

REFLECTION PAPER

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REFLECTION ON DESIGN THINKING

This research opted to provide information on how design thinking is implemented in the public sector of urban area development. It ended up demonstrating how the five design thinking themes were recognized in one specific urban area redevelopment case. On a scientific level, this information is relevant to scholars studying design thinking or urban development management, or anyone wanting to get a deeper understanding of the subject, as it provides a concrete example of the way in which the different design thinking themes were recognized.

On a practical level, this research's relevance depends on how well the results for this one specific case can be generalized. Generalization concerns the question whether the results of a study are applicable in a broader context beyond the one in which the research was conducted (Bryman, 2012, p. 711). Regarding generalization, Bryman (2012, p. 205) states that any findings can only be generalized to the whole from which the sample was taken. Adding to this, it is often suggested that it is impossible to know how the findings from qualitative interviews, conducted with a small number of individuals in a certain locality or organization, can be generalized to other settings. Bryman (2012, p. 406) and Yin (2009) state that it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made from qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment or generalization.

The conclusion that design thinking is part of process management and that its themes are recognized in the redevelopment of the Schiedam port area, can be generalized, to some extent, to municipal urban area redevelopment projects in which complexity is high and a process manager adopts a process based approach to management. The five design thinking themes can all be recognized within process management, which makes it plausible that they are also recognized in process based approaches to urban area development management. However, as mentioned in paragraph 9.3, it may not be necessary to adopt a process approach in which all Design Thinking themes are present, as it may not be necessary to do so depending on the complexity of the project.

With that in mind, the results of this research are relevant to project managers, process managers, and municipalities dealing with complex projects, as this research showed a process manager's way of working in order to deal with complexity. From this research's results, lessons can be learned about how the Design Thinking themes, albeit as being of process management, are implemented in one specific case.

The final step after reflecting on this research's results, is to establish recommendations for further research. This is done in the following chapter.

REFLECTION ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT

This research opted to provide information, as means to gain insight, on how the municipality of Schiedam is changing, and, subsequently, how the organization deals with that change. It ended up demonstrating how different organizational change management elements are present, or absent, in the municipality's process of change. On a scientific level, this information is relevant to scholars studying organizational change management and/or the changes Dutch municipalities face, as it provides a link between the two topics in the context of a real-life case. This is also of interest to anyone wanting to get a deeper understanding of the subjects.

On a practical level, this research's relevance depends on how well the results for this one specific case can be generalized. Generalization concerns the question whether the results of a study are applicable in a broader context beyond the one in which the research was conducted (Bryman, 2012, p. 711). Regarding generalization, Bryman (2012, p. 205) states that any findings can only be generalized to the whole from which the sample was taken. Therefore, the results of this research can only be generalized to municipalities experiencing change. Subsequently, some conclusions are better generalizable than others.

The conclusion that the change process is experienced in different ways within the organization can be broadly generalized, as it is plausible and understandable that different people, in different layers of an organization, experience a process in a different way. The conclusion of to what extent the organizational change management elements are recognized however, is less generalizable. This, since the way a municipality deals with change depends on a multitude of factors which are variable instead of constant, e.g. a municipality's culture, political direction, and the cause for change.

With that in mind, the results of this research are relevant to Dutch municipalities experiencing change and wanting to learn lessons from how other municipalities dealt with change in practice, as it may help to put their own situation into perspective.

REFLECTION ON TOTAL RESEARCH

REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH'S PROCESS

Regarding this research's process, one can reflect on several topics: (1) the timespan of the research, (2) the division into two separate studies, and (3) the course of the research.

1. The timespan of the research

When looking at the duration of this research, it is noticeable that it lasted longer than anticipated. The entirety of the research, from P0 up to P5, is scheduled to fit within one academic year. This research lasted a half year longer, which was mainly due to not having passed the Real Estate Management course. In order to still pass this course, an extra assignment was to be completed. Doing so took a lot of time, sadly at the expense of the graduation work. Still, in order to graduate at all, this assignment was to be completed with a sufficient mark, so it was decided to postpone the graduation research until the assignment for Real Estate Management was finished. Graduating was delayed a second time, due to receiving a No Go for the first P4 attempt. In hindsight, this turned out to be for the best, as the final report ended up being more logical and a lot clearer than before.

