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The Experiences City: Possible Retail Directions in Venlo

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Master thesis Human Geography

Nijmegen school of management

Radboud University Nijmegen

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Preface

In this preface I would like to start with a rather bold statement: 'The future of shopping areas is becoming one of the most interesting subjects in the urban studies field'. While conducting interviews and talking to people on my subject it became clear that lots of people feel connected with shopping areas. It seems that the future of these areas whether being an inner city or sub-centre is something that is of concern. At the moment shopping areas are changing at a fast pace. Problems such as vacancy, bankruptcies, etc are causing in addition to the changing consumer behaviour a change in the shopping landscape. In this research a possible way of dealing with future change is given.

As a master student Economic Geography at the Radboud University Nijmegen the master thesis is the most important part of your study. Looking at the above the choice for doing research on this topic was for me obvious. In essence it is one of the few subjects at the moment that asks for direct answers and is grounded in the daily practice of people. This particular thesis has been written in combination of a research internship at the municipality of Venlo. Venlo is a municipality with approximately 100.000 inhabitants. An opportunity to write this research was given due to the actualisation of the retail vision in Venlo. The specific question of the municipality was: '*How do we need to adapt to the changing shopping behaviour?*'. This question is in general a question lots of municipalities are dealing with. Especially the cutbacks lots of municipalities are forced to do, leave questions whether a municipality should act.

In doing this research lots of interviews were conducted with various actors in the shopping field. Trying to analyse these interviews and come up with a story that is engaging for all respondents proved to be a challenge. More than the adaptation to a new shopping paradigm, the political games played in the shopping field were the most important.

I would like to thank my Radboud University supervisor Arnoud Lagendijk for his help in creating this thesis. Next to that I want to thank Didier Barrois for supervising me in my work for the municipality. I would also like to thank Hanneke Laarakker and Freek Kusters for helping me in finding my way in the Venlo shopping environment. Special thanks go out for the employees at Venlo Partners for bringing me into touch with the shopkeepers in the municipality. Lastly I would like to thank all the respondents for taking the time to tell me about the shopping landscape.

Kristiaan Laumen

Venlo, 04-12-2014

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1. Introduction

The Dutch shopping landscape will never be the same! According to the *Dutch Council of Shopping Centres* (Nederlandse Raad Winkelcentra (NRW)) shopping areas are not attractive anymore for consumers. The NRW (2014) argues that the quality of the retail structure in the Netherlands is more than ever for discussion. People shop less frequent than ever especially since the rise of e-commerce (NRW, 2014). The retail sector will be broke before the year 2025, Lalieu (2014) of Retail Development Retail Boosting (RDRB) argues jokingly. On the other hand Ron Johnson of Apple argues that retail is not broke but stores are. Especially the traditional department store, that only wants to sell goods instead of value (Johnson, 2011). The big question is: '*what will be the future of retail?'*

This first chapter of this master thesis on adaptation to new forms of shopping will give an introduction to the topic and research of the thesis. First the background of the research is presented. Deriving from this background a research goal is constructed. This research goal is closely linked with the problems presented in the background of the research. The third step is the construction of the research question and sub questions. After that, the societal and scientific relevance of this research is discussed. This societal and scientific relevance is an important part of the master thesis, since it places this thesis in the scientific and societal debate.

1.1. Background of the research

The images of the future as presented above pose an image of maybe less and different retail development in cities. Dutch retail is confronted with more and more problems. Sales are stagnating or even running down. On the other hand Molenaar (2013) an associate professor of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam and a (e-) marketing expert, concludes that internet sales are actually increasing by 10 percent or more each year.

The average vacancy rate for all shopping locations at this time is 6.9 percent, in the beginning of this century this vacancy rate was 5,7 percent (Locatus, 2014). This shows that the physical store as we know it has to battle in order to survive.

The attractiveness of the inner city has become a major policy goal of many Dutch cities. Cities have to compete in order to attract mobile shoppers and thus spending power (Spierings, 2013). This competition fits in the shift of the city. In this day and age we live in the postmodern, cultural-experience economically driven city. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Lorentzen and Jeannerat (2013) we see, as a consequence, that consumer experiences are becoming an integral part of the value of goods and services. Now link this with the traditional Dutch retail planning practice. The Dutch shopping landscape consists of a hierarchy of shopping centres, new shopping centres are allowed, but only if they do not intervene with this hierarchy (Spierings, 2006a). The main goal of Dutch retail planning in the past was to maintain and strengthen the economic functioning of the shopping centre hierarchy, including city centres (VROM, 1977, 1988 in Spierings, 2006a). This strictness has become more and less strict in time (Spierings, 2006a).

Following the Second World War, a functional hierarchy of shops was designed and constructed in the Netherlands (Borchert, 1995 in Spierings, 2006a). This hierarchical system was based on the principles of the 'central place theory' by Christaller (Evers, et al, 2011). The American Brian Berry (1967) has used this 'central place theory' of Christaller to explain the dispersion of shopping areas. According to him every shop in a shopping area has to have a minimum amount of customers to stay profitable, the so called threshold. Another important point is the scope; this is the distance consumers are willing to travel for a shop. Dutch Retail

planning characterises itself as promoting a fine grained structure. As a consequence there are relatively many shops and shopping centres located within short travel distance of consumers (Van der Krabben, 2009). A negative side of this fine grained structure is that shops and shopping areas are smaller compared to a course grained structure (Evers et al, 2011). An important question is if this fine grained structure

Figure 1: Fine grained and course grained structure
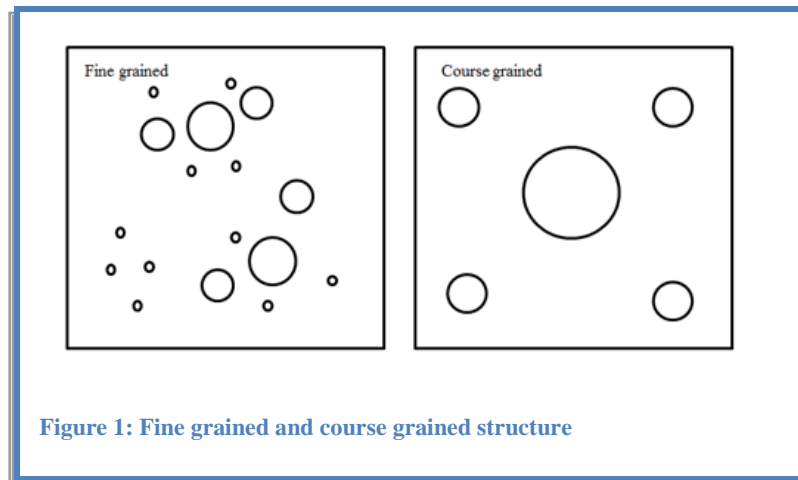
is still feasible today. The above could be read in a negative way. On the other hand this hierarchical structure has arguably caused that inner cities in the Netherlands stayed strong. In general, Dutch retail policy has been subject to discussion for a long time. In the United Kingdom for instance the retail policy is due to the political system subject to waves of liberalisation. This has caused the development (sometimes by force) of shopping malls. In reaction to that era the government in the nineties decided to create Planning Policy Guidelines (PPG) to establish a vital city core (Evers et al, 2011). So, it is clear that a very strict policy will harm quick developments, on the other hand a liberal policy has its negatives as well.

In the 1990s the dot-com boom led to a variety of new opportunities for retailers to sell products online. A well-known example is the founding of Amazon.com in 1995 (KPMG, 2009). This e-commerce allows customers to shop via the internet in the comforts of their homes (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). E-commerce is a relatively new phenomenon that potentially has a direct effect on shops in general. E-commerce can be defined as follows: "the trade of physical goods over open (...) networks" (Savrul and Kılıç, 2011, p. 251). One has to mention that the effects of e-commerce are not very clear yet (Weltevreden, 2008). E-commerce do lets consumers shop at any time, and at every location that has internet access (Bakos, 2001). So, e-commerce gives retailers various opportunities to sell their products. On the other hand there are some downsides, such as potential disruptive effects on retailers, online shopping. 'Online shopping or e-shopping is searching and/or purchasing consumer goods and services via the internet' (Mokhtarian, 2004). In the Netherlands, the substitution of real life shopping with internet shopping has potentially caused some retailers to close some of their shops or even caused them to go bankrupt (Weltevreden, 2008). I added the word potentially, since we cannot rule out the effects of the recent crisis in the closing of shops. Figure 2 gives an idea of the growth of e-commerce compared to the 'regular' offline spending. It is clear that although e-commerce is growing and offline spending seems to stagnate. The amount of e-commerce spending is only 6% of the total spending.
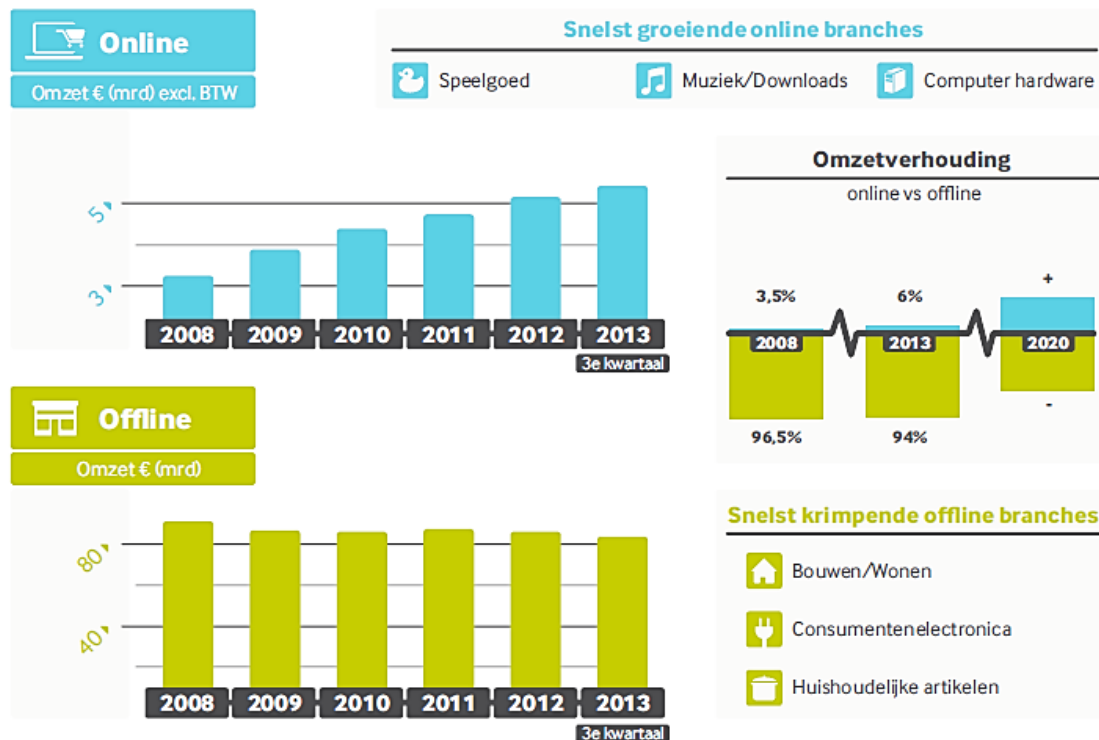
Figure 2: E-commerce compared to offline spending in the Netherlands. Source: Platform31, 2014

On the other hand the internet opens new windows of opportunity for retailers and consumers (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). Because of this, it can be regarded as a disruptive process innovation that can make existing business models obsolete (Wrigley et al., 2002; Burt and Sparks, 2003). One thing to note is the fact that only 20 % of the online shopping entrepreneurs have had an average income in the year 2012 (Thuiswinkel.org, 2014). So, only 1 in 5 online retailers can make a living with selling online. Making it a tricky business as well. The question whether web shops are used as a primarily source of income is justified. Some people have a web shop as a hobby.

