Reflection

The first period of graduation is finished and a first reflection can be made. This chapter will prevent some inside in how this first period was approached and how the process eventually went in terms of defining the research subject, of conducting the literature study, collaboration with a fellow student, the final research proposal and the next phase.

Within the graduation lab of Design & Construction Management we were confronted with choosing a graduation topic straight away. It helped that I provided a short list with my interests during summer. Fortunately cost and time overruns of building projects was on the list of existing research topics with the department of Real Estate & Housing. So the topic was chosen easily which gave the opportunity to start directly with the first approach on the topic. At the beginning sometimes the question raised if this was the topic that would keep me busy and enthusiastic enough during a year, but the kick start was not able to stop me anymore. The previous research of Robyne van Notten gave some quick entries into the subject of cost and time overruns. Along her research and especially the recommendations the specification of my subject was born: success projects in relation to cost and time overruns.

To provide a fully concept research proposal further literature was read to narrow down in the right direction. Then the link with management methods was easily made in relation to steering and intervening of the building process. That the first reference moment (P1) was passed was not a surprise but the approaching period of further research and real literature study provided some stress. This first time conduction a real research means that you do what you think is best based on your own view complemented with some advice. Actually there is no time to fail in researching so anyhow the chosen direction should be the right one.

The kick start from the first quarter actually helped a lot and provided a clear base for the literature research. Using the structure as described above studying literature meant the right literature needed to be found to substantiate the chosen direction. This was good performable for the general part on causes and indicators and research methods but it was a lot harder for the control factors and the analyses of the management method of PRINCE2.

It took a while before I realised that the focus on success projects was retrievable within the control factors of successful management of building projects. Still I am not really convinced because much research has taken place and different factors pop up all the time. Cost and time are included anyway but it makes it hard to keep the research focussed. This topic could be a separate research.

For the research on management methods it was clear that PMBoK and PRINCE2 are the current methods that are most often used and complete as approach for these processes. Unfortunately PRINCE2 is still working on its introduction in the construction sector. This method is not so often included in research in relation to overruns and therefore it was very hard define the right management tools.

When concluding the literature study only, probably it would have helped to write more parallel to the study on literature, especially for the control factors of successful management, it would have provided conclusions earlier in the process. Now I have read a lot of literature that was very interesting but not directly applicable for this research. For the analyses of PRINCE2 it was hard that the method was not as approachable as I thought. It took a long time before I found the underlying structure I needed. Unfortunately I do not know a solution how to approach this different the next time. I guess this is always hard when new topics are included in research. Anyhow I think I provided enough for this literature study and luckily the kick start already helped a lot in the beginning.

Besides this process it was special that I had a fellow student with the focus on the same topic to study with. We were able to split the amount of literature and study more. However we both needed our time to conduct our own literature study it was nice to have someone to deliberate with extra. This was also nice because of the really informal contact, anything that popped up was possible to discuss.
Of course it took some time in the beginning to find the right way for both our researches and till what level we had to cooperate. It is clear though for the both of us that we want to present our own research even though it has some overlap. I am curious though how this will proceed in the second part in practice because more organisations are involved and the fulltime period will start, it will be more complex.

During this second quarter I also started to search for a graduation company. However you can conduct the empirical research at the University, having the chance to conduct this in practice is very interesting. Luckily there was enough interest of companies. It took a while before AT Osborne was convinced I matched the company on different aspects but fortunately I will conduct my empirical research within their company and of course have a little peak within the organisation as well.

The last weeks of this first semester also provided some first perspectives on the period that is ahead of me. Several case studies and a survey must be conducted within a time frame of a bit more than a quarter. It will be a totally new experience to conduct an actual case study and survey especially because it is within practice. The expectation is that the interviews and survey will be conducted fine for a first real research but I am more curious if the outcome will meet the expectations or that it will be a huge disappointment. The time will pressure the research to retrieve enough information and furthermore it is a total guess what it will bring actually. Well I must say that the enthusiasm is still on so for the upcoming weeks this will help to fulfil the empirical research.