrete ideas on what this participation entails and moreover what is visualized as taking an active part in society. Integration in Dutch policy is thus brought back to a measurable component: people that have obtained their integration exam are by law defined as integrated individuals and allowed their residence permit. Even though integration is defined formal and judicial within the law, perspectives on what integration substantially entails remain divergent. In order to obtain a greater understanding, the concept of integration will be elaborated below.

#### 4. Theoretical framework: Unpacking integration

As explained in the previous chapter, integration is a complex and interrelated concept where perspectives and definitions can vary greatly. Consequently, measuring or understanding integration is a challenging task, if not impossible. In order to grasp an understanding of what values integration are experienced within co-housing communities, this chapter will critically unpack the framework of Ager & Strang (2008) that approaches integration through the lens of social capital. In this chapter I will discuss the different dimensions presented in this framework, and additionally provide a broader understanding of the use of social capital by assessing different conceptualizations. Finally I will adjust this framework fitting to the co-housing environment of this research.

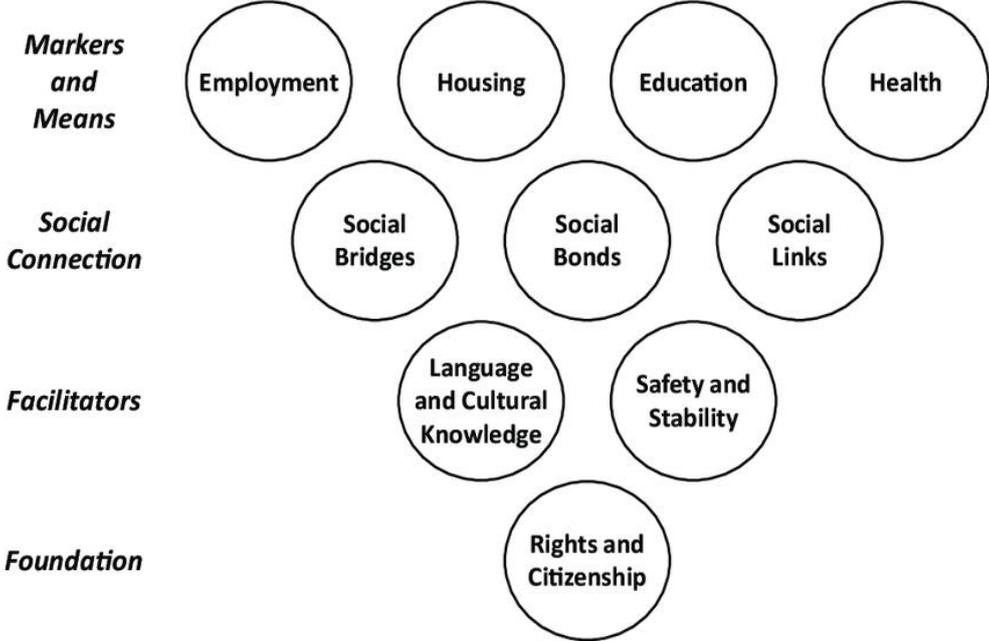
##### Defining integration

Scholars and mostly social scientists have engaged themselves around the concept of integration more in-depth and conceptualized from many different angles, how it can be perceived as effective or evaluate possible influences on integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Castles et al., 2002; Korac, 2003). Korac (2003) describes that what is meant by integration and terms that cover this process differ greatly. Integration can vary from assimilation, which entails full adaption of new members of society to their host society, to incorporation, entailing new members of society are included in day to day life, without the necessity to fully adapt. Castles et al. (2002) state that integration touches upon the idea of becoming part of a ‘new’ society, which includes gaining access to housing, work, health services, but also the less practical dimensions such as exchanging cultural knowledge and establishing social relationships. However, there is no unified definition on what exactly entails integration. This not only because integration is defined in

so many ways, but also because the process of integration is wide-spread and involves multiple different levels and multiple different actors, varying from state officials to neighbours. On top of this, the context in which integration takes place varies greatly, which complicates the definition of integration even more (Castles et al, 2002; Ager & Strang 2008).

**The integration framework**

Despite the fact some scholars might argue that creating a unified definition of integration is impossible, the concept of integration gets used over and over again within political debates and policy outcomes. Thus, Understanding and unpacking the concept is essential for this study (Ager & Strang, 2008). In order to do so Ager & Strang (2008) developed an integration framework based on dimensions frequently associated by the term integration. In this thesis I will apply this framework to the co-housing initiative in order to understand what effects co-housing initiatives can have on the integration process of refugees. The framework that will be discussed is posed below:



**Context of the framework**

Before unpacking the multiple dimensions this framework entails, it is important to stress the context in which this framework is built, and how to approach this framework. Firstly, it is important to stress that when using this framework, the placement of the dimensions might indicate a reinforced, linear or causal relationship. This is however not how the framework should be approached (Strang & Ager, 2010). The dimensions displayed can entangle themselves in complex interplays and interdependencies and are

consequently by all means not mutually exclusive. Agar & Strang (2010) stress the importance of approaching the domains of integration in this framework as resources without specified pathways.

Secondly, it is important to note that in order to create an applicable framework in both research as well as in the field, Agar & Strang (2008) have simplified the different dimensions displayed in the framework, leaving out important influential dimensions such as the surrounding politics, economics, and structures that can be found within the context of integration. While this favours practical applicability in the field, it can be perceived as incomplete or lacking. In order to create an in-depth theoretical and practical understanding of what role social bonding, bridging and linking play in the process of integration, and how these forms of social capital are established, I will unpack the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) in a more critical manner, and expand the understanding of these dimensions by adjusting the conceptualizations.

### *Markers and means*

The top-level of the framework discusses markers and means. Markers and means refer to 'key areas' which are widely suggested as contributors to successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). These areas cover housing, education, health, and employment. Markers and means are often expressed to form the measurable base of the integration process (Ager & Strang, 2008). Achievement in these areas are widely acknowledged as indicators of successful integration, and as facilitators through which integration can be established. In practice this means that when someone that is obliged to integrate is successful within the dimensions of education, employment, health and housing, this person is often regarded as integrated. In many countries such as the Netherlands, these markers are used to quantify integration (Czischke & Huisman, 2018). In practice this means we often look at the amount of refugees that have gained access to employment to assess whether or not refugees are integrating. From this perspective the dimensions of health, employment, education and housing can be seen as marker of integration. However Agar & Strang (2008) stress that approaching these dimensions solely as markers is problematic, as these dimensions, such as for example employment, can consequently serve as a mean through which integration is established. Concretely this means employment can serve as a mean through which an individual can participate and learn about a new society they are accessing, which are deemed important dimensions of integration in Dutch policy. In this thesis co-housing, and thus housing, will be regarded as a starting point for integration. Housing will not only serve as a marker but more importantly as a mean through which other dimensions of integration can be accessed.

While markers and means are generally important indicators of integration, social capital is often forgotten or neglected, while proven to be just as important (Korac, 2003). In addition to this, Landau & Duponchel (2011) argue that social capital and the use of social network in certain settings provide important resources for refugees to navigate through a new society, such as information flows or access. With employment, housing, health and education as means and markers of integration, Agar & Strang (2008) stress the importance of social capital to achieve integration.

### *Social capital*

The framework developed by Agar & Strang (2008) has been highly influenced by the concept of social capital, as the dimensions social bridging, social bonding and social linking that are presented in the framework find their origin within this concept. In order to create a better understanding of social capital, it is important to go back to the initial conceptualization of Bourdieu, (1986) who first coined the idea to approach social networks as a form of capital, which he conceptualized as the different means, ends and resources memberships of social network create and deliver. Concretely this entails social networks can deliver non-material aspects which benefit people accessing these networks, such as information, or access (van Uden & Jongerden, 2021). Approaching social networks through the theory of social capital in the context of integration entails social networks can create different resources and thus benefit those who are navigating through a new society. Building on the idea of social capital, the sociologist Robert Putnam (1995) introduced different dimensions in social capital, varying strong ties between people that are 'alike', towards weaker ties between different groups. In Putnam's (1995) definition, these assets are established to facilitate mutual benefit for those involved. The most frequently used dimensions of social capital are social bonding and social bridging. These different dimensions offer an important perspective on how to assess social capital in a certain context. For this reason, Agar & Strang (2008, 2010) have chosen to integrate these dimensions in their framework in order to capture integration. The dimensions of social bridging, social bonding and social linking will be elaborated below.

### *Social bonding*

The first dimension of social capital addressed in the framework is social bonding. In the framework of Agar & Strang (2008), social bonds are referred to as the thick connections refugees have with like-ethnic groups. This concept is based on the definition of Putnam (2000) that argues bonding relationships are stronger ties that usually occur in groups that are regarded homogenous or 'alike'.

Agar & Strang (2008) specifically stress this likeness upon like-ethnic groups, as they approach social bonding from an integration context. They limit themselves to co-ethnicity as they argue co-ethnic and co-linguistic groups have a higher chance of bonding in the first phases of integration which refugees arrive in a new country, which most of the time entails they still lack the linguistic skills for interaction with inhabitants in the country of residence, and are thus more likely to find their 'aliqueness' within co-ethnic groups. What is important is that Agar & Strang (2008) stress that co-ethnic or co-linguistic bonding should not be seen as a negative influence on integration, as establishing bonds with like-ethnic groups (including family, co-ethnic groups, co-linguistic groups, co-national groups or co-religious groups) have seemed to contribute to feelings of safety and belonging which additionally created a safe base to start the integration process. (Ager & Strang, 2008)

It is however important to note that arguing bonding can only occur within co-ethnic groups can be perceived as problematic. The assumption that thick relationships based on trust and likeness can only occur within ethnic groups, and not outside of these groups. As illustrated by several authors under which Spicer (2008) and Hynes (2009) while bonding occurs within co-ethnic, and co-linguistic groups, this is not necessarily obliged, and bonding also occurs cross-ethnic and even cross-linguistics. The argument that social bonds can occur outside of ethnic groups is also underlined by Czischke & Huisman (2018)

which argue that co-housing initiatives usually limit themselves to specific age groups, aiming to create a first resemblance: age, from which social bonds can grow.

To understand how social bonding can facilitate the integration process of refugees inhabiting co-housing facilities, it is thus important to develop a broader understanding of bonding relationships. As Granovetter (1973) argues, bonding is usually referred to as strong ties, however it is ambiguous to define what this means, as the definition is often dependent on the individual perspective and highly interrelated. Despite the complex nature of the concept of bonding, it is important to create a general understanding of what is meant by stronger or weaker ties. With this in mind stronger ties are defined by Granovetter (1973) as ties that usually contain a certain amount of time investment, emotional investment, intimacy and reciprocity, which usually arise from a certain base of 'aliveness' such as shared identity, or shared interests. The conceptualization of Granovetter (1973) provides a more inclusive and useful lens to assess bonding relationships, than Ager & Strang's (2008) limitation of co-ethnicity. Moreover, instead of taking co-ethnicity as a base for social bonding, Ryan (2011) suggests it is rather significant to assess how social relationships arise, what the barriers and resources for social relationships are and consequently what the effects or benefits of these relationships are. In this thesis, the concept of social bonding will thus not solely include co-ethnic relationships but rather look at the ways in which relationships and networks are defined through weak ties, strong ties and the sense of 'aliveness'. This 'aliveness' can for example touch upon a shared language but also on a shared socio-economic background, shared experience, shared values, norms or wants and needs, and will thus be approached from a wide perspective.

### *Social Bridging*

Another dimension of social capital recurring in the framework posed by Ager & Strang (2008) is the dimension of social bridges. Social bridges according to Ager & Strang (2008) address the social connection between the refugee and host community. Contrary to social bonds, which refer to the 'strong' ties within a group, social bridges refer to the weaker social contacts. Again this idea of social bridges is based on Putnam (2000), who argued social bridges are the weaker ties one can have with the 'other'. Once more, limiting the idea of bonding and bridging solely to co-ethnic characteristics such as nationality or language can be perceived as a limitation of this framework. A relevant illustration of this is made by Ryan (2011) who argues bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive, as one can bond within a co-ethnic group, but bridge within this same group over other divisions such as class or age. It is thus again relevant to approach social bridges from a wider angle, than solely approaching it from an ethnic-perspective. Granovetter (1973) provides such a wider angle, by stressing social bridging can be perceived as weak ties outside one's own social network, which can provide benefits such as information or resources. Weak ties in this context are thus established with the 'other', which again can be conceptualized from a wide angle concerning among others: language, values, norms, age, gender or socio-economic background. In the context of refugee integration or migration, social bridges and weaker ties can be of great value for accessing opportunities such as health care, education or employment (Uden & Jongerden, 2021).

However, as Ryan (2011) stresses, it is important to know that not all weak ties necessarily bring along resources, and some weak ties bring along greater resources than others.

### *Social linking*

Moreover, Agar & Stang (2008) describe social links as an important asset of social capital with regards to integration. Social links are described by Agar & Strang (2008) as the access refugees have to (governance) services. Agar & Strang (2008) include social linking in the framework, as they argue the connection of refugees with relevant services in many occasions has proven to be benefiting the process of integration. When assessing social linking it is thus important to understand in which sense refugees can access government arrangements and how this benefits their integration process. Government arrangements within integration can be regarded in the broader sense of the concept, and moreover entail access to social workers or services that support refugees in pathways towards the society of the country they have been granted permit.

