



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Programme of Master's Urban and Regional Planning

Community Gardens as Safe Spaces for
Promoting Social Capital: a case study in
Almere

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Content

By the start of 2016, the total number of refugees has reached 16.1 million around the world, with approximately 4.4 million of whom are resettled in the Europe (UNHCR, 2016). The suddenly increased needs from these people have created significant loads for the governments from financial pressures to social issues. With the increasing number of refugees seeking for a new life in the Europe but might not yet equipped with adequate skills or legal status to fit in the new society, it is crucial to have better understanding of the practice of integration at local level (Strang & Ager, 2010).

Integration has been the focus of immigration both in policy and academic aspect. In the three dimensions of refugee integration process¹ which are recognized by UNHCR (2002), this research will emphasize on the **socio-cultural integration**, which is closely related to social inclusion as one of the four key policy areas² recognized in 2011 EU Eurostat report of Indicators of Immigrant Integration. **Socio-cultural integration** is often considered as the relatively abstract aspect in integration because its close relations with subjective matters such as sense of belonging (Ager & Strang, 2004; UNHCR, 2013). The difficulty of measuring socio-cultural integration has been often mentioned and studied under policy frameworks (UNHCR, 2002; Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona, Flynn, Pasha & Beynon, 2006; Ager & Strang, 2008). With increasing recognitions of how complex interactions within host community and refugees could create different level and sense of belonging and inclusiveness, the needs to understand local practices of socio-cultural integration has been urged by many (Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona & Hauser, 2002; Ager & Strang, 2008; UNHCR, 2013). One of the more developed and used models for accessing socio-cultural integration is through the application of **social capital**, which is often considered as the one of the key elements in human interaction and functionality of social organization (Woolley, 1998; Kearns & Forrest, 2000).

The concept of **urban encounters** is adapted in this research as a mean for creating opportunities for increasing social capital for both host communities and refugees. These opportunities could range from unplanned and incidental encounters on the street to careful planned and interest-oriented encounters. Watson indicates in his research (2006) that people could form different relationships through different urban encounters. For example, women with young children who go to the same child care center might exchange related information while they go to the care center

¹ Which includes: legal process, economic process, and social and cultural process.

² Which includes: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

to pick up their children. In other words, urban encounters could create opportunities for people from different groups to meet and interact, and further encourage them to understand each other and may be endure each other's differences, and help building deeper and more meaningful relationships and lead to a smoother path of socio-cultural integration in the future (Cook, Dwyer & Waite, 2011; Valentine, 2013). This research focuses on exploring the potential of urban encounters for increasing two aspects proposed by Putnam's (2000) research on social capital: the **social bond** and **social bridge**.

Urban encounters could happen everywhere in people's daily lives. However, refugees often face serious challenges in the integration process. Those challenges could discourage refugees from interacting with others in the new community, which may depress them from building social networks and developing social capitals, and create segregation (UNHCR, 2013). Considering these special conditions, the concept of **safe space** here is conceptualized as the **space** which facilitates urban encounters that encourages refugees and the host community to meet and interact.

The space of **community garden** is chosen in this research as the actualized safe space for observing urban encounters. It is chosen because the gradually recognition that community gardens could be an alternative for meeting various needs of urban dwellers which ranges from food security (Halloran & Magid, 2016), health promotion (Soga, Cox, Yamaura, Gaston & Kurisu, 2017) to community building and social capital gaining (Carolan & Hale, 2016) with various benefits related to social integration (Smit, Nasr & Ratta, 2001; Smit & Bailkey, 2006; Firth, Maye & Pearson, 2017). There are also documents about how gardening could improve health and environmental conditions in refugee camps (Fall, 2009; WTsadik, 2009). However, there is not yet enough research on how could urban gardening and community gardens contribute to refugee integration process by facilitating urban encounters.

This research explores *the possibility of cooperating social and spatial benefits from community gardens to create a safe space for promoting social capital gaining through urban encounters*, especially on how could the space of community gardens facilitates *encounters and activities that do not relay significantly on common language*, and *how do repetitive encounters in community gardens may promote social bonding and bridging*.

Akwaaba garden in Almere, the Netherlands, has been chosen as the site for empirical study to help better understand the opportunities and obstacles in local practice. Using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods, the researcher had the opportunity to not only be on the first line of individuals' experiences in urban encounters, but also to better understand

how the encounters were hosted through different activities in the space of a community garden and how the encounters could contribute to social capital gaining. It is recognized by this research that social capital gaining for refugees and host communities in terms of social bonds and social bridges could be promoted in community gardens through various activities. The activities hosted in community gardens provide regular opportunities for participants to meet and interact within their own pace and to foster a safe space for individuals to show their differences, which could help refugees overcome the challenges they often face and build a smoother path for both refugees and host communities in future socio-cultural integration processes.

1.2 Aims & Research Question

Integration is recognized as an important aspect in immigration policy and studies for more than two decades, it is more than a functional process of adaptation to the host society but a more fundamental socio-cultural process of ‘fitting-in’ and ‘belonging’ (Atfield, Brahmabhatt & O’Toole, 2007; Masso, 2009; Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). Although there is no firm definition of refugee socio-cultural integration, this research adapts the definition from UNHCR (2013) as ***‘a two-way process and is premised on “adaptation” of one party and “welcome” by the other, with the emphasize of building, enabling the building of, and empowering refugees to be encouraged to bridge cultural, ethnic, and social divides as a mean to counter discrimination (pp.808-809).’*** In other words, the socio-cultural integration is a two-way process which both refugees and local communities adapt the living alongside each other without discrimination, and to encourage refugees to contribute or participate actively in the social life of the host country (Strang & Ager 2010). The result is ideally ‘a society that is both diverse and open, where people can form a community, regardless of differences (UNHCR, 2002).’

It is argued in this research that socio-cultural integration could be a key aspect for refugee integration, yet it cannot be objective measures easily because it often relates to personal feelings and matters (Zetter et al., 2002; UNHCR, 2013). However, this research argues that it is possible to promote and lead the way to it by increasing social capital among individuals and communities. Within limited time and resource, the aim of this paper is therefore to highlight key issues of how social bond and social bridge could be formed and reinforced in community gardens, and to explore the complexity of different experiences grounded in local settings. By creating opportunities for social capital gaining, it could lead the way to future socio-cultural integration.

In short, this research seeks to answer the question of '***How do community gardens promote social capital for refugees and host communities through urban encounters?***'.

To explore the potential contribution of community gardens the social capital gaining process mentioned above, 2 sub-questions are proposed:

1. What kind of *encounters* can community gardens facilitate for refugees and host communities?
2. How do these *encounters* contribute to social capital gaining in communities?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 *Social-cultural Integration and Social Capital: Invisible ‘Good Vibes’*

2.1.1 Socio-cultural Integration

The migration trend around the world has been greatly influenced not only by economic incentives and the pursuing of better quality of lives, but also the needs to avoid threats, dangers and to secure basic human rights. According to UNHCR (2016), the refugee crisis since 2015 has created millions of asylum seekers and refugees, with approximately 4.4 million of whom are resettled in the Europe. There are different solutions for people who seek asylum. Integration, however, is identified as the most durable way for the recent refugee trend, instead of resettlement and return (UNHCR, 2013).

In this research, the term refugee includes both asylum seekers and refugees. Although these two groups are different and do face different challenges in the process of integration, both group still share considerable challenges that are an overlapped, especially in terms of socio-cultural aspect.

Refugee integration is different from other migrant integration process because of their experience of the loss of protection from their country, various persecution or armed conflict, difficulties in obtaining documentation, and the separation or loss of family (UNHCR, 2013; van Selm, 2014). These experiences of trauma and insecurity not only happen during refugees' journey fleeing from their origin countries, but often continue in the host societies and may influence their ability and even desire to integrate (Strang & Ager, 2010; UNHCR 2013). Lack of understanding in their special conditions and needs may lead to unsuitable policy and inappropriate supports which is crucial for building an inclusive community within the host society (Ager & Strang, 2004; UNHCR 2013).

Zetter et al. (2002) identify 4 domains³ in their research for measuring refugee integration, which not only address the performance of integration frameworks and policies but also individual or specific groups of refugees' actual experience. Despite of the more quantifiable variables for measuring citizenship domain, governance and agency domain, and socio-economical function domain in the integration process, this research intends to understand the socio-cultural domain, which emphasizes the 'profound social dynamics which demarcate levels of social inclusion, participation and connectivity by minority groups such as refugees in the majority community (Zetter et al., 2002, p.139)'.

³ Which includes: citizenship domain, governance domain, functional domain and social domain.

Socio-cultural integration is focused as a future goal in the research not only because of the increasing recognitions of the gap between national policy and local practice (Ager & Strang, 2008; van Selm, 2014), but also because of the lack of understanding in the local practice of socio-cultural interactions within host community and refugees (Zetter et al., 2006; Ager & Strang, 2008; UNHCR, 2013), which could be a key for building a 'functional and inclusive society which all members could contribute and benefit (Strang & Ager, 2010)'.

Spicer (2008) indicates in his research that 'individuals' social networks are highly significant in promoting their sense of belonging within particular places, as are feelings of security, freedom, opportunity and empowerment (p.492)', which could help building information and resource channels and empowering refugees to access different parts and resources of the host society, to take active participation, or simply participate in different activities when they wish to do so. However, the lack of social supports and social networks within refugee groups are often recognized as one of the challenges these groups face (Ager & Strang, 2004; Strang & Ager, 2010; UNHCR, 2013); which include various reasons such as worries for separated family, pressures from uncertain legal status, insufficient language skills, financial insecurity, and physical and mental trauma (Atfield et al., 2007; Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2007; UNHCR, 2013; UNHCR, 2016).

Having the notion of the subjective nature of socio-cultural integration and the special conditions refugees might have in the process, the concept of social capital is adapted in this research for the understanding of individual networks. There are various forms of social capital, Putnam's (2000) model, which divides social capital into three categories is adapted in this research, which shall be further discussed in the next section.

Among all the factors that could affect socio-cultural integration, language has been recognized as one of the most important one (Strang & Ager, 2010). However, as Gijsberts & Dagevos (2007) indicates in their study that second-language proficiency 'depends on two different but relevant factors: the "investments" that people are prepared to make in order to learn a language, and the "opportunities" they have to speak this language (pp.808-809)'. In other words, the more intensively immigrants are exposed to the new language, the better they speak this language. Also, it is understandable that 'common interests' or 'common problems' could help refugees and host communities to gather and create social capital together, for example, studies have shown that socio-cultural integration could be well developed in schools (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Rah, 2013; Sorgen, 2015), sport teams (Spaaij, 2012; Booth, Cusimano, Easton-Calabria & Kühn, 2014), and community activities

like Local Exchange and Trade System (Smets & ten Kate, 2008). Therefore, having the interests-oriented focus in mind, this research tries to bring interests into spaces, and to explore to what extent could the space of community gardens contribute to social capital gaining by creating opportunities for people to interact with each other with or without a common language. This research also try to have a better understanding of how could community gardens and the encounters happened in those spaces help individuals to build their social networks, and to encourage refugees become more active participants in the host societies (Zetter et al., 2002; Zetter et al., 2006).

2.1.2 Social Capital

Social capital is generally understood as referring to social connections, networks and resources that exist within a community, as well as the norms that govern social interaction, such as trust and cooperation (Rostila, 2011). It exists within the structures of social networks and is often recognized as the 'features of social life that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995, pp. 664-665)'. In this research, social capital is conceptualized from Keeley's research in 2007 for OECD, as 'the interactions and networks among groups or individuals that facilitate cooperation with shared norms, values and understandings (p.103)'. There are 3 types of social capital: social bond, social bridge, and social linkage. Due to time and resource limitation, only social bond and social bridge are investigated in this research.

In the process of socio-cultural integration for refugees, social capital is especially important in combating social exclusion and discrimination, celebrating different cultural identities, promoting participation in social activities, and establishing new identities within host communities; by doing so, refugees could reconstruct their social networks to support a meaningful social life and identity (Zetter et al., 2006).

Social capital and social inclusiveness share the notion of social networks, which are 'resource and information channels that enable communities, individuals and groups to establish their social well-being by facilitating access to symbolic and material resources (Zetter et al., 2006, p. 12)'. Carpiano & Hystad (2011) indicate in their research that simply knowing other people in the neighborhood could play a significant role in one's mental health for enhancing a sense of community and familiarity. In other words, social capital exists within the structures of social networks (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000) and is often conceived as a collective resource that can increase a community's capacity to address problems of differences and enhance community well-being (Putnam, 2000; Strang & Ager, 2010; Pittaway et al.,

2015), which is one of the fundamental factors in socio-cultural integration.

As social capital often serves as an effective tool to understand the process of community building and integration, it has also been most criticized for its insufficient conceptualization, oversimplification of political power and relationships in communities, and challenges at different levels of governance (Kearns & Forrest, 2000; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Zetter et al., 2006). However, the concept is widely recognized as the effective base for accessing and understanding social stability and integration process (Atfield et al., 2007), which is also the reason why it is adapted in this research.

Putnam (2000) identifies three types of social capital in his research: social bond, social bridge, and social linkage. These three types of social capital have later been widely adapted into immigration studies. As Spicer (2008) indicates in his study, social bond is the interactions or networks within people based on a sense of common identity such as family, close friends and people who share a same culture, language, religion or ethnicity; social bridge represents the interactions or networks that stretch beyond a shared sense of identity among individuals, for example connections between communities with different ethnic, national or religious identities; and social linkage indicates connections between individuals and institutions, agencies and services.

Social bond and social bridge are adapted in this research as indicators for accessing social capital without social linkage not only because of the limitation of time and resource, but the focus of pursuing future socio-cultural integration, which usually begins in social bonding and social bridging, with relationships building and social contacting are the primer concerns (Losi and Strang 2008; Spicer 2008). Also, Losi & Strang indicate the possible reinforce effect between the two, since social bond is often an important source of emotional support, self-esteem and confident for refugees, it could underpin the possibility of stronger bonding capital promotes the development of social bridge, which seen as being the base of connections that promotes wider acceptance or endurance in differences for people to move forward together (Atfield et al., 2007).

The origin country of refugees is often used as the identity to catalog, however, this research catalog the participants with the language they use the most currently in daily lives, not only because there are situations where refugees do not feel happy to mix with members of their own ethnic group (Ager and Strang 2010), but also because one of the focus of this research is to understand how do people in community gardens overcome the language barrier in forming social capital.

In short, the social capital gaining process between refugees and host communities

could be understood as a form of invisible 'good vibes' in the host society, and could be an important factor in socio-cultural integration. 'Good vibes' is indeed an abstract term which deliver not only the intangible nature of socio-cultural integration, but also the complexity of such issue. It was difficult to identify the process of socio-cultural integration within the limited resource in this research. However, the 'good vibes' is identified by the participants in the empirical study. It is believed that the importance of socio-cultural integration should be emphasized and kept in mind in both the theoretic and practical aspects of local community integration, which has been facing increasing challenges in nowadays due to rising level of insecurity from terrorism and financial collapse (Valentine, 2013). The challenges of socio-cultural integration might be mitigated in the setting of urban area, where the potential of living inclusiveness together with difference has been celebrated by many, but could also be accelerated by the hardening attitudes towards 'others' and cause exclusion. The issue of how to create 'good vibes' in communities, which is identified as the actual site for local practice of socio capital gaining (Strang & Ager, 2010; Cook et al., 2011), will be discussed in next section.

2.2 Urban Encounters for Refugees & the Host Community: Creating Good Vibes

To encourage the building of a community which celebrates diversity, or sometimes even just endures differences, could be a challenge. Local communities have been recognized as crucial spaces for shaping integration experiences and social capital gaining (Amin, 2002; UNHCR, 2013). However, researches have shown not only a policy gap between state policies and local practices in such process (Daley, 2007; Pittaway, Bartolomei & Doney, 2015), also an academic gap on how to facilitate meaningful encounters in different spaces to promote better understanding on cultural differences for a more inclusive society (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2013). In the hope of smoothening the process of social contacts and building social networks among refugees and the host community, however, the challenge might be mitigated by simple forms of friendliness such as smiling or greeting on the street (Ager and Strang 2008; Strang & Ager, 2010), which might also lead a way to further socio-cultural integration.

The 'good vibes' in a community could be identified in individual's social networks development. Research has suggested that refugees often face challenges building social networks or forming friendships with members of the host community, which could be related to unrecovered trauma or mental issues, insufficient language skills, cultural differences, uncertainty of cultural norms, concern of discriminations and other limitations such as concerns about finances, legal status process, employment,

housing and family separation (UNHCR, 2016). The host community's attitudes toward new-comers also hold great influence toward such developments (Masso, 2009; UNHCR, 2013). In other words, the need for refugees and host communities to interact could be an urgent issue in terms of promoting social capital.

Putnam (2000) indicates the importance of reciprocity and trust in the development of social connections, which points out the need of opportunities for people to meet and exchange resources to create mutually benefits and further relationships in everyday lives. However, it could be difficult for refugees due to the reasons mentioned above. Therefore, a proactive strategy to create such opportunities and spaces for people to meet, make contact, exchange and get to know each other has become a crucial issue both in political and academic field is needed. As indicates in the research of UNHCR (2013) that 'contact cannot be relied on to happen automatically (p.96)', the concept of urban encounter has been conceptualized in this research for 'creating good vibes'.