1.2. Setting of the research

This thesis is written in accompany of a research internship at the municipality of Venlo. The reason for the internship is the actualisation of the retail note. Therefore the municipality of Venlo is interested in possible scenarios for implementing new forms of shopping. The shopping structure of Venlo is characterised as very fine grained (as to be seen in chapter 3). Venlo has a strong inner city next to the sub centres Blerick and Tegelen. Next to that the municipality of Venlo may call itself the best inner city of the Netherlands. Of course one could argue about the 'added value' of such a title. Now a day almost every city is the best in something. The way this title is won is also for discussion since one of the members of the jury (BRO) actually made the retail policy. On the other hand one should aim at using the title to the fullest. According to the jury (Platform Binnenstadsmanagement, expert retail property, retail and property professors, NRW, Locatus, Redevco, SCN, and BRO) Venlo deserved this title since it had invested in the inner city despite the recent crisis. Next to that the cooperation between retailers, property-owners, and municipality is positively assessed (www.venlo.nl). The municipality of Venlo is very much involved in determining the future of its retail structure. Making it a very interesting place to research this topic.

1.3. Research methodology

In this first chapter I discussed various topics on the retail and e-commerce debate, next to that I discussed the Dutch retail planning. It has become clear that the recent shift consumers made to e-commerce has a profound impact on the retail structure in the Netherlands. It is clear that the Dutch retail structure needs to change and adapt accordingly to the new wishes of the consumer. Some shopping locations have become outdated. E-commerce has also given shopkeepers new opportunities and new business models. We have also seen that the Dutch retail structure characterizes itself through a very fine grained retail structure. It is questionable if secondary shopping centres are still feasible in this new day and age. This gives rise to an interesting question: what strategy has to be implied in various retail locations? Does an inner city such as in Venlo need the same treatment as the secondary shopping centres in that municipality? Due to the setting and subject of the research a grounded theory setting is justified. It could be possible to study this via the use of models coming out of theoretical debate. Since the municipality of Venlo is interested in possible directions of change, the local setting becomes very important. Next to that possible retail developments are part of a hefty and complex debate. It would be interesting to create a theory based on the local practice. Grounded theory provides me, the researcher, with more freedom than other hypothesis based research methods would. A benefit of grounded theory is the method's capacity to interpret these complex phenomena (Charmaz, 2003). On the other hand Grounded Theory poses several pitfalls to the researcher (Jones and Alony, 2011). Among these is that after conducting data collection and analysis, the researcher may not actually uncover substantial or significant theory (also known as a basic social process (Glaser, 1978)).

1.4. Societal Relevance

In the first paragraph of this research it became clear that e-commerce is a potentially disruptive process for the continuity of the physical store. Because e-commerce allows customers to shop via the internet in the comforts of their homes, the urge to go to the city for shopping has diminished (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). But, what makes this topic societal relevant to study. Why is the problem described above so pressing? And, what would be the practical problem if this research would not be done at all? First of all shopping is seen as perhaps the most important function of an urban area (Chung, 2001). A busy shopping street is universally seen as a sign of a vital, successful, and healthy city. Lots of people feel connected with a shopping area. This thesis is therefore in this sense societal relevant. If one would not research ways to adapt one could face empty streets (Vacancy is already a pressing problem as seen in the previous paragraph). Take a look for instance at the shop 'Free Record Shop' due to a bad decision and focussing on a very general audience that supposedly only wants to buy a gift for their aunt. They now have no right to exist anymore. On the other hand music shops are doing somehow better at the moment (Blanken, 06/03/2014). This shows that it is vitally important for retailers to know their market and adapt to it accordingly.

Because of the local elections held on the 19th of March this year the state of the inner cities has become (temporary) even more important. Some political parties opened up so called 'political pop-up stores' to do their campaigning from. This way they ask attention to this 'recent' problem (Schuyffel, 04/03/2014). Shopping areas are changing in a very fast pace, due to changing's in our own shopping behaviour. Vacancy is increasing in a shockingly high rate. It is clear that the problem of vacancy in retail property is a prominent societal problem. Since, otherwise politicians would not bother that much. Next to that vacancy causes decaying buildings, less liveability, etc. The problem of vacancy itself and the reasons for the existence of the problem will be discussed in the course of this thesis.

In another way municipalities need to change their structure as well. A very strong shopping hierarchy may not be the best strategy for the future. Shops are often important in establishing the identity of a city. When shops disappear the 'soul' of a city also disappears, just take a look at some city centres in the United States. Although in the United States the shops disappeared due to the lack of a concrete shopping hierarchy. In the Netherlands already in the seventies the lack of planning discipline in the United States was criticised. One of the biggest fears was and is the possibility of so called 'urban food desserts'. These are areas that have shockingly low levels of provision (Evers et al, 2011). One can thus argue that shops are an important part in the 'liveability' of a city. This asks for a coherent strategy between shops, property owners and the municipality. According to Molenaar (2013) the overall strategy should be: a coherent whole that is very determinative for the attractiveness of the city, the shopping area and eventually the residential areas. In my opinion this is a correct way to tackle the problem. One should not focus on one part at a time, but one should try to tackle the problem via various strategies. Also when keeping in mind that an attractive inner city attracts more consumers, this attraction of more consumers eventually will lead to a better climate for retailers as well (Spierings, 2006b). The directions developed in this research will give some insights into adaptation to e-commerce by a municipality. On the other hand the translation of these new insights into the practical field will change them. Since, the scientific and the societal system are two systems with their respective modes of communication (Splitter & Seidl, 2011).

1.5. Scientific Relevance

This research on the adaptation possibilities of retailers in cities to e-commerce has two main contributions to the scientific field. The first main contribution is the formulation and development of different directions on how cities can adapt themselves to new forms of shopping. The second contribution is the testing of these directions. Testing of these directions will generate insights into the value of these directions. Next to that, this research will try to frame the directions into bigger theoretical frameworks such as the 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and the postmodern city. These bigger frameworks provide some more theoretical depth, since they help me frame the directions in bigger societal changes.

There have been various directions on how retailers and municipalities can adapt to new forms of shopping. Keeping in mind that the directions below are in most part complementary to each other, they are thus not mutually exclusive. This therefore should not be read as 'or-or' but 'and-or'. Some authors argue for a more Omni-Channel led shopping environment (Molenaar, 2013; Rigby, 2011). This Omni-Channel, which is an integrated sales experience that combines the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping, will give according to them the best solution to the problem. Other authors argue that the inner city's physical environment has to change. Spierings (2013) argues that missing links in inner cities shopping routes leads to a bad shopping experience. Other strategies are to look at inner city development from below. In the United Kingdom cities where challenged to come up with ideas to make their inner city more liveable. A grand of 100.000 pounds for every good idea was promised. It was especially important to look from below. And to see what the characteristics of the city are and to exploit them more profoundly (Molenaar, 2013). Another author Lalieu (2014) argues the same as Molenaar (2013) and Rigby (2011) that the consumer is the key to good retail practice. Retailers need to work to gather to generate a consumer oriented service.

It is clear that from a scientific point of view it would be helpful if these directions are bundled in various directions on how to change. These directions can give some clarity on the

ideas generated so far. Next to that these directions can also generate a new departure point for further scientific debate on this subject. According to Weltevreden and Boschma (2009) there is still little knowledge on what determines the adoption of retailers to e-commerce.

The second main contribution to the scientific field is the insights raised via testing the ideas into adaptation. Is an Omni-Channel retail structure the way to go? Testing them will give information whether these directions make up their expectations in practice. This will lead to more knowledge about the subject than generating ideas only.

1.6. Research goal and research model

In this chapter the research goal and the research model will be presented. The research goal is the most important part in this chapter since it tells what the scope of the research will be. The research model will show what steps need to be taken in order to reach that goal.

1.6.1. The research objective

The goal of this research is twofold since there is an academic and practical side to this research. The academic side of this research tries to come up with various directions on how cities can adapt to the internet use. These directions are developed from interviewing various actors, in a grounded theory research design (see the outline of the theoretical approach). The practical side of this research is the possible implementation of these directions in the municipality of Venlo in the Netherlands. The research objective is therefore two-sided:

The objective of this research is to develop different directions on how cities can adapt themselves to new forms of shopping, and testing these directions in the municipality of Venlo.

This objective is accomplished by creating directions on adapting to this new form of shopping via grounded theory research, and researching the possibility of implementing them in the municipality of Venlo.

This research objective will be a useful objective to steer me in researching the problems raised in the first paragraph. Since it lets me research different directions on how cities can adapt to new forms of shopping. Next to that it also lets me research the power of these directions in a practical sense, by testing them in Venlo. This research objective asks for a development of various directions and after that is done testing the possibilities of these directions. The research internship has lasted five months.