### *Facilitators*

Additionally the framework touches upon facilitators. Facilitators as explained by Agar & Stang (2008) identify how barriers towards integration are most likely to be tackled. The two most important facilitators are included in the framework and focus on language and cultural knowledge, as well as safety and stability. In this conceptualization, Agar & Strang (2008) illustrate language as essential to navigate through a newly accessed society. Moreover, cultural knowledge and cultural exchange are deemed important dimensions by Ager & Strang (2008) as understanding differing norms and values are highly important for participating in a new society. Besides this, safety and stability are regarded as important facilitators by Agar & Strang (2008) for integration. Safety and stability are defined as whether the refugee perceives their new environment and their connection to the wider society as safe and stable.

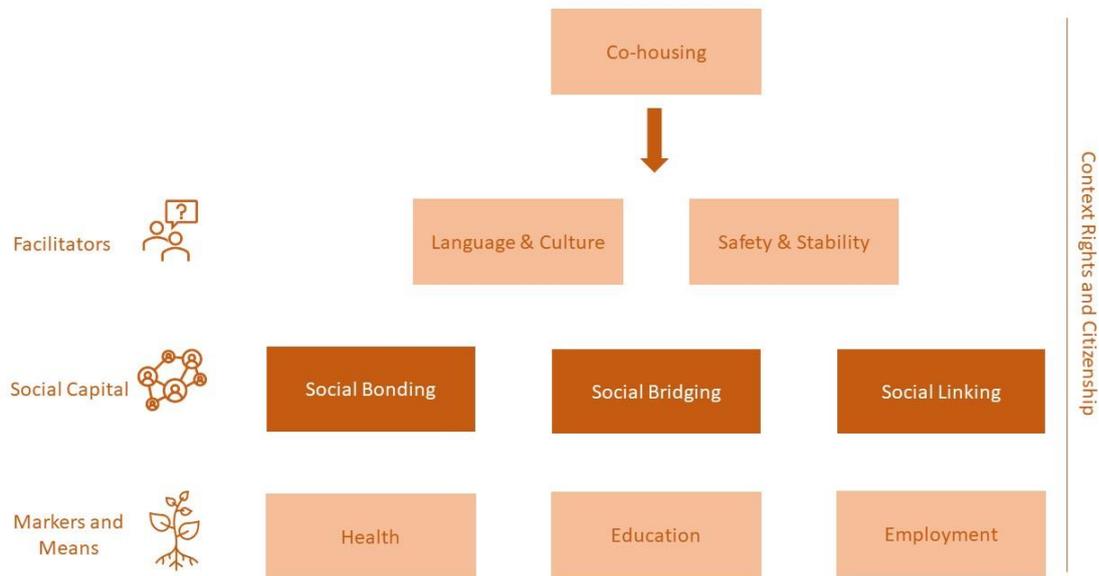
### *Rights and citizenship*

Finally, Agar & Stang (2008) note that it is important to give attention to the context in which these above mentioned dimensions of integration are facilitated. What are the norms within society for housing, education, health and employment and how diverse is this range? And more importantly, what are the standards within that country that defines the expectations for social cohesion? In order to analyse this, Agar & Stang (2008) added the top row 'Foundation' in which rights and citizenship are discussed. A concept aimed at understanding what the rights, values and responsibilities are to obtain 'citizenship' in a certain country. This concept, similar to integration, is sometimes considered vague and corresponds with multiple interpretations. However, it is important to understand what is expected of refugees integrating into society and which responsibilities, according to the receiving society, they have. Moreover, this section covers the rights of the refugee, which according to Ager & Strang (2008) can be found in the policy outcomes of nation states. Rights can be wide ranged and include for example equality, justice, security or freedom of choice. These rights form the foundation of governmental policy aimed at refugee integration and therefore form the base in analysing integration success in different contexts. In order to apply this framework to the case of co-housing initiatives within the Netherlands, the political debate

surrounding integration has been elaborated on in chapter 1, and additionally the policies surrounding refugee integration have been specified in chapter 3.

### *The integration framework in the context of co-housing*

In this thesis, the integration framework will be placed in the context of co-housing. As Czischke & Huisman (2018) state, collaborative housing is aimed at creating an environment in which social capital is stimulated. Co-housing facilities provide the opportunity to bond, bridge and link, which on their turn might contribute to establishing and navigating towards the means and markers of integration such as education, health and employment. In order to understand the effects of collaborative housing on the establishments of social capital, the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) has been adjusted to the context of this thesis accordingly. While critiques can be offered on the way Ager & Strang (2008) have approached co-ethnicity in the light of bonding and bridging, the framework provided by Agar & Strang (2008) still remains one of the few frameworks to assess integration beyond measurable assets as employment and housing, and dives into the importance of social capital within integration. For this reason, I have chosen to use the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) as a main guideline throughout this thesis to provide answers to the posed research questions. To create a holistic understanding of social capital within co-housing facilities, Ryan (2011) illustrates it is significant to assess how social relationships arise, what the barriers and resources for social relationships are and consequently what the effects or benefits of these relationships are. In this thesis, the concept of social bonding will thus not solely include co-ethnic relationships as suggested by Ager & Strang (2008) but rather look at the ways in which relationships and networks are defined through weak ties, strong ties, and 'alikeness' and assess the role of co-ethnicity in these interplays of networks. In order to do so the conceptualization of Granovetter (1973) and Ryan (2011) will be used to assess social bonding and social bridging. In which social bonding refers to the stronger ties in which include a certain amount of emotional investment, time investment, reciprocity and 'alikeness'. Moreover, bridging social capital in this thesis will refer to the weaker ties that bridge a person outside one's own network, which might provide information or resources. Finally, as stressed significantly important by Ryan (2011) this thesis will focus on *how* refugees access bridging and bonding networks and *what type barriers and opportunities* are experienced in this process. In order to create understanding of the creation of social capital in a co-housing environment, the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) is thus adjusted and projected on the next page.



The adjusted framework takes co-housing as a starting point and will assess what type of social capital is experienced within the different co-housing settings approached in this thesis, and more specifically how this type of social capital arise within the context of co-housing. This will be done within the general context of rights and citizenship explained in chapter 2 and the legal approach for integration explained in the beginning of this chapter. Furthermore, the context of the co-housing facilities will be elaborated in chapter 5. While assessing the different dimensions of social capital in co-housing facilities, this framework includes both the markers and means of integration and tries to assess what opportunities co-housing can offer. The methodological approach through which this will be achieved will be elaborated in the following chapter.

## 5. Methodology

This chapter will explain the research methods I have used to put the theory into practice within the co-housing arrangements I visited in Amsterdam. I will first explain which methods I planned on using, which methods I ended up using, and the implications I came across when conducting my research in the field. After this I will explain how I arranged access to my research participants. Finally, I will dive into how I processed the interviews and how I analysed the data.

This thesis dives into co-housing arrangements, specifically focussing on housing projects in which refugees live alongside Dutch young adults in the age group of 18 to 27. The study was aimed at gaining insight in the experiences of inhabitants, the barriers they experience and the possible opportunities co-housing offers. In order to get a complete and in-depth understanding, I chose to conduct mostly qualitative methods for this research, alongside with the literature review I used as a background for this study.

With this research I aimed at gaining an understanding of how inhabitants of co-housing arrangements experience the influence these living environments have on the integration process of refugees. In order to understand this, I based my methodology around the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) explained in chapter 4. Not only because this framework is one of the few to concretely operationalize integration, but

more importantly because the framework has been used in other research concerning co-housing arrangements and integration, and this serves as an opportunity for comparative, or future research.

In order to apply this framework in qualitative research I aimed at using different methods:

### Literature study and Policy review

First of all, in order to gain back-ground knowledge on the co-housing arrangements, their organizations and the municipal approach towards integration I dived into several local policy documents varying from the municipality of Amsterdam to the municipality of Utrecht and Den Haag. The policy documents I looked into entailed 'Den Haag bouwen aan een verbonden stad (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021) and the new integration policy ' wet inburgering 2022' (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022). The background knowledge gained from the policy documents helped me formulate a structured and well informed interview guide for the interview I had with the municipality of the Hague. While the research for this thesis has been taken place in Amsterdam, I was unable to obtain an interview with the municipality of Amsterdam. For this reason, policy documents I have reached out to have been specified on The Hague specifically. The Interview and policy documents have served as wider background and contextualization for this thesis during the process, but have not been incorporated in the results of this thesis.

Moreover, As described in chapter 2, with the start of 2022, the Netherlands applied a new policy in integration called: Wet inburgering 2022. In order to understand how integration is formally arranged in the Netherlands, and which role co-housing arrangements play in integrating refugees into the Dutch society, I used this policy to write the chapter on background knowledge for this thesis. Moreover, I used the literature study to gain understanding about the existing knowledge on the concept of integration, co-housing and finally social capital. With this background knowledge I was able to put together the interview guides I used to conduct the semi-structured interviews.

### Case study

Before starting on this research I decided to focus on a case-study for the research. The aim of using a case-study was to investigate how everyday life in a co-housing arrangement was lived, however due to implications with access and the Covid-19 crisis, I decided to broaden my field and not only to focus on one co-housing arrangement, but instead research multiple co-housing arrangements, but limit myself to the city of Amsterdam. Case-studies have proven effective in gaining an in-dept understanding of certain phenomena. Moreover, conducting a case-study enables the researcher to focus on a particular area of research to understand how and why certain events occur in a specific setting more detailed (Noor, 2008). In the case of my own thesis this means I have chosen specifically to focus on Amsterdam, where co-housing arrangements in which students live alongside refugees are much common than other big cities such as the Hague and Utrecht, in which both only one co-housing arrangement is located. Focussing solely on the municipality of Amsterdam enabled me to understand what co-housing arrangements offer in this city and what the barriers are inhabitants experience. Concerning the limited time and availability I had for this research, conducting a case study has proven more sufficient. While case-studies have been criticised for lack of generalization of the research results, it has been proven that comparing multiple

case-studies in which similar methodology is used, can enable a more general idea of the broader research area. By conducting a case-study this research aimed at contributing and serving as an addition to the larger debate on integration, by identifying barriers and opportunities experienced in co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam. Along with future and past research, this case-study can contribute to a broader generalization in the field of co-housing, gaining more insights in best practices and barriers that come along with co-housing.

### Semi-structured interviews

In order to gain a better understanding of the effects of co-housing projects, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with the initiators and professionals that guide the projects, as well as the participants, both refugees and locals that participate in the project. The interview guide I have used is attached in the appendix. While the questions in this interview guide seem quite specific I aimed at keeping the interviews as open as possible, anticipating on the answers given by the interviewees. I have chosen for semi-structured interviews, as it allows for more flexibility, approaching different respondents in different manners, while covering the needed research areas (Noor, 2008). Additionally, as (While & Barriball (1994) describe, semi-structured interviews will help gaining a deeper understanding into what meaning participants attach to a certain phenomenon, in the case of this thesis: co-housing. Semi-structured interviews have created space to gain more information and clarification on more personal topics, such as the barriers some inhabitants experienced while living in a co-housing arrangement, but also the opportunities. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe questions and ask for examples when my interviewees expressed their opinions. As with this research I aimed to gain more insights in the effects of co-housing, using semi-structured interviews contributed to get an insight in the perspectives, perceptions and opinions of the respondents. Semi-structured interviews create space to explore sensitive subjects and explore the answers to certain question more in-depth (While & Barriball, 1994). In this research focussed specifically on gaining a better understanding of how local governance initiatives aimed at enhancing the social integration process operate and influence processes of integration, the ability to probe questions has proven essential, in order to understand feelings my respondents experienced, but more importantly why they experienced these feelings. Within this research I have focussed both on the effect of multi-level governance on co-housing initiatives, as well as the way co-housing initiatives are perceived by their inhabitants.

In order to gain access to my research participants, I have reached out to many co-housing facilities in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Wageningen and The Hague. Most of these projects refused to cooperate in the research due to their limited availability or other requests from students to conduct their research. Moreover, some of the projects failed to respond to my requests at all. I have send several reminders and tried to call several numbers to gain access to the facilities. One co-housing arrangement in Wageningen did provide me access, however this was while my fieldwork had already ended. Eventually I gained access to the different co-housing arrangements used in this research through different methods. Through mouth-to-mouth spreading of the need for research participants, I came in contact with the Alliantie, a housing corporations in Amsterdam that concerns itself with co-housing Dutch students and refugees. Two employees of the Alliantie agreed to help with finding respondents and spread the message for the

need of research participants through WhatsApp and Facebook. From this I gained access to two inhabitants that were willing to participate in an interview. After this I have used what is called the snowball-method, to gain access to more inhabitants of the project. As Naderifar et al. (2017) explain, snowball sampling is used when research participants are hard to reach. The snowball-method entails gaining access to 'key' figures in the research and asking for these figures to introduce other possible participants (Naderifar et al., 2017) In practice this meant that I asked all of my respondents if they were willing to introduce me to other possible participants such as their neighbours. By using his method I was able to obtain a broader access to inhabitants instead of only using social media.