The concept of urban encounters here represents the planned or unplanned interactions in various public spaces which includes '(...) sitting, watching, being, chatting in spaces that may be planned, designed and monumental, but more often may be barely visible to the inattentive eye (Watson, 2006, p.13).' These spaces could be important for social bonds and social bridges because they offer opportunities for people from different backgrounds to challenge the fixed relations and notions, and to learn to interact and to live along with differences through new patterns of social interactions (Amin, 2002; Cook et al., 2011). Valentine (2013) expresses her concerns that it could be too naïve and inappropriate to see urban encounters as a guarantee for socio-cultural integration. However, the carefully planned encounters that are not incidental yet still informal, with proper accessibility and safe settings for individuals and groups, the sense of familiarity or belonging could be established through repeated interactions.

Watson (2006) and Cook et al. (2011) indicate in their research, the concept of urban encounters is often embedded in an understanding which acknowledges the importance of 'everyday lives'. It is emphasized that these encounters should be worked in local spaces with everyday routines in situated social settings to better create meaningful encounters (Amin, 2002; Cook et al., 2011). De Certeau (as cited in Cook et al., 2011, p.729) states in his research that 'everyday social practices were critical for enhancing the ability of ordinary people to negotiate, and possibly resist, structural apparatuses of power'. Others continue the recognition everydayness as the very essence of real life (Amin, 2002; Binnie et al. 2007), which allows individuals' to 'hold things together' and to create a sense of security (Cook et al., 2011, p.737).

However, as Valentine (2013) indicates in her research, having contacts with people of differences through encounters, even on a day-to-day base, do not guarantee those social contacts would translate into respect for difference. For example, Amin (2002) observed in his research that city streets are spaces of transit that produce actual little exchange between passing strangers. The lack of meaningful encounters, which might cause by the lack of common language and other limitations, could cause segregation and parallel society (Amin, 2002; Cook et al., 2011; Valentine, 2013). At the same time, although spatial proximity might create a sense of belonging between people with differences, it could also create a sense of defensiveness because of the need to strive for limited resources (Valentine, 2013).

In short, the possible creation of ‘good vibes’ through urban encounters for refugees and host communities could vary greatly from fostering stronger empathy for strangeness, hospitality and generosity, to the breeding of tension and open conflict between people with differences (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht, 2015). However, urban encounters could play an important role in people’s lives and promote social capital gaining on what are often referred as ‘positive or negative social relations (Cook et al., 2011, p. 728)’; which is the idea of ‘good vibes’ argued in this research. The challenge here is how to facilitate urban encounters among diverse groups to create opportunities for building social bonds and bridges, and foster the ‘good vibes’. In the next section, the issue of creating good vibes in the safe space of community gardens shall be discussed. A case study will also be investigated as empirical research for better understanding related opportunities and obstacles in further chapters.

2.3 Community Gardens for Refugees and the Host Community: Creating Safe Space for Good Vibes

Isin (2002) points out in his research that city generates differences and assembles identities as spaces being constituted by ‘(...) the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other, inventing and assembling strategies and technologies, mobilizing various forms of capital, and making claims to that space that is objectified as “the city” (as cited in Yeoh, 2015, p.546).’ In other words, urban spaces, especially public spaces, are considered important for increasing social bonds and bridges because they are sites for diverse types of encounters that emerge between new and host communities and individuals.

This research adapted the concept of safe space in the hope of better facilitating urban encounters and smoothing the process of building social capitals. Community

gardens, as the chosen space in this research, will be discussed after the section of safe space.

2.3.1 Safe Space

Safe space could be dated to the women movement to early twentieth century, but has been applied to various contexts with relatively loose definition and theorization (Barrett, 2010; Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014). Safe space can be understood as inclusive spaces which individuals could experience everyday activities as well as symbolic and functional collective actions with continuous reconceptualization and respect-building for differences. In other words, safe space '(...) is not only an attempt to create an abstract sense of equality, to smooth over differences, or to step outside of and ignore the dangers and injustices of the world (Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014, p.1355)', and where 'social difference is continually addressed and redefined (Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014, p.1348)'. This concept is therefore identical to the 'ethical space' Ermine (2007) develops to encourage the reconciliation of differences, which he describes as a meeting place or venue to 'step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and to assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur (Ermine, 2007, p. 202)'.

The production of safe space includes creating new relations and embracing differences, and should be understood through the relations that produce them, which in other words is an on-going, reactive and dynamic experience (Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014). In other words, the process of cultivating a safe space could be a way of practicing social justice that recognizes, emphasizes, encourages social difference (Ermine, 2007; Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014;); which is also the reason why it is applied in this research.

However, it is worth noted that although safe space does often aim at providing valuable sources of support for targeted groups, at the same time it could create internal boundaries which causes exclusion for other groups, for example: lesbian only festivals which only allow lesbian participants (Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014). Safe space could be highly controlled and become sites only serve for people with certain identities. In such circumstances, having bonding within a specific identity does help promoting strong social bonds, but might not promote social bridges. O'Neill (2015) also report in his article on a trend of building safe spaces in universities in North America that the idea of safe space could deprive controversial ideas to be explored, according to a student named Shapiro. In short, the challenge of safe spaces is not only the creation of safe spaces, but the process of managing and maintenance such spaces for people to be true to their identity and their ideas.

In general, the understanding of safe space has been developed into association with keeping marginalized groups free from threats and violence, and to support often marginalized groups by providing a space for facilitating common understanding and acceptance (Day, 1999). Also, safe space often encourages participants to take active part in producing and experiencing such spaces (Rosenfeld & Noterman, 2014), which resonates to the promotion of encouraging refugees to take active participation in the host community.

This research adapts such concept and argues that community gardens could be a suitable safe space for refugees and local communities to experience social capital gaining and explore the potential of further socio-cultural integration. The reasons why such gardens could be a suitable place for cultivating safe space shall be explored in the next section.

2.3.2 Community Gardens as Safe Spaces for Refugees

Community gardens have become a more and more recognized topic as an alternative for urban development and community building in recent years alongside with urban agriculture. Urban agriculture could play a significant role in various urban issues such as health, nutrition, environment, food security, water, sanitation, enterprise development, income generation, youth and women, and social equity (Smit et al, 2001). Urban agriculture could contribute to social equity by promoting the health and productivity of challenged groups (for example, the immigrants, refugees and people with disability etc.) for additional income and further empowerment. For example, youth in a Peace Corps project in the Dominican Republic ‘(...) have not only learned to achieve stable income by practicing urban agriculture, but to become accountable for the environmental well-being and food security of their communities (Smit et al, 2001, ch.7, p.12)’. One of the most important aspects of urban agriculture in the society today perhaps is the growing emphasize of food system and social networks that city dwellers become more socially, culturally, and politically active in (Smit & Bailkey, 2006; Carolan & Hale 2016). The experiences of working together and getting to know different cultures and people could create new social networks, which further contribute to organizational and individual values (Racin, 2015; Carolan & Hale, 2016; Soga, 2017).

Community gardens, as one of the sites for urban agriculture activities, is focused in this research because of its openness, affordability and flexibility in practice; which could contribute to the socio-cultural integration process by promoting social capital in community development and social networks. The definition of community could be distinguished into communities of interest (religion, culture, sports, gardening),

communities of circumstance (race, ethnicity, disabilities, orphanages, homeless), and communities of place (cities, villages, refugee camps); members of each of these communities 'recognize the commonalities that link them as a community, but do not see themselves as separate from the rest of urban society (Smit & Bailkey, 2006, p.146)'. Urban agriculture activities also provide opportunities for social contact and interaction, which are key attributes to active and robust communities (Racin, 2015).

Besides the various benefits of community gardens for people in general, the benefits for refugees for participating in urban gardening also start to receive recognition in various studies with focuses not only in financial supports (Smit et al., 2001; Chaille, 2015; Young, 2015) and mental supports (Seyler, 2015; Welze, 2015; Soga, 2017), but also community building, social capital gaining, and increase social interactions for people who might not have the chance or be comfortable to experience with each other (Firth et al., 2011; Grubisec, 2015; Seyler, 2015). Although one frequent criticism of community development through urban agriculture activities is that they reproduce neoliberal subjectivities and transfer state responsibilities to local communities and individuals (Carolan & Hale, 2016), the potential benefits of community gardens, especially how they could contribute to socio-cultural integration for refugees and host communities through facilitating urban encounters in such safe spaces, should still be carefully explored and examined.

As the process of socio-cultural integration between refugees and host communities involves multiple layers and aspects in community settings, this research tries to explore how and what could the space of community gardens facilitate different urban encounters, and how they could contribute to social capital promotion for specific groups in terms of creating social encounters with different groups.

In short, the process of socio-cultural integration has always been a difficult topic to study because of its 'feeling-based' nature (UNHCR, 2013). With the focus of studying how community gardens serve as a safe space for refugees and host communities to form stronger social networks through urban encounters, the concept of social capital will be applied in this research as a mean for specification. One case study is chosen for empirical study to achieve better understanding of the process of social capital gaining in local practices with the focus of how refugees and the host community overcome language and other challenges and create social capitals by participating in the garden, and whether the social capital in bonding and bridging does change through the encounters in the garden.

3. Methodology

To answer the research question, this research applied social capital as a mean to specificize the subjective nature of socio-cultural integration. For data collection, participatory observation is applied in the first stage of the study and semi-structured interviews in the second stage. These methods are chosen because this research argues that although language is often emphasized in the process of building social capital, there might be alternatives for social contacts and network building through planned, or even incidental, urban encounters, which includes verbal and nonverbal communication in the process. Also, community gardens offer various ways for people to participate in or 'become a part of' the garden, which includes of course gardening works and socializing with people, but also the possibility of just sitting, taking a walk, or simply enjoying the scenery and nature on your own in the garden.

In other words, this research tries to explore the potential of community garden as a safe space which allows people from different cultural background with different motivation to gather, build up individual networks, and create a sense of togetherness. Also, how people overcome difficulties of network building between refugees and local community, and how Akwaaba, a community garden, could be an efficient alternative site for local socio-cultural integration in individual levels will be discussed in further sections.

3.1 Case Study

As Jerolmack & Khan (2014) indicate, 'our social world is generated and maintained through interaction (p.197)'. In hope of comprehending of local practice of social capital gaining process, a case study in Almere (Akwaaba garden) will be investigated as an empirical research to help understanding the local practice process using participatory observation and semiostructured interviews with focuses on the sub-questions.

Akwaaba garden is chosen as the site for case study not only because of resource limitations and author's personal ties to the local refugee helping organization, Inspiratie In the Netherlands Community (short as Inspiratie Inc.), which is in charge of managing the garden. Akwaaba garden is located next to the refugee camp (asielzoekerscentrum, AZC) of Almere, which is one of the three AZC in the Netherlands. It is also one of the most developed garden which is managed mostly by refugees. Further details about Akwaaba garden will be discussed in chapter 4.

For data collection, participatory observation is applied in the first stage of the study

and semi-structured interviews in the second stage. These methods are chosen because this research argues that although language is often emphasized in the process of integration, there might be alternatives for social contacts and network building through planned, or even incidental, urban encounters, which includes verbal and nonverbal communication in the process. Also, community gardens offer various ways for people to participate in or 'become a part of' the garden, which includes of course gardening works and socializing with people, but also the possibility of just sitting, taking a walk, or simply enjoying the scenery and nature on your own in the garden. In other words, this research tries to explore the potential of community gardens as safe spaces which allow people from different groups of cultural backgrounds with different motivations to gather, make contacts, overcome barriers and create more inclusive communities by promoting social capitals. To overcome difficulties of network building between refugees and host communities, this research proposes the idea of using a space with the capacity of fostering both planned and incidental encounters for individuals to form social networks and social capitals in a more spontaneous environment to achieve the goal of building inclusive communities. Although the idea of creating more opportunities for promoting socio-cultural integration through urban encounters in a spontaneous setting is not yet been confirmed as an efficient way to achieve the goal of inclusiveness, these encounters and contacts could play an important role in influencing the basis of socio-cultural integration at the individual level.

To assess the process of socio-cultural integration through urban encounters in Akwaaba garden, the concept of social bond and social bridge is applied and accessed through participatory observation and interviews by the researcher. The process of creating social bonds and social bridges here are observed in both frequency: how much time do people meet and participate in the garden; and quality: what kinds of opportunity or network do people get from meeting and participating in the garden. Further application of the methods will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Participatory Observation:

3.2.1 Participatory Observation in Theory

Participatory observation is one of the most basic anthropological research methods (Bernard, 2000). Ethnographer usually begins a study with a topic and discusses that topic with various people who know about it. It is important to recognize the differences among people who know about the topic and to include them in the study, remembering that not everyone has the same opinion or experience about the topic.

Participatory observation is usually conducted over a period of about a year because this method requires researchers to build a certain level of trust between the researcher(s) and the studied targets (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). If the researcher lived in the culture for an extended time or visited the culture repeatedly over time, it is more likely that researchers could learn the language and social norms, get to know people and build trusts, and participate in the routine activities. However, Bernard (2000) indicates in his research that there have been participant observations that were conducted in a matter of weeks by using rapid assessment techniques, which means to go into the field with the questions researcher(s) wants to answer in his/her research. In this instance, the target participants are taken into the researcher's confidence as research partners to enable the research questions are answered.

Participatory observation is useful for gaining understandings of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts of the study of participants' lives, which includes the relationships among and between people, social contexts and norms, ideas, and events, and people's behaviors and activities (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005); which fits the purpose and focus in this research: better understand the process of socio-cultural integration in community gardens. Participatory observation is chosen as the premier data collecting tool also because it takes both verbal and nonverbal materials into account. This fits the different interactions focused in this research such as: *who interacts with whom and how often; how do different participants interact and communicate with each other; what kind of urban encounters are experienced and by whom etc.*, will be more properly included within situated character of social contacts through observing participants in the conditions of their 'normal' lived lives instead of a controlled environment provided by researchers. Through the activities, researchers could access to community members who can explain the meaning of such activities and social norms hold for them, and also process these extra information along the research for forming more specific questions in later stages of the research.

Considering the language and cultural barriers are what refugees often encounters, such observation could be one of the key aspects for answering the research question. Semi-structured interview will be conducted to better understand the experiences and feelings from participants in later phase of the research. Participant observation is also chosen here to avoid 'attitudinal fallacy'—the error of inferring situated behavior from verbal accounts (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014), which is another often encountered challenge for socio-cultural integration studies based in interviews (Atfield et al., 2007; Spicer, 2008).

As Jerolmack & Khan (2014) indicates in their research, ‘(...) people do not make meaning or act alone—they do so in relation to other people and in particular situations (p.200)’, participatory observation serves as a systematic tool for conducting description of events, behaviors, and other manners in the social settings chosen for study (Kawulich, 2005). It is well recognized by its capacity of enabling researchers to describe existing situations using all five senses, which helps providing a "written photograph" of the routine situations under study. Also, it provides a tool for researchers to explore and understand broader possible factors in situations under an open, nonjudgmental and respectful mindset through the process of learning with exposure to or participate in the routine activities or lives of participants (Bernard, 2000).

There are always doubts about validity of using participatory observation as data collecting method, which is why semi-structured interview is also included in this research to better understand the usage of terms during participatory observation, the actual feelings from participants’ point of view and other private or personal manners.

3.2.2 Participatory Observation in Akwaaba

For participatory observation, the researcher took part in the gardening team of Inspiratie Inc. for 4 months (from February 2017 to May 2017) and in total 15 times of participation with different frequency every week in three locations due to the assigned tasks from the organization. The three locations are Karibu garden, which is still in building process (5 times), where building patio was the main task; the Inspiratie Inc. office at Odeonstraat (3 times), where planning and presenting the results of the gardening work took place; and Akwaaba garden (7 times), as the more developed garden where gardening work and labyrinth building were the main tasks. Akwaaba was often chosen to facilitate different activities by Inspiratie Inc., thus was chosen to be the site of this research.

There are different types of observation. In this research, the descriptive observation has been conducted from February to early March, and changed into selective observation since. There are four types of roles that researcher could take in the process of conducting participatory studies. In this research, the position of ‘observer as participant’ has been chosen for the researcher. In this position, the researcher is an observer who is not a member of the group but interested in participating for better conducting observation and in hope of generating more comprehensive understanding of the settings and relationships within the target situation.

Mack et al. (2005) propose an observation guideline in their research with various elements to be recorded in field notes, which includes the physical environment of the setting, details of participants, and the activities and interactions that occur in the setting such as who speaks to whom, who listens, and who remains silent. Other subtle factors, such as incidental, unplanned activities and what should happen that has not happened are also important clues to grasp the whole picture of the setting (Bernard, 2000; Mack et al., 2005). As for the details of participants, the specific countries of origin of the participants are not indicated in this paper in order to preserve their anonymity.

The frequency of participatory observation in this research used to be irregularly, partially because there were a lot of new projects which were in progress this year for Inspiratie Inc., and gardening works usually reduce significantly in winter time. The official weekly working day (every Thursday) in Akwaaba started in the beginning of April, but there were a few changes of the schedule due to other tasks (discussion about other projects), national holiday (the King's day), and cancellation because of bad weather and coordination errors (the coordinator of the day got too sick).