1.6.2. Research model

In a research model the objective looks like this:
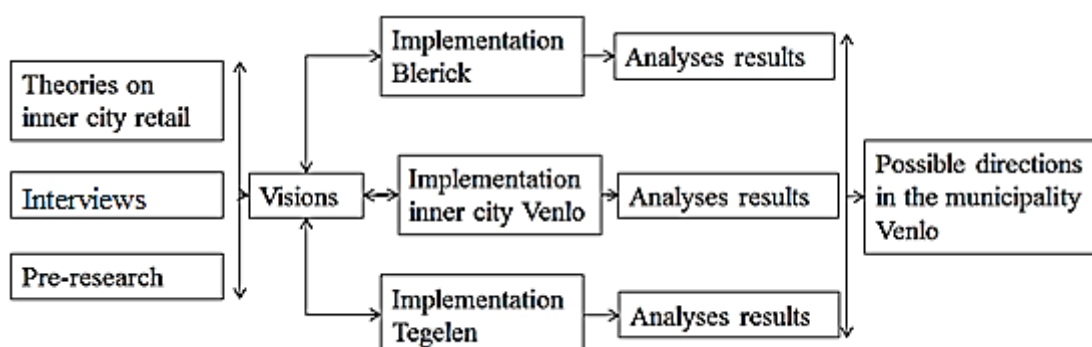
Figure 3: Research model

An analysis of theories of inner city retail, best practices, and pre-research will lead to directions on the adaption to new forms of shopping. These directions will be implemented in the inner city of Venlo, and its sub centres Blerick, and Tegelen. This implementation of the directions will lead to insights into the possibilities of these directions in the municipality of Venlo.

1.7. Research question and sub questions

The research objective of this research asks for insights into the possibilities of different directions in the municipality of Venlo. This has consequences for some of the questions I pose in this research. To quote Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 38) '*the research question in a grounded theory study is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied*'. It should be focused on *action* and *process*. On the other hand not all elements in this study will be based on grounded theory. So, the central question of this research can be formulated as follows:

What are possible directions on adaptation to new forms of shopping in the municipality of Venlo due to changes in shopping behaviour and e-commerce?

In order to answer this question various sub-questions are needed. These sub-questions follow the research model presented above.

1. What are recent changes due to e-commerce and what are the driving forces behind these changes?
2. How does a city adapt to new forms of shopping?
3. In what way can these directions be implemented or found in the inner city of Venlo, and its sub centres Blerick and Tegelen?
4. What new ideas are found in analysing these three parts of the city and do the directions need to be adapted accordinly?
5. What directions are usefull in the municipality of Venlo and should the retail structure in Venlo be changed?

These sub-questions answered in succession will lead to answering the central question.

1.8. Reading guide

This research is build up in eight chapters that clearly build on each other. This chapter has grounded the fundamentals of this research. It became clear what the problem is this research tries to solve, and what questions need to be answered in order to finish this research successfully. In the second chapter the methodological structure of the research is presented. This has been done in this order since the first part of the research is grounded theory based. This methodological choice is made due to the highly complex nature of the topic studied. As a consequence the theoretical chapters 3 and 4 are treated in a different way. Chapter 3 is about the theoretical shift towards a postmodern city structure. As seen in this chapter the shift towards post modernity puts pressure on the hierarchical shopping structure. In the fourth chapter different technological and cultural changes in the shopping landscape are discussed. It is emphasised that the experience economy could be the most important activity to compete against web shops. The fifth chapter discusses the first outcomes of the research. The way the data is analysed is presented in this chapter as well. Chapter 6 introduces the case Venlo in which the first outcomes are validated. After reading this chapter the environment in which the first outcomes where tested is made clear. The seventh chapter describes the outcomes of the validation round. At the end of this chapter a table is presented in which choices and consequences for those choices are displayed. The last chapter focuses on

answering the main question. In the same chapter a discussion and reflection on the research is given as well.

2. Methodological approach

The previous chapter has set the foundation of this research. In this second, I would like to explain the methodological approach of this research. Since, this research uses Grounded Theory as method it is essential to start with the methodological chapter. However, according to May (1986), writing a methodological chapter early in a grounded theory research poses difficulties. Mostly because of the methods used in grounded theory a pre-established scheme is not possible. Therefore I have chosen to write two paragraphs in this chapter. One paragraph that deals with the question why I have chosen my research strategies and what that research strategy entails. Secondly a final paragraph where I will describe in detail the steps I have taken to gather data and analysing this data.

2.1. Research approach

A well-founded research approach is based on the research objective and research questions. This objective and questions are leading in the choice for research strategy and research design. I would like to take this opportunity to analyse the goal and thus what is needed to achieve this goal. The research goal is as posed in the first chapter:

The objective of this research is to develop different directions on how cities can adapt themselves to new forms of shopping, and testing these directions in the municipality of Venlo.

This objective is accomplished by creating directions on adapting to this new form of shopping via grounded theory research, and researching the possibility of implementing them in the municipality of Venlo.

As seen in the research objective, the objective is accomplished by giving insights into various directions on adapting to new forms of shopping and researching the possibilities of implementing them in Venlo. It is clear that this objective is twofold, on the one hand there is a contribution to the development of different directions on how cities can adapt themselves and on the other hand there is a validation and testing of these directions. In what is left in this chapter I will try to elaborate the steps taken to come to a coherent whole. According to Saunders et al (2011) a research can be done via an inductive, deductive or mixed method. An inductive method can easily be described as the making of a theory or model. The deductive approach can be described as the testing of a theory or model. The mixed method is of course a mix of both methods. Since I will develop various directions on adaptation in a grounded theory manner I essentially firstly use an inductive research strategy. This will serve the objective of the research better, than the other way around. Of course it was possible to come up with directions that already existed. These directions would then arguably be hypotheses, such as seen above a hypothesis could be: if retailers use an Omni-Channel approach they would get more customers. These hypotheses could then be tested. An inductive approach for the objective is better suited, since it will lead to broader more visionary ideas. Whereas the deductive method would lead to the testing of one or more hypotheses. The deductive approach is used in the second stage of the research. In the second step the directions are validated and tested. These two steps both deserve their own attention.

2.2. Research strategy

According to Verschuren en Doorewaard (2007) a research strategy is the whole of coherent decisions about the way the research is conducted. The main strategy of a research can be divided into seven different strategies. A detailed description of the various research strategies is not included in this thesis. These steps will lead to a description of the design of the research. A first general remark I would like to make is that since this research has a twofold

way of research, generally speaking I would use a mixed method. The paragraph on data collection will further elaborate on the specific choices, for data sources.

2.2.1. Part one: development of directions Grounded theory research

The first step in this research is doing pre-research on the subject. To steer this process I have formulated two sub-questions. The first sub-question: 'What recent changes can there be identified in light of internet based shopping and what are the driving forces behind these changes?' this allows me to research the underlying trends that either strengthen or facilitate the new forms of shopping. The second part of the question goes deeper into the driving forces behind these changes. One could think in terms of globalisation, experience economy, individualisation, and the city as a consumption place. This is what May (1986) tries to explain as finding gaps in the literature. In chapter 1 I have explained the underlying considerations in writing the chapter. It is of no use to include them again in this chapter. The objective of this part of the research can be described as explorative research. This type of research can be described as 'finding out what happens to generate new points of view in order to asses a particular phenomenon' (Saunders et al, 2011). Other goals could be descriptive research, explanatory, or projective research. These types of goals would be better suited in a deductive research. The descriptive research is the giving of a detailed picture of a particular situation. This research would be better fitted into a demographic research of for instance the amount and type of shops in Venlo. Explanatory research is research that makes connections between various variables. This type of research depends on hypotheses, as in a deductive research. The projective research is research about problems in the future. This research is also suited for this goal since this goal looks at the future situation of shops. The explorative research is the type of research goal used in this part of the research.

As mentioned in the previous section the first part of this research is grounded theory research. The development of directions on how cities can adapt themselves to new forms of shopping calls for a grounded theory approach and thus an inductive method. Grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). According to Creswell (2007) grounded theory is used in cases where a theory is not available to explain a process, or where the research subject is very complex. Although the literature provides me with some tools to construct directions. I would like to state that I am mostly interested in creating directions from below, using as many knowledge of important players in the shopping landscape. Therefore grounded theory is a very well suited research strategy.

Grounded theory:

Grounded theory was developed in sociology in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. These researchers felt that theories used in research were often inappropriate and ill-suited for participants under study. Although both conducted various studies using this method, both authors ultimately disagreed on the meaning and procedures of grounded theory. Glaser has criticized Strauss's approach to grounded theory as too prescribed and structured (Glaser, 1992). So, there has been some debate on what direction grounded theory should head. Charmaz (2006) has argued for a constructivist grounded theory. This way emphasis does not lie on core categories as in Strauss and Corbin (1990) but on diverse local words, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds. So, more emphasis is placed on beliefs and values. The table below from Jones (2011) summarizes both schools of grounded theory:

Glaserian	Straussian
Beginning with general wonderment (an empty mind)	Having a general idea of where to begin
Emerging theory, with neutral questions	Forcing the theory, with structured questions
Development of a conceptual theory	Conceptual description (description of situations)
Theoretical sensitivity (the ability to perceive variables and relationships) comes from immersion in the data	Theoretical sensitivity comes from methods and Tools
The theory is grounded in the data	The theory is interpreted by an observer
The credibility of the theory, or verification, is derived from its grounding in the data	The credibility of the theory comes from the rigour of the method
A basic social process should be identified	Basic social processes need not be identified
The researcher is passive, exhibiting disciplined restraint	The researcher is active
Data reveals the theory	Data is structured to reveal the theory
Coding is less rigorous, a constant comparison of incident to incident, with neutral questions and categories and properties evolving. Take care not to 'over-conceptualise', identify key points	Coding is more rigorous and defined by technique. The nature of making comparisons varies with the coding technique. Labels are carefully crafted at the time. Codes are derived from 'micro-analysis which consists of analysis data word-by-word'
Two coding phases or types, simple (fracture the data then conceptually group it) and substantive (open or selective, to produce categories and properties)	Three types of coding, open (identifying, naming, categorising and describing phenomena), axial (the process of relating codes to each other) and selective (choosing a core category and relating other categories to that)
Regarded by some as the only 'true' GTM	Regarded by some as a form of qualitative data analysis (QDA)

Table 1: Comparison of the two schools of Grounded Theory

I have chosen to use the 'prescribed' method outlined by Strauss and Corbin in their book 'Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded theory Procedures and Techniques'. This book provides me as researcher with enough tools to conduct a grounded theory research. The choice for this type of grounded theory is thus a practical one. The use of this method has consequences for the way the research is constructed. In reading this study you probable have already stumbled upon some consequences. Already in the first chapter grounded theory forced me to formulate research questions in a different way.