To understand the effect co-housing can have on the integration of refugees, I conducted 14 interviews of which 1 interview was not recorded. 9 of these interviews I conducted with inhabitants of the co-housing projects. 4 of these interviewees identified as female and 5 of these interviewees identified as male. 6 of these interviewees were Dutch inhabitants of the project and 3 inhabitants were refugees. The refugees I have spoken to originated from Syria and Eritrea. Besides the interviews conducted with the inhabitants of the co-housing project, I have conducted an interview with a project manager from the municipality of the Hague about the new policy on integration to obtain background knowledge. Moreover, I have spoken to a social worker that is active at one of the co-housing initiatives and lives in a co-housing arrangement as well. Finally I have spoken to the community builder, which guides the community and arranges activities, and the location manager of the projects Karmijn and LoHuizen. All interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. With 3 of the research participants, I have done an extra interview in order to ask questions on topics that - after transcribing - needed more clarification. These extra interviews have been through the phone and not recorded. However, detailed notes have been made of the data provided.

Most of the interviews conducted, took place online, considering the lockdown and additional covid-19 measurements that were in place during my fieldwork. Some of the interviews have taken place at the homes of the participants and in the office of one of the co-housing arrangement that was involved in my research.

### Participant observation

Before starting the research, I tried to conduct a participant observation, as it is seen as useful to gain better understanding of the context research takes place. Especially when the study is focussed on a specific case, understanding the context is particularly important. Kawulich (2005) describes that participant observation serves multiple purposes such as understanding nonverbal expressions, interactions and communication in daily life. Additionally to interviews, participant observation can serve as an explanation of what respondents have mentioned during interviews. Besides this, participant observation produces knowledge that is unable to obtain through interviews, as participants might not be aware of certain patterns, behaviour or interpersonal interactions. Besides gaining a broader understanding of the context of co-housing, I aimed at using participant observation as a tool to build rapport with the respondents of the research before conducting interviews (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020).

Despite the fact that participant observation could have offered a great addition to this study, it was not possible to apply this method. As described above due to the lockdown, my own infection with the COVID-19 virus and the lockdown measurements that were in place during my fieldwork period, participant observation was not possible. The main idea of participant observation was to attend events and informal gatherings in the co-housing arrangements, however due to the corona measurements, these events had been postponed or cancelled. Besides this, as described above most of the interviews I had conducted had taken place in an online environment. This had limited the opportunity to build rapport with the interviewees, and thus restricted the opportunity to participate in more informal gatherings, if these would have been there.

### Analysis

All interviews that have been recorded have been transcribed by the usage of the software Trint, a software that transcribes the interviews roughly and provides a first set up. After being transcribed by Trint, I have listened to all the interviews and corrected mistakes made in the transcriptions. After the transcriptions had been finished I used the software Atlas Ti to code all the interviews in order to categorise the data I had obtained. As there was no pre-defined set of codes to code the interviews with, I have used an inductive method of coding the interviews. An inductive approach is described by Thomas (2006) as "an inductive analysis refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher" (Thomas, 2006: 238). Practically this entails theory emerges from the data, instead of theory guiding which concepts will be derived from the data. Using an inductive coding approach led me to coding the data in several turns, to create more specific categorizations. After the first round of inductive coding, my data entailed 173 codes. In order to specify my codes, I used a deductive coding method, with codes I extracted from my literature review, to come to 11 categorizations under which these 173 codes were divided. The final categorizations were based on my research questions and entail: Facilitators, Bonding, Bridging, Linking, Improvements, Barriers, Opportunities, Lack of Organization, Sense of Integration, Weak ties, and finally Strong ties. These categorizations will be elucidated on in chapter 5, in which I explain the empirical findings of the research.

In order to enhance the privacy of my respondents, all respondents will be anonymous, even if they have expressed their consent to be named in the thesis. All respondents gave oral permission to use the data gained from the interviews and allowed to be recorded. Due to the fact most of the interviews were conducted online, I have chosen for oral consent instead of written consent. All respondents were informed that they were allowed to stop at any time during the interview and were not obliged to answer questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so.

### Limitations

As described above, while applying the methodology to gain data for his thesis, I ran into several limitations.

First of all the limitation of access. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the lockdown that was implied during my fieldwork, I was not able to join in on activities as I had planned in my research proposal. As I

was not able to visit most of the buildings in the beginning of the fieldwork, gaining access to research participants had to go solely through social media. Moreover, as I was limited by gaining access through key-informants and messages on social media, several inhabitants of the building that I had tried to reach informed me that they were not willing to participate in the research due to trust-related issues or other reasons. Building up rapport through an online community has proven to be challenging.

Furthermore, the fact that most of the interviews were conducted online, limited the data I was able to collect. Some respondents experienced technical issues, and sometimes the internet connection did not work appropriately. This limited the interviews sometimes from going more in-depth. While interviews that were conducted face-to-face allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere, interviews conducted online were more formal and did not allow for getting to know my respondents in depth. Besides this, conducting the interviews in real life allowed me to experience what the living environment of my respondents looked like, while the interviews that I conducted online limited me to the description my respondents gave me. Despite the limiting factors of online research, I am thankful for all the respondents that adjusted themselves to the online ZOOM or Teams environment and participated in this research.

Moreover I experienced a language barrier. I am able to speak Moroccan Arabic, but my knowledge on this is too basic to conduct a full interview. Due to the fact I was not able to speak Arabic and Tigrinya (which most of the refugees from Syria and Eritrea speak) I limited myself to the respondents that were able to speak Dutch or English. It is important to acknowledge that due to this fact, a severe part of the co-housing projects was not reached in this thesis.

Another limitation for this research was the timeframe in which it was conducted. When the COVID-19 measurements were lifted I got invited to several activities which were organized in the co-housing communities, however, this all occurred while I started writing the results. Moreover I believe I could have gained access to more inhabitants that lived in co-housing arrangements if the time allowed me to. Gaining online access took me longer than I had expected in the first place, and while the snowball-method proved fruitful, it took a lot of time to access more participants in an online setting.

In the following chapters the analysis of the collected data will be presented, starting with an introduction to the projects and the research participants. Furthermore, the following chapters will explain the facilitators of social capital, the different types of social capital and the opportunities and barriers for building social capital that became present while conducting this research.

## 6. The projects and their participants

In order to understand how co-housing arrangements are experienced by their inhabitants, it is important to be aware of how and why these projects have originated as explained in the introduction. Moreover, it is relevant to understand how they are organised, and what type of inhabitants are living in these arrangements. While doing research I gained access to 4 different co-housing initiatives, in which I interviewed different inhabitants. The projects accessed were: Karmijn, LoHuizen, de Woondiversiteit, and Stek Oost. All projects came with their own background, context and stories. In order to understand the following empirical chapters, it is important to understand how these projects are arranged.

### *Karmijn*

Karmijn is located in Amsterdam-Nieuw West, and consists of two separate buildings. The location houses 110 inhabitants, of which 50 percent are refugees. In order to live at Karmijn, the inhabitants need to fall in the age group of 18 to 27 years old. Within one floor there are 12 to 18 other inhabitants with whom the residents share a common room, however due to the corona measurements and a transition in management, these common rooms are currently closed, and not available for usage. Both buildings are managed by the housing corporation the Alliantie since November 2021, but used to be managed by the housing corporation Socius. The purpose of Karmijn is to create a place in which refugee integration is enhanced. The project aims at bringing people together, making sure they help each other when needed, and create a close-knit community. The Alliantie has two employees available in the building, mostly on Tuesdays. All inhabitants get a contract to live at the location for 5 years, and after that, they make place for a new wave of residents. The buildings are divided over different corridors, and all corridors have 'gangmakers' which means that each corridor has an inhabitant that - in exchange for a discount on the rent - manages the community in its corridor and serves as the main point of contact for the corridor. Gangmakers serve both as a regulator of the rules and as a social function, such as completing welfare checks, managing the corridor WhatsApp, arranging activities and creating a community. Moreover Karmijn has an external community builder which assists these gangmakers in arranging activities and creating a community, in her own words the gangmakers serve as "the eyes and ears of the building" in order to map the wants and needs of the inhabitants. The locations are connected with several civil society projects such as het Buurtteam, which assists the inhabitants one day a week, and Ykeallo, an organization that focusses on the integration and guidance of refugees coming from Eastern-Africa.

### *LoHuizen*

LoHuizen is a similar project as Karmijn, and also managed by the Alliantie. LoHuizen is located in between the Indische Buurt and the Oosterlijk Havengebied, and inhabits 81 residents, of which similarly to Karmijn inhabitants fall in the age group of 18 to 27 years old of which 50 percent is refugee and 50 percent is Dutch. Similar to Karmijn, the purpose of LoHuizen is to create a place in which refugee integration is enhanced. The project aims at bringing people together, making sure they help each other when needed, and create a close-knit community. Moreover, similarly for LoHuizen, the corridors are managed by 'gangmakers'. LoHuizen owns various common rooms such as a study room and the 'LOkaal', a common living room that is often used for activities organized by the building. Besides this Lohuizen owns a common rooftop and a garden accessible for all inhabitants. Within LoHuizen a social worker is active in providing a consultation hour and community engagement, such as organizing a language café. What is important to know is that before the Alliantie took over the management of LoHuizen, the project was managed by inhabitants that were categorized as a self-managing team. In cooperation with social workers, the project was thus managed by Dutch students inhabiting the building themselves.

### *De Woondiversiteit*

De Woondiversiteit is located in the city centre of Amsterdam and houses 118 inhabitants divided over different corridors, of which similarly to the projects mentioned above, 50 percent is refugee and 50 percent are Dutch students or starters in the age group of 18 to 27 years old. However, the layout of de Woondiversiteit is slightly different, as the kitchen and bathrooms are shared within a corridor, that usually houses up to 10 inhabitants. The purpose of de Woondiversiteit is that through a self-managing team, a safe and clean living environment is created, in which people from different backgrounds spend time together and help each other towards a fruitful future. As well as Karmijn and LoHuizen, de Woondiversiteit is connected to social services such as 'vluchtelingenwerk' and 'de regenbooggroep'. Other than Lohuizen and Karmijn, de Woondiversiteit is managed by a team consisting out of inhabitants themselves in a so called system of self-management, instead of external managers. Similar to Karmijn and LoHuizen, de Woondiversiteit works with 'gangmakers', or as they call them: 'Captains', which manage most of the community networks and activities to be organized and serve as main point of contact. Within each corridor, one captain is present. Moreover, there is a caretaker present every day for three hours that manages the liveability of the building, which entails making sure everything is clean, but also more practical inconveniences and complaints.

### *Stek Oost*

Lastly, Stek Oost is organized slightly different from the projects mentioned above. The project again houses both refugees and Dutch students or starters, but the division between the groups is 68 Dutch students and 22 refugees aged between 23 and 27. The purpose of Stek Oost is to bring together people from different backgrounds and make sure they help, and look after one another. They do so by creating a 'community'. The inhabitants get a contract to live in the building for 5 years. Furthermore the building provides access to one common room in which activities can be organized. In exchange for living in the community, the Dutch inhabitants are expected to spend at least one hour per week to invest in the community, this investment is allowed to be interpreted individually and can thus differ per inhabitant. Despite the fact the hour of investment is deemed mandatory when living in the project, there is no regulation on this. Similar to de Woondiversiteit, up until recently there is no external management on the project, However, the inhabitants are involved in creating a self-management team, which focusses on building the community and at the same time managing the practical side of the building. Moreover Stek Oost is the only project that actively works with a buddy project, which means inhabitants are connected and can ask their buddy for help or a cup of coffee.

The five most important characteristics of these four projects are first, the aim to create a community in which integration is enhanced. Second, the overall idea of self-management. While in Karmijn and LoHuizen external community makers are available, all projects rely to a great extent on the so called 'gangmakers'. Third, all projects facilitate the possibility to connect with external social workers, an important asset for social linking, which will be elaborated in chapter 8. Finally, all projects visited focussed on inhabitants aged between 18-27, with a minor difference in Stek Oost, where the minimal age

is 23. These characteristics serve as an important background for the following chapters, in which the results of this research will be presented.

## 7. Accessing social capital in a co-housing environment

Before engaging in the question on what type of social networks are established in co-housing communities, it is important to understand how these contacts are established, what the most important facilitators of social capital are, and moreover how these facilitators are accessed. While Agar & Strang (2008) talk about facilitators of integration in terms of social bridging, social bonding and social linking, this research took a step back and assessed how bridging, bonding and linking are facilitated in co-housing projects.

Many respondents argued that there is a general assumption that putting together refugees and non-refugees would automatically lead to the establishment of social capital. This however, has proven not the case. While co-housing in itself can be viewed as an important marker and mean through which social capital can grow, additional facilitators for accessing social capital were deemed essential. The most frequently mentioned facilitator touches upon the accessibility of the co-housing projects. Moreover, a facilitator was necessary for leadership and supervision, both professional as well as non-professional. Finally, more physical facilitators of co-housing were expressed such as the design of facilities, the looks of the building, and the availability of common spaces. In this chapter these facilitators will be elaborated on.

