13.2 REFLECTION

For my graduation topic I did research on the energy neutral use of the façade and simultaneously the well-being of elderly and their abilities in living energy neutral, healthy and safe. When I started my graduation in November the topic was totally different.

The initial idea was to design an ‘intelligent door handle’ on behalf of the company ALCOA Architecture systems. There was no problem statement or assignment formulated which this ‘intelligent door handle’ had to meet. So I started with analyzing the different interaction levels between façade and user, which is very broad. Therefore the launch of the project took a little bit longer than expected.

A few weeks before my P2 presentation it became clear that both of my tutors would appreciate it if I combined this project from ALCOA with the BAM 2nd skin project (a renovation project of porch apartments in Rotterdam). As this was not very clear to me from the beginning, the launch of my graduation project took a little bit more time than planned. The change of the main research question shows the research direction completely changed during the time. While these changes in research direction first were a bit confusing to me, in the end the subject made much more sense. The relevance of the project not only became clear by the different recent (newspaper) articles I read, but also by discussing the research topic with others. A lot of people became interested in the outcome and asked me to stay in touch. Also the switch from designing a ‘door handle’ to designing a ‘façade element’ made more sense for the framework of my graduation studio.
The main part of my graduation project consists of research, which is in the end translated into strict design requirements and a final design. It was new for me to go deeper into the well-being of elderly and take their well-being into account while designing for an energy neutral use of the façade. The final design is mainly based on literature, feedback from interviews, simulations from Dialux and reference material from ALCOA. My first planning shows that I wanted to finish the final design in nine weeks and after that prototype the design and test it. Unfortunately the process to define the strict final design requirements took much more time than planned. In the end 10 concept designs were made, from which one design was chosen to develop.

I noticed that defining the final design requirements was much more important than quickly defining the design requirements and starting on designing the final product. By formulating the design requirement much stricter, the design possibilities became much smaller and made more sense.

My planning and the research methods were valuable guidelines during the research process. Although I couldn’t live up to my initial planning, it functioned as a handhold during my process. The research method consisted mainly of literature, but I also learned a lot from talking to the target group. Also interviews with professionals provided me new insights.

My graduation research allowed me to focus on topics I had never done research in before. It didn’t only taught me a lot about the life and deteriorations of elderly, but also on how to deal with designing for interactions, a graduation direction from the faculty of Industrial Engineering. The different knowledge fields of my tutors and my mentor from ALCOA helped me to think and design from different angles.

When looking back at the entire process, I learned that talking to my tutors regularly contributes to a faster process. Especially when feeling stuck, they can help you to change your mind settings. I am sure a second big research project like this will have a faster progress because of all I learned from this project.

The original plan was to graduate before summer. Due to personal reasons and the feeling that I wasn’t done yet, my tutors and I decided to postpone the graduation date. My student advisor from the TU Delft advised me to take a break and go on holidays during the summer and get back with a fresh mind. So I did and now, doing the P4 presentation for the second time, I feel much more satisfied.