Criticisms of Grounded Theory:

In general grounded theory has been criticized on the following points. The most common criticism is that it suffers from internal misalignment (Bryant, 2002). The method uses interpretive and constructionist tools although it comes from positivism or objectivism. Other points of criticism are: naïve inductionism (Bryant, 2002; Goulding, 2001), limitations on a priori knowledge, phenomenalism (Goulding, 2001), the paradox of 'theory' (Bryant, 2002), and limitations on the theoretical generalisation (Charmaz, 2006). Discussing these 'theoretical' criticisms is outside the goal of this thesis. On the other hand the author recognises the need for an in deep discussion on the pros and cons of research methods. Therefore it is more interesting to think about other ways this research could have been done. A legitimate other method could have been testing (as proposed in the beginning in this chapter) a theory or set of hypotheses. The downside of this approach would have been in line with the 'Hawthorne effect' (Landsberger, 1958). People could actually try to please the

research in answering in line with the hypotheses. Using Grounded Theory ensures in theory that the respondent is in charge of the 'agenda' of the interview.

2.2.2. Part two: Grounding the directions in Venlo

The second part of the research, is the research of the possibilities of the directions in Venlo. This research has a deductive character, since the directions made in the previous step are now tested in this step. A case study is an interesting method for this research since it allows me as researcher to grasp the context of the case studied as well. It allows me to answer the questions 'what?' and 'how?'. In a case study research it is vitally important to use various forms of evidence, this is what we call triangulation. This increases the internal validity of the research since it increases the power of the claims made on basis of the data gathered (Verschuren en Doorewaard, 2007). The external validity of the research is relatively high, since I have used data from various best practices in order to make the directions. To make sure that it is clear what the methods are per sub-question it is important to deal with this. Therefore the next paragraph will further elaborate the data collection strategy per sub-question. In this way it becomes clear what the data collection strategy is overall.

2.3. Data collection

In this paragraph the different sub-questions and their respective data collection methods are discussed. The first sub-question was: *What recent changes can there be identified in light of internet based shopping and what are the driving forces behind these changes?* In order to research this question in depth literature study is conducted on various sources. An extreme detailed description of the snowball method is necessary. The question remains whether this could have been done differently. The drawback of the snowball method is that you could be vulnerable for tunnel vision (only looking at one subject). In essence this first research question is an introduction (or pre-research) into the underlying trends that all have their impact on the Dutch retail structure. The outcomes of this first sub-question are already discussed in chapter 2. One could ask the question why I insert a part on literature in a grounded theory research. In essence grounded theory research is about discovering relevant categories and the relationships among them. Instead of testing already theorised relations among variables. You do not want to be constrained by pre-established relations. So, how should we use this chapter? Strauss and Corbin (1990) provide some 'guidelines' for the use of literature. The technical literature can be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity. Reading literature can help us in identifying important concepts in our own data. Key word here is the theoretical sensitivity. This sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher. '*It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 41).* Another way of dealing with the literature is using it as secondary source of data. Quotations in scientific literature can be used for analysis.

The literature can be used to stimulate questions. The reason being that due to the very broad field of 'shopping' and related variables no pre-research would decrease the quality of the questions asked in the interviews. Starting with only one broad question would not generate interesting new ideas. Simply asking the question: 'How should a city change in light of new shopping?' would maybe only provide me with ideas on new forms of parking. This literature study is also used to direct the theoretic sampling, and thus guide me in where to go first on my journey. It is too early to already discuss the outcomes of this direction in theoretic sampling, this is done in the conclusion of this chapter. The literature study will also be used in supplementary validation. When I have finished the developing of my theory I will use references to the literature to back up my line of argumentation.

The second sub-question in this research was: *Can these recent changes be identified in the municipality of Venlo?* This research question is conducted by using the most important documents on the structure of Venlo, the *Ruimtelijke Structuurvisie Venlo,* the *Visie Stedelijk Centrum 2022* (Vision on the Urban Centre 2022) and the *Detailhandelsnota 2006* (Retail brief 2006). The latter is at this time of writing as already mentioned under construction. The new Retail brief will be due in November of this year. Other sources used in this chapter are the consumer flow researches done by Locates.

The third sub-question is: *how does a city adapt to new forms of shopping?* This sub-question is the foundation of the development of the directions. In essence this sub-question is the translation of all the rough data in various directions on adaptation on new forms of shopping. Interviews are held with retailers, municipality of Venlo, retail experts, property owners, and interest organisations. Since this is grounded theory research I would like to use a form of encoding to systemically research the data. This is especially true for the conducted interviews. The documents analysed will be further analysed via the usage of the terms mostly used in these documents. This will be shown schematically in a scheme highlighting the most used terms. I will now provide my method in bullet points making it easier to read and understand.

- In general I will use a so called 'snowball' or 'zigzag' method to conduct the interviews. This means that I will go in the field to study, back to the office to analyse, back to the field, etc. I will continue this until I think the information gathered is enough to create the directions. This went up to 29 interviews.
- The interview partners are theoretically chosen. Often deductive research methods use a stochastic method of gathering participants. Since this is grounded theory research I will use participants that are helpful in making directions. In searching for possible interview partners I have gotten some help from the municipality's inner city manager. The interview partners, interviewed after this round where asked for other interesting interview partners. Hence the 'snowball' method. The 'zigzag' method was used by trying to figure out behind my desk what people could fill out some gaps in my story. People interviewed are: retailers, property owners, retail experts, retail associations and people of the municipality.
- The interviews will be analysed using the different steps of the grounded theory research by Strauss and Corbin (2008). The interviews are firstly transcribed. This makes it easier to analyse the data.
- Secondly the interviews are coded via open coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (2008) open coding refers to the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data.
- The third step in the procedure is the axial coding, in this step you are going to look for connections between the codes. This will be done visually via AtlasTi. In axial coding the central phenomenon, explores causal conditions, the context and intervening conditions and delineates the consequences for this phenomenon.
- The fourth step is the selective coding in which I will write a 'story line' that connects all the categories. The directions now have emerged, I would like to state.
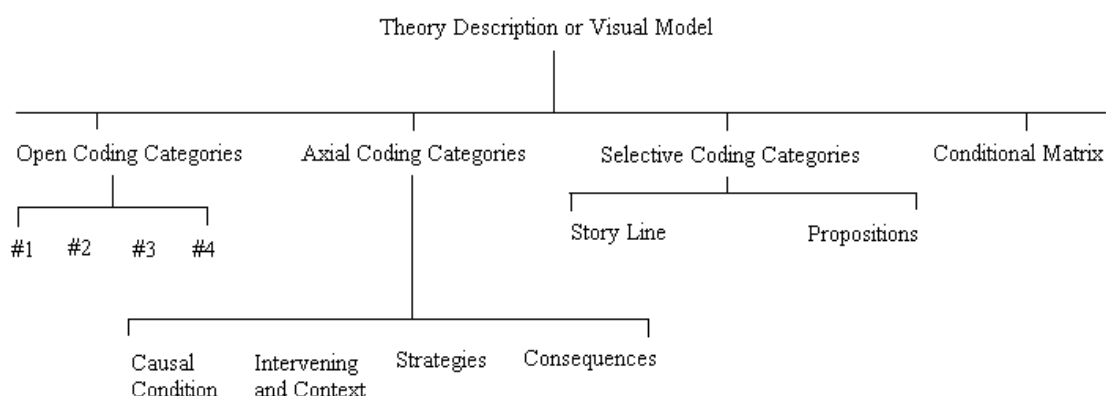
Figure 4: Template for Coding a Grounded Theory Study

The above figure shows what template to follow in coding a grounded theory study. This template is similar to the steps described above the template.

The fourth sub-question of this research is the validation of the directions. The question was*: In what way can these directions be implemented or found in the inner city of Venlo, and its sub-centres Blerick and Tegelen?* We have to take some time distinguishing the difference between validation and testing of the directions. Validation of the directions is in essence determining in what way the directions are found Venlo. The testing of the directions is determining if the directions themselves are valid and if they can be implemented in Venlo. The validating will be done via interviews and could be done via observations. In general interviews can be divided into three types:

- Structured interviews
- Semi structured interviews
- Unstructured interviews

When validating and testing the directions I interview some retailers, people of the municipality and experts on the subject in a semi structured way. The semi structured interview helps in systematically analysing the criteria made in the previous question. Next to the interviews, an observation could be done in order to analyse the possibilities of these directions in Venlo. The criteria will be put to the test by observations in the inner city of Venlo, Tegelen and Blerick. I have chosen not to do an observation. An example is observing the consumer routes in the inner city, or observing the busyness of certain parts of the city. Such an observation will not generate new ideas. Next to that being in the inner city, Blerick and Tegelen numerous times allows me to 'talk' about them in a grounded way.

The fifth research question, *What insights are raised in analysing these three parts of the city and do the directions need to be adapted according to the insights raised?,* will enable me to reflect on the outcomes of the validation of the directions. In this part of the research no specific research strategies are needed. The main reflection will be on the differences in strategies due to the characteristics of the different parts of the city. This question is in essence also a reflective question, but an important one. Because, in answering this question the strength of the directions made in first instance is tested. When the directions need to be changed a lot, the strength of the directions is relatively low

The last sub-question is in essence a different way of asking the main question. *What directions are feasible in the municipality of Venlo and should the retail structure in Venlo be changed?* After answering this question the research is concluded.

2.4.   Conclusion

In this conclusive paragraph I would like to schematically show the steps that are taken in this research. The first part in the research is the creation of the directions, the second part is the validation of these visions, and the last part is the conclusion in which the main question will be answered. The table below will give a very detailed description of the research method and data source per sub-question.

Research part	Sub question	Research method	Data source
Part one: Grounded theory research	1. What are the recent changes in light of e-commerce and what are the driving forces behind these changes?	• Secondary literature study.	• Scientific journals • Books • Policy documents
	2.How does a city adapt to new forms of shopping?	• Secondary literature study (encoding of the documents) • Interviews	• A total of 18 semi-structured interviews with retailers of Venlo, municipality of Venlo, interest organisations, property owners, and chain stores.
Part two: case study research	3.In what way can these directions be implemented or found in the inner city of Venlo, Blerick and Tegelen?	• Interviews • Observation	• 11 semi-structured interviews with retailers, policy makers . • The inner city, Blerick and Tegelen.
	4. What new ideas are found in analysing these three parts of the city and do the directions need to be adapted accordinly?	• Interpretation of the above	• All the data gathered
	5. What directions are usefull in the municipality of Venlo and should the retail structure in Venlo be changed?	• Interpretation of the above	• All the data gathered

Table 2: Research method and data per sub question.