### Accessibility

The accessibility of co-housing has been experienced by several respondents as a vital facilitator in order to establish social capital. Accessibility is a concept that can be perceived in many ways. In this thesis accessibility entails the ease from which social capital can be established within a co-housing facility; in Dutch called 'laagdrempeligheid'. Some of the respondents claimed that the accessibility of the project contributed widely to the establishments of social capital, or at least facilitated the possibility to do so. Others argued that the accessibility of the projects sometimes fluctuated, and at times when interaction between residents had lowered - as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic - the consequences of the diminishing accessibility of the project were felt. However, what all these respondents agreed upon was the fact that the accessibility of the project contributed widely towards the establishment of social capital. In this section the perceptions on accessibility will be elucidated and the effects of accessibility will be illustrated. Additionally this section elaborates on how different types of accessibility are made possible, and how physical factors such as shared environments can contribute to this.

Accessibility has been experienced in many ways, but first and foremost, accessibility was shaped by the fact every respondent is informed about the aim of co-housing, namely forming a community, this created a way for refugees as well as non-refugees to engage in social networks, forming a base for social bridging as well as social bonding:

“ [in a co-housing project] You just see each other more often. So yes, if, for example, I see someone in front of the door struggling with his bike [...] I walk down and say yo, Can I help you [...]. So here you just see each other and you just have contact with each other. Yes is just literally, No distance or barrier. You just live together. So yes, I think it [the co-housing project] makes it more accessible to make contact”.

Moreover, the idea of sharing a hallway together and living in a corridor provides daily encounters for this respondent he would otherwise not have. This was also the main reason he believed the project offered a certain accessibility for establishing social networks:

“It is just your everyday encounters with your neighbours and whatever. So then it [establishing social contacts] just kind happens a bit more organic or something than it otherwise [in a non-co-housing environment] does”

This idea of daily contact enhancing the establishment of social contacts within the project was additionally expressed by one of the respondents from Syria that argued he felt more at ease to ask his neighbours in the co-housing project for help if he needed to than when he was living in a non-co-housing situation:

“Uh, because you don't. You don't them. Then how to how you can ask somebody if he doesn't know you or if you don't know him.”

The project offered him the opportunity to access the social networks of his neighbours through activities and WhatsApp groups that were available. For him, this made it easier to approach someone in the hallway, or text someone when he needed help. This ease at which social contact was approached and motivated by the co-housing facility thus served as a facilitator for accessing different types of social capital. This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

### Physical environments

Besides the accessible nature of the projects, the physical design of some of the projects also served as a facilitator for access to different types of social capital. In most projects visited, inhabitants owned their private kitchen, however, in one of the projects visited this was not the case. Inhabitants from ‘de Woondiversiteit’ were obliged to share their kitchen. As the kitchen is an environment used daily, inhabitants of this corridor often encountered each other here, marking this kitchen as a physical facilitator to access social interactions. This was particularly illustrated by one of the respondents, that explained he and his neighbour from Eritrea often had daily encounters in their shared kitchen where they would engage in small interactions about their daily life. These daily encounters created an access for social capital to emerge. This particular respondent explained that this shared environment had opened the first door towards their interactions: His Eritrean neighbour felt more at ease to knock on his door whenever he needed assistance. The shared environment in this way stimulated the accessibility for these neighbours to engage with each other, and consequently established a trust relationship in which the Eritrean neighbour felt at ease to approach him for assistance.

### Activities

Apart from shared environments, the main contributor to accessibility in which co-housing facilities contribute was seen as the organization of bigger and smaller activities in which neighbours were offered the opportunity to get to know each other and find common grounds. As one of my respondents illustrated:

“It is the result of moments of encounter. So that originated on yes, game evenings for example. I just saw those people [my neighbours] very often at one point. And then you find out that you just have certain things in common, and then at some point you go. You meet at a collective gathering and then you go and chill alone more often. And you think ‘oh that one neighbour is approachable’, so then I know it’s cool to ask him if I’ve forgotten for example my sugar. You know and with all that, yes, it just grew”

This respondent explained that she noticed by corona, the possibility to organize activities had diminished which consequently diminished the accessibility to knock on each other’s doors. This same observation was made by one of the social workers in place that that stimulating informal and easy ways to get to know each other was of great importance, as otherwise the barrier to ask others for help becomes too high:

“For example, I receive questions during my walk-in consultation hour on a letter they [the refugees] don’t understand. And sometimes, for example they call me on monday and then I say, I won’t be there until wednesday, but you can also ask a neighbour. You live next door to two Dutch people, maybe they can translate that letter for you as well. And then she says no, no, no, I’ll wait for you Wednesday. Or no, no, I don’t know anyone or. In that sense I do indeed see a barrier. Yes, that if they do not know their neighbour, they do not dare to indeed knock on the door.

What became clear from this conversation is that while the accessible nature and communication about the aim of co-housing in projects which had a lack of shared environments exists, it is important to facilitate this accessibility by means of activities and bringing inhabitants together, as some inhabitants still expressed they did not know who their neighbours were. Activities by these means are seen as a main binder for the community to establish a foundation of trust. As these activities were seen as one of the main facilitators for creating an accessible environment in which social capital can be build. In addition to this, a facilitator for social capital that was frequently mentioned were initiators who take the lead in the organization of activities and stimulate social capital inside the buildings.

### Initiators

Initiators and leaders were deemed as an essential and present facilitator to access different types of social capital. As explained in chapter 6, most of the co-housing projects visited for this thesis rely on the concept of self-management, which entails inhabitants having to facilitate the management of the building and the community themselves. In many cases this is done in cooperation with ‘gangmakers’ or corridor captains, that get the responsibility to serve as a main contact person for their corridor. Besides the importance of gangmakers, respondents stressed the necessity of external professionals, that guide ‘gangmakers’ in the establishment of community building, but moreover personally assist inhabitants. In this section the importance these facilitators will be explained.

A commonly shared idea on how social capital was facilitated inside the projects was the necessity of active participants that serve as stable contact persons and additionally organize, plan and involve others in activities. In every project visited for this thesis, these inhabitants were present in the co-housing projects and embodied the role of gangmaker. These gangmakers serve as the driving forces behind the establishment of social capital that goes beyond the day-to-day interactions refugees and non-refugees have in co-housing facilities. Not only because they are seen as a stable and approachable factor in the

projects, but also because they establish the organization of larger events, which consequently contributes to ways in which people create deeper connections and access of social capital.

In many cases the need for certain inhabitants to take the lead in organizing activities was expressed as an important facilitator for the establishment and access of social capital.

One of the employees that serves as a community builder in two of the co-housing facilities addressed that it is necessary to have inhabitants that are willing to actively motivate and involve others. Even though inhabitants express they are willing to build a community, it takes time and effort to do so, and not everyone is able to create the time and space to do so. The role of 'gangmaker' can be seen as an informal task: the inhabitants that embody this role sometimes get a discount on their rent, but it is not a paid function. Therefore some of my respondents stressed the necessity of more formal functions in order to direct the gangmakers where needed and moreover stimulate the access of social capital:

"the community builder is now also a regular face and. And that that. is very important for a sense of community and yes, you notice that a lot of people want to, but you might still need an initiator, who just plans a date for an activity, or who buys something."

Additionally this was affirmed by another employee that served as community builder and addressed:

"But [the establishment of social contact] doesn't happen by itself. No, so that's why I'm happy. That [the housing corporation] chooses to put extra attention on it. By employing a complex administrator and to hire me as a community builder. Because the projects could really use it if someone boosts it a bit."

This idea that accessing social contacts would not always be straightforward without people facilitating it was also expressed by another respondent:

"It's just hard work. And if you think: nice a mixed housing project and go do it all together[through selfmanagement]. It's just not going to happen. You need driving forces"

What these respondents illustrate is that accessing social capital, even in a co-housing facility, is not as straightforward as it might seem. While the accessibility and physical factors such as shared environments can be regarded as a base towards accessing social capital, a necessary facilitator that creates access to social capital is needed. In this case, it were the initiators that aimed at bringing inhabitants together.

### Safety and stability

Besides initiators that stimulate access toward social capital, many respondents stressed that a safe and stable environment was a priority in order to facilitate and access social networks. Agar & Strang (2008) approach the concepts of safety and stability from both the perspective of the refugee, as well as the perspective of non-refugees in the community. For both of these groups, safety and stability play a significant role according to Agar and Strang (2008). Refugees are mostly concerned with safety and stability from the viewpoint of a peaceful place to make themselves feel at home, in which they are able to stay for a longer period of time. On the opposite, Agar & Strang (2008) mention that non-refugees are mostly concerned with the idea of safety and stability in the sense of not experiencing unrest and inconveniences. When discussing safety and stability Agar & Strang (2008) focus mainly on the physical

aspects of safety, such as a non-violent environment, the possibility to stay in one place for a longer period of time and access to public services. Agar & Stang (2008) remain limited in how this safety and stability should be facilitated. Through the interviews it became clear inhabitants of co-housing facilities saw much added value in professional guidance.

This was illustrated by a respondent that argued when you organize a co-housing facility it is important to keep in mind that some inhabitants with a refugee background sometimes find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

“ If you just don't pay attention, you just put people, very vulnerable people, together If you're just not on top of that, things can go very wrong, [...] things can really get unsafe”

She expressed that frequently, the possible vulnerability of refugees that are placed in a co-housing facility is underestimated. Co-housing projects in her opinion get treated like an inexpensive solution to deal with the housing crisis and the placement of refugees at the same time. She explained she saw a lot of potential in co-housing, but addressed that to realize this potential, much time, effort, money and professional support is needed in order to guide co-housing facilities in the right direction. This in order to create a safe living environment in which it is actually enhancing the integration process.

This respondent stressed the importance of professionals in co-housing projects, as these professionals often got the knowledge and experience to handle more complex situations regarding the welfare of inhabitants. She experienced several events in which she had felt unsafe and argued the lack of professional guidance resulted in a lack of supervision or surveillance, and consequently in an unsafe environment. This had led to several inhabitants moving out of the building and diminished the amount of contact she had with other neighbours.

Both of these respondents argued that at the start of the project, these professionals had been available in the building:

“ but they [the social workers] were there to support that person to talk to those people yes and if there was anything, they could seek help. They are not alone. So that was a good initiative”

And moreover the need for professional guidance and the positive effect this had for the social environment was stressed by one of the inhabitants that had been closely involved in the management of one of the projects:

“We worked very closely with the social worker and that social worker really had contact with all the people and then I could say: hey, I haven't seen him [an inhabitant] for a long time, is that true? And she would say yes, he is with family. And I didn't have to know what he was doing. But then he was in the picture. So yeah, I just knew about everything and everyone”

She argued such welfare checks helped early detection of vulnerability and provided a preventive approach for facilitating a safe environment for all inhabitants.

The lack of professional guidance was the most present critique many respondents that had lived through a situation they regarded as unsafe expressed. Inhabitants consequently argued in order to create a safe

and accessible atmosphere inside co-housing, professional guidance is a necessary facilitator. Professionals are able to prioritize co-housing and bring along their experience and knowledge in complex situations. Not having this safe environment limited the establishment of social contacts and even caused inhabitants to move out of the co-housing environment. For this reason both a safe and stable environment as well as professional expertise and knowledge were regarded essential for accessing social capital.

This chapter identified different facilitators that were deemed important for accessing social capital, such as accessibility, the physical environment, activities, initiators and professional guidance. In order for refugees to create social capital in its full potential these facilitators were deemed essential. Consequently, the lack of these facilitators would cause barriers or challenges towards the access of social capital. Before describing which types of networks were established inside co-housing facilities, barriers for accessing these networks will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

## 8. Barriers for the establishment of social capital

As mentioned in chapter 8, many housing associations that initiate co-housing facilities are under the impression that putting together refugees alongside non-refugees would automatically lead to the establishment of social capital, this has proven far from obvious. Where the previous chapter identified necessary facilitators, this chapter will elaborate on the barriers inhabitants of co-housing facilities have experienced in the establishment of social capital, including COVID-19, the lack of autonomy, language barriers and time.

### COVID-19

The most indispensable and present barrier that has presented itself in my research has been COVID-19 and the restrictions it has brought along, which have been noticeable in all co-housing projects I have visited to conduct this research. As co-housing is all about facilitating the right environment for connections and networks to be established through means of low-key activities, the COVID-19 restrictions reaching from social distancing to a full lockdown, limited the ways in which my respondents were able to connect with each other, predominantly because it was not allowed to organize activities and gatherings, as one of my respondents illustrated:

“But I do think that if Corona was not there, [..], then we'd have more, had moments of meeting. So yes, Corona is a bit of a death sentence for a co-housing project.”

Moreover, he explained that due to the COVID-19 restrictions everyone became more careful, and the community spirit that was present in the first place, diminished:

“And what you noticed was that people are quite, at least I myself, was very careful at the beginning because, for example, my parents are also vulnerable to COVID. So I didn't have the idea of OK. I am now going to commit myself very hard to all kinds of social things to organize. I think that messed up a lot”

Another respondent explained she had a harder time finding connections and meeting new people, as these large scale activities were not there to remove social barriers for establishing social networks. She

explained it had to be in your nature to be assertive and willing to connect to new people, if you wanted to establish new relationships inside the co-housing facilities during the pandemic.

While COVID-19 presented itself as the most present barrier for establishing social capital in a co-housing facility, the lack of autonomy was another concept that presented itself frequently as barrier for social capital.

### The lack of Autonomy

Autonomy and additionally motivation to participate in a co-housing environment has been an important dimension in facilitating and accessing social capital, consequently a lack of autonomy can prove challenging for the establishment of social capital. van Dijk et al. (2021) already noticed the concept of autonomy was lacking in the framework of Agar & Strang (2008), and defines autonomy as the choice of the refugee to integrate. Autonomy within co-housing can be defined from a broader perspective: the choice of inhabitants to participate in the co-housing project.