It was intended to document the encounters in Akwaaba garden every 5 minutes on papers with in-scale illustration of the garden space to examine the interactions among participants, with special focus on people who did not share a fluent common language. However, after 3 attempts of such method the researcher decided to switch back to textual field notes and illustrations because it was observed that although participants did have multiple verbal and non-verbal communication during the gardening work, they tended to spend most of the time focusing on the job that they took responsible to by themselves, only interacted to each other with occasional small talks or interact in the purpose of understanding and accomplishing the tasks (for example, the task of the day could be weeding, and participants would focus on weeding by themselves, only interact with each other randomly or interact with each other in break time). The focus of observation then turned into more general observation of individuals' interaction and the incidental encounters in the garden.

Bernard (2000) and Kawulich (2005) both note that participant observation is conducted by a biased human, the researcher, who serves as the instrument for data collection; the researcher must understand how his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation, in order to provide an objective research. There is why a reflect section in the last part of the empirical study is conducted, which in hope to reflects on researcher's biases which might affect certain understandings and interpretations in the research, and to propose an objective conclusion and further research focuses.

3.3 Semi-structured Interview

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interview in Theory

Semi-structure interview is a well-developed tool for data collecting in various field (Bernard, 2000). With the differences between the amount of control researchers try to exercise in the process for people's responses, three different types of interviews are distinguished: informal interview, semi-structured interview, and structured interview. This method is chosen to be the data collecting tool in the second stage of this research, after the practice of participatory observation and the informal interviews which have been used to conduct field notes. It is chosen to reinforce and clarify personal opinions from the respondents based in former observations.

Semi-structured interview could serve as an effective tool under the limitation of resource and time, because it uses a well-organized interview guideline listed with several topics or answers which could help researchers to answer their research question (Bernard, 2000). It is also controlled but open enough to have a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the focus of a structured survey. Also, this method can uncover rich descriptive data on the personal experiences of participants for the researcher to better grasp and understand how respondents experience and feel in their day-to-day activities and encounters (Bernard, 2000), which could be subjective and difficult to comprehend the whole picture. This is where the experience of participatory observation could further contribute in the research by offering the researcher field information about respondents' experiences and her own experience, and allowing the researcher to examine the similarities and differences between the observation results from the 'outside world' documented by her and the 'inside world' reported by respondents.

The question of accuracy is one of the most discussed questions for the method of interview. However, since the purpose of conducting interviews in this research is mainly for the researcher to understand respondents' personal feelings, which could expect to be less inaccurate and avoid potential deference effect by the trust between the respondents and the research which is built during participatory observation stage, and the protection of anonymous. The other often discussed question in interview is the selection of respondents. However, the sample of respondents is not intended to be representative, neither the research is presenting robust empirical data since the members in the gardening team of Akwaaba garden change frequently.

Despite the challenges of using interview as data collecting method, the fieldwork of this research does enable the researcher to elaborate an understanding of what kind of urban encounters could be facilitated in the community garden of Akwaaba, and how do participants overcome the language and cultural barriers and start building

social capita in an actual local practice.

In short, participatory observation and semi-structured interview are combined in this research to ensure a more comprehensive understanding and proper intervention by offering opportunities to experience and explore the social capital building process through urban encounters in Akwaaba garden, and enabling the researcher to understand how these encounters help the building of individual social networks to promote better endurance of differences.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interview in Akwaaba

For the semi-structured interview, 6 of the participants were selected as respondents. These 6 respondents are selected based on the frequency they participated in the garden while the participatory observation stage and their current identity (3 refugees and 3 non-refugees). For 5 out of 6 of them are regular participants in gardening works, 2 participants in this group are refugees and the other three are non-refugees; the other one does not participate in gardening works regularly, but often hosts other activities (for example: music events) in the garden, he/she is also a refugee. It's worth noticed that although the gardening team of Inspiratie Inc. is a group welcomes everyone who is interested in gardening works and has 265 contacts in the WhatsApp group⁴, the mode of participants in Akwaaba on the weekly working day is 6 people during the researcher's participatory observation stage. The 6 respondents are chosen because they are the regular users of the garden, who fit the broader definition of 'participation in the garden', which includes working, sitting, walking, socializing and enjoying the space of the garden.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in English. There were two main part in the interview: the first part of the interview focuses on activities, encounters and experiences of social bonding and social bridging in Akwaaba, which is designed for the intention of understanding respondents' experiences of different activities and encounters in the garden and how they feel or what they have formed through these encounters; the second part of the interview focuses on respondents' experiences in other gardens and the general experience of interacting with people in community gardens. For the interview guideline, please see appendix 1.

3.4 Research Limitation:

The aims of the research have been reached in the study, there are however a few

⁴ A WhatsApp group of the Inspiratie Inc. gardening team is the main communication tool for participants of the group to communicate for tasks, meeting time and location, and share information of anything related issues to all five gardens Inspiratie Inc. is currently managing.

limitations. First, this research was aimed at exploring how community gardens could contribute to socio-cultural integration and social capital gaining by facilitating urban encounters among refugees and the host communities. Although the correlation of social capital gaining and socio-cultural integration encounters was observed to be positive, further studies with longer time duration and deeper understanding of participants' experiences in community gardens would offer a more detailed understanding in such topic if people from the neighborhood are also included.

Second, participants are categorized into two groups (refugees/non-refugees) according to their identity in this research, with people from at least 4 different nationalities. Although all respondents were fluent enough for understanding and responding for the interview, it could help if further research could arrange trust worthy translators for the interview so the respondents could express their opinions more freely and precisely, which this research did not manage to accomplish due to limited resources.

Finally, every community garden is unique, research on different community gardens and how they facilitate encounters by what activities, and how these encounters and activities contribute to refugee groups and local communities should be explored. By doing so, researchers could further enrich the understanding of how and even why do community gardens contribute to social capital gaining, strategies for a smoother path towards future socio-cultural integration may also be conducted.

4. Empirical Study: The Akwaaba Garden

4.1 Describing Akwaaba Garden

The city of Almere

Almere is located in the Randstad conurbation which includes four major cities (Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague, Rotterdam) in the west of the Netherlands. Almere is also one of the main cities in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (see Fig. 1). It is located in the province of Flevoland and borders the cities Lelystad and Zeewolde. There are 6 districts in the municipality of Almere: Almere Stad, Almere Haven, Almere Buiten, Almere Hout, Almere Poort and Almere Pampus.

Almere's present territory was mostly water and wetlands during the 20th century. In 1975, Almere's first inhabitants took up residence on the newly reclaimed land, and the expansion and development of the city continues today⁵. According to the city planning agenda, one of the main objectives of the city's spatial planning is to provide an integrated solution for environmental consideration, while at the same time attaining optimal levels of quality of life, comfort and social, economical and cultural values. Almere is one of the fastest growing cities in Europe and has the potential to become the fifth largest city in the Netherlands over the next twenty years⁶.

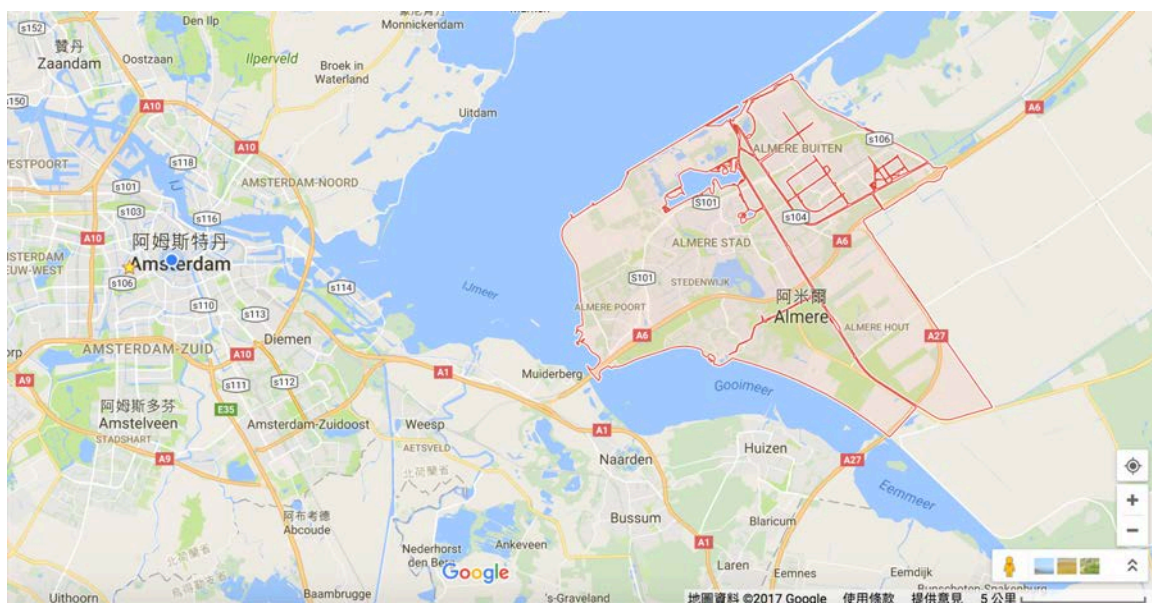


Fig. 1 Map of Almere, in relation to Amsterdam

(Source: Google map)

⁵ Source: Municipality of Almere, <https://english.almere.nl/the-city-of-almere/history/>.

⁶ Source: Municipality of Almere, <https://english.almere.nl/the-city-of-almere/almere-20/>.

Unlike most major cities in the Netherlands, Almere still has plenty of space available to accommodate business and residential developments. Also, the municipality of Almere tries to help accommodate the growing refugee population in recent years.

Almere is a young city. Not only in terms of age, but also in terms of its inhabitants. According to the statistic report⁷ from the municipality, about one-third of the population is under the age of 25; only mere of 9% is 65 years or older. About one-third of the 78,000 households in Almere are families with children. However, Almere has a growing number of single person households. The percentage is expected to increase from 31% now to 35% in 2020, while the percentage of families with live-in children is expected to decrease from 34% to 23% in 2020. This is due to a rise in divorce rates, single parent families and elderly women outliving men. It is also expected that over the next decade Almere will attract a growing number of students.

The AZC Almere

The existing refugee center (asielzoekerscentrum, AZC) in Almere is a place either for refugees whose legal asylum seeking process is in procedure, or for refugees who are having an extended procedure. The AZC Almere is located close by the sports FBK park (see fig. 2 & 3). It is a relatively small camp, with 800 accommodation places. It consists of one hundred and four bedroom homes, some offices, recreation rooms, a sports field and parking spaces. There are computer facilities for the residents and a homework space for kids. The small apartments consist of a ground and upper floor which are divided into several units. Each unit can accommodate approximately 6-8 people. Currently, the municipality of Almere is having discussion about whether to extend the camp due to the decreasing number of asylum application since 2016⁸. Although the municipality was planning to boost up the capacity by another 600 places in 2017, the construction has been put off

⁷ Source: the municipality of Almere, <http://english.almere.nl/>

⁸ Refugees in the Netherlands, <http://refugeesnetherlands.weebly.com/statistics.html>



Fig. 2 Map of Akwaaba garden

(Source: Google map)



Fig. 3 Map of Akwaaba garden

(Source: Google map)

The Akwaaba garden

Akwaaba garden is near the AZC of Almere in Almere Stad. The refugee helping organization: Inspiratie Inc. used to have their office which also served as a community center for refugees right next to the AZC, on a municipal land which is accessible for everyone. The center shared the land with the Language Center Almere (where children from AZC do their Dutch Course) and bordered a common schoolyard. Inspiratie Inc. had a contract with the municipality for using the site to build a home office and a shared garden: the Akwaaba garden. The contract ended in 2015 and the community center was removed, however, the Akwaaba garden remains (see fig. 4).

Inspiratie Inc. is a refugee helping organization funded in 2013, which aims at developing creative forms of social participation and cooperation, which could enable people to find new ways in which everyone can participate and contribute positively and proactively. The foundation focuses on helping anyone who is willing to take an active role in the society: children, youth, adults and older people, with different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and social status. Being built in the same period and on the same site of the organization's former home office, Akwaaba garden was built in the hope of offering opportunities for people to meet, work and contribute with respect of differences, which as they put it '(...) if anyone would be able to fully utilize their talents and strength, then no challenge is too great⁹'.

As identified in several researches, voluntary work could be an efficient opportunity to facilitate active social contacts and participations (Smets & Ten Kate, 2008; UNHCR, 2013). Akwaaba garden is not only used as a site for people to enjoy the nature, but also as a mean to create a sense of community and increase social capital by fostering a place for people to meet and participate in gardening works regularly.



Fig. 4 Two pictures of the Akwaaba garden

⁹ Source: Inspiratie Inc., <http://inspiratie-inc.nl/inspiratie-inc/>.

The events and activities that are planned and hosted in Akwaaba resonates to the studies which suggest that if a refugee tries to take an active role participation in volunteer work, he/she would be more likely to contribute in social capital gaining (Ager & Stang, 2004; Atfield et al., 2007; UNHCR, 2013).

4.2 Data Analysis

As one of the earliest projects of Inspiratie Inc., Akwaaba garden was founded to encourage people to work, to contribute and to (re)connect with yourselves, others, and the nature¹⁰. This research argues that the setting of urban gardens, which include open access, affordability, flexibility for different motivations such as: doing gardening works, enjoying the environment, or socializing with friends etc., could contribute as an efficient alternative for people from different cultures to meet in a spontaneous way and encourage people from different backgrounds with different interests to start making contacts. To explore the possible answers for the research question, the analysis will be shown in two sections according to the sub-questions, with discussions focus on the promotion of social capital.

The research data from participatory observation is documented in field notes and data from the semi-structure interview is transcribed into inscriptions. For data analysis, content analysis is used with coding, which divides the research data into two themes: the space-related theme and the social-capital-related them. The space-related theme is used to focus on *'the types of encounters urban gardens facilitate through different activities for refugees and host communities'*. The social-capital-related theme, on the other hand, is used to examine *'how do these encounters contribute to social capital gaining in terms of social bonds and social bridges'*.

Activities and encounters in the garden are grouped into two group under the space-related-theme to help understanding what kinds of encounters have happened in Akwaaba garden through the activities, and how the encounters were facilitated. Here, activities are the tasks which were designed or scheduled by the coordinators in the Akwaaba garden, which includes gardening tasks and non-gardening tasks (for example: a BBQ). Encounters here represents the ways of interactions between people, which includes interactions among gardening participants and random interactions between the gardening participants and people who joined the garden for non-gardening events or incidental events (for example: someone who walked by the garden and make contacts with people who work in the garden).

Statements from interviews about how different encounters in the garden and how

¹⁰ Source: Inspiratie Inc., <http://inspiratie-inc.nl/inspiratie-inc/>.

do the respondents experience the encounters in terms of social bonding and social bridging are grouped into another two groups under the social-capital-related theme to help understand how these encounters lead to the development of social networks and promote social capital among participants.

4.2.1 The space-related aspect

The routine activities

The routine activities in Akwaaba were naturally gardening works, which included planting, weeding and making new planting beds (see fig. 5). Special work for the garden like building constructions also took place sometimes, for example, the labyrinth building was a main task in Akwaaba for about 2 months in the winter, when there was nothing much to do for gardening. The actual gardening work such as weeding, building new growing beds (see fig. 6), planting and watering started from late April in this research, when the weather turned warmer and rained less. Besides the routine works and construction works, other activities hosted by the Inspiratie Inc. also took place in Akwaaba.

The routine works were guided by coordinators of the gardening team. These works were the tasks assigned for the 'official' working day for Akwaaba garden, which is scheduled on the Inspiratie Inc. calendar and announced to the public through internet (email invitations and Facebook announcements) and paper flyers. Incidental encounters for the gardening participants and other people (for example: people from AZC, students and teachers from the nearby schools etc.) were documented often, which in precise is 5 times in total of 7 times of participation work in Akwaaba by the researcher.



Fig. 5 Two pictures of the routine working in Akwaaba

(Photo credit: Irene)

The incidental encounters include the encounters between gardening participants and people from the nearby school (3 times), between gardening participants and people from the AZC (2 times). In the encounters with people from the nearby schools, once was from teachers of the school walked by and 'thumb-up' to the participants, the other two times were both with teachers with children approached the participants and asked what they were building (while the building of labyrinth) and what would the gardens be like in the future (trees will be planted, benches will be placed etc.).

The two encounters with people from the AZC were both based on non-verbal interactions. One of the encounters happened when an elderly gentleman who walked in the garden and smiled to everyone when eye-contact occurred while the gardening participants were doing the assigned tasks of the day. According to Alpha, the gentleman was a frequent visitor of the garden, who '(...he) would just sit there and smile and talk, no one understands him but he would still talk and smile and just watch everybody.' The other encounter happened while the garden participants were doing weeding, a gentleman from AZC walked by the garden, saw the weeding process (one of the participants was using a sickle for weeding the higher grass), and joined in for about 10 minutes to show how he used to weed back in his country. These two encounters were based on non-verbal interactions because of the lack of common language, however, the feeling of 'good vibes' was created and it remains with the participants; which might grow and lead to further network building.



Fig 6. Building the planting bed (the herb spiral)

Although these encounters were relatively short (all of them were less than 10 minutes), the encounters with people outside of the gardening team of Akwaaba do help create a sense of pride for the participants. Also, the positive interactions between local communities and the gardening participants through these encounters, which might be the important factors of fostering 'good vibes'. For example, 3 out of 6 respondents in the interview responded the appreciation about their encounters with youngsters in the garden in different activities; and all respondents reported that through working in Akwaaba they had more opportunities to meet different people from the refugee groups and local communities, and to create further social networks.