3. Retail developments in a broader context

In this third chapter the focus will be on the broader context of the research. More precise: *what recent changes can there be identified in the light of internet based shopping and what are the driving forces behind these changes?* The first part of this chapter will focus on the changing functions of the city as we know it. Bigger terms such as globalisation, individualisation, and technological change will be discussed. This first paragraph will set the scene for further theoretical debate.

3.1. The city's changing functions

In this first paragraph I quickly want to discuss the changing functions of cities. My focus will be on cities in the developed world, since this thesis focuses on the city Venlo which is a city in the Netherlands. In exploring the city it is feasible for this thesis to do this via four different 'steps' in the history of the city. These four steps are: the rise of the pre-industrial city, the industrial city, the post-industrial capitalistic city and last the postmodern city. In this paragraph I solely want to give the reader enough background to understand the rise of the city we know today. As a bonus available data on evolution of retail structure is included as well. The single shop, I would like to argue has existed for almost all human history whether it is market places or the bakeries, shoemakers, butchers etc. The retail as we know it today (clusters of shops) arose in the nineteenth century. Before that there is little information on the retail structure. There is doubt that before 1800 a well-developed retail structure existed. This in part is explainable due to the lack of well documented data and because most cities where too small to form a well organised retail structure (Lesger, 2011).

3.1.1. The rise of the pre-industrial city

There are some theories that tend to explain the origins of cities. These theories can be divided into (Pacione, 2009):

- **Religious theories:** these theories focus on the power structure created by the religious elite who controlled the disposal of surplus produce provided as offerings. In one point in time these temples obtained the function of 'banks'.
- **Military theories:** these theories focus on the need of people to organise against threats. Although not all early towns had defensive walls.
- **Economic theories:** these theories focus on the development of large scale trading networks that stimulated the growth of urban society. In this sense it is unclear whether the trade caused city growth or the product of already existing urban elite caused the city to grow.
- **Hydraulic theories:** these theories focus on the need of irrigation for urban development, especially the co-ordination of this irrigation.

It is important to understand that these theories are not autonomous in explaining the existence of cities. It is therefore better to understand the development of a city as a process with a host of factors. Cities developed themselves as nodes in larger trading networks developing themselves especially in infrastructural efficient places such as estuaries or river crossings.

3.1.2. The industrial city

In the mid-eighteenth century and onwards a complex series of innovations in Britain (industrial revolution) caused big technological cultural and societal changes. A central prerequisite in the industrial revolution was according to Weber (1958 in Pacione, 2009) profit. Profit is a prime precondition for the industrial revolution, and the development of capitalist society. Before, money was seen as a buffer of goods, in the capitalistic society

money changed into capital. Especially under the in the fifteen century in Italy developed banking system (Pacione, 2009).

The industrial cities in the nineteenth century such as Manchester where the driving forces in the capitalist society. These cities are well-known for their rather bad living conditions. Public sanitation and water supplies where often non-existent in the slums. There was an inadequate division of power in these cities. For most part these cities leaned on either a company or a special type of product (Pacione, 2009).

The late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century is known for the emergence of the so called 'department store' or grocery store. Such as the opening of the first Albert Heijn store in 1887 (www.ah.nl), Vroom en Dreesman in 1887 (www.vd.nl), de Bijenkorf in 1870 (www.debijenkorf.nl). One could only wish their ancestors opened up such a store. Before that, cities only had 'specialty shops' concentrating on one type of product.

3.1.3. Post-industrial (modernistic) city

The post-industrial (modernistic) city characterises itself in the change from a manufacturing economy to a service economy. The modernistic way is often perceived as positivistic, techno centric, and rationalistic. Modernism entails the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardisation of knowledge and production (Harvey, 1989). The post-industrial city is further characterised by fragmentation of the urban form and its associated economic and social geographies. Cities such as London and New York grew due to financial services. The capitalistic service sector needed, due to specialisation and interaction, to be allocated near each other in large offices. The modern city characterises itself by 'mega structural bigness' (Dear and Flusty, 1998). See for instance Manhattan in New York.

Picture 1: Guggenheim museum in New York. A very modernistic building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The museum opened in 1952.

After the Second World War practicality and efficiency became important, next to profit. Especially since the mass distribution of all kinds of products. At this point in time warehouses and big discount stores emerged as well. See for instance the Target store (founded in 1961) or Wall-Mart (1962) in the United States or Albrecht-Discont (Aldi in 1945) (KPMG, 2009). Developments in direct marketing (TV commercials) made it easier for retailers in the twentieth century to reach the customer. A phenomenon such as catalogue shopping emerged (KPMG, 2009). Many cities in the Netherlands are very much influenced

by the modernistic times I would like to argue. Especially if one takes into account that the modernistic age fell in the reconstruction of the Netherlands after the Second World War. Many Dutch inner cities such as Nijmegen became the 'victim' of the building style based on concrete.

3.1.4. Postmodern city

The last stage described in this chapter on city development is the postmodern city. Postmodernism is as described by Harvey (1990) in '*The condition of Postmodernity'* a reaction to, or departure from, 'modernism'. Post modernism entails a more heterogenic view and distrust in absolute way of thinking (such as modernism). The postmodern city is the city as we know it today, where globalisation processes take shape. The effects of globalisation in these cities can either be explained as something good or something bad. Dicken (2011) in his book '*Global Shift'* explains that the more right wing oriented neo-liberal thinkers see globalisation as something that will bring benefit to the greatest number of people. On the other hand the 'anti-globalisers' on the left wing see globalisation as a problem. I would like to state that the processes of globalisation definitely have some good and some bad effects. In this thesis I take a stance in that some globalisation processes have a profound negative effect on the retail structure. The internet and especially the ease it gives to be active 24/7 make it hard for the physical one man owned store. Because this will open a widely debate on the effects of globalisation I will only focus on the effects of *Information and communication technologies* (ICT). A quote will show how we can place the 'electronic highways':

"The new telecommunications technologies are the electronic highways of the informational age, equivalent to the role played by railway systems in the process of industrialization (Henderson and Castells, 1987, p.6)"

This quote shows that the new communication technologies actually shape the world we now live in. Zook (2002) argues that one of the greatest paradoxes of the twenty-first century is that as telecommunications improve and the economy globalises, spatial proximity and cities are important in economic development. Harvey (2012) detects in this city the formation of market niches. This is expressed by different urban lifestyle forms and consumer habits. The urban surrounds itself with an aura of freedom. This city exists under pressure of various technological changes such as the dot-com bubble. This city is known for its non-existent pattern due to possibilities of the electronically communication known as the internet. Postmodern townscapes are detailed but capital tends to allocate itself on non-predictable places. The only thing 'fixing' them together is the telecommunication networks (Dear and Flusty, 1998). There is now no real fixed place necessary to establish themselves. Dear and Flusty call this 'keno capitalism', the city is now a random pattern of squares growing like a collage with various consumer-oriented landscapes.

Figure 5: Keno-capitalism according to Dear and Flusty (1998).
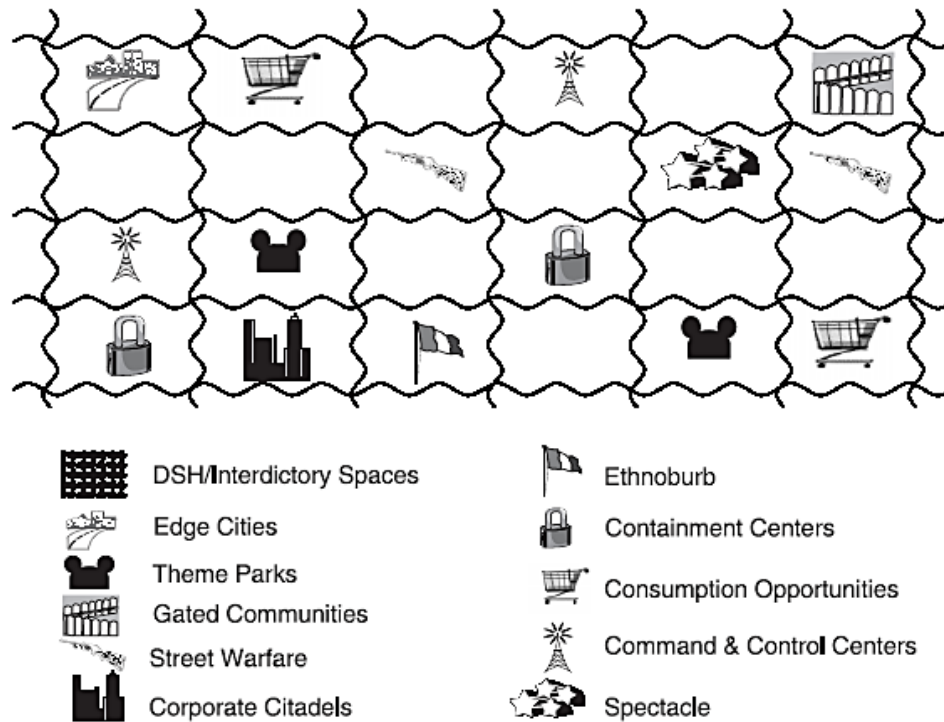
I would like to argue that indeed some elements as described by Dear and Flusty (1998) are true. We indeed see the emergence of leisure centres at the periphery of cities. On the other hand the very strict Dutch planning systems tend to guide the postmodern symptoms in a modernistic way. Therefore the keno-capitalism is not that strong in the Netherlands. In the USA on the other hand we do strongly see keno-capitalism in action.

In accordance with this the city is transforming into a place to 'experience' things, we can call this the switch to a cultural economy. Cities are now branding themselves as the city to go to, focussing on the individual. Cities now have major efforts realising two main objectives:

'*Boosting place identity and promoting the 'selling' of city as commodity to the 'flaneur', or the pleasure-seeking 'urban voyeur', a concept referring to both visitors and residents in the postmodern city'*(Gospodini, 2006, p. 312).