The lack of autonomy had been expressed by both non-refugees as well as refugees in a different context. For non-refugees autonomy to choose in a co-housing environment is limited: Often a lot of students do not particularly want to live in a co-housing environment, but due to the current housing crisis, they deem co-housing as one of their limited available options for an affordable place to live. For refugees on the other hand, autonomy is absent. Refugees get placed in co-housing environments without the ability to choose for this. This complex concept of autonomy and choice will be elaborated on below.

As explained in chapter 1, co-housing partly originated as an effect of the housing crisis within the Netherlands. The effects of this housing crisis have been visible in the motivations inhabitants expressed for inhabiting a co-housing facility, and consequently their participation in a co-housing project. It is thus important to understand how the housing crisis influences such a project. As illustrated by one of my respondents, the effects of the housing crisis are visible in the composition of people inhabiting the facilities:

“And what it comes down to is that there's just also a large number of people living here who have never lifted a finger at the entire community. You get a studio here with your own kitchen and bathroom. You don't have to talk to anyone or anything. And those are just. Those are just people who are just like, no thank you, from day one, I don't need it. And if perhaps we hadn't lived in a housing crisis, the people who lived here would have really chosen this project.”

While from this perspective, motivation plays a big role, one can state that the housing crisis has an impact on the ability to choose for different options of affordable housing. This creates an environment in which students inhabit co-housing facilities while not sharing the vision of these facilities: establishing social capital. This was also illustrated by another participant:

“It is a really small amount that actually really wants to get to know their neighbours. The biggest part of the Dutch students is minding their own business, they don't care at all who is living next to them, they just want a house.”

This idea of people not choosing the project for its purpose - creating a community and enhancing integration for refugees - echoed in the motivation of three other respondents that explained why they had chosen to live in the project. As one of my respondents illustrated:

“Why I live in this project? Eh, mostly because it is a cheap living environment at a very good location. I heard it was easy to get access to the project [...] I do think it is interesting. That there are refugees living here and that you can help them, however I don't believe that is the main reason I am living in this project. I like living in this project, but it was not my intention, the main reason why I came to live here was that it is just a little cheaper [than the average houses in Amsterdam], and [it is located] in the city centre of Amsterdam”

And additionally another respondent argued:

“I came living here as I had been looking for a house for a long time [...] I was looking on 'woningnet' and this was actually the only option I found, that's how I got here. [...] If it is needed I would definitely help [in the project], but I haven't really heard of it and I did not go looking for it myself”

The current housing crisis in the Netherlands thus seems to play a significant role in the autonomy residents experienced to choose for a co-housing environment. Residents that inhabited the co-housing projects for the sole reason of needing a roof above their head, most of the times expressed they were less active and while some of them had established some connections, they frequently expressed their priorities were not invested in the co-housing project.

While non-refugees in all projects have to write their motivation to participate in a community building co-housing facility, this is not required for refugees, that get placed in co-housing facilities by the municipality of Amsterdam. This absence of autonomy was illustrated by one of the respondents that argued:

“Their full autonomy is taken away [of the refugee]. They are put in a mixed housing project and they are told: 'you have a permit now, now you can make it yourself. Oh yes, by the way, here's a nice project. Have fun with your neighbours.' I have a lot of neighbours who say yes, I don't feel like chilling with neighbours at all. Just give me a job and I keep my distance.”

Both refugees as well as particular non-refugees that inhabit co-housing facilities were faced by some sort of lack of autonomy. This influenced their motivation for the establishment of social capital inside co-housing facilities, and could be identified as a barrier for the establishment of social capital inside co-housing facilities. Moreover, language has proven to be both a facilitator, as well as barrier for accessing bridging and bonding networks.

### Language

Language is addressed in the framework of Ager & Strang (2008), that describe being able to speak the language of the country you have permitted residence in, is often seen as one of the most important aspects of integration, as this opens up the possibility towards full participation in society. The barrier of language was extensively mentioned by the inhabitants.

Both a respondent from Syria as well as a respondent from Eritrea illustrated language had limited them in the establishment of social contacts:

“For example, if I want to talk with the Dutch people, and they want to help me or I ask for help. They directly switched to Dutch. Of course, it cannot understand it, because I didn't start to study it.”

And moreover he continued stating:

“For example, if someone who doesn't speak English or who doesn't speak any language. Just his mother language, Arabic. Yeah, he will not get help. No, because he doesn't know how to ask for help.”

Another respondent from Eritrea affirmed this by stating:

“Yes, that's a shame, I want to have contact with them [Dutch residents]. But you know for me the problem is, you know, language. Otherwise you can talk a lot [to each other]. And understand [each other] well. After that, it is easier to make contact”

Despite the fact that language was often seen as a severe barrier to establish deeper connections, respondents often found their ways to deal with this. A typical example was given by one of the non-refugee respondents, that argued while he and his neighbour had a tough time understanding each other, over time their contact improved and they had gotten familiar with each other's patterns:

“Before I didn't, but now I often find that when he uses a certain word, I know it what it means when, he uses the wrong word. [for example] when it comes to talking about the army or something or about war, then he says police or something, you know, but then he often means soldier, military or that sort of thing. Yes you know that I learn to understand him better, and [through this] sometimes I can also teach him things about how to say something”

While language was thus often expressed as causing a barrier for deeper connections or even a barrier for asking others for help, for others language sometimes became the subject of contact. Inhabitants were able to establish relationships around the learning of the Dutch language. This happened in the case exemplified above, but moreover it happened in other contexts with other respondents that argued they sometimes met with their neighbours to practice their language skills.

Different languages thus created several barriers to establish networks, or deepen superficial contacts. However, what became clear from the interviews is that approaching language solely as a barrier for social capital is problematic, as social networks were able to grow beyond the barriers language provided. This will be elaborated on in chapter 9, where different types of social capital and the opportunities they provide will be discussed. Finally, it is important not to approach language as a static barrier, but as a flexible concept that is able to improve over time. Language for many respondents had improved over time, lowering their barriers for social contact.

In addition to language, Agar & Strang (2008) emphasize that a lack of mutual cultural knowledge can act as a barrier towards successful integration.

### Different backgrounds

As explained in the theoretical framework, Agar & Strang (2008) emphasize that mutual cultural knowledge can be perceived as a facilitator for social capital, which consequently means that the lack of it can be perceived as a barrier or challenge towards establishing social networks. Agar & Strang (2008)

approach this idea of cultural knowledge as a mutual concept, meaning it entails refugee knowledge on the broader cultural aspects of the host country, but moreover non-refugee knowledge on the broader cultural aspects of the refugee. What is important to note is that Agar & Strang (2008), by stating this, fail to specify what their idea is of broader cultural knowledge, as culture among other concepts mentioned in this thesis is not a static concept. Despite this fact, the lack of cultural understanding was brought up by some of the respondents. In this chapter I will not approach the differences that had been noticed among inhabitants as cultural, but rather as different backgrounds.

One of my respondents touched upon the concept of differing backgrounds, as she explained she had witnessed multiple conflicts in the building she was living in. When she explained the reason behind these conflicts she illustrated this by stating the following:

“Cultural differences, what I have understood and what I have understood that every culture has different norms and values now. [...] Everyone lives according to different norms and values, different standards. And that sometimes clashes with their own standards and values, which has resulted in some conflicts inside this building”

While this respondent explains there are cultural differences, she exemplified it was mainly clashing norms and differing backgrounds that had brought conflicts along. While Agar & Strang (2008) mainly focus on different cultural backgrounds between refugees and non-refugees, this respondent noted that the clashing of values did not only occur between refugees and non-refugees, but also among refugees with different backgrounds, that were living alongside each other in the co-housing facility.

What is important to note is that while the perspectives on what culture means differs, it is noticeable that different people bring along different backgrounds in combination with different norms and values. This was also explained by another respondent which stated that in a co-housing facility, all these differences come together and perspectives might not always correspond, with conflict as a result. Within the experience of this respondent, the conflicts inside his building could often be attributed to these clashing norms and values.

As one of the social workers explained, while co-housing offers opportunities to engage conversations about clashing norms and values, this requires active engagement by preferably professionals that know how to interact with these kind of situations. Active management is thus highly important to face the challenges different backgrounds might bring along. However, many respondents explained active management in their facilities had been lacking.

Moreover, time was stressed to be of influence on the establishment of social capital, as will be elaborated below.

### Time

While Agar & Strang (2008) do not necessarily touch upon the concept of time being a possible obstruction towards establishing social capital and moreover integration, the lack of time was a reoccurring concept the respondents of this study touched upon when they explained what withheld them or others from establishing some type of social capital. While both refugees as well non-refugees I spoke

during this research were not against the idea of creating a community or participating in activities, many argued their participation in the projects was limited. The main reason for this frequently touched upon a lack of time.

This was illustrated by one of my respondents that argued time formed an obstacle to create social networks inside the building due to several reasons. The first reason he explained was the fact that the people living in a co-housing facility usually find themselves between the age of 18 and 27. Within this age group, many of them are studying and besides this they are often working on a side-job. Due to this, not much time is left for participating actively in organized activities, consequently leaving established contacts to remain superficial. Moreover, he argued that while refugees often have not created their own social network in the early stages of the co-housing projects, Dutch inhabitants often have a social network outside the building which they spend a lot of time with, leaving less time to invest in social capital inside co-housing facilities. This idea additionally was illustrated by one of my Dutch respondents, that continually argued he would like to put more effort in establishing networks with his neighbours, but contradicting to this, most of the time when activities were organized he had other plans or priorities. He illustrated this as following:

“Anyway, it's kind of what I say, you have to find natural connections. In any case, there is room for that because you see each other quite a lot. But then when I look at myself for the past year, I was quite little at home because I was also just making a lot of trips and I'm just not home that much at all.”

He argued that if you are not actively looking to establish a network or community, even if you want to, it becomes very complicated to accomplish this. He argued that real motivation and assertiveness were needed but it was not his main priority.

Moreover the concept of time was touched upon by one of my respondents from Eritrea , that illustrated:

“In the beginning I had a lot of contact with others, because I had a lot of time, I had no job and I only went to language classes two times a week”

Now, he explained, he had found himself a job, he was going to school fulltime and on the side he was participating in his language classes. When he got home he spend a lot of time on his homework and saw some of his friends occasionally. The free time he had left, he would rather spend with his family, leaving less time to invest in social capital inside the co-housing facility.

This resonated with the experience of another respondent, that explained he was in close contact with two of his neighbours that were both refugee:

“From the summer of 2020 to the summer of 2021 I saw those neighbours a lot. But then they suddenly had a lot of schoolwork because they wanted to start studying. And since that time I haven't seen them much. So I think I've seen them for a little over a year almost every week, but now I don't see them that much anymore. I still come across them in the hallway. Yes, but I think they also have their own life”

The lack of time for many respondents was thus one of the main reasons why they failed to attend certain activities that were organised to enhance the sense of community. Respondents expressed different

reasons for this lack of time such as busy schedules, school, work but also different priorities. While expectations are often that many inhabitants participate actively in the co-housing facilities, time is one of the barriers respondents argued to form a barrier for active participation and consequently the establishment of social capital.

## 9. Type of networks inside the co-housing projects

Multiple facilitators such as the accessibility of co-housing projects as well as physical elements provided an opportunity for both refugees as well as non-refugees to access different types of social capital. As described in the previous chapter, these facilitators were opposed by barriers that prohibited inhabitants from accessing social capital, such as language, time and a lack of autonomy.

Before creating an in-depth understanding about the types of networks provided in the co-housing projects, it is significant to acknowledge that not all inhabitants inside the co-housing facilities actually engage in the establishment of both social bridging and bonding. As one of the respondents illustrated, the opportunities gained from co-housing, would often reach those who are open to the full concept of co-housing which includes participating in an active community:

“Uh, yes, I'm in favour of it [co-housing refugees and non-refugees]. But we shouldn't be too ambitious about it to think: wow, it will really help a lot of people. It will especially reach a selective group that is already open to it.”

And in addition another respondent supported this by stating:

‘[...] But certainly those people who are open to it. They benefit a lot from such a project, for example me. I am open to it, and living here for me is very nice. Yes, I made a lot of nice friends who come for example from Iran and Syria, that I all met here, for me this is very valuable.’

While all respondents experienced some type of social capital from inhabiting a co-housing facility, this is thus not always applicable for every individual inhabiting a co-housing facility.

In this chapter, the experienced opportunities of the respondents that have accessed social capital will be elaborated on using the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) as a guideline, by identifying the types of social network through social bridging, social bonding and social linking.

### Social bridging

Agar & Strang (2008) bridging social capital entails the connections and networks that are established outside one's co-ethnic or co-identical group. As explained in the theoretical framework, limiting bridging to co-ethnicity is problematic and should not be perceived as such. Social bridging in this thesis is approached from a wider angle, namely as weaker ties that are often established outside one's network. These weaker ties might include daily interactions but often lack the idea of 'friendship' and trust. Moreover, networks could be linked to a shared culture or a shared ethnicity, but by all means should not be limited to these categorizations. Networks that are perceived as 'alike' or 'different' can have a wide range varying from: refugee, non-refugee, age, gender, culture, language, socio-economic background, education and knowledge. The co-housing environment, as illustrated in chapter 7 provided a fruitful

environment to access social networks, and especially weak ties, as respondents explained the environment provided a certain ease to approach others, creating an environment in which several networks were bridged. In this subchapter, different types of networks available inside co-housing, and consequently opportunities provided by their bridging interactions will be exemplified and illustrated.

