introduction to reflection
For my graduation project I choose to do an inquiry on sustainability assessment for outdoor sport events. I choose outdoor sport events in particular, since I am responsible for the sustainability of the World Rowing Championships of 2014.

The knowledge I gathered from my inquiry on sustainability assessment was therefore applied as a theoretical framework on the specific testcase of the 2014 World Rowing Championship. As an addition a specific reflection on the practical application of my proposed framework is therefore added to my research thesis.

My graduation design consists of a new Olympic Training Center for the Bosbaan, in the context of a newly imposed configuration of the Amsterdam forest, based on conclusions derived from my thesis. The central question for my research:

“What effective framework can balance the net sustainability impact of outdoor sport events, indicate the potentialities and improve the urban metabolism with the help of the built environment?”

methodology
The predominantly applied tools for my research were (i) interviews, (ii) review of articles, (iii) literature, (iv) datasets, (v) the use of available case-studies and (iv) generative modeling.

The process for my inquiry consisted of six phases, in chronological order: problem definition, research & analysis, concept model, validation, testcase and in the last phase the application of the framework.

At the start of my research phase I processed available information to gain a more elaborate view of what sustainability in its most fundamental form means for me and what it means for outdoor sport events.

In retrospect, my methodology and tools were chosen well. I however did not cope with the abundance of available information, which became a time-consuming activity to process. I therefore did not manage to comply with most of my deadlines. The other major disturbance in the process was my responsibility towards the World Rowing Championship event organization, asking me different, more practical deliverables and thereby contributing to exceeding my time-constraints.

I recognize that with a more elaborate approach, based on more concise research (sub)questions a better approach could have been proposed. The problem however is that my fuzzy-start phase provided a more comprehensive understanding and thereby helped me in defining my research in a more concise way.

Together with my research/BT mentor I therefore stated that my research consists of all knowledge acquired before September 12th 2013. This helped in the constraints of my research.

My graduation design, in contrast to my research, consisted of a more concise research phase. Several case-studies in contemporary design for stadia, urban parks and rowing venues were conducted and provided a thorough understanding of the way they work and helped in providing the principles for the proposed design. These studies resulted in the newly proposed configuration of “het Amsterdamse Bos”.

The design phase for the Olympic Training Center - the building for my graduation design - was a rather rough process. The predominantly rational approach in both my previous design studios and throughout my research phase, prohibited the inclusion of emotion in the process.

As my design mentor stated: “sustainability for me, is affection to the object”. Meaning that an emotional connection to the object provides a longterm relationship in which the object is nurtured to last. For my ‘modus operandi’ this meant that I was going to have to take a clear position, based on my personal frame of reference. This helped.
As mentioned in my “Graduation Plan”, my graduation results in three main deliverables: (i) a sustainability assessment framework, (ii) a newly imposed urban plan for the area and (iii) a new design for the Olympic Training Center.

Reflecting on the results of my graduation project, I can admit that I am satisfied. I gained a fundamental understanding in what sustainability means for outdoor sport events and what this entails for their physical context; the urban park.

One of the most important ‘lessons learned’ from the results of my research thesis is that the hard thing with ‘sustainability assessment’ is the fact that is not an exact science (yet). Sustainability is not a single metrics you can use. Everyone literally does ‘something’ that they think is best. Therefore sustainability assessment results in a biased/coloured view of a real-world situation, reflecting the value system of a company, organization or person.

Another interesting result is the dismissal the general critique towards sustainability in events. They are generally conceived as environmentally unfriendly, because by not organizing an event, there is no impact. These temporary dense urban interventions can however result in a lower impact (when well connected to the urban fabric), because events are organized in urban parks that have an efficient urban metabolism.

I do however regret that due to the implications of my extended deadlines and the extra workload for the World Rowing Championships, I was not able to devote all the available hours to my design. In retrospect I therefore conclude that with more time invested, the proposed design of the Olympic Training Center could be better.

In conclusion I am satisfied with the imposed implications by my research, for my design. My graduation project in a way reflects the mission statement of Explore lab, as it resulted in a strongly research-driven design project.

In the larger social and scientific framework my graduation provides interesting information on sustainability for outdoor sport event organizations, the practical application of my research for the World Rowing Championships illustrates that relevance.

The main learnings derived from this project is that in hindsight a more concise and detailed plan would have helped in providing a more pre-emptive approach in which I could preclude time-constrained conflicts in my process. More detailed deliverables and expectations provide important elements for a more realistic planning.