11.1 REFLECTION RESEARCH

The research was carried out during nine months. The first five months consisted of writing the research proposal and the remaining four months the research.

In the research proposal the social relevance and scientific relevance of the research were set out. The social relevance was described as the understanding of the role of the CGREA, a government department, that involves public money. But as well has the largest real estate portfolio of the Netherlands. The research described the role of the CGREA, they are an operational department that manage and maintain the portfolio of government properties. They are not a policy department or have the ability to do financial investments in the built environment. In the scientific field not much research is done into the portfolio of the national government, specific the CGREA. Besides the researched aimed to define public values in real estate and link this to the disposal. The research described an approach to make the CGREA aware how to approach public values in the disposal process.

The research methods chosen were a literature study, interviews, discussion and case studies. The chosen research methods provided the right method to answer the research question: In what way can the CGREA dispose vacant properties while incorporate public values? The literature study provided a lot of information. It have been very broad, but this was because the focus of the research shifted a couple of times. From social return to society return to public values. In the beginning I did not delineate my research sufficient.

The discussion held at the CGREA was very interesting. Many interviews and a few small workshops were held to make a presentation with a couple of statements to present during the discussion. As well a survey was conducted to provide the different viewpoints on the disposal. The interviews were very helpful during the research, both with employees of the CGREA and real estate professionals. They allowed to see the different perceptions on the vacancy in the Dutch real estate market. And the roles seen by real estate professionals of the CGREA. The research could have been better by skipping the case studies and replace them with expert meetings/ workshop intern the CGREA but as well with real estate professionals or increasing the number of case studies. This is because the ways of working regarding disposal changed the last year. Many research is done in order to get a grip on the size of the disposal portfolio and to determine the right strategies according to these. The case studies now resulted in many information about the process of disposal (collaboration), not much could be set about public values. This was also a mistake from me, I didn’t made the right decision which points I wanted to research in the case studies.

As well the right information about many cases could not be found and this narrowed the choice for cases. However, this also indicated the way in which is worked at the CGREA. The analysed cases can be seen as learning cases and illustrated the process during disposal and how this need to be changed in the future to allow the selling of 700 properties.

The planning of the research was made in the beginning of the process and finalised at P2. The planning was based on examples of finished graduation researches and consultations with the supervisors. Because the work to be done was not yet known in detail the planning was kept at a global level and mainly indicated the key points to be researched. This resulted in the fact that I didn’t follow the research planning to much, and hesitated to make steps forward in my research.

11.2 REFLECTION PERSONAL PROCESS

In the first week of the graduation I attended an expert-meeting at the Hembrug area in Zaandam. The question raised at the expert-meeting was how to cope with public values and financial return, I found this a very interesting statement. The CGREA has a nice portfolio and interesting properties that will be sold. It was also interesting because not much research has be done yet on the portfolio of the CGREA. The research started really easy and I enjoyed every single aspect that came across as important for disposal. In the ended this leaded to a research that was too broad and which was hard to narrow down.

The research started with the question about balancing social return and financial return. Very interesting but during literature research and field research it became clear that it is not only about balancing if you don’t know the right definitions. There were very much ambitions in my P1. I established the 5 determinants by analysing the sales of the CBS-property. In my P1 every single determinant was actually a thesis research itself.
The other difficulty was that I formulated a lot of questions focused on how things should be done, like categorisation and collaboration. There was not much information available about the CGREA in the early stages of my research. When I started the field research, the CGREA already was executing categorisation possibilities and collaboration opportunities with other that is why I formulated my questions different in the end and took the CGREA more as a study object.

In the beginning of my field research I started with a literature research on society return and how this can be made measurable in practice. Combining the literature research with the first findings in the field research at the CGREA, society return was not the right concept to use. The literature research indicated as well that measuring the softer aspects in real estate can be very bureaucratic and subjective. Therefore it changed to public values. After this it actually changed two more times and I rewrote the thesis a couple of times.

Lastly, I experienced a lot of difficulties in drawing up conclusions. This is probably very difficult in a qualitative research. The amount of opinions and interests make it hard to just conclude black and white. Everyone has a different perception of values, and in the end you have to compare your value to a range of other values and make the best possible values out of that.

I was also very afraid of writing down and actually choosing for an option and wrapping it up, I kept searching and reading more literature in search for a better answer. In the end in would have been better to just write down what you know and learned and discuss it.

**Learning points**

I learned a lot during the research. Most important learning point are in the terms of planning, research methods and outcomes, the following order is essential when doing a research:

1. Establishment of the research topic
2. Broad conceptual model with related themes
3. Extensive literature research
4. Establishment of the research question and sub questions
5. Research techniques
6. Expectation of outcome

I did do my research in this order, the only bottleneck was that I stayed to long in extensive literature research and deliberation about research methods. Besides, I was to open minded in this research, which is obviously good to get objective outcomes. But I think it can be very useful to have a clear view on the final product of the research and somehow the expected conclusions. I frequently changed the final product of the thesis: decision-support model, assessment framework, strategy, process and in the end ‘just’ recommendations. In the end I am very happy with the recommendations but it took me a long time to see that this is just as good as a decision-support model because it had a better fit with my research. So it is important to establish the final product and describe this already in the early stages about what it should look like.