The individual has limitless opportunities to see all kinds of places. Van Houtum and Spierings (2008, p. 899) argue that: '*In our world of globalization, hyper-capitalism, and mass-individualism, there seems to be no escape from having and parading a personal identity, no escape from the commercial template for seductive urban shopping spaces'*. The economic basis for cities is now the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The specific type of consumption associated with this (festivals, theatre, museums, shopping, etc.) now forms an essential part of the city's economy (Jane, 2006). Cities use branding and marketing to place their city in the consumers head as a possible place to come to and 'excite' (Hospers, 2011). According to Lorentzen (2009) the loss in industry and the loss in jobs accordingly is often tackled by investing in branding themselves as hosts for global events and accordingly in tourism, attractions and activities. They do so with considerable success. What they do is to exploit the potentials of the experience economy.

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In the retail structure we now see the emergence of e-commerce. In 1995 Amazon.com was launched (KPMG, 2009). This is a good starting point for the next paragraph, which further elaborates on the retail and e-commerce in the city.

a *Pre-Modern urban landscape* in the 19th and early 20th century: **Land-use mix**

b *Modern urban landscape* in the '50s, '60s, '70s: **Land-use zoning**

c *Post-Modern urban landscape* since the '80s: **special land-use mix** & since the '90s: **eclectic clustering** of particular flourishing urban economic activities.
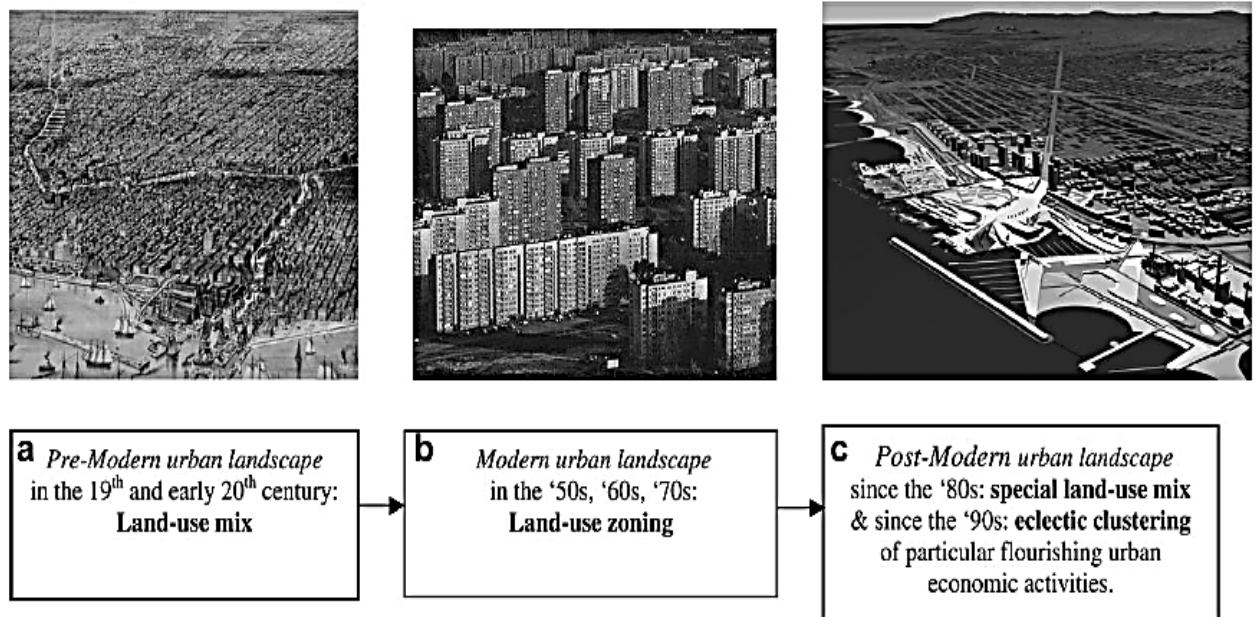
Figure 6: Visualisation of the shift in city types (Gospodini, 2006).

Above a visualisation of the shift from the pre-modern city to the postmodern city. As seen above the city is in a theoretical sense changing towards a postmodern city which is used for 'fun'. I have to mention that this shift towards a postmodern city is especially in the Netherlands not that obvious. Cities in the Netherlands still have very well defined parts. Venlo also still has a city centre with shops. On the other hand we see some change, such as outlet centres as in Roermond. The big American city Los Angeles is the example of a postmodern city. *"Most world cities have an instantly identifiable signature: think of the boulevards of Paris, the skyscrapers of New York, or the churches of Rome. But Los Angeles appears to be a city without a common narrative, except perhaps the freeways or a more generic iconography of the bizarre (Dear and Flusty, 1998, p. 53)"*

4. Retail and e-commerce in the city

The Dutch council of shopping centres (Nederlandse Raad Winkelcentra (NRW)) argues that the quality of retail structure in the Netherlands is more than ever subject to discussion. People shop less frequent, especially since the rise of e-commerce (NRW, 2014). Other effects next to e-commerce that are mentioned by the NRW are: the economic situation, the aging population and a reducing population growth. Especially the increasing shopping supply per head of the Dutch population (increase of 10%) in combination with a declining population is problematic. Since, in the long run their potentially will be too much shopping space available per person.

The main goal of Dutch retail planning was to maintain and strengthen the economic functioning of the shopping centre hierarchy, including city centres (VROM, 1977, 1988 in Spierings, 2006a). This strictness has become more and less strict in time (Spierings, 2006a). The Dutch shopping landscape consists of a hierarchy of shopping centres, new shopping centres are allowed, only if they do not intervene with this hierarchy (Spierings, 2006a). Following the Second World War, a functional hierarchy of shops was designed and constructed in the Netherlands (Borchert, 1995 in Spierings, 2006a). This hierarchical system was based on the principles of the 'central place theory' by Christaller (Evers, et al, 2011). The American Brian Berry (1967) has used this 'central place theory' of Christaller to explain the dispersion of shopping areas. According to him every shop in a shopping area has to have a minimum amount of customers to stay profitable, the so called threshold. Another important point is the scope, this is the distance consumers are willing to travel for a shop. The change towards more *Perifere DetailhandsVestigingen since the end of the 1960s* (PDV), *Grootschalige DetailhandelsVestigingen* in 1993(GDV), and Factory outlets can be seen as developments towards a post-hierarchy of shopping centres (Spierings, 2006b). The functional hierarchy of shopping centres is since these developments less strict. Although, only shops that are too large for the inner city are allowed in these areas (Spierings, 2006b). The recent change in the retail landscape is the acknowledgment of consumption experiences. There are propositions for categorising shopping practices containing 'fun shopping centres' (Spierings, 2006b). The 'Dutch Scientific Counsil for Government Policy' (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR)) analysed in 2000 the rise of commercial leisure facilities in addition to the existing leisure services. Conclusively stating one could argue that 'leisure sites' such as skiing halls are located outside the city, and are now 'competing' for leisure with the inner city. As already discussed in the previous paragraph this 'leisure' situated in the outside of the city constitutes in what Dear and Flusty (1998) call 'keno capitalism'. Arguably due to the modern lifestyle of consumers (more spending power, more mobility, etc) the hierarchical system is threatened these days (Spierings, 2006b). The so called scope has become bigger and bigger over time. Just ask yourself the question, have I travelled more than 50 kilometres to go and shop somewhere? Chances are you have, such as visited the Outlet centre in Roermond, made a day trip to Amsterdam, etc. Consequently cities are having a hard time 'competing' for visitors.

The subject of this research calls for an in depth analysis of the effects of internet shopping on the Dutch retail practice, including the role of governments. First the rise of e-commerce is discussed. With the rise of the internet a new medium became available for retailers to serve their customers the so called e-commerce. This allowed consumers to shop via the internet in the comforts of their homes (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). In the Netherlands in 2013, 95% of the population had internet access (CBS, 2013), making the Netherlands an ideal place for internet sales. In 2012 in the Netherlands 10 million people used the internet for shopping, note that is 10 million different people. From those 10 million

6 million frequently used the internet for shopping (CBS, 2012). This shows that the internet is a commercial technology with a very important place for commercial activities. Consumers are engaged via the internet in various commercial activities. Secondly I want to use the work of Molenaar (2013) to walk through the threats and opportunities for retail caused by the internet. This will be a good guide to explore the field, next to that I will use opinions from others to check of these ideas are indeed a correct way of naming the current developments.

4.1.1. Threat of e-commerce

E-commerce can be defined as follows: "*the trade of physical goods over open (..) networks*" (Savrul and Kılıç, 2011, p. 251). E-commerce lets consumers shop at any time and, at every location that has internet access (Bakos, 2001). So, e-commerce gives retailers various opportunities to sell their products. On the other hand there are some downsides, such as potential disruptive effects on retailers (as seen in the next part). Online shopping (the effect of e-commerce) can be defined as follows: '*Online shopping or e-shopping is searching and/or purchasing consumer goods and services via the internet*' (Mokhtarian, 2004). In the Netherlands, the substitution of real life shopping with internet shopping has potentially caused some retailers to close some of their shops or even caused them to go bankrupt (Weltevreden, 2008). I added the word potentially, since we cannot rule out the effects of the recent crisis in the closing of shops. On the other hand the internet opens new windows of opportunity for retailers and consumers (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). Because of this, it can be regarded as a disruptive process innovation that can make existing business models obsolete (Wrigley et al., 2002; Burt and Sparks, 2003). One thing to note is the fact that only 20% of the online shopping entrepreneurs have had an average income in the year 2012 (Thuiswinkel.org, 2014). As shown in the previous paragraph the online player Amazon.com was founded in 1995. Amazon.com is a so called 'pure player', a 'pure player' is a company that solely sells goods via the internet. This can be seen as the opposite of classical retailers that solely sell in their shops and do not have any distribution via the internet.

Molenaar (2013) summarises five threats e-commerce has on the retail in the Netherlands. The first main threat is the increase in internet sales. The home shopping market monitor (by thuiswinkel.org, Blauw and PostNL) shows various numbers concerning e-commerce in a playful way via an info graphic (as seen in chapter 1). It is clear that this spending tends to increase every year. On the other hand the total retail sales tend to drop. This shows that online shopping potentially as Molenaar argues takes more and more from traditional retail sales. On the other hand the differences in spending are still vast. The spending of online shopping is only a very small part of total spending (6% in 2013 according to Platform31). Next to that from this info graphic it seems that online spending substitutes some offline in store spending. It is not sure if this is indeed substituted spending or complementary spending.