As for the encounters among the gardening participants, the most frequent type of it was the task-related (for example: deciding who will plant what from where) ones. In this type of encounters, all respondents reported that there was no problem in not having a common language, because they tended to communicate through both visual signs and verbal conversation to understand each other. In the interviews, the 3 non-refugee participants reported that not having a common language was an 'good challenge', which brought them great satisfaction when they overcame such barrier by using gestures or demonstrations, and encouraged them to think differently; while the 3 refugee participants did not specifically point out that not having a common language as a barrier, but 2 of them mentioned their desire to better their language skills (in Dutch and English).

A common language was not recognized as necessarily from any respondents, since they tended to communicate through basic words and reinforced the communication through visual tools like gestures and demonstrations. Often, how individuals carried out the tasks together in the garden were communicated also through something that's 'unsaid':

'(...) we have this wheel barrel for carrying soil, and we were always switching around with everybody. Like... it almost came out natural that after two or three runs while everyone else goes shoveling... and it just came natural because you kind of know how much you can take, and all those other guys are way more stronger than I am, and they just know that when am I going to be tired and they will just take over, and I will go back to shoveling... it's nice to see how everybody wants to try to contribute, and that everybody has the instinct to help.' - Beta

Ask for someone to translate was also well mentioned by the respondents, especially when individuals are trying to deliver conceptual ideas (such as permaculture knowledge) or asking active feedbacks. However, the researcher did not document

any occasion that required translation in the participatory observation stage.

The reasons why verbal communication was not a necessity and both visual and verbal communication were used in the garden might not only due to the lack of common language, but also how the gardening knowledge is delivered, which Zeta indicated in his interview that:

‘(...) I think it’s not only about the language actually, it’s about the knowledge as well. For example, back home, when I worked in landscape company, sometimes you have young people who work with you to discover the work, and they don’t know plants or how does the machine can work. (...) I think in each country you need to have visual good communication skills for these kind of jobs. It’s not because of you don’t have the same language.’ – Zeta

Another type of encounters between the gardening participants was those happened in the break time. These break times were moments of small talks and food sharing took place. Participants also tended to talk about more complicated topics (such as the up-coming plans for the garden) and exchange information at these moments.

The space of gardens offers opportunities for gardening participants and other people to meet and interact in the gardens through not only gardening activities, but also by sharing gardening knowledge and sometimes by just being in the garden and enjoy the space. This research argues that community gardens have the advantage of being close by residents and their daily lives, thus have great potential to foster urban encounters among individuals with diverse backgrounds to start and build the ‘good vibes’. One thing about the space of Akwaaba that is worth noticed here is the pattern they chose for the labyrinth: a turtle, and the fable behind it (see fig. 7). The fable was about a turtle who didn’t know its strength until a big fire in the forest and it



Fig. 7 Building the labyrinth

carried all the animals who couldn't cross the river to the safe side, and found its strength and the meaning of its life. According to one of the respondent Beta, this fable could be found in Dutch, African and Arabic cultures, which is why they chose to build it as a reminder of the similarity despite the differences of people.

Other activities

Other than the routine activities, there were a few other activities hosted in Akwaaba that were documented during the participatory process of the research from the interviews, which included: the children's weekly gatherings, a BBQ party, a treasure hunt for celebrating Easter, and a children's concert, all hosted by Inspiratie Inc..

Akwaaba used to be a popular spot for people from AZC to hang-out and socialize with people while Inspiratie Inc. had their office, which also served as a community center for refugees in the garden. It was frequently used and visited by refugees because it offered a space for them to go other than the AZC to relax, and a place to consult their concerns with people who might share similar situations.

'(...) When we still had a community center in the Akwaaba, it was really a hub, a living room for people who lived in the AZC. (...) There were always a lot of people in the Akwaaba, just sitting there and enjoying their time... talking to people or just sitting and seeing people being happy. (...) You could really sense the appreciation of the people being there, that they have somewhere to go, somewhere that they feel they belong.' – Alpha

After losing their office in the garden, Akwaaba remains as an important space for Inspiratie Inc. to host activities for the refugee communities and the local communities. The openness and accessibility of the garden are important factors for hosting people from different backgrounds to meet and interact because of its casual and spontaneous setting which is unique than other spaces in people's daily lives, which was reported from respondents in the interview. For example:

'(...) Gardens are open space, people can just come and sit and walk. (...) when you go to a shop you have a goal, so even you meet people... but gardens, you can just chilled and enjoy the moment with others, so I think gardens are definitely unique, you can really talk and discuss with people with more relaxed feelings and to be more open.' – Zeta

'(...) You can go to see the green, the good weather, see the flowers, and the kids can play at the place as well, and adults can sit and enjoy talking, it's a really nice thing.' – Eta

It is reported by respondents that it was easy for them to build connection with people from different backgrounds in the garden through different activities. Zeta commented in his interview that:

‘(...All) these events make the garden a place to be. Of course you can work in the garden, but there are also a lot of other events in the garden. It’s nice to have events like this, to gather people, so people can enjoy as well what we did, especially for those who work in the garden, it’s nice to show the works to others. Like, the spiral is beautiful, and when you have an event, you have a lot of people, and you can show your work... I think that’s very important in this garden too.’ – Zeta

Besides the routine gardening activities, the children’s weekly gatherings were mentioned by Beta and Zeta, that these activities helped them to connect with both refugee children and non-refugee children through playing games, singing, and other activities. The treasure hunt and the children’s concert (Fig. 8) were both reported by 2 respondents that they offered opportunities for refugee and non-refugee children to work on something together, and they also brought the parents together to enjoy the results of their children’s work, and to interact with people they might not have chances to interact in their daily lives. The BBQ party (Fig. 9) was mentioned by 4 out of 6 the respondents, with comments that ‘food sharing’ activities offered an opportunity for people to relax, and helped people from different backgrounds to interact with and learn from each other more easily:



Fig. 8 The children’s concert

(Photo credit: Nouri)

‘(...In the BBQ party) you see all the people sharing food, because the garden is kind of a way to share with people as well. People from the school and the AZC were all welcomed in the garden, and that BBQ party was really there to provide that.’ – Zeta

‘(...) People from different places, people from Dutch, Arabic, Africa, Iran and Iraq, different countries. (...) We were just sharing food and sharing time together. We enjoyed it too much!’ – Eta

In short, the space of Akwaaba allows individuals to share something similar (for example: appreciation of gardening) and gather in one place with a ‘safe distance’: individuals can just ‘be there’ and enjoy the space with other people, with or without personal interactions. In times of repetitive encounters in the garden, the experience could encourage individuals to further show their differences at one’s own pace. It also offers opportunities for individuals to interact with each other with their life experiences (for example: similar stories, different ways of doing similar gardening tasks etc.) in different cultures through both verbal (for example: telling stories) and non-verbal (for example: showing how the weeding was done) ways. Respondents in this research also reported that they had similar experiences in other community gardens. These experiences resonate to researches from Day (1999) and Rosenfeld & Noterman (2014) that community gardens could play an active role of being safe spaces in facilitating people to show their differences, build acceptance, and be more encouraged to experience such spaces in the future.



Fig. 9 Two pictures of the BBQ event in Akwaaba

(Photo credit: Nouri)

This research also argues that as an open space, the accessibility and flexibility of community gardens could facilitate diverse activities for people with different backgrounds to meet and interact with each other in a spontaneous setting, which could help not only to empower individuals, but also create 'good vibes' and social capitals that might lead to a smoother process of socio-cultural integration in the future.

4.2.2 The social-capital-related aspect

In the social-capital-related aspect, which resonates to the 'assessing good vibes' and 'creating good vibes' in the theoretical part of this study, observations have been made to show how do the encounters in Akwaaba contribute to the building of *social bonds* and *social bridges* in different encounters.

Social bonds

In terms of social bonds, it was observed that participants who joined the gardening works regularly were people who could speak either Swahili or English fluently, and mostly male. In terms of social bonding, which means people who share a mother tongue or a common language they can speak fluently together in this research, language seems like an important factor for the purpose of increasing social bonds; and it's more common for people who can speak Swahili fluently to chat with each other than people who can speak English fluently to chat with each other.

6 out of 6 respondents reported that they felt more connected to people who shared a common language with them and had increased their personal networks and social bonds through working in the garden because they get to meet, work and spend time together face-to-face regularly. As Beta pointed out in the interview, working together in the garden with his friend regularly helped them to know each other better:

'I do feel more connected with people who speaks the same language and from my surroundings. (...) it's because we work in the garden together and faced some difficulties together and being strong together.' – Beta

In other words, having opportunities to meet regularly helped the increase of social bonds in Akwaaba. One respondent pointed out that having these opportunities helped him/her especially because he/she spent the majority of his/her time working in front of computers. Another respondent also commented that although he/she could talk to his/her friends and family through on-line communication programs (for example: Skype), he/she prefer to meet his/her friends face-to-face in the garden because:

'(...) be near to my friends is more important.' - Delta

Social bridge

Increasing social bridges has always been an important mission recognized by Inspiratie Inc.. In Akkwaba, the coordinators only planned and coordinated activities but did not usually coordinate people. Sometimes coordinators did assign people into activities, which usually happened when there were more than two tasks happening at the same time, or when someone new joined the gardening work. How people were grouped into working on the same task together seemed to be random most of the time, especially when people showed up later than the meeting time. However, for people who did show up at the meeting time, they were assigned into groups randomly by the coordinator of the day, which as some coordinators claimed to be the method to encourage people with differences to meet and interact, but sometimes it was simply with no reason.

Although having a common language has been recognized in multiple studies of socio-cultural integration (Strang & Ager, 2010), all respondents reported in the interviews that not having a common language did not trouble them from working together nor joking or having fun with people who did not share a common language with them, because they used visual communication with basic words together often. It is not the goal of this research to argue the importance of having a common language in socio-cultural integration. However, the creation of 'good vibes' did not appear to be relied on it heavily, if any. Therefore, it is possible to say that the building of social bridges might not require a common language when people can communicate through different methods and have opportunities to meet regularly.

According to researcher's observation, participants didn't talk a lot during gardening works if it's not about the tasks. When they did talk, according to the respondents, most of the talks were small talks about their day or their family, and they usually talked in language they could speak fluently. However, they would also try to talk and greet other participants with basic conversation in the common language they shared. Other than the small talks and greetings, another common topic for male participants in the garden was the 'girlfriend issues'. According to Beta and Zeta, male participants often chatted about romantic relationships and their desire to have a girlfriend, and those chats help them bonded with each other sooner, which resonates to the research from Zetter et al. (2006) that having 'common interests or common problems' could help people gather and foster the creation of social capitals.

Participants who joined the gardening works regularly did not show negative attitudes while working with people from different backgrounds or did not share a common language in researcher's observation. However, one participant reported in the interview that he/ she witnessed one argument among two gardening

participants (H. and J.) because H. participant talked about colony history and religious history a lot, and he/she told J. that 'your ancestors took my ancestors' land and made us slaves'. According to the respondent, J. was not offended in the beginning, but H. kept going about the colony history of J.'s country, and J. got offended in the end. The respondent reported that he/she did not agree with H.'s behavior and felt uncomfortable in the situation, however, he also reported that H. and J. did apologize to each other at the end of the working day. This situation gives a positive support of how community gardens could be a safe space for people to show their differences and still feel safe, and even to work through uncomfortable situations together.

The incident mentioned above was not mentioned by any other participant. On the contrast, 4 out of 6 respondents reported that they never felt uncomfortable in the garden, although one of them commented that he has encountered unfriendly people in the garden, he/she felt that 'it's normal' and did not take it personal.

6 out of 6 respondents reported that they felt more connected with people who they did not share a common language with or hold a different status (refugees and non-refugees). One respondent commented that it was easy to connect with different people through gardening work because people all wanted to contribute to the community and it did not matter how different they were:

'(...) I connect with many people. It helps because of the garden. (...) We connect because we want to help.' – Gamma

One respondent commented that when people worked and chatted together, he/she could feel that all participants felt they were part of a team, and it helped people to further share their differences.

'(...) I do make a lot of friends from different countries in the garden and every time I come here I feel like stepping into a warm bath of friendliness. (...) you feel really valued and like part of the family. It's definitely like that in the garden. We share things and also hear different things from all the cultures.' – Alpha

Also, it was reported by participants that through the gardening works and the encounters they experienced in the garden with other participants, a sense of belonging to the gardening group and the garden has been created and held, thus increase social bridges. This sense of belonging could also be reinforced with others' appreciation of the garden. For example, 3 out of 6 of the respondents reported that they feel happy and proud when people come to the garden and show their appreciation to the environment they managed.

Other than the gardening activities, activities such as the children's concert and the

treasure hunt were both reported respondents that they offered opportunities people to gather and interact despite the differences. Encounters through these activities create opportunities for people to celebrate and create 'good vibes' despite their differences, which encouraged the promotion of social bridges, and may lead to further socio-cultural integration in the future.

It is worth noticed of a series of encounters reported by three respondents while they worked in another community garden managed by Inspiratie Inc. which happened between the gardening participants and a local Dutch family. The encounters started with a boy who came to the participants who were working in the community garden in a neighborhood, and asked if he could work with them. It grew into working days that not only the child and the gardening participants met and work together (see fig. 10), the participants also met and interacted the parents and experienced hospitality and friendliness from the family. It is worth noticed these encounters and experiences because the garden was located in a neighborhood that some participants have encountered unwelcoming feelings before. However, the experiences with the child and his family have encouraged the participants greatly, because they believed that both the participants and the residents in the neighborhood witnessed reciprocal kindness and positive interactions. Although these encounters did not happen often, they still shed the light of how community gardens could be an active space for 'good vibes' to happen, and may be an underestimated site for socio-cultural integration to be promoted.



Fig. 10 Two pictures of the gardening participants working with a child they met in the Almere haven where the garden locates in a neighborhood

(Photo credit: Ali)

It is argued in urban encounter researches that without meaningful encounters the sense of respect or acceptance to differences would not be created (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2013). However, community gardens like Akwaaba provide safe spaces and regular opportunities for people to meet and may be eventually create meaningful encounters:

‘(...) Sometimes you want to make good friends, you can't make good friends if you don't know them. One day you meet and small talk. The next day you can go and talk deeply. You might find people who go through problem and you can help because he or she tells you. You can't go “Hi how are you. What is your problem?” No. You need time to get to know the person and want to make time to get to know the person.’ - Gamma

All the small talks and greetings, the experiences of working together repetitively, and the encounters with different people through the diverse activities held in the garden, did create ‘good vibes’ among the gardening participants, and between the participants and other residents of Almere.

In short, this research argues that community gardens do have the potential to foster meaningful encounters through repetitive day-to-day meetings and contacts, but every meaningful encounter starts with saying hello or simply smile at each other. The Akwaaba garden has shown that by facilitating different events in the garden, the opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet, to form social networks and create social capitals have increased, and so does the sense of inclusiveness. These encounters might not be meaningful in the early stage of the socio-cultural integration process, however, they are no doubt the base of forming meaning encounters and building social networks for the individual level, which in terms could help achieving the hope of building inclusive community, or at least, to encourage people to learn to ‘live with, perhaps even value differences (Amin, 2006, p. 1013)’.

4.3 Research Reflection

Participatory observation and semi-interview were chosen to be the data collecting methods in this research in order to give the researcher a better understanding of how community gardens could contribute in building ‘good vibes’. The two methods did provide the researcher adequate data to answer the research questions. However, the limited time and resource were great challenges for the researcher. For example, although the researcher tried to join the gardening work regularly, there were a lot of late-noticed alters of Inspiratie Inc.’s working schedule due to the new projects they

were having this year. Also, the gardening work in Akwaaba started only in the beginning of April, which even more limited the researcher's time and experiences in Akwaaba. However, the researcher did get the opportunity to follow another gardening project because of the situation. Although the project was still in construction period and the works were mainly building a patio in the 'garden', it offered the researcher precious experiences in interacting with refugees and the 'good vibes' among participants in the organization.

Also, the working instructions for Akwaaba were not always clear. One of the possible reasons of it could be the insufficient communication. Most of the instructions were delivered through cell phone App (Whatsapp), which caused misunderstanding of meeting time, locations, and assignments. Situations like this made all participants tired and frustrated, especially in the winter, when the weather was not so welcoming outdoor. Even in the warmer days, such misunderstanding could make participants wait in the garden for thirty minutes or longer, which was also frustrating for participants. The results for promoting social capitals in this research has been stated positive. However, it is also worth noticed that community gardens are only spaces to facilitate encounters. Who holds or plans for these encounters could have a significant influence on how the space could contribute to the issue too.

It is worth noticed that Inspiratie Inc. plays an important role in the process of helping people to get into the encounters in the garden. Inspiratie Inc. actively introduces and includes people from different backgrounds to join the activities they are interested in or capable of, which could be a difficult stage for refugees in the beginning stage of forming individual networks, because of insufficient language skills, unstable financial status or cultural differences. However, the organization takes a relatively 'decentralized' position in project management stage, at least in Akwaaba garden. Most of the activities in Akwaaba are designed and executed by the gardening team, which is formed by refugees and local participants (local students, residents and entrepreneurs), with Inspiratie Inc. providing financial support and introducing professional knowledge when it is needed.

