

Personal reflection on the graduation process

Management in the Built Environment
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
Technische Universiteit Delft

Graduation lab: Housing Market Analysis

Thesis title: *Stimulating Filtering Processes: Evaluating the addition of an intermediate rental segment for middle income households*

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In this document, my personal reflection on the graduation process, personal study goals and feedback received during the process is presented. It starts out with an extensive reflection on the lab selection process, how I ended up with Dudok Wonen as graduation institution, and a general reflection on the process towards the P4 presentation. After this, a reflection upon the feedback that was given to me by my TU Delft mentors and others (employees at Dudok Wonen) is presented. This document concludes with a reflection on the personal study targets which were set during the P2 presentation, as well as other things I learned from writing this report and carrying out the research.

Lab selection, graduation institution, research subject and P2 presentations

At the start of the academic year 2017-2018, a graduation lab had to be chosen. The available options were Design Management for Projects, Urban mining, Housing market analysis, Collective Commissioning, Smart Real Estate management and Big Open Linked Data Cities. Out of these options I decided to opt for Housing Market Analysis

The choice for this graduation lab was not an easy one, as the curriculum of the Management in the Built Environment master programme involved many interesting subjects, projects and courses. However, I found the lectures provided by Peter Boelhouwer concerning housing systems (part of the course AR1R035, Housing Policy, Management and Sustainability) to be particularly interesting. These lectures revealed the unique characteristics the Dutch Housing market features, the role politics have had in establishing these characteristics, as well as the contemporary debates concerning the Dutch housing market. The recent policy changes concerning the role of housing associations and restrictions concerning the allocation of regulated rental dwellings, in combination with the recent developments in the Dutch housing market have led to my belief that choosing the lab Housing Market Analysis would result in an interesting thesis subject.

After having decided on the graduation lab, several internship requests were presented. One of these was from Dudok Wonen. In this internship, Dudok Wonen introduced their ambitions to realise filtering processes with the addition of an intermediate rental segment. This caught my interests, as the available supply of affordable dwellings were (and still are) a much discussed topic at the time.

Due to personal circumstances on my behalf, determining the exact research question and subject for this thesis was a quite lengthy process. Eventually, Dudok Wonen accepted my proposed research question and subject on the 18th of December, 2018. As the research questions and sub questions were established late in the graduation process, the P2 presentations resulted in a retake. The reasons for this result were related to the formulation of the research questions, concerns about the scope of the research (as the proposal in the initial P2 mainly focussed on dwelling characteristics), and the selected research methods in relation to the envisioned populations. After having paid more attention to these subjects, the P2 was passed, indicating a 'go' for the internship and the rest of the graduation process.

The internship and process towards the P4

My internship at Dudok Wonen started on the 5th of February in 2018, and ended on the 18th of May 2018. In the three and half months I was present at Dudok Wonen in Hilversum, I was allowed to take part in meetings concerning the pricing of the intermediate rental segment and several other projects which Dudok Wonen was developing. Next to this, I was able to fully develop and distribute the structured web-survey and the interview guides for the interviews with the middle income households that had recently moved to the intermediate rental segment.

While doing this, the real estate agents and communication advisors were very supportive, and were able to help out with formulating the questions for the web-survey and the questionnaire properly. Upon the request of Dudok Wonen, the structured web-survey was altered so that it also included questions which Dudok Wonen needed. With the help of the asset manager I was able to retrieve the relevant data for the quantitative analysis.

When my internship at Dudok Wonen ended, the web-survey had been completed, and several interviews had been conducted. As I was not yet satisfied with the number of interviews I had already conducted, I had to conduct some of the interviews by telephone, from home. During the summer, the analysis of the results took place. The P3 was held on the 31st of August, right in time to register for the P4 presentations.

Dealing with feedback

As mentioned before, I was able to consult Dudok Wonen's employees on several matters. The real estate agents employed by Dudok Wonen have given valuable feedback on how to assess income levels in the structured web-survey, as well as what options to include for some of the multiple choice questions regarding the current housing situation of the respondents. The communication advisors and their colleagues at the help desk aided in formulating the questions for the questionnaire so that they are unambiguous. My personal belief is that the high completion rate of the web-survey (80%) is achieved mainly thanks to the feedback these people have given.