The second threat Molenaar (2013) argues is, that internet tends to influence the whole buying process. Shops are no longer an orientation place for consumers. Consumers first orientate via internet which product they want to buy. One can say that the arrival of online and related technologies has democratised the flow of information, making consumers sometimes stronger than retailers (KPMG, 2009; Burt and Sparks, 2003; Weltevreden, 2004; Dixon and Marston, 2002). In stores they want to get a feeling of the product. At home they decide whether they want to buy the product online or in a store. This so called 'show rooming' is according to retailers a serious problem. Another problem is the change in the time window people can shop. With physical stores this window is framed by the opening hours whereas internet stores can be accessed all the time (Weltevreden and Atzema, 2006). For consumers the opportunities internet gives for product information are very helpful. Let

alone the price transparency internet offers (Rigby, 2011). One could argue that since consumers are now capable to first look up the prices of goods retailers cannot 'hide' their prices anymore. On the other hand prices of products have always been available for the consumer via various advertisements. Next to that dynamic pricing has been a controversial subject (Hinz et al 2011). Amazon ones upset its customers by asking higher prices for customers that frequently shop on the Amazon page. People that deleted their cookies on their computer saw prices of DVDs drop (Baker et al, 2001). The Media Markt has already introduced the dynamic pricing which entails that they can always make sure they have the lowest prices (www.retailnews.nl).

The third threat closely links with the second threat. The business model of the retailer is under pressure. The classical store is a place where products are being sold to the end-user, who will pick this up in the store itself. Because of the above stated increased transparency this business model is getting obsolete. This supply driven model has to be changed into a demand-driven model (Molenaar, 2013) or maybe even a model that predicts demand (Davenport, 2011). But this already takes a leap to the next paragraph. Retailers also do not know how to react on the increasing e-commerce developments according to Lalieu (2014). Of course one can argue that retailers lack the dynamism of internet shopping. On the other hand would a demand driven business model not be something impossible, taking into account that stores have to be supplied on fixed times.

The fourth problem is that store locations are not attractive anymore (Johnson, 2011; Lalieu 2014; Molenaar, 2013; NWR, 2014). The '*verblokkering*' standardisation of the inner city shopping areas is seen by consumers as one of the most unattractive parts of cities (Molenaar, 2013). Just take a look at the average Dutch shopping street, the shops are almost always the same. This of course does not contribute to the consumer's shopping experience. Dealing with missing links in intra-city shopping routes in order to increase consumer spending has become an important factor for municipalities to change their inner city (Spierings, 2013). On the other hand municipalities tend to raise their parking fees, this is shown to decrease the attractiveness of cities (Lalieu, 2014). Increased shop vacancy has caused inner cities to become less attractive. At this point in time the vacancy rate is 6,9 percent (Locatus, 2014). Also because of the increased mobility of the consumer the selection places to shop are getting more selective (Molenaar, 2013).

The fifth problem is the lack of a cooperation model in which the players of the retail landscape work together. Molenaar (2013) and Lalieu (2014) both argue that the shops, suppliers, landlords and governments operate on their own. They propose a more cooperative system. One could say a marketplace online. The consumer tends to shop on basis of price and convenience. This online marketplace would have some beneficial effects for the retailers. On the one hand they gain more awareness for their shop, they can split the costs for website maintenance. On the other hand the consumer has to be able to find this online warehouse. Next to that what is the difference between the Venlo online warehouse, the Nijmegen online warehouse, and the Dutch online warehouse called Bol.com. This takes us to the next paragraph, 'new forms of shopping'.

4.2.   New forms of shopping

In this paragraph new forms of shopping are discussed. When researching different literature on the future of shopping various trends that are repeatedly mentioned are the shift to the experience economy, and a complete fusion of online and offline shopping.

4.2.1. Shopping in the experience economy

As soon as the mid-1980s a new experimental approach on the experiences of consumers along with the notion of the consumer as a rational decision maker was launched (Gentile et al, 2007). This most 'recent' change in shopping is the shift from a 'functional' approach to an 'experience' approach. Why this change? In essence this has to do with the way people psychologically treat and value their leisure time. Some use the pyramid of Maslow as a starting point in their argumentation why people are value shopping as something memorable. To make a long story short. People are actively trying to create self esteem an actualisation when shopping (NRW, 2011). As a consequence leisure is According to Lorentzen (2009) the experience economy is a notion that intends to conceptualize a new trend in economic development, in which the driver is people's search for identity and involvement in an increasingly rich society. Verhoef et al (2009) note that the amount of literature investigating this topic is limited. The literature that is available mostly focuses on managerial actions rather than theories underlying antecedents and outcomes of consumer experiences. In the era of the service economy the question how to meet customers' expectations and to measure customer's satisfaction turns to be the driving force of value creation (Yu and Fang, 2009). Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that experiences will be the next big thing for companies to make profit. Retailing in the twenty-first century means doing business with your consumers on their respective terms. Experiences take place when a company on purpose makes use of services as stage and goods as props in order to win the satisfaction of the customer.
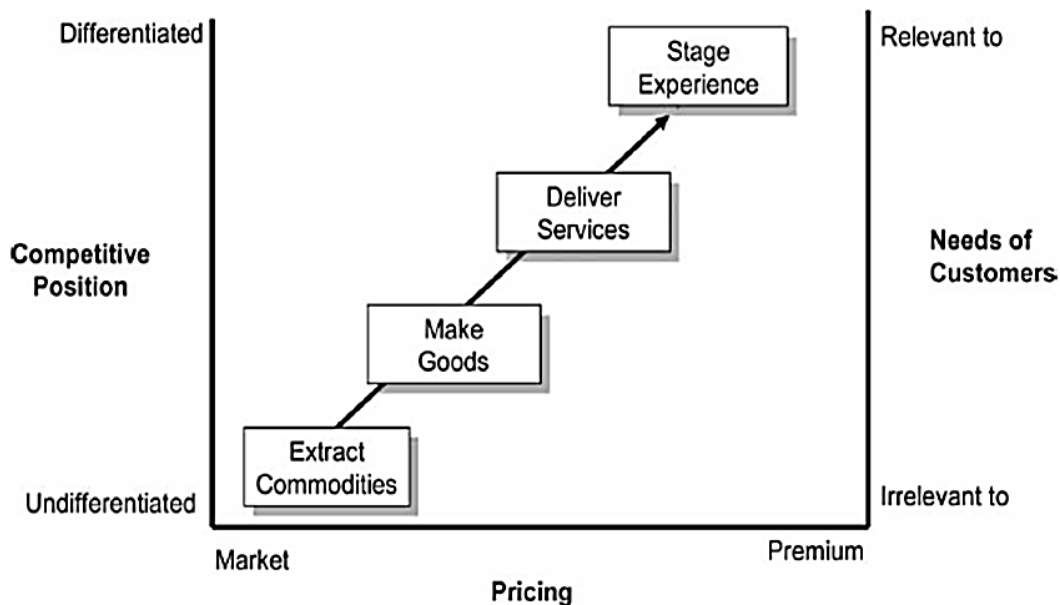
Figure 7: The ladder of economic value (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.22)

The increase in economic value due to the usage of the experience economy is well explained by the figure 1 by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

The first stage in the ladder of economic value is the *commodities*. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) real commodities exist of materials that are originated from nature (animal, mineral, and vegetal for instance coffee beans). Commodities are per definition exchangeable, because they do not lend themselves for differentiation. The second stage in the ladder is that of *making goods*. In this stage the commodities are transformed into usable goods. Such as wheat which is transformed into bread. The third stage is that of *(delivery of) services*. Services are according to Pine and Gilmore (1999) immaterial, intangible activities

that are tuned to the individual requests of (well-known) clients. Clients tend to value the benefits of a service higher than the products that are used to deliver the services. The last step in figure 1 is the stage of the *experience*. Experience takes part when a company on purpose makes use of services as podium and goods as props in order to win the satisfaction of the customer. Experiences are memorable, the consumers of experiences are guests. One is the guest of the Disney theme parks, where one if open for it has a memorable experience. An experience is only memorable when one can recall and tell the experience to another person. Taking a look to the future, a new part is added to the landscape of Pine and Gilmore (1999) the so called *transformation*. A transformation is the tailor-made delivery of the experience. After this extra sport the ladder of economic value would look like this:
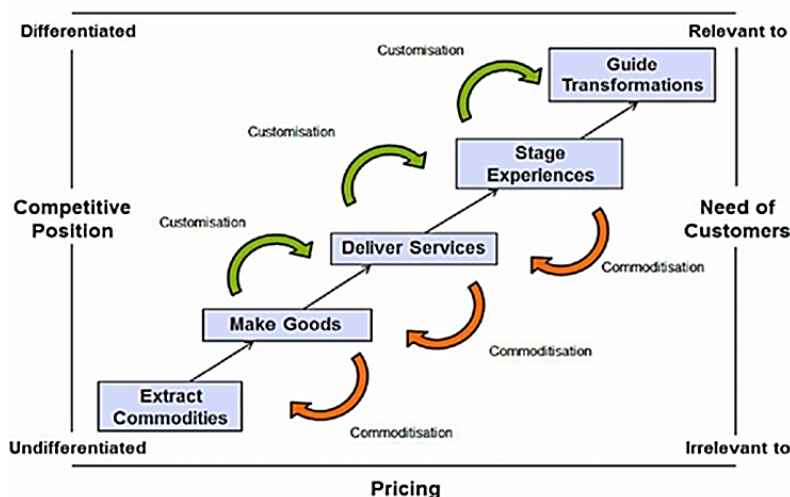
Figure 8: The ladder of economic value with added sport (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Transformation is a bit too ambitious for a shopping area. I do not think that an inner city visitor will say: *'I'm a changed man'*. Transformations are more applicable in the psychological services or schools. The transformation phase will therefore be left out of the remainder of the thesis. The focus will be on experience influenced shopping. Another look on the experiences of consumers is by seeing them in contrary to a staged approach as a holistic thing. The consumer than changes to a person that is in contact with the product and company the whole time. In this way a personalised co-creation of a unique experience is central. In this perspective companies do not sell experiences, but rather they provide artefacts and contexts that are conductive of experiences and which can be properly employed by consumers to co-create their own unique, experiences (Gentile, 2007). Both systems operate next to each other. Sometimes it is impossible to co-create an experience, and it is more suited to pre-establish something memorable. A company has to go through the production stages, and decide in accordance to the company's strategy the best way to tackle the customer experience.