2. The division into two separate studies

During the course of doing research, the focus shifted from Design Thinking towards organizational change management, as it became clear that the municipality of Schiedam was in a process of change. However, this was not well reflected in the first version of the P4 report. That version focused mainly on Design Thinking and how to deal with resistances, and mentioned change management as a kind of side issue. The entirety of change management, and how to deal with resistances for that matter, did not add in answering that P4 version's main research question: 'How are Design Thinking elements recognized within the redevelopment project of the Schiedam port area redevelopment?'. Therefore, that entire part could actually be left out. Adding to this, there was no clear consistency in the previous report regarding in which direction the research was heading. Because of these reasons, the decision was made to divide the research into two separate studies, one on Design Thinking and one on organizational change management. Both parts contain their own research questions, research proposal, research, and conclusions. By dividing the research into two separate studies, it became easier to structure both parts in a clear and logical way, making them easier to read and understand.

Following this division, changes had to be made to both parts. The part regarding Design Thinking had to be made more concise due to the fact that this report would otherwise consist of over 200 pages. Because of this, the chapters regarding strategies to resolve dilemmas and to apply command and control within a network, were dropped. This also includes the interviews regarding this specific topics. Nonetheless, the essence of that part of the research remained the same. For the part on organizational change management, additional interviews were to be conducted and new information was to be gained through literature. This, due to the fact that the information on this topic that was already present in the report, was not sufficient to make a complete, whole worthy report about organizational change management.

3. The course of the research

The course of this research can be described as being bumpy. The first period of this research coincided with the elective Process Management and the mandatory course Real Estate management, both of 7 ECTS. Combining these two courses and graduation proved to be quite difficult, and resulted in my P2 not being at the level I personally wanted it to be. Still, having to

retake the P2 came as a surprise and was experienced as setback, which diminished the motivation to continue on a bit. The next setback was not having passed the Real Estate Management course, as explained above. This was followed by yet another setback at my first P4 presentation. This all put a lot of pressure on my motivation to finalize this research. But, keeping in mind the effort that had been invested in this research by not only myself, but also my mentors, and the fact that this research concerned topics that are of a big personal interest, kept me motivated.

Adding to this, I was a little bit too fixed on showing that I could do this research as independent as possible, which led to consulting my mentors insufficiently. Because of this, I consulted my mentors less often than preferable. Meeting them more often, especially my second mentor Tom Daamen, could have prevented some of the setbacks described above.

REFLECTION ON RESEARCH ELEMENTS

The research proposal consisted of several elements: research strategy, research design, research sample, research methods. A reflection on these elements is done in the following sub-paragraphs.

Research Strategy

For this research, a qualitative research strategy was chosen. As Bryman (2012, p. 380) states, this strategy focuses on understanding situations in the social world through examination of the interpretation of those situations by their participants. This has been the main principle of this research: understanding how the municipality of Schiedam is changing on an organizational level, and how Design Thinking themes are implemented within the port area redevelopment project, by examining the interpretations and views of several people involved in these situations. Therefore, a qualitative research strategy proved to be the correct one.

Research Design

Quite early in the process it became clear that the design for this research would be a single case study, as the research focused solely on the municipality of Schiedam and one redevelopment project of that municipality. This proved to be the right choice, especially when considering that two different studies were done.

Research Sample

In hindsight, the sample for both researches could have been bigger. Specially for the organizational change part, as this part showed how the changes of the municipality of Schiedam are experienced very differently through the different layers of the organization. A bigger sample could have resulted in a more complete view on why the change is experienced differently and if such differences could also be seen within the same organizational layer. Having had more interviewees would have resulted in more profound conclusions, meaning that the conclusions would provide answers to the question as to why different layers of the organization experience the change in different ways. At this moment, this question can be seen as input for further research, however, had there been more interviewees on this topic, and more time, this could have been included in this research.