During my internship, I also was able to meet with my first and second mentor nearly every two weeks to discuss my progress in the graduation process. For these meetings, I tried to communicate the pieces I desired feedback for at least two days in advance. These pieces were discussed thoroughly, and sometimes, especially later in the graduation process (when I felt more confident about my knowledge concerning the subjects) resulted in interesting discussions. Other pieces that required less urgent feedback were communicated through e-mail. As a quite stubborn person, I was always critical about the feedback that was given, but often I had to acknowledge that I was jumping to conclusions. In most cases, the feedback and discussions with my mentors have led to either more nuanced problem descriptions and more concise conclusions, for which I am thankful.

Personal study targets

At the time of the P2 report, I set several personal study targets which I wished to accomplish during the graduation process. These personal study target were related to experiencing how it is to work in an office environment and a larger team, gaining insight in how a housing association works, or becoming more acquainted with the selected research methods. In this section, these personal study targets are reflected upon.

I desired to involve an internship in my graduation process as I wanted to become more acquainted with working in an office environment. I hoped to be able to actively participate in a larger structure in which different groups work together to achieve a common goal. During the internship, I was able to take part in meetings, and express my thoughts on certain matters. I was surprised to notice that I was actually able to contribute during these meetings, even though I often had to ask about the jargon

used during the meetings. I also was hoping to take part in meetings between Dudok Wonen and the municipalities in their working area, to experience how performance agreements and joint ambitions are established. Sadly, I was not able to partake in these meetings, as they were either adjourned or conflicted with the schedules of other courses I was following during the internship.

Another target was to get better insight in how a housing association manages their portfolio. I was hoping to see how the ambitions, goals and agreements of a housing association translate to the management of their housing portfolio. I learnt that this process takes a long time. Although the labels of dwellings under the care of a housing association can be changed instantly, actual changes in the housing stock can only happen when a dwelling 'mutates', which is either when the tenant decides to move, or when the housing association forces tenants to move. As the latter option can be quite costly, the first option is more commonly used. Although Dutch households move fairly often compared to other housing markets, this is still a long-winded process. Because of the long-winded nature of these mutations, it can take a considerable amount of time before the portfolio of housing associations is perfectly moulded to the residential visions of and performance agreements established with municipalities.

Taking into account my background education, the bachelor in Architecture offered at the TU Delft, I wanted to improve my knowledge and capabilities concerning data analysis. Contrary to all other bachelor curriculums offered at the TU Delft, the bachelor in architecture does not offer a lot of courses concerning statistical data analysis (at the time it was offered as an elective, but I opted for a course involving geometry instead). I was hoping that an increased knowledge concerning statistics would not only help me during the graduation process, but also to better understand studies performed by others. During the graduation process, I was able to follow the course AR3R059, Applied Statistics, which has helped me improve in this field. This has aided me while analysing the quantitative comparison of the rental segments (chapter 6) and the results of the structured web-survey (chapter 7).

What I've learnt from my own work

While writing this report, I learnt a lot about writing comprehensively. From previous experiences in writing reports, I learnt that I have a tendency to write down long sentences, which do not contribute to the readability of the texts I produced. From the feedback supplied by my TU Delft mentors, I learnt that I also had to put in more effort in the structure of the texts I produced.

Before starting out with this research, I was not very familiar with the selected research methods. During my education at the TU Delft, I did not have a lot of opportunities to work with datasets, and surveys a lot. While carrying out these research methods I learnt how important it is to be transparent in the steps I took during the analysis. Not only because being transparent makes the results more comprehensive, but also because being transparent made it easier for me to receive feedback on my work. After having completed the research, I am confident that any of my peers is able to comprehend what steps I have taken, and will be able to reproduce the outcomes of my research methods and analysis without too much issues.

While creating the structured web-survey I learnt how tough it can be to formulate unambiguous and comprehensive questions for a survey. Most of the questions I had prepared turned out to be full of jargon, or featured words the employees at Dudok Wonen deemed too difficult for the envisioned target group. Next to this, preparing a structured web-survey forced me to think ahead, as once the survey is distributed, no large changes can be made to it any more. I had to make clear for myself what I wanted to do with the gathered responses beforehand.

For the interviews with middle income households that have moved to the intermediate rental segment, I was a bit anxious at first. This was partly due to the large number of households that were not interested participating in the research when I contacted them over the phone. However, I learnt

that people appreciate it when you show interest in their past actions, and that conducting interviews can be a lot of fun.