One last remark on the field work is the gender-related issues of the researcher. Although all participants in Akwaaba were respectful, being a female and often the only female in the garden with all other male participants remained intimidating to the researcher sometimes, especially when the researcher could not understand what others were chatting about because of the language barrier. Also, cultural differences in friendliness and romantic relationships also confused the researcher. One of the coordinator in the organization asked the researcher out for a date as potential lovers despite the fact that the researcher clearly informed him/her that she was in a serious

relationship from the beginning and was only participating in the organization because she wanted to help the organization in promoting socio-cultural integration. However, one of researcher's friend who had more experiences than the researcher in terms of the romance relationship in the coordinator's culture assure the researcher that people in such culture do not usually consider romantic relationship a one-on-one relationship. The researcher felt less awkward to the situation after the friend's comment. However, such experience did bring the researcher the awareness of gender customs in different cultures. Also, being the only female participant in the garden, sometimes it was difficult to be part of the conversation with others. For example, the researcher did not know about the 'girlfriend issue' until one respondent mentioned it in the interview. The influence of gender n data collecting has been shown in the examples mentioned above. Thus, it is suggested that further research should be conducted with more attention to gender-related issues.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Socio-cultural integration is an important issue for the society today because of the increasing pressure from refugee crisis. It is important because people from different backgrounds under the growing pressure of limited resources could stay at intra-group interactions, encounter cultural shocks from different groups and develop negative attitude toward each other and cause segregation. Therefore, the importance of how refugees and host communities could form 'good vibes' together and how social capital could be promoted in our daily lives have been proposed. It is argued that safe spaces could encourage people to show their differences and negotiate ways to live among each other, which help the promotion of social bonds and bridges. Community gardens are proposed in this research that they could play an important role in facilitating urban encounters for refugees and host communities as safe spaces because of the accessibility and flexibility these spaces offer for different encounters to happen.

In the empirical study, the encounters for refugees and host communities to interact in a community garden, Akwaaba, has been explored by the researcher using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews. It is observed by the researcher that the activities in Akwaaba offered people multiple opportunities in gathering, making contacts and forming social networks especially in individual levels. These activities, no matter the gardening activities or other activities such as BBQ party and the children's concert, provide opportunities for people to meet in a spontaneous setting and interact in their own pace, which could be an important support for refugees to overcome challenges they often face in the process of socio-cultural integration.

Through the empirical study, the researcher has experienced encounters with refugees and non-refugees in both verbal and non-verbal ways, and has grown to understand how the seemingly meaningless encounters: small chats and greeting, could definitely be an important factor in fostering 'good vibes' between people.

These encounters, although might be meaningless in the beginning, are the bases for people to make contacts with others they might otherwise do not feel comfortable enough or do not have the opportunity to interact with, thus contribute in social capital gaining and may lead a smoother path for future socio-cultural integration.

Although the process of socio-cultural integration would usually take a long time for any actual results to be seen, it is clear that the 'good vibes' created through encounters in community gardens could provide an intangible but undeniable evidence for people to move forward as a community. Therefore, it is fair to say that community gardens could definitely serve as the modern garden of Eden for refugees and host communities in hopes of achieving a society that celebrates differences.

5.2 Recommendation for Further Research

Socio-cultural integration is an abstract but fundamental aspect in integration studies. The aim of this research was to better understand how the space of community gardens could serve as a safe space for social capital gaining and lead a smoother way to socio-cultural integration, which has been fairly accomplished. However, there are a few recommendations for further research.

Firstly, a study with longer time duration is recommended because it will allow researchers to have opportunities to look deeper into different groups and local communities. In this research, the main study targets were those who worked in community gardens. Researchers may grasp an even more comprehensive view in how do community gardens contribute in social capital gaining and socio-cultural integration if they could include those who does not participate in activities but visit the gardens frequently. Also, it might help to compare individuals' attitudes in socio-cultural integration between refugees and host communities from parties with those who participates in community garden activities to interact with each other hose who does no, and to see if those who

participates in the activities changes his/her attitudes along the time. Also, the relationships among different individuals or groups and how they interact in terms of deciding who manage the garden should be taken into account in the future, because it could have a decisive influence on who might be included in the gardens and might not be included.

In this research, Akwaaba garden has been investigated and the experience provided the researcher rich data in better understanding how a community garden could contribute to the issues this research recognized. However, all community gardens are different. Therefore, the second recommendation for further research would be a plea for further exploration in different community gardens: locations, residents who live close by the gardens, coordinator or manage organization for the gardens, and even government policies to the gardens could all be the reason(s) why or how a community garden could or couldn't contribute in social capital gaining and the related issues, and influence the potential of how such spaces could promote socio-cultural integration.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview Guideline

I. Personal Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Nationality:
4. Citizenship of the Netherlands: Y/N/In progress

II. Experience in Akwaaba

1. How long have you been working in Akwaaba? How often?
2. Why do you choose to be a part of Akwaaba garden?
3. What kind of works do you do in Akwaaba? How do you usually do them (along / together with other people: who?)?
4. For the works in Akwaaba, do you need to talk to understand them? If not, how do you communicate?
5. How does the experience of not having complete verbal communication in the garden work for you?
6. How do you feel about the garden (a place to work, with or without feelings attached / a place you recognized as somewhere you are comfortable and confident in / somewhere you have a place in / somewhere you feel belonged)?
7. Do you remember any interesting interaction with people in the garden (BBQ with Inspiratie Inc. / meeting kids nearby / having people come to ask about the work or offer helps...)? What do you think about these experience (create a sense of community or belonging / make you feel you are a member of this place or neighborhood)?
8. Do you feel you make friends with people from the garden? If yes, who? If no, how do you feel about the people in the garden (co-workers / people you know / strangers)?
9. Have you ever had any uncomfortable experience in the garden? If yes, what kind of experience?

10. Do you think Akwaaba bring you opportunities in your life in Almere (getting to know people from home/from local community, making friends, getting more information for daily life...)? Do you think the experience in Akwaaba help you be closer to people? Who are these people (same language/Dutch people)?
11. Do you think you can get these opportunities somewhere else? If yes, why? If no, why?
12. Are you encouraged by the experience in Akwaaba to be more active to be a member of Almere or the Netherlands?

III. Related and Extended Experience

1. Do you take part in other urban gardens? How often?
2. Why do you choose to be involved with urban gardens?
3. What kind of work do you do in those gardens (Similar/different with Akwaaba)?
4. Do you have any interesting experience in those gardens?
5. Do you make friends from those gardens? Do you think those gardens bring you closer with people from your home country / the Netherlands?
6. How do you feel about the people who work with you in those gardens (Similar / different from Akwaaba)?
7. Do you ever have uncomfortable experience working in those gardens?
8. Do you think these experiences bring you closer to people? If yes, to whom (Dutch / others)?

IV. General Experience

1. In general, how would you describe your experience in terms of relating to other people from working in urban gardens (more connected, to whom / still strange, why do you think so e.g. lack of meaningful conversation...)?

Appendix 2. Interview Transcription – Alpha

- Speaks Dutch, English (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Entrepreneur
- Age: 20-29
- Has been working in Akwaaba for more than 1 years
- Considers himself/herself as an open-minded person

Y: So, I will need a little bit of your personal information, but this interview will be completely anonymous. I already know your name... and you are Dutch if I'm correct?

α: Yes, I was born in the East of Holland. My dad is from Amsterdam and my mom is from a small village in the province of Groningen. A lot of their adult life they lived in Zambia, because my dad used to work in the university in Lusaka. And they had me pretty late... my dad was 39 and my mom was 37 I think, when they just got back from Africa. So my dad works in the university, so I was always around with people from all over the world, because university is a pretty international thing, and when I was a child my parents used to drag me to all kinds of official functions... so I was introduced to multiculturalism my whole life. When I was 7 we went to Australia because my dad got a job in the university there, and when I was 8 we got back. When I was 18 or something, I left for New Zealand for a couple of months, and I also spent a few months in Bulgaria. So, in a lot of different countries, a lot of different cultures.

Y: That's really cool. Living here is like, my first experience of living somewhere else than Taiwan, mind exploding! So, I could say that you do have a Dutch citizenship?

α: Yes.

Y: Ok. So now we are moving to the second part, which is your experience of working in Akwaaba. First, how long have you been working in Akwaaba?

α: Since...last spring, or something. I live really close to Akwaaba, in a social housing community where we have a vegetable garden. I saw online that Inspiratie Inc. was like, I want to help, and they also have a permaculture garden. And I was like, oh I like permaculture, let's go check out what these people are doing. So I just went there to say hello, to meet these people, and I was also very curious of course, because it's next to the AZC, and I heard that a

lot people from there are working there. And I was very curious to meet those people. I just came back from Bulgaria where I did to volunteer, I also did an internship there but also volunteer works, where kids cooking collectively, called 'action food', where they do actions called food not bombs. So they feed the homeless people, they also did some work for... uh... of course in the Eastern Europe a lot of refugees there are in illegal account. So they used to go to the border and help people there because they live very difficult there, and because governments don't want them to be there and stuff. Unfortunately I wasn't able to go to the border with them because I had to come back. So I still wanted to meet the people and I was also curious because it was all over the news. So I thought, oh, I'm curious who these people are and I wanted to put some positivities as well. So I went there and it was obvious immediately that they needed or they wanted some help in the garden. I volunteered to take over the coordination work, which is... part time paid part time not paid... So, I have been doing these for more than a year now.

Y: So, how often do you usually work in Akwaaba?

α: Last year was once a week, this year because there are so many different projects going on and like Odeonpark and Almere poort are also very big projects... So, a lot things have been added, but I think everything started in Akwaaba, and it's still the home base for a lot of people cause that's next to where they live.

Y: Ok. So what kind of work do you usually do in Akwaaba?

α: Um, my job is to make sure of what's supposed to happen, what is the schedule, when are we going to do certain tasks and when to complete them. And help and tell people that ok today we are going to do the weeding, or ok next week we are going to do some planting, I also have to think about which plant we should do and where should they go. So most of the time, ideally, I spend most of my time doing actual doing work in the garden, but actually it's impossible. So most of my time is spending on making coordinating and making sure people know what to do, how to do it and when to do it.

Y: So, when you do these works, do you need to do them as a team? Or you need to work with somebody else? Or do you usually just do it along and deliver it to other people?

α: I try to, um, because I work only one day a week in the garden, so I try to make sure other people know what to do on the other days, so there are other coordinators because there are another 3 days of gardening works. And I try to

make sure that they know what they can do, because usually they are not that experienced, so they might be like, oh ok now we are in the garden so what should we do? So I try to make sure that people know how to do things themselves, and I try to be there and help as much as I can.

Y: Ok. So when you work in the Akwaaba... well, because we don't really have a common language there, do you think you need to talk to understand each other in Akwaaba? Is not having a common language a barrier for building ? If yes, how big is the barrier?

α: Hm, in a certain degree. What I am running into more and more now. Because for the actual work, for being there and for people being there to spend valuable time, and to feel as a part of the team or something like... I don't think having language is necessary for that, to give people a purpose, I don't think language is necessary for that. But, we do a specific kind of garden, the permaculture garden, so when I explain some of the concepts for people, especially people from different culture... which might not be as in touch with permaculture, sustainability or... things seem to be normal for me and you... sometimes it's a bit of a hard concept if you don't share a same language, then it becomes really hard for you to explain to them. There are only so much you can do with your hands or interpreted dances, or demonstrations. So I usually try to find somebody to translate to help me doing that. But in transferring the concept... and the general idea behind it, because I really want other people to have the same knowledge I have, because they can apply this in their lives, if they live here in the Netherlands they can apply it or even if they have to go back or go live somewhere else, they can still use this, it's still valuable knowledge, and I really want to teach them that, and to... empower them in that, in that way, sometimes it's difficult if you don't speak the same language. So, in general, for the work and the sense of purpose, for the community building stuff like that, language is not necessary. But I think for a deeper understanding, for education... then it is a barrier for me.

Y: Ok. Hm, so, it is kind of similar to the last question, but how does not having complete verbal communication work for you in the garden?

α: Hm, when I first started, which I've almost finished my study... it was my first real job, so it was a very big challenge. I remember we made a big planter in Akwaaba garden, it was last summer, I got a lot of help from people and also from N., he speaks a little Dutch now, but he only spoke Arabic at the time. He

is amazing in making stuff, so he was helping me, but I need to transfer my concepts to him, and we had zero language in common at that point. So I was like, how am I going to do this? It was a really big challenge, but in the end it worked out ok. I had people translate, and I sometime demonstrated with my body, make examples, stuff like that. In the beginning it was really a challenge, I was really overwhelmed. But now I have been doing it for a year, it's not that big of a problem because... when people don't understand something I just try to explain in another way. I'll draw it for you, I'll demonstrate it for you, I'll find someone who speaks the same language and translate for you, so it's ok.

Y: You will find a way.

α: Yes, I'll find a way. Sometimes it's a bit frustrating, well not necessarily frustrating, it's just that it will take a long time, and you will have to like, ok, how am I going to transfer this process; ok, let's try something else. Sometimes it's challenging, but it's also rewarding. Especially when I was working with Nouri on the planters... it was really really rewarding. Because he was there, and when he understood the concept and building the planter, you really felt (like) part of a team and you saw his spirit and he was so happy! And he also had other friends there who speak his language, and they were all working together and chatting a way... they all felt part of something, and it was a very powerful feeling for me to work with all these people, some of them I share a common language with and some of them I don't, and sometimes people don't share a common language among themselves, even. And we were still a team, and they were not just sitting there in the AZC staring out of the window. I felt that was very beautiful.

Y: Yeah, I had worked with N. a few times, he's such a happy and gentle guy.

α: Yeah, and he has the spirit. Sometimes when you try to explain this same thing for the 5th time and people still don't get it, they would be like, ok whatever I'm going home. But he is not like that, he always tries to meet me in between from his end too, I think that's also very important.

Y: Yeah, and it was really beautiful to me that, when we were building the patio in Odeonpark and we had a guy to teach us how to do the construction, because he speaks only in Dutch so I had no idea. But I think N. understand his instructions the most in the group, and when people go to him to ask, it's so nice to see someone who usually don't speak or stand out is just... there and humble and being knowledgeable to teach others.

α: Yes exactly. When one or two people know what need to be done and start doing it, it becomes easier for other people to just join in, because you can learn by seeing or whatever, so you don't really need to speak the language for that. Sometimes when I can't transfer the idea, I would just start doing it, and people would join in... then they understand because they see it.

Y: Ok. So, how would you describe your feeling to Akkwaba? Would you say it's just somewhere you work, without personal feeling or attachment; or you do feel something personal? And do you feel in the garden? Do you feel comfortable and confident? Or something else? Do you feel you belong to the garden?

α: Yeah, definitely. The people who work with me in the garden are very open and friendly. I think it's a little bit of cultural difference as well. Cause usually Dutch people generally are very reserved... not as open, and... hospitable or something. You must have noticed that when you come in here people are always seeing hi and how are you, and you feel really valued and like part of the family. It's definitely like that in the garden as well. We share things and also hear different things from all the cultures. Like, when you do the work, most people have a story. So here in Holland, we are usually pretty separated from where the food grow, but in other countries it could be quite usual that you have your own vegetable garden, and to at least produce something by yourselves. So people do have experience of this. And when you work in the garden, these things come back to them, so they will try to tell me or demonstrate how they do it back in their home, like, oh we usually do this or we usually grow this in our home... until the land this way or... yeah. I think that's very interesting and valuable connection.

Y: Yeah, I think that's why I like gardens, it's a place you can link your history to the present with your own skills and differences.

α: Yes, and we all eat! So the connection is really easily made over food, even you don't share same culture or language, everybody has a history... well we all eat in our whole life. So, there's this thing, last year I saw M. and A. in Akwaaba picking this kind of leaf, which I was taught is very very poisoned. So I was like whoa why are you guys picking that, that is so dangerous! And they were like, oh no, we used to eat this back home all the time, if you prepare this in a certain way, it's fine. And I was like, ok wow, today I learn!

Y: So, do you have any other interesting experience in the garden?

α: I think the experience of seeing A. picking that leaf in the garden was definitely an interesting experience that stands out. Hm, I think it's the general experience of working with people in the garden. So who help me the most in the garden will be A., M., S., of course they speak French and Swahili so they talk a lot among themselves, and sometimes I feel a bit like an outsider, when I'm working with them in the garden but I don't understand what they are saying... but still, we make a lot of jokes. It's still fun to talk. So, I never ask questions like, why are you here, or how did you come here, or what do you hope to do here... all these questions I'm sure the co-ops or the people from the government ask them all the time. I just want them to be able to feel valuable and important. Sometimes they tell me what it was like in their country, and that really hits me hard. So I don't ask because of two reasons, one is that, I think it's really rude to ask that, because they might have a very traumatic experience which I don't want to ask, and I don't think they need to justify why they are here. But sometimes they do tell. And that's another reason why I don't ask. Because I can't deal with it. And when they tell me things like what was it like in their country, why they fled and why they are here... it keeps me awake at nights for weeks. Those are also the thing that stand out to me, that just sitting in the car, for example, with A., telling stories about what it was like... makes me really angry and really sad, and it also makes me really angry and really sad that some people here in Holland think they don't deserve to be here. Yeah, so that's the darker side.

Y: Which is also important.

α: Yeah.

(Side chat...)

Y: Ok. So, have you ever had any uncomfortable experience in the garden?

