

Reflection

Graduation project

This graduation fits the objectives of the MSc. track Management in the Built Environment well. In essence, management is about practice and thus empirical observations are needed in the study of this domain. My research, moreover, focuses on the interaction between different stakeholders, in specific on the stakeholders that are the focus of the graduation studio Corporations & Cities. By choosing a qualitative, exploratory approach, findings from this research cannot yet be transferred to a broader context. However, it does give implications both for further scientific research as for discussions in the professional world. This research fits the objectives of the MSc. program of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences as well. This program is characterised by the mix of physical and social sciences and focuses on creating more sustainable developments. This study particularly focuses on an aspect of social sciences, communication, that is used in the creation of the physical environment. By recognizing this use and further research into it, decisions on the built environment can in the future become more transparent and informed in the future, leading to a higher quality built environment. An ethical dilemma in this is that when stakes are high, transparency also depends on individuals that might be held accountable for certain statements. For confidentiality reasons thus, certain information might not be available, while for complete transparency, completeness of information is important as well.

During this graduation project I have learned a lot about 'structuring', both in writing as in doing analysis. After all the interviews I sometimes drowned a bit in the volume of data. I had all kinds of links and connections in my head, but a clear structure or analysis was lacking. It was only until the last two weeks that this structure really came into shape once I started writing down my findings. Although this writing itself was not structured at all, it helped me clear my head of all these loose connections and start to analyse the data more structured. I think sometimes I had already done some analysis in my mind, but by not writing it down already, I missed the steps I took to get there. So in these first writings I skipped information. During the more structured analysis, I also discovered new connections. In next projects, I would start earlier with writing in order to better structure the analysis. However, I also think the broadness of my scope caused me to be able to create many insights and ideas but sometimes limited me to give them a place. In hindsight, I think I could have asked more feedback during the process. A bit too often I wanted to figure it out myself first, while also only talking about it would have helped me in my own thinking as well.

Personal

Personally, I found the most challenging part the fact that it is a completely individual project. During the MSc. program we had some individual projects as well, but the topic was always the same for everyone. Thus you could compare your work with that of others, giving some indication of the quality of your own work. In this project, with no comparison with whoever, I found that rather difficult. Partly because usually my motivation is boosted by this kind of 'competition' (although it maybe should not be a competition, it does feel so). This individual aspect got reinforced by having to execute the most intensive part of this project during the Corona crisis and thus at home. I missed short updates on what everyone was doing and the short discussions on dilemma's you may have on your research. I think these kind of conversations are beneficial for the quality of the work, but also happen mostly spontaneous, not by telephone, Skype or Zoom. Not to forget that it makes the process a bit more fun. Apart from the lack of communication (yes, there it is), with fellow students, I also struggled with having to do everything from

home on the fact of being at the same place every day. Before the crisis, I enjoyed the variation in locations by going to different places for interviews and I switched study locations at the university every day or even within a day. Although I think I am personally very lucky with my student room, the fact to not have other options for studying was sometimes difficult (in particular when the house with whom my house shares a garden decides to throw a beer cantus there with loud music on the day of your deadline). So this Corona situation sometimes frustrated me, but it had some upsides as well. In order to physically escape (communication is everywhere) sometimes, I took daily walks around the city to clear my head. So in the past few months I think I have seen more from the city than the 7 years before. Writing this down, it feels a bit strange to talk about walks around the city and upgrading my student room in a personal reflection, but I do think these things are related to my process, keeping me motivated throughout the project (and I think Corona-graduates can agree).

In the end I am happy, and also a bit proud, that the Corona situation did not take my spirit for this project down. I believe this also had to do with the fact that I am genuinely interested in this topic and I am really glad that my mentors stimulated me to choose what I like. I was positively surprised by the amount of reactions I got from 'randomly' approached interviewees. Moreover, I am really glad to have been able to interview this amount of persons, even during the Corona circumstances. At the beginning of this graduation, I was a bit hesitant about doing qualitative research, as it involved interviewing, which I had never really done before. So before I started interviewing I sometimes regretted not having chosen the 'safe' option of quantitative research, which I had more experience and confidence in. This regret however has disappeared completely. By having done this qualitative research, I feel I have broadened my skill set more than I would have doing quantitative research. Also, I did not expect upfront to enjoy interviewing, as I always kind of associated it with a stiff interrogation. However I really enjoyed interviewing in this research. I liked the contact with different people, the different conversations and getting new insights from each interview, even if minor. In particular, I enjoyed it when interviewees made rough statements or spread some gossip. Thus after every interview I did I felt renewed energy for the project.

In the end, I believe this graduation process has challenged me in both professional and personal ways and made me ready for the next challenge in my career.