A typical social bridging experience almost every respondent described were the day-to-day encounters experienced within the projects, these day-to-day encounters were mostly described as meeting each other in the hall ways, greeting each other and having small talk. Through these interactions, different groups consisting of refugees and non-refugees, different genders and individuals who spoke different languages all interacted with each other. While at first sight it might feel like these encounters are not necessarily meaningful, Agar & Strang (2008) describe that day-to-day encounters can be perceived as a positive influence on the integration of refugees, as it creates a first encounter between networks and enhances the feeling of being seen and welcomed. These day-to-day interactions consequently provided the opportunity to open the doors for further engagement as one of my respondents explained:

‘I greet everyone, also so they know they can knock on my door whenever they need help’

Small acts of daily encounters can be perceived as a first step towards bridging social capital, as it expanded the networks of inhabitants without engaging in closer relationships. Daily encounters served as an opportunity to lower the barrier to ask each other for help, which was a frequently mentioned and could be seen as an opportunity served by social bridging inside co-housing. These requests for help were especially present in the beginning of the project, as one of my respondents illustrated when she just arrived in the co-housing facility she experienced a hard time finding her way in the neighbourhood, she frequently asked her neighbours for good locations to study or hang out. This respondent used the co-housing environment to connect with inhabitants that had been familiar with the environment to navigate herself around her new living environment. This encounter could be conceptualized as social bridging as this respondent belonging to the group of people that are unknown in the environment, used the network and knowledge of people that had been living in the environment for a longer period of time. What is interesting to note is that over time, networks and who accesses which networks changes. This was illustrated by this same respondent who had now been living in the co-housing environment for over 4 years and familiarized herself with the environment. She explained that where in the first phase she used the networks of both refugees and non-refugees that had been around for a longer period of time to find her way in the environment, now that she gained the knowledge, she on her turn used this knowledge to guide individuals that were new to the co-housing environment.

This specific example illustrates the importance of overlooking the categorization of co-ethnicity and approach social networks from a wider perspective, as knowledge is not limited to ethnicity. While this respondent came to the co-housing environment as a refugee, she bridged with neighbours both refugee and non-refugee who had knowledge about the specific environment the co-housing facility was located. The time one had spent in this environment became more relevant than ethnicity or whether an individual was a refugee or a non-refugee in this example.

While the example illustrated above described bridging between inhabitants familiar and unfamiliar with the environment, another type of network that was frequently bridged could be identified as linguistics. As many of the respondents, coming from different linguistic backgrounds such as Tygrinya or Arabic illustrated, they often used the weak ties established inside the building to gain more knowledge about the Dutch language. In practice this meant non-Dutch speakers often used the knowledge of people who spoke the Dutch language to translate important paperwork or to practice and develop their own Dutch language skills, as one respondent exemplified, he often contacted one of his neighbours to help him with the language barrier he faced when he just arrived in the Netherlands:

“She helped me with the Dutch language, she helped me with translating emails, if I had Dutch emails, she would help me, or if I have like an appointment or, uh, some troubles with the municipality she would help me translate”

The weak ties provided by the co-housing facility in this example provided access to different linguistic networks inside the co-housing facility and consequently provided non-Dutch speakers with the opportunity to gain information in the Dutch language. What is important to note is that ‘Dutch’ speakers and ‘non-Dutch’ speakers are not linked to ethnicity, as one respondent coming from Syria who had been learning the Dutch language also illustrated he translated information that had been provided in Dutch to others who were not able to speak the language yet.

Another frequent type of bridging that occurred within co-housing facilities was bridging over different cultural backgrounds, as respondents explained engaging in small scale activities such as working in the mutual garden provided the opportunity to meet one another and consequently create a process of mutual learning regarding differing norms and values. As one of the Syrian respondents expressed, that by participating in activities with her Dutch neighbours, she learned about Dutch norms and values, and consequently, the ties she established here offered her the opportunity to welcome her Dutch neighbours to her own culture and habits, and exchange cultural knowledge:

“ I think that [doing activities together] is beautiful and fun. And also exchanging experiences or knowledge, and cultural exchange. Yes, for example during Ramadan we did iftar together, and it was really valuable to do that”

Not only learning about the Dutch culture but also providing knowledge about her own background was seen as valuable by this respondent, as she believed integration in this way became a process of mutual understanding. The cultural bridge that had been created through accessible activities inside the co-housing facility thus provided the opportunity for mutual learning and mutual understanding regarding cultural norms, values and habits. The illustrated case above was not unique, as another respondent argued:

“I think that's a really important thing anyway. Living together is just good to be in contact with [each other]. Just so you know what each other's wants and needs are. And then you can just take that into account. So I think socializing here is just the best way to get to know each other and see what people don't like. In general, but also in integration. You just learn from both sides what someone's norms and values are, and I think that's just that really good thing”

This respondent valued bonding as mutual understanding and moreover understanding each other's wants and needs. He illustrated that co-housing provided him with the option to meet other people that might have different wants, needs and values. The contact he and his neighbour had can be described as a cultural bridge, as both the respondent from Dutch origin as well as the refugee were able to gain information about the wants, needs and value of the other. Bridging in this specific example thus provided a reciprocal flow of information, creating mutual understanding. The idea of cultural norms and values being exchanged was also stressed by another respondent:

" I am always strict in, for example, talking to them in Dutch, to help them [non-Dutch speakers] with the language. Yes, unconsciously I think Dutch norms and values are imparted while we have conversations because if they do something or say something and I say oh yes, that's funny no, in the Netherlands we really do things differently. So that goes automatically. I take my culture with me and they take their culture with them. And then we get together and we learn from each other"

Co-housing for these respondents did not only enhance the integration of refugees , through exchanging knowledge, cultural values and practicing the language, but it also created a mutual understanding. Integration in this sense was perceived as a reciprocal process, in which mutual learning is important to understand each other and live together. What is important to note is while these interactions often start and provide a bridging function namely linking one's 'cultural network', or 'value network' to another, these individuals engaging in these bridging activities, namely learning, understanding and gaining information often resulted not only in finding differences, but moreover similarities, which consequently often resulted in bonding relationships: relationships characterized by some form of 'aliveness', trust and reciprocity. In order to create a holistic understanding of how both bridging and bonding relationships could occur simultaneously, the next subchapter will explain the occurrence of bonding relationships inside co-housing.

### Social bonding

As explained in the theoretical chapter, Agar & Strang (2008) approach social bonding from the idea of co-ethnicity. When conducting this research, social bonding was approached in a different manner, by assessing social bonding as the 'stronger' ties that would originate between people, who in one way or another share a certain amount of 'aliveness'. Social bonding in this definition was not solely limited towards co-ethnicity and approached in the broader sense of the concept. This resulted in the findings presented below.

While approaching social bonding solely through the lens of co-ethnicity is problematic, Agar & Strang (2010) stress that in the first phases of refugee integration, social bonding is likely to occur inside co-ethnic or especially co-linguistic groups, as shared language can prove to be very important to establish a deeper connection. This idea was confirmed by the data collected for this research and will be illustrated below.

Many of the respondents expressed that in all the projects it was clear to see that people with a like-ethnic or especially co-linguistic background would find each other and bond together. Most of the explanations

for this came from sharing the same language, culture or experiences, as one of my respondents, that originally came from Eritrea explained:

“When I came here, I did not speak the language at all, so I met up with other people [that are living in this building], only Eritrean people, because we speak the same language”

While language provided one of the main reasons he connected more with other Eritreans, he furthermore explained that whenever he felt uneasy or felt feelings of loneliness, mainly because of the journey he had to go through to end up in the Netherlands, he would go and see his sister that is currently also living in the Netherlands:

“Also with my sister. Yes. But yes, I grew up with her also in Eritrea You know? We have the same experiences. Yes, yes. I am very happy with this bond. Yeah, sometimes people don't have a family or something here”

He explained that by growing up together, they understand each other and they have experienced the same events, therefore, the relationship with his sister provides him with a feeling of safety. The idea of sharing the same background, or at least the same language as an important dimension in bonding relationships was also stressed in an interview in which a Dutch respondent expressed:

“I also have the idea that refugees already have a certain social circle inside the building. And that everyone there is discussing things more in-depth with each other, rather than in Dutch. Some sort of relief from their hearts.”

As well as another respondent that noted that while he and his neighbour were in close contact on a personal level, such as talking to each other on a daily base and helping each other out when needed, a deeper connection was difficult to create due to the language barrier:

“I notice that it's uh. That it's just hard to really talk about things that you talk about with friends, in terms of language, and for example, yes, we were talking about the other day about relationships. About that he had a girlfriend in Eritrea for two years and that I have a girlfriend, that sort of things. But you can't go any further, you cannot really talk about what this relationship is like, It's just that that language is a barrier for that. ”

In addition to this another respondent noted:

“Uh, like, you know, because we don't speak the same language? Mm hmm. Uh, most of the time, what we do like a party or activities between each other. You see all the Dutch people in this place, The Eritrean people in their group, the Arab people in their groups. Yeah. So they don't have contact with each other, because not all the people can understand each other”

All these respondents explained that while they did believe it was important to come out of their own circle, bonding with a co-linguistic group served refugees with the opportunity to talk more in-depth about their feelings and relate to someone with the same experiences and cultural background, as the Dutch language most of the times, especially in the early stages of the refugees coming to the Netherlands, served as a barrier to create a real in-depth relationship with each other.

While sharing the same language was often expressed as the reason why refugees would bond within co-linguistic groups, it is important to know that other factors besides co-linguistics often played a role in the establishment of bonding relationships, such as shared interests. Co-linguistics may facilitated the thickness of the relationship by providing a tool to express in-depth information such as feelings, however should not be seen as demarcated dimension which automatically facilitates bonding.

Moreover, bonding did not only limit itself solely towards co-linguistic networks in the projects, especially not after a certain period of time, when many of the refugees expressed that their knowledge of the Dutch language had increased. This resulted in bonds expressed as friendships, as illustrated by the following respondent:

“I would rather call it a friendship than a buddy, rather a friendship than saying I am his buddy and I help him. Because yeah, we just get together, we just go for a walk or have dinner together. It doesn't feel like helping, it just feels more like together, no, we just basically live together in the same building as friends.”

This respondent explained he valued the relationships he built inside the co-housing facilities equal to the relationships he had with his friends outside the co-housing facilities, as their relationships were built on mutual interests, such as taking walks, watching a football match together and gaming. Mutual interest for him played an important role in creating deeper and stable connections providing trust relationships.

Mutual interest thus played a significant role in the establishment of social bonds, as these interests could be seen as a some form of ‘aliveness’. The respondent that illustrated he saw his neighbours as friends explained that rather than looking at the differences in for example culture and language, they bonded over their mutual interests, creating a lasting friendship.

This idea of mutual interest being important for building strong relationships was moreover stressed by another respondent that argued he believed the establishment of relationships in co-housing should not be forced, but rather be created from natural connections such as enjoying the same sports. He and his neighbour had met each other through the shared enthusiasm for football, which in summer, they recently played on the field nearby. From this interaction, their bond had grown and while this respondent acknowledged there were differences between him and his neighbour such as language or just the experiences they had in general, he valued the similarities that brought them together more. Over time their relationship had evolved and he explained now they often spend time together, or helped each other out when needed.

What is important to understand about these bonding relationships, is that while they are all established over some type of similarity varying from language to mutual interest, there were still differences within these relationships. Bonding and bridging relationships, especially inside co-housing initiatives in which many different wants, needs, languages, cultural backgrounds and values come together, are not mutually exclusive, and most definitely not bound to co-ethnicity. Additionally, respondents often regarded a relationship stronger if this relationship went beyond day-to-day interactions and the idea of one person helping the other out. Where co-linguistics could be seen as a useful tool to engage in thickening relationships, bonding relationships were often established over mutual interests, over time leading to

feelings of trust and reciprocity. It is important to note the difference in opportunities provided by both bridging and bonding. While bridging relationships brought along practical information on for example one's environment, language, culture, values and norms, bonding relationships often provided feelings of trust and engagement. All these factors are important for the process of navigating through a new society.

Despite bonding and bridging, co-housing facilitated another form of social capital, namely social linking, which will be elaborated on in the following sub-chapter.

### Social linking

Agar & Strang (2008) described social linking as the access a refugee has towards governance institutions, or more specifically the way a refugee is linked to the state. practically this means in what ways a refugee can access social services, and moreover through what means. In this subchapter, the provision of social linking in co-housing facilities will be elaborated on.

As described above, the setting of a co-housing projects provided the opportunity for neighbours to approach each other for help, such as translating letters or making an appointment with the municipality. Indirectly this can be perceived as social linking, as this helped refugees with finding their way to institutions and society in general.