α: Hm, yeah, Well, I don't know... so I used to work as a light technician, so I'm used to work with a lot of men, which is also the case in the garden. It could be very difficult sometimes as a woman to work with men. First of all, well, they don't take you seriously about your knowledge. This is definitely not something I experienced in the garden, which I'm really grateful for. Because before it will be like people explaining a lot of things to me and I will be like, ok, people, this is my job, you can trust me to plug in the light, I know how that works. That could be very frustrating, but I never experience that here in the garden. But of course here in the garden I also usually work with guys who are here alone,

away from their wives. So of course they try to talk about sex with me, a lot. I'm a very open person and I can make a lot of really dirty jokes, I'm ok with that. But I also have learned to say, ok, this is enough. Because sometimes they would go a little... over the edge. Yeah. So sometimes you get it from guys like, oh you are so pretty, you are super nice... But, yeah.

Y: So would you say it's a gender thing? Or is it a cultural thing?

α: I don't know... I do have it with Dutch guys also, so maybe it's just a guy thing? It was really hard for me to learn that. Here, I can say ok that's enough, and the guys here will accept that and let go. So you really have to learn to balance being nice and being comfortable and have your own boundaries. It is hard, but I think that's something a woman will have to learn no matter where you live or what kind of culture you are in.

Y: Ok. Next. Do you think Akkwaba bring you opportunities in your life?

α: Yes, definitely. When I first start working for Inspiratie Inc. I was really worry because I studied applied biology, and I was already late graduating, that my classmates already graduated... there were no jobs, actually. So people are either home, or started doing master just to get money from the government to live or to get a higher education. But that is...that doesn't necessarily mean that you can get a better job. I was really like, oh my god I've finished my study and what should I do? So what Inspiratie Inc. did for me was empowering me and gave me the opportunity to start my own business and to work for myself. It has been such a blessing and I'm really super thankful for that. And I was able to have my own business and grow my own business.

Y: What about on the personal level? Do you think working in the garden help you make friends and being more connected to the community?

α: Yeah I think so. I do make a lot of friends from different countries in the garden and every time I come here I feel like stepping into a warm bath of friendliness. And that's really really nice. I live in a community where we have a community garden, but there's always a lot of tensions... that's really not what I expected. And when I started in the Inspiratie Inc... I think that's how it's suppose to be like to live in a community, that people being nice and supportive despise the differences, and coming from the differences, everybody tries to contribute to the family and create a sense of connection, instead of what I experienced in my neighborhood is that everybody is trying to defend their own space, that they don't know how to live in a community anymore. I think people in Holland

are usually more individual and realistic...yeah.

Y: So do you have similar experiences in other urban gardens? Do you think the opportunities you get in Akwaaba is something you can get in other urban gardens?

α: I think it's similar in all the gardens that belongs to the Ispiratie Inc. Because it's the same group of people who do all the gardening works, so I don't think it's necessarily bonded to a garden. For example, last year we still had a community center in the Akwaaba, it was really a hub, a living room for people who lived in the AZC. I'm glad we have this space now, because last year was... really a lot of moving. But there were always a lot of people in the Akwaaba, just sitting there and enjoying their time... talking to people or just sitting and seeing people being happy, because it was a much nicer place to be than in the AZC. You could really sense the appreciation of the people being there, that they have somewhere to go, somewhere that they feel they belong. And with the community center gone, I think the sense of that community in the garden is also gone a bit because there is no inside space for you to sit, to drink tea or coffee... that not necessary for you to work in the garden but to feel the garden. I'm really glad that there will a new Akwaaba community center near the AZC, because I think it's very very valuable to the people. I think it's really important to have these things close, because you can see here in Odeonstraat it's always busy, there' always people here... but it's pretty far away from the AZC. Last year was really way busier in the Akwaaba. I think it's really important to have an inside space for the sense of community which extent into the garden.

Y: Ok. Next question is that are you encouraged by the experiences you got from Akwaaba to be a more active person in Almere or the Dutch society?

α: Not necessarily. I've done a lot of volunteer works my whole life because that's how my parents taught me and it's important to contribute to the society and the place you live in. So I think the things... that I like being in Akwaaba is a drive from myself, not necessarily from Akwaaba.

Y: Ok. The last part. So we have all these gardens and this one garden team, and how often are you involved to those gardens?

α: I do practical works in the garden once a week, and I try to go to different gardens every week. Like last week we did a lot of thing in Almere Hoof. So the guys and girls worked there on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays... and with the Whatsapp you see all the pictures and chats, so you know that I get

questions and calls every morning even I'm not in the garden. So even I'm not there I'm still pretty involved with what's happening these days.

Y: Yeah, I think you can say that people do consider you as a leader in the garden.

α: Haha, yeah, thank you.

Y: Ok, so, would you say that you have similar experiences in these gardens like in Akwaaba?

α: Yup.

Y: And do you have any uncomfortable experiences in those gardens?

α: Yeah, it's in Almere Hoof. It's a very interesting place that it's a really small garden, it's an apartment center in... like a circle around the buildings. So you have all the people's balcony inside, their own sitting place that facing the garden they can see from their place. And it's... I think it's a social housing, so there's a certain... demographic that lives there, which is the lower class Dutch people. And a lot of people who live there are very negative towards immigrants. So going there with all the guys from (an African country), you get all these people who's always sitting outside or looking out from the window and watching or keeping an eye on you. They are always a bit suspicious. Last year I was there the first time and the garden was a little lack of maintain in the garden so it didn't look well, and the people there were angry. Which I understand cause when they look out from the window the garden was really weedy, not a lot was done there... I understand they were angry, but it was very uncomfortable to work in that garden with the guys and with all these people peeking at you that you know they are judging you.

Y: That's an interesting contrast from the Akwaaba, cause you remember that old gentleman? He looks like a middle eastern...

α: Oh yeah! He's also there in the Akkwaba a lot last year, and he would just sit there and smile and talk, no one understands him but he would still talk and smile and just watch everybody.

Y: Yeah and he looked so happy!

α: Yeah he does! I was so glad that he can just sit there and enjoy the space. But now that actually we met another family in the Almere Hoof that they have a little kid... so most of the people there just peek out from their windows are in their 50's or 60's, but this family is a young family, they have a little kid, and the dad always sits outside and smokes weed... they are very very friendly. And the kid is always so enthusiastic that he wants to help, he wants to water all the

plants and dig the ground... It's so great that we can use their bathroom. They were very very friendly. So, by doing this, by going there, these people also have a positive experience, with another culture which otherwise they might distrust because whatever reasons and all the things happening in our society. So I think it's very important that they go there and feel comfortable, and to show people there that actually these people are nice, and they are working, so people who live there could also have a positive experience.

Y: So, in general, how would you describe the garden and the process of working together in the garden is for those who work in Akwaaba?

α: I think it's a very empowering and valuable process, which not only create a sense of community but also a purpose for people who work in Akwaaba. I think it's really important that people have a purpose cause... just imagine that there's nothing you can do because you don't have your papers yet, so all you can do is stay in the room and think about what happened to you and worry what will happen next. I really can't imagine a life like that, if I'm in that position, I would be drunk all the time in less than a year, and I've heard that some people have been living like that for 15 years! So I think it's really important to have a sense of purpose, even if you are not sure if you can stay or how long can you stay, I don't think that matters, just that it's important to give people a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging. Yeah. And if we don't do this, a lot of people might get depressed and turn to things that we would rather not see. And that's what we can create in the garden.

Y: Would you say it's the same for you?

α: Yes, I think it is. It so gives me a sense of purpose, a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, a sense of love and acceptance. That I'm doing something that matters. Cause if it's not important to me than I wouldn't stay in the office behind the desk... yeah of course sometime it's chaotic sometime it's a lot of works, sometimes I get really frustrated like, why are people calling me on Sunday night! Stuff like that. But I would much rather do this than anything else.

Y: That's a perfect ending. Thank you!

Appendix 3. Interview Transcription – Beta

- Speaks Dutch, English (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Student
- Age: 20-29
- Has been working in Akwaaba for about 2 month
- Considers himself/herself as an individualistic and conservative person

Y: Thanks for accepting doing this interview! To start, I need a little bit of your personal information, but it will be anonymous in the research... I already know your name...

β: Yeah ok. I'm in my 20's. I'm Dutch, and I was born in Almere.

Y: I really like Almere, it's such a young and energetic place.

β: Yeah you can say that. It's a very mixed place with a lot of differences, of course it depends on who you hang out with, but generally people here are very open, and people here likes the city... Some kids might be a little rebellious, which is in their natural, but in general people like living in this city. (Side talk...)

Y: Ok. So how was your experience in Akwaaba?

β: So this is probably... my 5th week working in Akwaaba, because I was away for a week, and I was not there every week. It's a very nice place, we also host weekly event there every Friday, and I try to take active role in the events. Combines with my classmate, we also work with Monique, as our official internship in the Inspiratie Inc.

Y: So how often do you work in Akwaaba?

β: Depends, sometimes I worked there the whole week, but now usually is once or twice a week. Because we have set up all the things to do for the kids... I don't do a lot of actual work at the moment there, other than Fridays to work with the kids.

Y: Cool. So why do you choose to work in Akwaaba?

β: Hm, I'm not sure. I like the place because it is a very cool area with a lot of schools there, with kids from all different kinds of backgrounds. It's really interesting to see what they are interested in doing in the garden. And it really motives me to have faith in everything that's going on in Almere...

because they will probably grow up here in Almere, if they don't have to go back to where they are from of course, which is always the question...

Y: Ok. And how do you find Akwaaba?

β: I find it very interesting because I used to work with Inspiratie Inc. before... I went there when the office was still there (in the Akwaaba)... like the small building that was right next to it, but no more... so the garden is still there and looks really good actually, for the time has passed. It's really interesting and cool to see kids just come and check out the garden. That they are really interested in all the things we built there... well, and it fills in my hours (for the internship).

Y: So you know about Akwaaba before you started working here?

β: Yeah, I used to work with the organization who built the neighborhood that's surrounded the Odeonstraat, and that how I got in contact with AM., and I chose to do my internship here now.

Y: Cool. So what kind of work do you usually do in Akwaaba?

β: Usually I arrange events for kids and people who came there, but other than that I help volunteers there and guide them, and try to learn a little garden works because I would like to have my own garden later. Yeah. Working there with all the people is really interesting and motivating. They really just want to work, which help them to keep their minds out of the negative aspects they have been through, for example. Not often but some of them are here just accidentally, and there's no mean to go back yet. And it's really cool to see how the place is like a melting pot when you work there, that everyone can really set into a team work, knows what they can do with each other and what can take or ask from each other, and what they can expect from each other.

Y: Ok. So for working in the garden, do you think a common language is important?

β: Well, you always have the common language of body language. When you are trying to arrange specific things, it's nice to have a common language so people understand you, but even that you don't really need to convert it 100%. With the looks in their eyes and everything, you can tell if they understand or if they know what to do, or if they get the joke you make. It's also nice to see a little community feel of course, that we can make some jokes, and laugh with each other. Very important. So in that sense, a

common language can help, but it's not necessary. So you don't really need a common language to understand each other, but it helps. Also it helps if you want to get some active feedback from people, like... if what they are doing works for the expectation, for example. So it helps when you say something and people understand so they can do better. But generally just by showing what to do is quite enough.

Y: So how would you communicate with them if you don't have a common language?

β: By showing, as well as... most of them did understand English. But showing and ask someone to translate for me, and ask if they get what I said... so it's still possible to understand. Also, it was very helpful that V. was there because he/she speaks native French, and a lot of people work in the garden are from (an African country), they also speak native French, to some extent, so it was very helpful.

Y: Do they speak Dutch to you?

β: Sometimes, like saying hello and stuff. They like to try... well I don't expect anything from them but it's nice to see they try. They also ask, in English, what is it like to live here, what is it like to be student or specific student system, and what is it like in my University. They are very interested in knowing about you.

Y: Ok. Well I will say their English is pretty good if they can talk about things like that.

β: Yeah some of them speak pretty good English, but some of them only understand. But they will nod and... you can feel that they understand. And like I said V. really helps that everybody gets it.

Y: Cool. So how would you say about the experience of not having 100% verbal communication is like for you in term of working in the garden?

β: I think it's good. Because I myself is nowhere close to be good at language, and I don't find it troublesome or anything, it's a nice challenge. It's a nice challenge that you have to communicate with someone without completely understanding what you are saying, and that they still get the jokes and everything. It's funny they still get those. But to actively get some feedback... not just nodding, it helps.

Y: So would you say that you've built a certain relationship...

β: Yeah I would say that, to some extent. At least some acquaintance. You can't

call someone acquaintance if you don't know them, that how I feel. Some people are very easy in this kind of stuff... but I'm not. I myself am also feel... very difficult in trusting someone, usually. And this is a nice intermediate place that there's a challenge to build friendships and other values with all the people work in the garden.

Y: I feel the same why. How do you feel about the space of the garden then?

β: I don't have any personal feeling yet, I think. Except for the people who work there. I really like to spend time and work with the guys, it's really cool. But other than that I don't have any feeling to the garden. Because I also kind of feel that this garden is for the next generation, like, for the kids who will come after us, they will come and take care of the garden after we are gone... because the Inspiratie Inc. is such a big organization, I think in the future they will have to have like satellite organizations to maintain and sustain their work. So... I have a feeling of responsible for it, but not personal attachment yet. But that can be because I usually have a personal feeling of responsibility to everything that comes to our planet. It's because I have grown up in Church society, so seeing the responsibility of how the world is looking together with everyone around you is very important to me, and has always been a driving force to me for what I'm doing, which now I'm a student in sustainable development. It's very important to see that you are taking care of the planet where your kids and your grandchildren will be live on... so it's a really big task to keep and sustain everything the way as good as it is now. I wish more people know that, but you can only do so much by yourself of course. So it's nice to have these types of communities surround you, that people who think the same way.

Y: So in the garden, do you feel recognized or comfortable? Or is it more about the people? Do you feel more connected to the space or to the people?

β: I think it's the same for me, the space and the people...um, either the space or the people itself, when they come together, I feel I belong there. But if it's separated, then I'm just alone and don't have things to take care of, which is the individual way of living in the Western society. Generally I try my best to be a good friend and connected to everyone, but I have my own family, I have my own things going on, my own worries. So I don't want to be settled with strangers, well not strangers but acquaintances. So I tend to keep things for myself, and I don't... Hm, I'm a little more open when I'm with people in a

certain space, but generally... and you have to remember I'm only joining for a couple of month too.

Y: So would you say you feel more open because you start working in the garden with these people? Like, does working in the garden make you want to know more about different culture or what happened to them? Or is it something that's not relevant to you?

β: Yes, it does make me more curious. But for me it's more about their motivation, why do they want to work in the garden? That's completely out of what they are used to... I think. It's so odd to see that people come from somewhere else would have such attachments to a space in a place, and people from the place are way less attached to public spaces and care way less about what's going on. (Side chat about his/her research).

Y: Do you always feel the same way about your curiosity? Or would you say that you develop them after your work and the experience in the garden?

β: I always have the curiosity about globalization, about how that work, which is also very important in my study, so you can keep your mind fresh, creative and to think differently. It is also very helpful for me myself because I have a lot of mental issues and difficulties about... so yeah I like it because it keeps me motivated and have faith that the world is a good place. It's like some people will go aboard for vacation every once a year, that's how they keep their mind fresh and be ready for another year cycle, and I think it's the same for me in some extent.

Y: So you would say that working in the garden is like a little vacation for you to keep your mind fresh?

β: Yes I would say that, in some extent.

Y: Ok. Do you remember any interesting interaction you had in the garden?

β: Meeting kids the first time in the garden was really interesting for me, because it was my first time teaching... especially with kids who are not native Dutch, and they were really young, and they were all calling me teacher... really funny thing, in a good sense. And they all heard me, because I was helping them, but I really didn't do that much. It's just... these kids have so much love to give, it was really nice. So it was a thing that always stuck with me, as well as working with the volunteers in the garden. So we have this wheel barrel for carrying soil, and we were always switching around with everybody. Like... it almost came out natural that after two or three runs while everyone else goes

shoveling... and it just came natural because you kind of know how much you can take, and all those other guys are way more stronger than I am, and they just know that when am I going to be tired and they will just take over, and I will go back to shoveling... it's nice to see how everybody wants to try to contribute, and that everybody has the instinct to help.

Y: So would you say these experiences help you build a sense of team or a sense of community?

β: Yeah, for sure. It is still too short for me to say I feel the sense of community, but it is coming. I feel it every week. I know everyone's name, we always ask how's your day? Did you do anything nice? How's your girlfriend or wife? Because I know which guys are still looking for a girlfriend... they all tell me those kinds of things. And they will ask me how was your week, did you do anything cool... yeah.

Y: That's so cool. They never told me those things.

β: No? Oh by the way do you know the story of the turtle pattern in the garden?

Y: No I don't.

β: It's the story of a turtle who used to be jealous of other animals in the forest because he didn't know what he is good at... he didn't what was his purpose. But one day there's a big fire in the forest, and a lot of animals were by the shore of the river but cannot go to another side. The turtle said yeah no problem, just hop on my back, I'll carry you to another side. And he did. And he found his purpose.

Y: That's beautiful.

β: Yeah, and I think most of the people in the garden know about the story.

Y: That's awesome.

β: Yeah, even he young kids I think, because they go to Dutch classes at the school nearby too. It's lucky that at least kids do learn and understand new language quickly. So we are lucky that most of the kids who come to the AZC are pretty good with Dutch, even better than their English.

Y: Ok. So you do feel in a certain level you are friends with the people who work in the garden?

