In this reflection not only the research project and its methods are reflected upon, but also the learning plan, which was presented during the P2 and was designed to structure the search process and provide a time table for individual goals.

**Learning plan**

During the P2 report a study plan was presented which outlined the planning for the graduation project. It elaborated on both the contents of the report as well as the planning. The interview questions and methodical methods which were designed during the P2 phase paved the way for data gathering in analysis, with which most of the P3 phase would be occupied with. Alongside this process a study object would be selected, which would be used as a case for the development of a transformation strategy, which would be designed in the P4 phase.

However, during the P3 the preliminary data showed that a transformation strategy on a retailer’s real estate portfolio would not be an option, as a business case for altering a store’s size or location was almost never feasible. The goals for the P4 were therefore adjusted and strategy types were produced which could serve as guidelines for future retailers. These were then used to analyze current strategy, bringing opportunities or weaknesses to light.

Although the learning plan had a realistic time table, its individual components should have been tested on their viability. A more detailed description of what a transformation strategy would entail, during the P2 phase, would have allowed for testing the feasibility of the process and would have identified the transformation strategy as non-feasible. Different goals could have been set, which would have allowed for a better research design and possible a better outcome.

**Research methods**

This research project was conducted using two different research methods. First a quantitative analysis was conducted using data from Locatus, on consumer electronics stores from 2006 to 2012, which allowed for the identification of current trends in retail real estate. Secondly, qualitative research was performed by interviewing experts and retailers on the future of the needs of consumers and the functions by which the retailer would address these needs. These two research parts made up the main body of this project and were preceded by a theoretical analysis of the market and concluded by answering the research questions and providing recommendations for consumer electronics retailers.

The quantitative part of the research allowed for a proper analysis of the branch. Without it quantification of physical stores would not have been possible. The branch which was defined at the initial stages of the research; consumer electronics, excluded the telecom and computer sub-branches. This allowed for more reliable data in terms of real estate, as the telecom market is very volatile and the consumer computer market is for a large part indistinguishable from the professional computer market. However, publications about the branch which provide for example annual revenue numbers cover the entire branch of consumer electronics, including telecom and computers. It was therefore not possible to link financial figures to the real estate trends seen in this literature. Choosing the entire consumer electronics branch would therefore have allowed a deeper financial analysis of the results, which would have been an interesting addition to the research.

The qualitative data was built on the answers to the interview questions which were related to the research questions by assigning variables to each interview question. Each interview contained six
questions and allowed for a very open and personal answer, which caused answers to vary greatly. This produced very interesting and often surprising information and data, yet these were difficult to structure and often did not match answers from other interviewees. It would have been possible to ask questions which could be answered with a quantitative answer. This would have allowed a more efficient analysis of the answers and conclusions in the form of: “x% of retailers see the stores grow with xm² in next 5 years”. Also, those data could more easily be used in future research.

An additional bottleneck in the quantitative research method was the response rates of retailers. As only 13 large consumer electronics retailers operate in the Netherlands, a low response rate would have made getting a representative sample of retailers impossible. There was therefore a serious risk of getting too low of a response rate, rendering the data insufficient. However, the 8 out of 13 retailers which were interviewed provided a satisfactory response rate of over 60%.