In addition to neighbours serving as social linking opportunities, formal types of linking social capital were present within the facilities. For example, in Karmijn and LoHuizen, there where specific walk-in hours organized weekly. During these hours, professionals were available to provide guidance if needed. The questions they assist in most of the times have a practical and bureaucratic nature, such as a registration for a new house or the extension from a residence permit. Refugees expressed to find these linking opportunities useful, as one of the Eritrean respondents explained. He would always attend the walk-in hour if he had received difficult paperwork. He valued the opportunity to access these walk-in hours as these professionals often had the time and expertise to assist him with more complex questions.

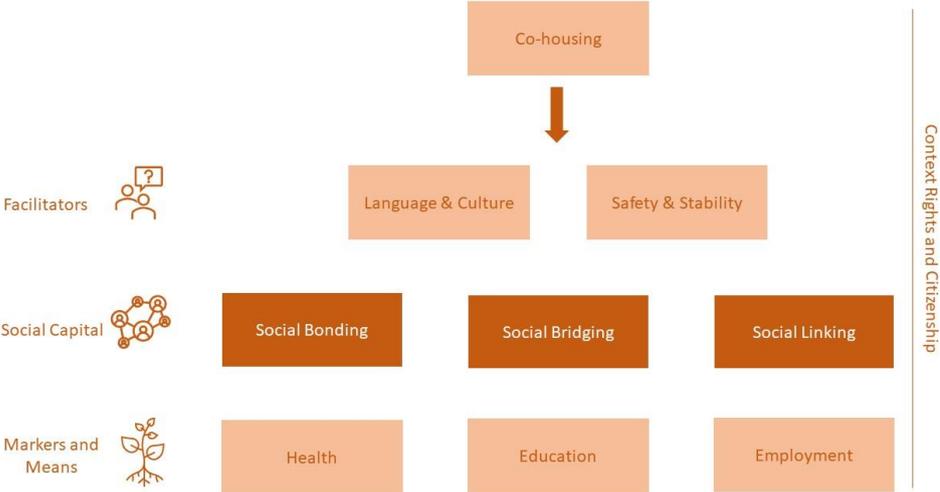
Moreover, one of the professionals working in these co-housing facilities expressed she often engaged with the individuals who did not establish a social network inside the facility, or were hesitant about asking their neighbours for help.

While it is not the main priority of co-housing, social linking provided a valuable dimension of social capital inside co-housing, as inhabitants experienced these walk-in hours as an easy access towards the complex bureaucratic structures of the Netherlands. Besides the fact social linking informally got established through contacts with neighbours, refugees often valued the presence of professionals. This is because they perceived that professionals explicitly had the time and expertise to assist. Additionally, social linking through the presence of professionals facilitated by walk-in hours provided a valuable doorway to governance systems for those who were not in contact with their neighbours.

## 10. Discussion

This thesis aimed at describing the experienced effects of co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam on the creation of networks of refugees in the Netherlands. This was done according to the adjusted framework

of Agar & Strang (2008) that served as a main guideline throughout this thesis. This chapter will elaborate on the findings this thesis has provided in relationship to the theoretical background and illustrate how this thesis serves as an addition to the ongoing debate on integration and the importance of social capital within integration. The adjusted framework that is used in this thesis is posed below:



Approaching integration through the lens of social capital, this thesis was constructed around the main question: “ *What are the experienced effects of co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam on the creation of networks of refugees in the Netherlands?*” In order to answer this question, this study assessed the organization of co-housing, the networks that arise within co-housing, the facilitators for accessing these networks and both the barriers and opportunities inhabitants of co-housing initiatives experience.

What is important to note is that the adjusted framework projected above assumes the notion that co-housing stimulates the markers and means of education, health and employment. While the opportunities gained from the establishment of social networks might indirectly lead to these markers and means, concrete examples of how co-housing stimulates health, employment or education inside co-housing were limited and thus not included in the results section of this thesis. Further research into the opportunities of social capital might indicate the existence of these markers and means in co-housing. Because of the limited time for this study, it did not take into account indirect opportunities, but focussed on direct opportunities served by the establishment of social capital in co-housing.

This thesis first aimed at describing how co-housing is organized in Amsterdam. It specifically described the political debate surrounding integration and the context of the co-housing arrangements accessed for this thesis. This information corresponds with the dimension of ‘rights and citizenship’ integrated within the framework of Ager & Strang (2008) and proved to be essential for understanding the context in which the results of this thesis were presented, as both the complex political debate surrounding integration, the new integration policy implemented at the start of 2022 and the housing crisis are of big influence on the lived experiences of both refugees and non-refugees. While these contextual political factors are often included in research into co-housing (Czischke & Huisman, 2018; Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020; Oliver

et al., 2020), many of these studies fail to include the role of the housing market on the emergence of co-housing. The data collected shows that the current tight housing market within the Netherlands results in co-housing for refugees and non-refugees to emerge in the first place, but moreover the data explicitly shows how this tight housing market is pressuring the emergence of social relationships within co-housing facilities. This was done in chapter 8 that touched upon the barriers inhabitants experienced. Many inhabitants expressed that the main reason for inhabiting a co-housing facility was the tight housing market and the limited scope for finding a place to live, which in this thesis was approached as a lack of autonomy. This lack of autonomy resulted in inhabitants living in co-housing facilities without feeling the need to actively contribute to the realisation of a community, which consequently served as a barrier towards the real aim of the projects: creating a community and contributing towards the idea of integration.

This idea of autonomy was not only approached from the perspective of non-refugees in the context of the tight housing market, but also from the perspective of refugees, and was identified as an important barrier for accessing social networks inside co-housing. The framework of Ager & Strang (2008) fails to incorporate the dimension of autonomy, while proven important, as illustrated by Van Dijk et al (2021). This thesis serves as an addition to this importance, and created a wider understanding of the concept of autonomy. Refugees have no autonomy in whether or not they want to live in a co-housing setting. This resulted in inhabitants that did not necessarily want to participate in community building activities, and were often perceived as not willing to 'integrate'. However, as one of the respondents explicitly noted, every path towards integration is different, not every refugee wants to engage in co-housing in order to integrate. Limiting the autonomy of refugees to choose which path they want to take towards integration and forcing them to approach integration through co-housing has proven contra-productive and limited the access of social capital in co-housing. What this thesis illustrates is that the concept of autonomy and especially the lack of it, is a dimension that can be of great influence on the path towards what we call 'integration', and should be incorporated into research in order to create a broader understanding on the dimensions of integration.

Besides describing how co-housing is organized this thesis described the following facilitators that were deemed essential to access social networks: accessibility, physical environments, activities, initiators and safety and stability. Ager & Strang (2008) describe facilitators for integration in general as safety and stability, language and cultural knowledge. This thesis provides a broader understanding of what facilitates social networks within a co-housing environment. On the one hand it validates the notion of safety and stability, as described by Ager & Strang (2008) as a facilitator. It also deepens the understanding of what it means to have a safe and stable environment. Especially the guidance of professionals was necessary to provide a safe and stable environment within a co-housing facility. On the other hand it also recognizes other forms in which co-housing facilitates social networks, such as initiators and activities that stimulate the forming of networks. Further research is needed to see if these facilitators also expand to other contexts of integration.

Furthermore, the barriers experienced within these networks correspond with a lack of the aforementioned facilitators mentioned by Agar and Strang (2008). The lack of linguistic skills, the different cultural backgrounds and the lack of safety and stability all proved to be significant barriers for the establishment of social capital, affirming the importance of these concepts identified by Ager & Strang (2008). Additional barriers that were identified entailed covid-19, the lack of autonomy and the lack of time. Both these facilitators and barriers will in-depth be elaborated on in the conclusion, chapter 11.

Moreover, this thesis described different types of social networks that were accessed inside co-housing facilities. As explained in chapter 9, co-housing facilitated social bridging, social bonding and social linking. These types of networks are integrated within the framework of Agar & Strang (2008) that highlight the importance of social capital within integration. However, the definitions of both bridging and bonding that were provided by Agar & Strang (2008) remain limited and can even be perceived as problematic. Agar & Strang (2008) bound themselves to co-ethnic relationships in both concepts where bonding is described as the stronger ties between people from the same ethnic or linguistic background, and bridging consequently as the weaker ties that are established with the 'other' outside of co-ethnic groups.

In this thesis the conceptualization of both bridging and bonding have been critically approached and expanded to a wider definition, based on the definitions of both Ryan (2011) and Granovetter (1973). Bridging was approached as the weaker ties one could have with the 'other', while bonding referred to stronger ties one could have with people that are 'alike'. 'A likeness' and 'the other' here were approached in the broadest sense of the word and could entail language, norms, values, cultures but also socio-economic background, mutual interests and even time spend in a certain environment.

This thesis illustrates how social bridging inside co-housing occurs over networks that were far more comprehensive than the dimension of co-ethnicity. Co-housing provided the possibility for neighbours - both refugees and non-refugees - to create bridging networks that varied from language, culture, values, wants, needs, but also the knowledge one has about a specific environment. Within these networks, people from varying ethnic backgrounds participated simultaneously.

What this study also shows, is that people can engage in social bridging within networks we would view as 'similar', over content that has nothing to do with the 'alike' of the group. For example, the bridging would occur over specific knowledge one has access to and the others have not. Thus, networks should be engaged as complex entities that are far from homogenous, but rather heterogeneous and constantly changing. Once more, approaching this only from the frame of co-ethnicity is a great limitation, and neglects the diversity of 'ethnic networks'. This finding corresponds with Ryan (2011) that describes it is rather important to understand how social relationships are established and through which means, instead of limiting oneself to co-ethnicity, as networks are far more complex and interrelated than this limited dimension of co-ethnicity suggests.

Besides bridging networks, this thesis identified bonding networks. While approaching social bridging and social bonding from a wider perspective, it is important to note that Agar & Strang (2008, 2010) argue

that especially in the first phases of integration when the linguistic knowledge of refugees is limited, social bonding often occurs within co-linguistic groups. This was confirmed by the data presented in this research which illustrated that language, especially in the first phases of integration formed a barrier towards creating deeper connections with people that did not speak the same language, and refugees expressed that in this phase they often established friendships with individuals who spoke the same language. Language should however not be seen as co-ethnic, as language goes beyond the borders of ethnicity. Moreover, bonding that occurred over co-linguistic networks often went hand in hand with other dimensions, such as mutual interest. It is thus again relevant to approach conceptualizations of social bridging and social bonding from a wider perspective.

By approaching bonding from a wider perspective, this thesis illustrates that co-housing serves as an opportunity to go beyond just 'helping' each other, but rather a place from which friendships can grow. Inhabitants would find similarities beyond culture, ethnicity and language such as a mutual passion for football, from which strong ties and bonding relationships would eventually be established. This data once more shows that bonding is not limited to co-ethnic groups and approaching it as such might limit the scope of actually analysing to what extent social capital can contribute to the idea of integration. These results serve as an addition to studies from Spicer (2006) and Hynes (2009) who both show that bonding and bridging in the context of integration is not limited to co-ethnic groups and approaching it as such might limit the opportunities that can be found within social relationships between refugees and non-refugees.

Finally this thesis identified multiple opportunities coming from both bridging and bonding relationships, such as the access to different linguistic and knowledge networks, but moreover mutual understanding and relationships characterized by a feeling of belonging, and reciprocity. The opportunities derived from social capital once more illustrates, as Korec (2006) argued, how important it is to look at integration beyond the measurable dimensions of housing, employment and education, as integration is much more than this, and social dimensions of integration offer a valuable set of opportunities.

In summary this thesis stressed the importance of contextual factors that might influence the establishment of social capital or integration, as illustrated by the pressure the establishment of social capital is experiencing by the housing crisis. Moreover this thesis illustrated the importance of the concept of autonomy in integration, and served as an addition to van Dijk et al (2021) who argue the concept of autonomy should be included in the integration framework of Ager & Strang (2008). Moreover, this thesis provided a critical note on the conceptualization of Ager & Strang (2008) and illustrated how limiting the concepts of bonding and bridging to co-ethnicity can be perceived as problematic. Finally, this thesis once more illustrated the importance of social dimensions and social capital inside integration, acknowledging the idea of Korec (2006) that integration should be seen as much more than the measurable dimensions such as education, employment, housing and health. In the next chapter, the final conclusions of this thesis will be presented.

## 11. Conclusion

This thesis had the ambition to provide more insights on the lived experiences of inhabitants of co-housing facilities and the types of networks that arise. By focussing on the establishment of social capital, the opportunities this provided and the barriers that came along with this, the following main question was formulated:

*What are the experienced effects of co-housing initiatives in Amsterdam on the creation of networks of refugees in Amsterdam?*

This question has been approached through finding out how co-housing is organised, what kind of social networks are established within co-housing initiatives, how these networks are facilitated and accessed and what barriers and opportunities have been provided through these networks. This has all been done by assessing the lived experiences of inhabitants of co-housing facilities through semi-structured interviews.

What is important to note when regarding these conclusions, is the fact that not everyone in the co-housing facility engages in social networks and benefits from social capital. As described in chapter 9, those who are open to establish social networks are likely to benefit from social capital more than those who are not actively engaging in the co-housing facilities. This means that co-housing does not necessarily provide the type of social networks that will be discussed below.