β: Yeah, in a certain level. Acquaintance is for sure. We always talk about how are you and how's everything in your house, and we also talk about how do you find the work, do you find it's interesting? And they would say yeah it's good we like it. It's a bit difficult now because there are not a lot of guidance

for them... so I hope that doesn't have a bad influence.

(Side chat about his/her project)

Y: Ok. So do you ever have any uncomfortable experience in the garden?

β: Yes, only one. It wasn't to me personally. So there was a guy who is very skilled in construction... And there was an older guy who really likes to talk about religion things... and he talks really pushy about religious, which is pretty rude. And he also said see you Dutch people came to steal and rub from us and something... I was like, dude I know but that was something our great grandparents did and now we are trying to help you. Yeah he was really pushy. I think if you likes to talk about these sensitive subjects it might not be a good place for you to be in this multicultural community. That was the one negative experience I have, everything else were nice. And they apologized to each other in the end, so it wasn't really a really big deal, and I suppose it's actually because of certain subject or people who are just really stubborn about some subjects.

Y: So you don't think it's a language or a cultural thing?

β: No, they can both speak Dutch. It's just religion and history basically.

Y: Both are pretty subjective.

β: Yeah exactly. They always say that the winners' right history, you know.

(Side chat)

Y: Would you say the experience in Akwaaba brings you opportunities in life?

β: I'm not sure yet... It helps my study, it helps me to get in contacts with other people who is also interested in what I'm interested in, but I'm not sure... I want to stay close because don't want to hurt other people, and because a lot of my experiences lead to sadness... like, you were really close friends but after a while you stop talking and then you can rarely recognize each other. That's something I really had bad experience of. So that's one of my reasons why I have difficulty in making contacts with people. And actively involve with those people... I'm afraid I'll get hurt in the moment.

Y: Do you think your experience or opportunity in Akwaaba is something you can get from other places?

β: Not interactions with refugees. But similar feelings, you can get them in other gardens. For example, there are a lot of public gardens or kitchen gardens for kids, I used to work in one of them, and... when you just walked by the garden you will feel happy and the positive energy really come to you. I believe that if

people have been somewhere then they will have an impact to the place, also some places could bring you negative feelings.

Y: Ok. Do you think your experience in Akwaaba encourage you to be more open or to be more involve with these kind of work? Like works with refugees?

β: Not enough yet, I do want to do more, but in my mind there's so much I want to do. It does motivate me to keep going for what I want to do, but not necessarily the same type of projects. I will keep in mind that my experience in Akwaaba does help me to be more open and to be who I want to be as a person... after such a difficult year for me, I have go to psychiatrist for a year now, and Akwaaba really helps me.

Y: Cool. Do you also work in other Inspiratie Inc. gardens?

β: No.

Y: Ok. So, in general, would you describe your experience in the garden in terms of the relationship with people make you more connected with others? Do you feel your more connected with other Dutch speaking people? Or just people who work with you?

β: Yes. I do feel more connected with people who speaks the same language and from my surroundings. Like V., we are very close now and it's funny to see how similar we are and it's because we work in the garden together and faced some difficulties together and being strong together. Also the kids who speak Dutch I have a better connection with them because those kids would try to talk to me and one of them especially, he would tell me everything like what's going on in his home and in school... I really feel connected with him.

Y: What about whoever can't speak Dutch that well?

β: I try to teach them a little Dutch every time. It's funny. And I also try to teach them something about Dutch culture, because the basic Dutch language actually borrow a lot of words from different culture, also some Christian backgrounds in our words.

Y: So in general would you say that you do feel a sense of team or a sense of community is being built in the garden?

β: Yeah, a sense of team is for sure. And friendship is a bit more difficult also because I'm much younger than the people work in the garden, but they are like teachers or a model for me. They already have a lot to deal with, but they are still there helping, so I do have a lot of respect to them that's for sure. So friendship... yeah it's difficult for me because I'm more conservative in that

aspect... if they speak Dutch it might be easier, but it's definitely unnecessary.
Y: Ok, thanks!

Appendix 4. Interview Transcription – Gamma

- Speaks Swahili, French, English, Dutch (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Refugee
- Age: 40-49
- Has been working in Akwaaba for 1 year
- Considers himself/herself as a happy and have great desire to help others

Y: Are you in your 20s, 30s, or 40s?

γ: What's that?

Y: What is your age range? 20-29, 30-39, 40-49?

γ: 40's

Y: Where are you from?

γ: (African country)

Y: Do you have a Dutch Citizenship yet?

γ: Not yet, it is in progress.

Y: How long have you been working in Akwaaba?

γ: One year.

Y: How often do you work?

γ: Around 5 hours a week? An hour or two a day.

Y: What do you usually do in the garden?

γ: We plant trees, flowers, like that. Build things from Africa.

Y: Do you usually do those things in gardens by yourself or do you have to communicate with people?

γ: Yes, I communicate with people. I don't do it by myself, but I can. But I usually work with people when I can.

Y: For working in the garden, do you think you need to talk to people to understand them?

γ: Yes it can be good when I have people to talk. But it doesn't matter what language, we can work together. For me, no problem.

Y: So, if we don't talk, how do you communicate?

y: By using our hands, smiling, laughing. Like that. By showing many things like that. We can bring something to eat together and share together and drink together.

Y: How do you feel about the work in Akwaaba that we just work together and don't necessarily talk. How do you feel about that situation?

y: I feel very happy because a garden is very important because if you are in there, you can think, feel free, feel good.

Y: Great! Do you feel as if the garden helps you feel safe? That you don't have to worry about anything.

y: Yes I agree. It's for everybody. Whether you are old or young, it's the same.

Y: Is the feeling the garden the same as other places, such as this place (the community center of Inspiratie Inc.) right now?

y: No, it's not the same. This garden feels natural. It was made for people. Inside a building or house or home you must be quiet.

Y: Why did you choose Akwaaba?

y: I chose Akwaaba but there is a garden and I like to be in gardens. I like being in gardens because it helps me. When I first came here I was traumatized but when I go to Akwaaba, in the garden, I was thinking and I was recovering. I feel good when I'm there.

Y: Do you remember any interesting interactions in the garden?

y: Yes, there are some people when they come, they like us so much. Because the African houses that we build in the garden is much like the houses built 100 or 200 years ago. People find that interesting and their reactions are interesting.

Y: How do you feel about building the turtle?

y: I like it because it helps remind me of home and the past.

Y: And what about the herbs spiral?

y: That is very nice also, we plant some flowers and food. We can plant many things. I really enjoy it.

Y: There was a BBQ in Akwaaba and you were there. How was it?

γ: It was very nice. There was a lot of people. Many people different people. We eat together, shout together, cry together. Accept one another.

Y: Would you say those events help people to bond?

γ: Yes, it helps people to be together. Because things that have people make food, we need things like BBQ.

Y: Do you have different food from the BBQ?

γ: Many types of food. From Arabia, Africa, Dutch.

Y: Would you say having different types of food people would feel more...

γ: When you bring food from different country, people like it because when it's there people see different culture.

Y: Do you think you made friends in the garden?

γ: Yes! I found you there! You're my friend!

Y: How do you think you make friends?

γ: In the garden, it's very simple to make friends because when you are there, you are happy, and when you are happy, to make friends it's not difficult. People to don't think so much.

Y: Have you ever had an uncomfortable experience in the garden?

γ: No, in the garden you feel safe because you are happy! And if you are not happy, you feel happy because everything feels happy. From the flowers, and trees...

Y: Have you ever met any one who is intolerant of your culture, in the garden?

γ: No, no, no... When you are in the garden, there is no color, no young, no old.

Y: Do you think Akwwba brings opportunities for your life here in the Netherlands?

γ: Yes! It brings something very important for now and in the future. To know more people and to have small friends. I get to use the flowers (of friendship) for different things.

Y: Do you also learn Dutch culture in the garden?

γ: Yes! Not just Dutch, but every culture, too! Because when you are in the garden, we are one.

Y: Why do you think we can be ourselves and not worry in the garden?

γ: In the beginning, God created two people in the Garden. Adam and Eve. In the

Garden. That is maybe the home for EVERYBODY. God said, "This is your Garden. You get food and everything you need. Enjoy the garden"

Y: Do you think you can get the same opportunities somewhere else? The same "We are one" feeling.

γ: Maybe! But in the garden, it is very special, for me.

Y: So by working in Akwaaba, do you feel more encouraged that you can work in other places?

γ: Yes! I work at different places. The port, another garden, here. I feel good.

Y: Does working here at Akwaaba, do you feel as if you want to do more for Almere or your surrounding area?

γ: Yes, it helps the community and the future of Almere, for the population. When I work here, I feel good because it helps the community.

Y: You also work in other gardens, do you feel the same there as you do here?

γ: Yes, sometimes. A garden is a garden. I feel good but some place might be a little different. The number of plants, the organization. But most of the time it is the same

Y: How do you feel about meeting other people in other gardens?

γ: It is good because they invite me. And it makes me feel at home. I know many people through the garden

Y: Do you also meet people from your country in the garden?

γ: Yes, I brought one. We work together and I show them. I also met one.

Y: In general, would you agree that by working in the garden you feel more connected?

γ: Yes. I connect with many people. It helps because of the garden. There is no reason, such as money or business to connect. We connect because we want to help.

Y: What do you usually talk about?

γ: In the garden, no one talks about politics. We speak about history. Simple things. Things to help relax. Like small talk. How are you? Where are you from? Also plans for the future. You can exchange information and plans things for the future.

Y: I read that if we want to be friends, we have to talk about meaningful things. Those talks help us know each other deeply. But I think small talk can also known each other through the small talks.

y: Sometimes you want to make good friends, you can't make good friends if you don't know them. One day you meet and small talk. The next day you can go and talk deeply. You might find people who go through problem and you can help because he or she tells you. You can't go "Hi how are you. What is your problem?" No. You need time to get to know the person and want to make time to get to know the person.

Y: Ok, I think that's all. Thanks!

Appendix 5. Interview Transcription – Delta

- Speaks Swahili, French, English, Dutch (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Refugee
- Age: 30-39
- Has been working in Akwaaba for 2 year
- Considers himself/herself as a happy and have great desire to work

Y: I need some personal information from you. Are you in your 20s, 30s, or 40s?

δ: 30s

Y: Where are you from?

δ: (African country). I am still waiting for citizenship from the Netherlands.

Y: How long have you been working for Akwaaba?

δ: I have been working in Gardens for [4 years?]. Akwaaba is not the only place I worked in. I have worked in others.

Y: Do you know when Akwaaba started?

δ: A little bit more than 2 years. I think you may be confused about Akwaaba and Inspiratie Inc.... the names...

[5 mins of side talk about naming conventions and Swahili translations]

Y: My questions will be based mainly in Akwaaba because I want to see how they interact in gardens. Why did you specifically want to work for Akwaaba? Inspirati does many different types of events and Akwaaba does the gardening

δ: Yes there is a lot of groups. Each choice has a person who is good at certain things. For my group it was that way. We like the environment. My parents are farmers.

Y: What do you like to do there?

δ: I like to grow and plant crops and fruits. Right now there are different types of flowers and fruit and vegetables being grown, tomatoes and onions. And we also have the turtle, you know. We like to change the environment. When people come and say, “wow, this is nice”. It is a good feeling.

Y: Do you usually do these things alone or with people?

δ: We do it in teams. Sometimes others come, who are not in our group. They come do it for free and join and help us.

Y: Do you think talking is important in gardens?

δ: Yes. Very.

Y: Have you ever had the situation where you couldn't understand people?

δ: It's normal. In society you come across that. But that's life.

Y: How do you communicate in those situations?

δ: In the garden work, you don't need language. If you are doing something, just by doing a gesture, people can see and do. It's not geography, history, or math. Just do this and it's simple.

Y: Do you think by that, you can be a team or feel friendship?

δ: Yes. Of course. If your mind is smart, it is very easy. One problem is the people have to feel it. This year, if people come unprepared. It's cold here sometimes. If people come from another climate, they may feel uncomfortable and not want to work for free. Four people may be working in the garden but 20 people may be inside, eating and drinking and relaxing. They can do what they want, but sometimes I do not like it.

Y: Do you make friends in gardens?

δ: I see people who come and I hear what they speak, I will use the language to speak with them. Africa has many language that lets me speak to them and make friends with them.

Y: Do you feel more connected to people by working together in the garden?

δ: Yes. Because we share time together and we share a lot of other things together.

Y: Do you feel it's the same for people who can't speak your language?

δ: No... actually, I had to prove my English and development my English. English I can use to speak to more people. I use language to connect to people. But I also like to see people who are active. Who work hard. I can connect with them through that. I come here for work, they come here for work. We use the work to interact. But if someone comes to just talk, I don't like it.

[3 mins of Discussion on the types of people and his opinions on the ones he can be friends with and can't be]

Y: Do you have any memories of the garden working with someone who makes you feel happy?

δ: Yea. There are some people, when I work with them, I feel happy. I feel happy because my plants grow and therefore I am happy. I say I am not here to sleep and eat only. Working means I get to eat. When I eat, I talk with people. It is like a cycle.

Y: Do you feel happy because you meet people in the garden?

δ: Of course. I meet my friends, they are like family. In my room, it is just me and my computer. Maybe I can Skype. But to be near to my friends is more important.

Y: A lot of people say they like working in the garden because they can help Almere too. It helps people and children. A month ago there was a BBQ. How did you feel about the BBQ?

δ: It was a good feeling. There was a lot of big jobs and it was at that time we had a chance to relax.

Y: I think there was a little boy who helped you water the plants at that time. How do you feel about things like that? Meeting people by random who help in small ways.

δ: I like it. If you give fish, I say thank you very much and God bless you. If you teach me to fish, it is much better because I can do it myself. So when I work in the garden and small children and they imitate me, it is great! They cannot forget. It is fresh minds. I hope in the future, the majority of my children can work in a garden too.

Y: In addition to Akwaaba, do you have any interesting experiences in other gardens?

δ: Yes. I get a lot of contacts in gardens. I don't meet people who are a lot like me but I remember the good times I had. If I think positively, it is better for me.

Y: Do you feel that garden is a safe space for you?

δ: I feel the garden is a natural and safe space.

Y: Do you think nature can help people be friends, easier than other places?

δ: It depends on who you are. If you come to connect with people, it is easy. You

make links and meet many types of people.

Y: Would you say overall, you feel that by working in the garden helps you and your ability to connect with other people and the community?

δ: Honestly, in the garden, the people who work together and exchange ideas. This is connection. It is also a family society.

Y: In the garden, people give short greetings, such as “Hi, how are you?” What do you have to say about that? Do you answer questions like that honestly?

δ: Yes, that is a greeting but if I have a problem, I can just come to you in private. I feel safe doing that.

Appendix 6. Interview Transcription – Zeta

- Speaks French, English (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Student
- Age: 20-29
- Has been working in Akwaaba for 5 months
- Considers himself/herself as a moderated person and cherish his/her privacy

Y: So, I would need a little bit of your personal information... I guess you actually share a common language with most of the people here in the garden?

Z: Yes, I do.

Y: That is so lucky.

ζ: Well, you also share English with everybody.

Y: Yeah... but sometimes I can't really understand everybody because we all have different accent...

ζ: Oh yes yes, I know what you mean.

Y: Right. So, personal information?

ζ: I'm in my 20's. I hold a (European country) citizenship only.

Y: OK. So, how long have you been working in Akwaaba?

ζ: I did my first internship in Akwaaba for my school, which was for a month and was mainly about workshops like the herb spiral and other things in Karibu, that was in January. After that I had to find an internship, which is a bit complicated for me because I'm (European country) and I can't speak Dutch... I know Amal was looking for people to help in the gardens and a lot of other projects at the time so I decided to join Akwaaba as my internship. Also for the new Akwaaba over there, it will be a new project for me to design and work with the children... it's nice. Especially with the children, it's very nice because even though you don't have the same language, it's very nice to see how you can feel with them and to play with them... and it's enough to build a communication. I hope I answered your question....

Y: Yes yes, so how often do you work in the garden?

ζ: Ok, so to answer your first question... I was already here since February, but it was not the real internship, it was just to help. I'll be here until June, so in total it will be four months. My working frequency depends on the schedule of Akwaaba, but most of the time will be once a week for the gardening work,

every Thursday.

Y: So you chose to be in the gardening team because you need the internship?

ζ: Yeah. I worked in landscape company back home... my strategy here is to learn more about urbanism. It is very important for me to know how people can share and interact together in the garden.

Y: Cool. So what kind of work do you usually do in the garden?

ζ: In Akwaaba, lot of stuff actually. The turtle (labyrinth) there, the herb spiral you also made it with us, and sometimes it's just about planting like today. Sometimes you also need to find out new ways to do things. Like, we didn't have money to buy the plants for the turtle, so we have to find a new way... like use the willow branches there to build the... kind of an arch. It's nice sometimes you have to reflect things like this, without money.

Y: Yeah that's important. So do you usually do these works by yourself? Or do you have to communicate with others?

ζ: Yeah most of the time I have to check with other people... I usually work with Irene, Amal is very involved as well, in the process... not really here in the garden but still. I always have to send mails or messages to check if it's a good idea or not, to get feedbacks. For example, I'm not sure if you meet D.... the Turkish girl, she works for Amal after Isobel, and she works in the art school in Turkey, so one of my projects for Akwaaba is to build some kind of flowers in a wooden box, to put a special paint on it, so the children can draw with chalk on it, so we did it with D. and other people on this box.

Y: That's so nice! So would you say you guys build a relationship from working together?