Regarding the interviewees, it would be have good for this research to have spoken with someone from the 'other side' of the dilemma addressed in Chapter 20 regarding which way of working should be implemented in the redevelopment of the Schiedam port area. This had always been the plan since the early stages of this research. However, the person that I approached for this, insisted on doing the interview in the presence of the process manager of the case. After consulting with

the process manager, it became clear that this was not a desired situation, as the process manager considers this to still be a sensitive subject. Adding to this, I personally believed that it would be better for the interview to conduct it one-on-one, as I believed that having the process manager present would somewhat constrain the interviewee in freely answering the questions. For these reasons, I asked the person I wanted to interview if she would agree to do the interview one-on-one. After getting no reply to this, I decided not to pursue this interview any longer, as I did not want to open up old wounds or cause any problems among these colleagues. Lacking this interview remains unfortunate, as it would provide new insights on the dilemma, and a new point of view.

Research Methods

The research method for this research, next to a literature study, has been the conduction of interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several interviewees. The main idea regarding interviewing was to ask the interviewees general questions, and to just let them tell about their experiences regarding the changes within the municipality and/or the redevelopment of the Schiedam port area redevelopment. Using probing questions, more detailed information about topics that are considered important were to be obtained. Then, it can be investigated which Design Thinking themes and/or organizational change management elements are recognized within the information provided with the interviews. This methodology worked very well with one interview, but proved to be difficult during the others. This was mainly due to the fact that the majority of the interviewees had a limited amount of time for the interviews, mostly around 30 minutes. This amount of time proved to be too narrow to just let the interviewees tell their story and use probing questions in a decent way in order to gain usable information. Therefore, the risk emerged of ending up with information to which no Design thinking theme or organizational change management element could be linked, ultimately resulting in uselessness. To cope with this, a more structured way of interviewing was adopted in which Design Thinking themes and organizational change management elements were directly incorporated in the interview questions. The order in which the questions were asked however, was not fixed. This, as to allow to follow up on answers in the most fluent and logical way and linking similar themes or elements with each other.

As mentioned, the previously described way of interviewing worked very well with one interview: the one with Bart Heinz, process manager of Schiedam. This was mainly due to the fact that there was no limited time for the interview and he himself was happy to talk about his project of redeveloping the Schiedam port area. Therefore, a clear difference in interview style can be noticed between this first interview [interview A1] and the rest.

LESSONS LEARNED

In the course of this entire research, a lot of lessons are learned, and a lot of different new insights are gained. The main lesson learned is how to actually conduct research. During my study, I learned about different elements of doing research - research sample, design, etc. - and only had to conduct one short interview. Therefore, the entire process of conducting this research has been experienced as a learning process, in which I learned:

- How to properly set up a research report and structure it in such a way that readers can easily follow the common thread throughout the report and understand why certain steps were taken, thus making it a coherent entirety.
- How to set up interviews and conduct them. Subsequently, I learned the importance of being able to swiftly shift between the interview questions and their order, as to adequately react to the given answers and create a dynamic setting, instead of a very static one. This ultimately helps in having a fluent conversation, that helps the interviewee feel more comfortable

- The importance of explicitly defining the research's boundaries. When these boundaries are unclear, the research can become endless. This, as one can stray away from the main topic, focusing on side questions that are not really part of the main issue. Losing focus on the main topic can be detrimental to the research, especially when there is a limited time in which the research should be concluded.

The case of Schiedam proved to be a very informative one. Regarding organizational change, I learned how important it is to ensure that there is a clear vision on how an organization is going to change, why it needs to change, and what the desired state is after the change. This needs to be clear for every person within the organization, as creating a sense of urge and necessity is necessary in order to get everybody on the same line. Subsequently, active and consistent steering towards the desired end goal should take place to ensure that goal is reached. When a change process lacks both of these elements, it is possible that some individuals may not take the change seriously or that disagreements arise between individuals who think differently about the changes. Adding to this, doing a literature study on organizational change management taught me that there are different forms of change in terms of how it comes about, scale and rate of occurrence, and that successful management of organizational change is a necessity in every organization. Looking into the case of the municipality of Schiedam helped me to better understand the reasoning behind those statements.

Regarding Design Thinking, not only did I learn what it is, since I had never heard of it prior to this research, but also how to apply it in an urban area development setting. This may be of great value in my professional life. I also learned about a management methodology that was new to me: the Ambitionmap. Working with an Ambitionmap proved to be very effective in the management of the Schiedam port area redevelopment. Without this research, I would have probably never come across this method. Subsequently, I learned how it is a way of dealing with complexity, an aspect that is always present in urban area redevelopment, by opting to provide insights, form consensus and include users/actors in decision-making processes.