In order to understand how co-housing is organized in Amsterdam it is important to know how the sudden rise of co-housing facilities had emerged. In the introduction and chapter 3 it was explained that co-housing arrangements are often temporal housing arrangements, that create a relatively cheap solution for the housing crisis, as well as the challenges municipalities face to house refugees. The co-housing arrangements visited for this thesis had 4 main characteristics in common. First all co-housing arrangements aimed to facilitate integration through social interaction. Second, all co-housing arrangements were organized by the idea of 'self-management' entailing that inhabitants were expected to manage and arrange activities to enhance social interaction inside the co-housing facilities themselves, without an external management team. Third, all co-housing facilities welcomed inhabitants between the age of 18 and 27. Finally, all co-housing initiatives were connected to external social workers which facilitated social linking.

Moreover, facilitators to access social capital have been identified in this thesis and entailed (1) accessibility, (2) physical environments, (3) activities, (4) initiators and (5) safety and stability. First, accessibility (*laagdrempeligheid*) has been defined as the ease in which inhabitants of co-housing facilities could access contact with one another. This was done mainly through day-to-day encounters and interactions. Furthermore, the idea that co-housing is aimed at facilitating social contact, lowers the barriers for knocking on a neighbours door. Second, physical environments in which inhabitants would encounter each other in day-to-day interactions – such as a common area to cook - were marked as an important facilitator for accessing social capital. Third, activities which were organized to engage in social interactions proved to be an important facilitator in accessing social networks in co-housing

arrangements, as these activities lowered the barriers for approaching each other. Furthermore, initiators who put effort in engaging inhabitants from the co-housing facility in activities and create moments of social engagement were of great importance towards the establishment of social capital. Finally, safety and stability proved to be of great importance for co-housing initiatives to come to its potential, as the possible vulnerability of the target audience for co-housing is often overlooked. Safety and stability was mentioned frequently in combination with the need for external professionals, who had the expertise and time to handle complex situations, which could not be solved through 'selfmanagement'. A lack of safety and stability could otherwise not only serve as a barrier for accessing social capital, but moreover as a barrier for the wellbeing of inhabitants in general. The identified facilitators overall illustrated how social networks could be accessed.

Barriers experienced within these networks were firstly the lack of the aforementioned facilitators such as a lack of safety and wellbeing, which were elaborated in chapter 8. Besides a lack of safety and stability, other barriers that had been identified for the formation of social capital in this thesis were first and foremost COVID-19 and its social restrictions. Moreover the barrier of language, which in some cases prohibited contact, or hindered the deepening of connections. Additionally, different backgrounds such as norms and values would at times clash. Furthermore, the lack of time for non-refugees was an important barrier. Non-refugees are often busy with their studies, side jobs and networks outside co-housing, and refugees are often as well engaged in their studies, their integration obligations, language classes, side jobs and sometimes networks outside the buildings. Finally, the lack of autonomy for both refugees as well as non-refugees sometimes proved to prohibit the access of social networks. For non-refugees this was related to the housing crisis; the limited options they had for choosing a house to live in, resulted in non-refugees applying for co-housing environments without having the time or willingness to invest in a project aimed at the creation of social contact. Moreover, refugees were experiencing a complete lack of autonomy, influencing their motivation to participate in the creation of social networks.

Additionally, within these co-housing facilities accessed for this study, 3 types of networks were established namely bridging, bonding and linking networks. First, social bridging was identified as the weaker ties established with the 'other'. As mentioned earlier, it has proven to be fruitful to approach the conceptualization of social bridging from a wider angle, namely the establishment of weak ties over different networks. The weak ties established inside co-housing facilities had proven to provide both refugees as well as non-refugees access to different flows of information and the opportunity to engage in a process of mutual learning and mutual understanding. Social bridging occurred over different linguistic networks, enabling mainly refugees to access information that was provided in the Dutch language. Moreover, social bridging occurred over time between people that had been living in the environment for a longer period of time, and people that had newly accessed the environment. This resulted in the opportunity for those who had newly accessed the co-housing environment to gain information on the environment from those who had been around for a longer period of time. Lastly, social bridging occurred over different backgrounds, enabling people with different norms and values to engage in a process of mutual understanding. This resulted in people learning about each other's cultural habits such as engaging in iftar and creating understanding about what each other's wants and needs are. Consequently, enabling

an environment in which integration is not only refugees who have to adapt to Dutch norms and values, but rather a co-existence of different wants and needs.

Second, social bonding was identified as a network inside co-housing facilities. Social bonding inside co-housing arrangements, in the first phases of refugee arrival, mostly occurred over co-linguistic networks. This resonated with the idea of Agar & Strang (2008, 2010), that elaborated on the often limited linguistic knowledge the refugee has in the first phases of arrival. The respondents in this thesis often argued that speaking the same language was essential to create a thickening relationship. However, as described in chapter 9, linguistics were not the sole base for the creation of these thickening relationships, and often went hand in hand with other dimensions such as mutual interest. Besides language being a prominent dimension in social bonding, mutual interests and hobby's thus appeared to have a great significance on the establishment of bonding relationships. Bonding relationships were thus not limited to linguistics or co-ethnicity only. Bonding relationships in this thesis consequently lead to an idea of trust, engagement and were often identified as friendships, that went beyond day-to-day interactions and more importantly beyond the idea of solely 'helping' each other serving a feeling of reciprocity.

Third, social linking has been identified as a form of social network inside co-housing. Social linking describes the possibilities refugees have to access government services. Social linking inside co-housing occurred through informal as well as formal structures. Informal, neighbours often translated letters for one another or helped establishing an appointment with the municipality for others who did not know how to do this yet. Indirectly this can be perceived as social linking, as this helped refugees with finding their way to institutions and society in general. Moreover, every co-housing arrangement created formal walk-in hours in which refugees could ask their questions on living in the Netherlands with an expert. These walk-in hours were experienced as an easy access towards the complex bureaucratic structures of the Netherlands. Within these networks, There were several arrangements that facilitated the access to the networks.

In conclusion this thesis has provided insight into the experiences on the creations of networks inside co-housing arrangements, by gaining more insights on how co-housing is organized, what types of networks have been established in co-housing, how these networks are facilitated and accessed, and what the experienced barriers and opportunities have been. By bringing together refugees as well as non-refugees, co-housing was experienced to facilitate access to different types of networks through means of accessibility, physical environments, activities, initiators and safety and stability. Besides facilitators, different barriers such as language, different backgrounds, a lack of autonomy and time on the other hand were experienced to prohibited inhabitants from the establishment of social networks. The types of social networks that consequently occurred consisted out of bridging networks over language, knowledge on the environment, and different backgrounds, resulting in access to information in other languages, access to information on the environment and mutual understanding. Moreover, bonding relationships were created over co-linguistics, but more importantly over shared interests or hobby's, creating feelings of trust, engagement and reciprocity. Besides this, social linking in the co-housing facilities, was experienced as creating informal and formal access to governance structures and services.

Overall, co-housing in this process has been a fruitful facilitator for bringing the social dimensions of integration, identified by Ager & Strang (2008) together. While the markers and means such as health, employment and education have not directly been addressed as explained in the discussion, further research into how co-housing contributes to these dimensions could provide a more holistic understanding on the lived experiences of co-housing.

Finally, this thesis was able to provide knowledge on the significance of social relationships and the non-material benefits social capital can provide to the integration process. These can be seen as equally important to the measurable assets of integration, while often forgotten (Korec, 2006). However, co-housing by all means should not be underestimated. Where co-housing can be seen as a relatively cheap solution for the housing crisis, the experiences of inhabitants of co-housing facilities in Amsterdam stressed the importance of not underestimating the costs, time, expertise and investment it needs to create an environment safe for all inhabitants. As only by doing so, co-housing can be shaped to facilitate opportunities.

## 12. Final reflections

In the last section of this thesis I would like to reflect on the journey made to conduct this thesis research but moreover on my developments as researcher in the field of migration and integration.

First of all I must acknowledge I have underestimated the fieldwork conducted in this research, as reflected on in the methodology, gaining access to my research population has proven rather difficult as I was facing not only the COVID-19 restrictions, but also linguistic barriers. Moreover, the reach I gained through social media channels such as Facebook and Whatsapp was limited.

Conducting interviews online has moreover proven challenging, not only did technical difficulties occur, but moreover the online environment limited the possibility to small talk and create a relationship based on trust to start off the interviews. While the interviews conducted for this thesis contained much valuable information, I believe conducting the interviews in real life on location could have benefitted the outcomes of this research.

Despite the fact conducting research in an online environment has proven challenging for me, I gained more understanding of how to approach this in the future concerning time and the build-up of interviews. The research into co-housing overall has improved my knowledge on integration policies, but moreover on the lived experiences of integration, the barriers and the facilitators. It has helped broaden my perspectives on co-housing facilities in general.

In conclusion I must state I am grateful for all the insights that have been provided to me by the inhabitants of co-housing initiatives and moreover the willingness and power of my respondents to adjust to online environments when needed and trust me in the process of interviewing. Finally I am thankful for the insights in the daily lives my research participants have provided and trusted me with, and the insights this gained me into the local and lived experiences of what we call 'integration'.

## Bibliography

- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Boelhouwer, P. (2020). The housing market in The Netherlands as a driver for social inequalities: proposals for reform. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 20(3), 447–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2019.1663056>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*.
- Caponio, T., & Borkert, M. (2010). The Local Dimension of Migration Policymaking. *The Local Dimension of Migration Policymaking*. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789089642325>
- Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E., & Vertovec, S. (2002). *Integration: Mapping the Field*.
- Czischke, D., & Huisman, C. J. (2018). Integration through collaborative housing? Dutch starters and refugees forming self-managing communities in Amsterdam. *Urban Planning*, 3(4), 156–165. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i4.1727>
- Entzinger, H. (2006). Changing the rules while the game is on: From multiculturalism to assimilation in the Netherlands. *Migration, Citizenship, Ethnos*, 121–144. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403984678\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403984678_7)
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2003). Unraveling the central state, but how? Types of multi-level governance. *American Political Science Review*, 97(2), 233–243. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000649>
- Hynes, P. (2009). Contemporary compulsory dispersal and the absence of space for the restoration of trust. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22(1), 97–121. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen049>
- Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-6.2.466>
- Korac, M. (2003). Integration and how we facilitate it: A comparative study of the settlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. *Sociology*, 37(1), 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038503037001387>
- Landau, L. B., & Duponchel, M. (2011). Laws, policies, or social position? Capabilities and the determinants of effective protection in four African cities. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq049>
- Lippert, R. K., & Pyykkönen, M. (2012). Introduction: Immigration, governmentality, and integration assemblages. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10202-011-0021-1>

- Mahieu, R., & Van Caudenberg, R. (2020). Young refugees and locals living under the same roof: intercultural communal living as a catalyst for refugees' integration in European urban communities? *Comparative Migration Studies*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0168-9>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Noor, K. B. M. (2008). Case study: A strategic research methodology. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5(11), 1602–1604. <https://doi.org/10.3844/ajassp.2008.1602.1604>
- Oliver, C., Geuijen, K., & Dekker, R. (2020). Social contact and encounter in asylum seeker reception: the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00187-0>
- Penninx, R., & Garcés-Mascareñas, B. (2016). Integration Processes and Policies in Europe Contexts, Levels and Actors. In B. Garcés-Mascareñas & R. Penninx (Eds.), *IMISCOE Research Series* (pp. 189–202). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_11)
- Rath, J. (2009). The Netherlands: A reluctant country of immigration. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 100(5), 674–681. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2009.00579.x>
- Ryan, L. (2011). Migrants' social networks and weak ties: Accessing resources and constructing relationships post-migration. *Sociological Review*, 59(4), 707–724. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02030.x>
- Schakel, A. H., Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2014). Multilevel Governance and the State. *The Oxford Handbook of Transformations of the State*, November, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199691586.013.14>
- Scholten, P. W. A. (2013). Agenda dynamics and the multi-level governance of intractable policy controversies: The case of migrant integration policies in the Netherlands. *Policy Sciences*, 46(3), 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-012-9170-x>
- Spicer, N. (2008). Places of exclusion and inclusion: Asylum-seeker and refugee experiences of neighbourhoods in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(3), 491–510. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830701880350>
- Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee Integration : Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 589–610.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>
- Tinnemans, K., Fermin, A., & Davelaar, M. (2019). Een kans voor ondersteuning van statushouders bij integratie en participatie: Gemengd Wonen met Statushouders. In *KIS* (Issue April, pp. 3–32).

- Tummers, L. (2016). The re-emergence of self-managed co-housing in Europe: A critical review of co-housing research. *Urban Studies*, 53(10), 2023–2040. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015586696>
- van Dijk, H., Knappert, L., Muis, Q., & Alkhaled, S. (2021). Roomies for Life? An Assessment of How Staying with a Local Facilitates Refugee Integration. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 0(0), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1923879>
- van Heerden, S., de Lange, S. L., van der Brug, W., & Fennema, M. (2014). The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40(1), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.830881>
- van Spanje, J. (2010). Contagious parties: Anti-immigration parties and their impact on other parties' immigration stances in contemporary western europe. *Party Politics*, 16(5), 563–586. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068809346002>
- van Uden, J., & Jongerden, J. (2021). 'Everyone is a Possibility': Messy Networks of Refugees from Syria in Urfa, Turkey. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 23(2), 251–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2020.1867807>
- Vestbro, D. U. (2010). *Living Together, Co-housing Ideas and Realities Around the World*.
- While, A., & Barriball, K. L. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 19(7), 328–335.