ζ: Yeah in the beginning you might just be talking more about work but since you spent a lot of time with the same people everyday... 6 or 8 hours everyday... you always have to chat about something else than works. And you will kind of build trust through that.

Y: I guess it's easier for you to talk to I. or AM. in words, but what about here in the garden?

ζ: So in the garden, you really need a good skill in visual communication. You have to see or show how others do the works. I think it's not only about the language actually, it's about the knowledge as well. For example, back home, when I worked in landscape company, sometimes you have young people who work with to discover the work, and they don't know plants or how does the machine

can work, so yeah, I think in each country you need to have visual good communication skills for these kind of jobs. It's not because of you don't have the same language.

Y: Ok, that's an interesting point! So, do you think you need to talk to people to understand each other?

ζ: Yes, it is as well. But for me it's easier because I speak French, and most of the people who works here can also speak French. But sometimes, like you said, I can't understand them because of the accents, which is always difficult.

Y: So how would you communicate?

ζ: You have to combine the visual communication and verbal communication. Like to show this plant you cannot remove it, or you have to remove it like this, you have to speak and also show.

Y: And how do you guys chat? I've seen you guys chat while working... what do you usually chat about?

ζ: Well we sometimes talk about girlfriends or their wives. I think it's an important topic between men. When I work with A. in the turtle, we talk about if I have a girlfriend or things like that.

Y: That's so interesting! So, I've heard about you guys would chat about girls before, but not all of you can speak French. So I was really interested in if this is a guy's thing... Cause I never heard things like this from you guys!

ζ: Yeah I think it's a guys' thing. A common concerns for guys.

Y: So would you feel that by working together, that you have a common interest, or like the girls thing that you have a common problem, will help you bond faster?

ζ: To be honest I'm not really curious about if people have boyfriend or girlfriend or not... But it is common to see when boys work together they start to talk about things like this.

Y: Ok. So how do you feel about the experience that you have to use both visual communication and verbal communication here in the garden?

ζ: To be honest I'm very happy about it. When I'm in the garden... because I also have a lot of computer works, so when I can go outside and work with people, and to discuss with them, I'm very happy. Because I'm used to it, I like to enjoy the weather, and... like, just put my hands in the herbs.

Y: So it doesn't really matter if you can talk jokes with other people or not?

ζ: Well it's difficult when you don't have a same language for you to be funny... but

it doesn't really matter. You can still feel the good relationships.

Y: Ok. And how do you feel about the garden? The space of garden I mean. So.

ζ: So... it's a place to work for sure, as well as a place to share moments with people.

Every Friday we will go here with the children, to make some activities, and get to know the spiral and the turtle. So it's not only a place to work but also for me to enjoy the environments, the weather and the interactions with people.

Y: So would you say that you have a certain relationships built up with the place? Or with the people?

ζ: I would say both, yes. With the people here, I feel special in the garden. But if I come here alone, it's different. I can enjoy the alone time in the garden, enjoy the sun... but when you have a lot of children with you, with a lot of people, you feel different, you feel connected with them.

Y: Cool. Do you remember any interesting moments or activities in the garden?

ζ: Yeah I think the better one was for the Easter. We decided to make an Easter event, with treasures and some activities. We had maps and we cut them into pieces, and children would have to play some games to win different pieces of the map, and in the end they can find the treasure. It was a very nice day... T. wears the bunny rabbit suit!

Y: That's so cool! I've heard that there was also a BBQ?

ζ: Yeah yeah (there was) as well. I think it was a Saturday, like, one month ago, it was very nice as well, to see all the people sharing food, because the garden is kind of a way to share with people as well. People from the school and the AZC were all welcomed in the garden, and that BBQ party was really there to provide that.

Y: Right. So, how do you feel about these experience?

ζ: For me, these events makes the garden a place to be. Of course you can work in the garden, but there are also a lot of other events in the garden. It's nice to have events like this, to gather people, so people can enjoy as well what we did, especially for those who work in the garden, it's nice to show the works to others. Like, the spiral is beautiful, and when you have an event, you have a lot of people, and you can show your work... I think that's very important in this garden too.

Y: So would you agree that the works in the garden help us, whoever that's in the gardening team, to build a sense of community and inclusiveness; but with these events...

- ζ: Yeah, it helps to bring more people and build relationships with everybody. Especially with people from different social classes and groups. Like, they are refugees, and we are students, and some other people are from here... it's very nice to share our cultures and experiences.
- Y: Cool. Do you think you've made friends in the garden? Or what will you describe your relationships with other people who work in the garden?
- ζ: Um, it's a lot of things at the same time... we are a team, and we share things. Like Gamma and Delta, they are very friendly, they always try to discuss with you and get to know your culture and everything, so... Yeah so we are a lot of things, we are a team, and friends, and colleagues at the same time. You can't use only one word to define them.
- Y: So do you feel you get to know more about other cultures or you are more curious about others from working with all these different people in the garden? Do you feel you have grown more open to differences?
- ζ: Yeah, definitely. Because in the beginning I came here I was like, ok I have to improve my communication skills, I have to improve my drawing skills, and my English. But it was not about how to improve my knowledge about Africa or all these countries would help me to help them or be friends with them. When I first came here I worked with Isobel, who was from England, and Shabani, Gamma all these guys, and even in the first meeting it was very nice to see how you can share a lot of stuffs. The day at the BBQ, I went after that to Thomas' place to take a tea and discuss about the way in his country... how to celebrate weddings, that was very nice. Really there are a lot you can share. Even in the beginning I was not really focusing on this, like, sharing culture with other people, but in the time it become nature.
- Y: Nice. So, have you ever had any uncomfortable experience in the garden?
- ζ: Actually no. It's always nice.
- Y: Ok. Do you think working in Akwaaba bring you different opportunities in life?
- ζ: Yeah, sure. When you work with refugees, it really open your eyes. Some of them have very difficult stories, why they came here is not their choice. Sometimes it's because of the wars and a lot of stuff. When I was in back in home, I was like, ok, refugees are here, but I wasn't really take a lot of attention on them. Now, in this garden working with them, it opens my eyes a lot about this subject.
- Y: Ok! Do you feel the same way about people who are not refugees?

ζ: Yeah as well! It's very nice because we are people from different part of the world and different backgrounds. Like you, you are not from a gardening background, but you can still try to be involved in this garden, and I can get to know you and your profession, that's also very nice. Also, like Danis, I'm not an artist, but we can still share a lot of stuff together, and teach different skills to each other.

Y: Cool. Do you think you can get these opportunities somewhere else?

ζ: Um... I would say cooking would be a way for me to have the same opportunities to share moments with others, because every country, even in France different region, has its own specialty. So cooking is way for me. Sports could also be a way, like football, basketball... all these team sports are very important to create a sense of group, that's also very important as well.

Y: Ok. So do you think there's anything that's unique in the garden?

ζ: Yeah I guess garden is special because it's an open space, any one can come and try at least to do works. Or just be in the garden with people and enjoy the nature. And I think I general people like to be outside and enjoy the sun and a beautiful garden. Some people can be healed in the garden, and nobody can be destroyed in a garden. So yeah I think it's an unique place.

Y: So would you say that the experience of working in the garden of Akwaaba encourage you to be an more inclusive person?

ζ: Yeah I would definitely say that.

Y: Ok. So, how's your experience in other gardens which belongs to Inspiratie Inc?

ζ: So I work only 1 or 2 days a week in the garden, because I also have a lot of computer works. I work also in Madhaba garden, which is in Almere Heaven, and Halili in Almere Poort. I also work on the new Akwaaba project, but it's still in design now. To be honest I'm very involved with Akwaaba garden so I will come every week, even when we don't have schedule here. I'll come water the plants or do some weeding alone, and I really enjoy it. I have to write a report on all the gardens belong to Inspiratie Inc, so I try to work at different places. Also for the new Akwaaba, because I'm doing design for it, so I have to go see other gardens and take pictures and do research on them because every garden has its own specialty. We also met a kid in the garden in Almere Heaven, so he can come to work with us and we can discuss things with his family, it's really nice.

Y: Is there any different tasks you do in these gardens?

ζ: So we have the general task, like planting, weeding. But each garden because

they have different goals so we have different tasks in the gardens.

Y: Cool. Could you also tell me more about your experience with kids in the garden?

ζ: So we have different principle themes every time. Last week was about flowers, so I made the paper flowers to decorate with them together, and sang songs about flowers with them, and some games. Now the new theme is about chicken, which will be working with JO., so we will play some games together, to know more about chickens. Also to draw chickens, because there are a lot of different species of chickens... yeah. I'm doing these with kids also because the new Akwaaba garden will be a playful garden for children, so AM. suggested me to come have some works with the children, then I will know better what they need or what they like. And to show them so of our works. I showed them our compost bin and the worm bin, and we show them how to feed the worms. I didn't really choose to come to the garden with children, but in the end it's a good experience.

Y: And could you tell me more about your experience in Almere Heaven? Could it's a closed garden right? I'm curious about how you feel about the space and the interactions you have with people there?

ζ: It's actually pretty good. I think people there are always happy to see us because we help to make the garden pretty, so I always feel welcome there.

Y: Cool. So would you say by working in the garden you feel you build relationships with people?

ζ: Yes, I would say so.

Y: Ok. The last question is how would you describe your relationship with people from the experience of working together in the garden?

ζ: I think you meet a lot of people in the garden, and even though some of them might not be interested in gardens, like some of the people from AZC, but they are always very nice and curious about your life. So even they are not interested in gardens, they still come to you and ask questions or discuss thing with you... well maybe not at the first meeting, because for everybody it is difficult to discuss with people you don't know. But when you come every week and they kind of know you are coming every week, maybe from their friends or from Inspiratie Inc. It's very interesting because when I was working back home, even though I share a lot of things with the people I worked together with there, like we have the same language and everything, but we didn't talk a lot if people are not interested in the garden. But here is very different, especially in

Akwaba, when you share a moment with people, even they might not be interested in garden but they are interested in your life, you can feel a friendly curiosity, and it's nice.

Y: Yeah, and do you think gardens facilitate these interactions uniquely?

ζ: Yes. Because gardens are open space, people can just come and sit and walk. Maybe you can discuss things in a shop, but the atmosphere would be different. Because when you go to a shop you have a goal, so even you meet people... but gardens you can just chilled and enjoy the moment with others, so I think gardens are definitely unique, you can really talk and discuss with people with more relax feelings and to be more open.

Y: Ok! That will be all, thank you very much!

Appendix 7. Interview Transcription - Eta

- Speaks Arabic, English, Dutch (In order of fluency, respectively)
- Refugee
- Age: 40-49
- Has been working with garden for 2 months
- Considers himself/herself as an open-minded person

Y: So I need a little bit of your personal information...

η: Yes sure. I'm in my 40s, I'm from (A middle east country), I am still waiting for the citizenship here.

Y: Ok. How long have you been working with the gardening team in Inspiratie Inc.?

η: I have been working with the team for about 2 months. So I'm not only working in the garden, but also in catering here, and the music side too. I'm working in the management. I have my mission with Inspiratie Inc.

Y: Ok. One thing I'm always curious about, how do people choose to be in which group here?

η: Sometimes they choose, but sometimes we assign them. And it's not really like a project, more like groups, and there are a lot of activities in each group. For example, when you can cook, we will ask you to be in kitchen; if you can work in garden, we send you in gardens; if you have a talent in music, we send you in the music. For those who don't really have much experience in cooking or music, they usually go to the gardening team.

Y: Ok. So how is the working experience for you to work with all these different people in the garden? Especially when you don't share a common language with them?

η: Sometimes the African guys don't speak English or Dutch, they only speak their own language or French. In those times I try to find a way to communicate with them so they can understand me, or I can understand them, by making signs or something. But we can always reach the time that we can understand each other.

Y: Ok. And do you think language is important for you to communicate with them?

η: See the language is important for you to communicate with people, but sometimes when you and the person are interested in each other you will find a common language together. Like signs or some little words for you to understand each other, and by seeing.

Y: Cool. So about your work in the garden and when you plan events in the garden, do you do it by yourself or do you usually talk to people to do it together?

η: No I have to talk to many people to set the work. For the budget, for the shopping, for the cleaning... and also I have to arrange the place for music. So I have to talk to a lot of people. It's very important for you to have a group to do your job.

Y: Ok. How do you feel about the experience that you don't have 100% the verbal communication here?

η: I think it's very important for you to learn the language. It's really pushing me to learn the language so I can understand people here and talk to them and tell them what I want, so I can make friends. Because that's what I believe, this world for everyone. We just have to believe love and peace, and love can do everything. It's not only about the love between man and woman, but between everybody, about humanity. Forget about nationality, forget about what color and religion, it's not a problem. With love, you can find a common ground. Sometimes it will be hard, but it's not impossible. And when you learn the language, it will be easier. No one can live by themselves in this life, we always need others.

Y: Yes, I agree. So could you tell me about the BBQ you guys had in Akwaaba a month ago?

η: Yes. It was great. People ate everything! It was delicious and because of that they have asked me to make it again. Everybody was happy and a lot of people told me it was the first time they eat like this.

Y: Do you remember how many people were there?

η: There were about 60 people. People from different places, people from Dutch, Arabic, Africa, Iran and Iraq, different countries. We were just sharing food and sharing time together, it was really nice. We enjoyed it too much!

Y: So tell me about your feelings about the garden. Would you say the garden is somewhere you would go to enjoy after events like the BBQ?

η: Yes, of course. You can go to see the green, the good weather, see the flowers, and the kids can play at the place as well, and adults can sit and enjoy talking, it's a really nice thing.

Y: So would you say the garden is a safe space for you to be? To be there and just be you, no worries about colors or religions?

η: Yes, of course. I do feel like that.

Y: Do you feel that too here in the Karibu garden? Is it about the place or the people for you to feel comfortable?

η: I feel it's both about the place and the people. When you don't have a stable place, you can't feel rested. And if you don't have nice people, you also don't feel rested. So I think it's both. We the place is nice and the people is nice, you feel comfortable and you feel you can do anything, and people in the garden are always very nice. People in gardens are to help, to work, to make yourself busy. And it also make you happy when you see people smile for what you are doing, that you reach their hearts.

Y: Yes I agree. Could you tell me about the concert you had with the kids in the garden?

η: Yes, it was in the woods, it was wonderful and so amazing! The kids learned the song in only two times rehearsals. There was a Dutch girl, she is 11 years old, and she has a mental problem, she goes to the school next the garden for kids with mental problems. She came just to sit with us, but then by chance she learned the Arabic lyrics in 30 mins, and she sang it with us in Arabic. I was very proud of her. All the kids' parents were there too.

Y: So do you think events like this helps people to meet and understand each other more? To overcome the pre-judgements?

η: Yes. It's all about people meet with each other and get to know each other. Some people judge without knowing, it's really bad. If you want to judge me, you must sit with me and talk to me, and then you can judge me. It's not because you are Muslim so you are bad, or because you are black so you are bad. Because bad people (are) everywhere, in every color, every religion, and everywhere. In

this world, there are much more good people than bad people, you have to remember that, that's very important. But there are bad people, a certain percentage of bad people. So you can't say a person from a certain country is bad just because someone from the same place did bad things. There are bad people everywhere. By eating together and have concert like that together, people can be more close.

Y: So would you agree that with events like these could help people see that people from different places might not be what they thought these people are?

η: Yes, it's true.

Y: Do you think it's a unique thing that gardens facilitate?

η: I think you can do it everywhere. You can do it in the street, you can do it in restaurants, in coffee house, everywhere. If you want to you can always find a way to get to know people and help them know you too. And sometimes you don't need language to let people know what kind of person you are. Sometimes by smile, or some signs in your eyes, you can reach to people's heart. And people will understand you. It will make people reach you too.

Y: So do you ever have bad experience here in the garden or in the Netherlands?

η: I had some problem with people who are also from the middle east, but never with Dutch people. I have a lot of support from my Dutch friends. And yes there are people who don't like immigrants and refugees, but it's very less. And even with those who didn't like you, when you sit with them and share sometime with them, they become understand of your culture and you sometimes.

Y: Would you say that gardens are an easier place for people to do that?

η: Like I said I think you can do it everywhere, but in the garden it is a nice place so it is easier to sit and talk to them. It's more important that you just be open and honest, just be you, and just sit and talk to people. Don't be shy. Talk like how you talk at home. And then you will find a communication starts. By time, one week two week and you talk, you will become really close friends. And that's what I like, to be close friends to people.

Y: Cool. So how do you feel about the experience you had for hosting events in the gardens?

η: I feel really grateful for all the opportunities. They were all really nice, and I met a lot people and made a lot of friends through that. And I think these events helps to people grow closer. Because they would meet, they would talk, and they would know each other from time to time. Sometimes it could be difficult, maybe because of the language or the culture, but you will find a way to solve the problems. It also helps me to be close with other (middle eastern country) people. Because now I work with a (middle eastern country) band, and I also made connection with a Dutch band because of them, and we are trying to put on a performance in the future. I believe the language without national is the language of music, and you can be a part of it even just by listening to it.

Y: Yes, I think it's also like the garden, when you are in the garden, you are a part of the garden, you don't have to work in the garden, but when you are enjoying the garden, you become a part of it with all the other people.

η: Yes, it is like that.

Y: So, in general, would you say that Akwaaba helps you to be more connected with people?

η: Yes, I would say that.

Y: Cool! Thank you very much, I think this will be all I need!