The experience value of a shopping site according to NWR (2014) is one of the most important factors for consumers to go to a shopping area. The most important reason for this is the fact that leisure is seen as something scares (NRW, 2011). The experience of an area determines whether consumers go and shop somewhere. On the other hand consumers shop for various reasons, these may not include a specific goal or need for a product. They, for example need entertainment, recreation, social interaction, or intellectual stimulation. As a consequence the same retail environment causes different experiences depending on the goal of the shopper (Puccinelli, et al, 2009). It is helpful to make a distinction between goal oriented and experimental shoppers. Goal oriented shoppers tend to get the most satisfaction

out of the return of their investment in time, effort, and money (Mathwick, 2002). So, these people would not care when they are in a goal oriented state if they 'experience' something. When they are in an experimental state on the other hand, they get the most satisfaction out of enjoyment (Mathwick, 2002). These consumers would mind if the inner city for instance is exciting, since they seek enjoyment. In order to make the experience economy workable in a city there has to be a large pool of possible consumers. This requires two different developments. The first development is the increase in spending power of the people living in the 'service area' of the city, which allows room for more luxury type of consumption. The second development is the emergence of the individualised society. People according to Lorentzen (2009) plan their future identities by orchestrating particular experiences.

Concrete measures for shops to implement the experience economy are creating a specific feeling in the shop. One could for instance think of an outdoor experience in an outdoor shop (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The activity shopping itself can and should be part of the experience. Why not implement the local heritage in the shopping district? The city centre in the experience economy should be the magnet for visitors. For the other parts of the city this role is more difficult since the experiences in the city centre already have a large service area. In these secondary areas the experience economy does not have a very significant role, although it could be that for instance a little village has a very unique historically appearance it could be used (Lorentzen, 2009). To conclude this sub-paragraph a definition of the customer experience made by Gentile (2007, p.397) is quoted. It is interesting whether this quote remains of importance in the course of this research.

''The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial physical and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points (Gentile et al, 2007, 397).''

4.2.2. Omni-Channel retailing

Another recent change in the retail landscape is the potential shift for some retailers to an Omni-Channel led shopping experience. In brief, a strategy of Omni-Channel led retailing is: '*an integrated sales experience that combines the advantages of physical stores with the information rich experience of online shopping*' (Rigby, 2011, p. 67). The name Omni-Channel led retailing according to Rigby (2011) comes from the fact that retailers will be able to interact with customers through all channels, such as websites, physical stores, kiosks, direct mail and catalogues, call centres, social media, mobile devices, gaming consoles, teledirections, networked appliances, home services, and more.   To give an overview of the shopping environment I would like to use a figure of Molenaar (2013). In first instance there were talks about so called 'dual channel strategy' in retailing, later on 'multichannel strategy', because of new technologies such as the tablet. The dual channel strategy entails a system where there will be a shop and online shop simultaneously. A multichannel retail strategy is one where the customer has more freedom to choose the preferred channel to do a transaction.

Online shopping   Different stores   Smartphones
Social media   Different experience   Tablets
Googling   Different mobility   Qr-codes

Traditional sales   Internet sales

Classical   Web shops with store/pop-   Pure
retailers   up stores   players

                 Shops with web shop
                 traditional/internet sales

Offline   Online

New shopping behaviour
New power relations
Imploding supply chain

Figure 9: The new retail landscape. Source: Molenaar, 2013

A very important point, made in this paragraph, is easily overlooked. Linking the previous paragraph to this paragraph one can argue that the store itself is in fact becoming even stronger due to the internet influences. The physical shop linked with an Omni-Channel led retail strategy will be in essence an experience. Below the advantages of offline and online shopping are presented in a table.

Advantages of the online store	Advantages of the physical store
Rich product information	Edited assortment
Customer reviews and tips	Shopping as an event and an experience
Editorial content and advice	Ability to test, try on, or experience products
Social engagement and two-way dialogue	Personal help from caring associates
Broadest selection	Convenient returns
Convenient and fast checkout	Instant access to products
Price comparison and special deals	Instant gratification of all senses
Convenience of anything, anytime, anywhere access	Help with Initial setup or ongoing repairs

Table 3: Advantages of online and physical stores (adopted from Rigby, 2011)

Would a mix of these advantages lead to a near perfect shopping experience? Arguable it will lead to a very individualised consumer oriented shopping idea. Although not all shoppers are open for these experiences. Sometimes as mentioned above one is goal oriented. Although an Omni-Channel led retail experience is very goal oriented, since one already knows via different channels what one wants. In an overview I would like to present the past and future of the Dutch retail. In this overview one clearly sees in what way the retail will involve. Starting in 1860 with the opening of the first department store to the total retail.

1860: Opening of the first department store → 1960: Selfservice stores → 1996: Broadening of the openingshours → 2000: Online retailing → 2010: Cross channnel retailing → 2020: Total retail: individualised omnichannel offer

Figure 10: Important innovations in the Dutch retail landscape. Adopted from (GfK, 2013).

One could argue about the selection made. It clearly shows the importance of online retailing.

The last section of this paragraph will go deeper into the technological innovations next to the internet that can help in making shopping a nicer activity. These are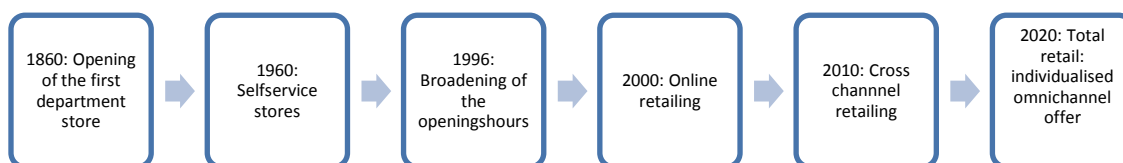 the technological innovations that further merge the offline with the online shopping world. To begin with it would of course be nice if retailers knew beforehand what the customer that just walks into the store would want buy. This would be the purest form of customer manipulation. Today's customer is often bombarded with various advertisements, information, and discounts and has no clue anymore where to look for. According to Davenport (2011): *'The shorthanded and often poorly informed floor staff at many retailing sites can't begin to replicate the personal touch that shoppers once depended on—and consumers are still largely on their own when they shop online'*, he continues. He would like to introduce the 'Next Best Offer' (NBO), the NBO is a customisation of the to sell goods via various information channels. In developing the NBO one should follow these steps: 1) Defining objectives, 2) Gathering data, 3) Analysing and executing and 4) Learning and evolving. Especially in these social media heydays, the data gathering is an interesting part in knowing what your customers want. The question is: to what

• **GEO-FENCING**: Geo-targeted mobile advertising, proximity marketing, digital signage, location based services and QR codes can all be used to make the customers more aware of products and promotions in their direct environment (awareness);

• **KIOSKS:** Personal Shopping Assistants, tablets, mobile apps, mobile barcodes and QR-codes can be used to support the customer in searching for specific product information (engagement);

• **mPOS**: (mobile POS), NFC (contactless paying), QR codes, mobile wallets, BLE (Bluetooth low energy), digital coupons, hands free paying in the shop and Self-Checkout, are going to play a role in paying for products in shops, restaurants etc. (Conversion);

• **RFID**:, pick-up points and take vaults, mobile apps, Click & Collect service counters, drive through, etc. play an important role in monitoring online customer orders (pick up, delivery);

• **Mobile coupons**: vouchers, mobile apps, QR codes, mobile and contactless banking systems and loyalty systems, Big Data is going to play a major role in the binding of clients (repeat orders) and offering personified offer (personification).

extent do customers still choose what they want to choose? With this I mean, the so called tailor made advertisements. With a fully integrated Omni-Channel retailing experience the customer walks by a shop and directly gets a personal advertisement on his cell phone (Davenport, 2011). In order to make this work the soft and hard infrastructure of inner cities has to change. The rapport '*De Nieuwe Winkelstraat (The New Shopping Street)'* from InRetail, an organisation for retailers in the living, fashion, shoes, and sports industry, is made to find out what the new shopping street has to look like in the future (see figure 5). In conclusion the main line of reasoning in the rapport is that shopping has to be integrated in various other forms of entertainment or activities. Such as traveling and shopping or work and shop. Next to that an even more important conclusion is drawn. One should always ask the question: 'is it shopping or is it grocery shopping?' This very well reflects the new direction the shopping landscape is going to. On the one hand we see the experiencisation/leisureisation of the inner city. On the other hand the secondary districts have to be on ease with a role of pure provider of basic needs.

4.3. Conceptual model

Below you will find the conceptual model outlining the theoretical foundation of this research. This conceptual model will show the proposed relations between key concepts, and thus gives a schematic overview of a part of the real. In essence this conceptual model is a summary of the theoretical foundations mentioned in this chapter.
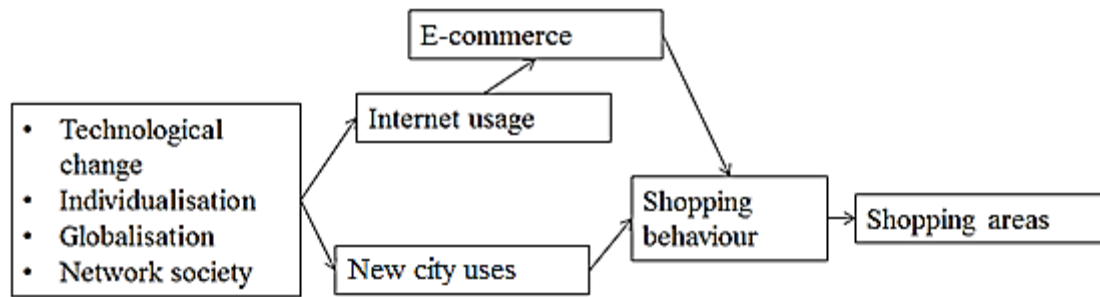
Figure 11: Conceptual model

Underlying trends such as technological change, individualisation, globalisation, network society, the usage of cities have changed. These new city uses (using the city for experiences) have an impact on the shopping behaviour of consumers. Next to that technological change has made it easier to shop online. This new shopping behaviour and e-commerce has an impact on the shopping areas in cities.

4.4.   Conclusion

We saw that the Dutch retail policy is slowly changing towards a less hierarchic strict policy. People's modern lifestyle makes it easier to go to places that used to be too far away for a 'days out'. Accordingly the hierarchical system is under pressure. Especially since the rise of e-commerce, people are more aware where they can get what they want. Shops on the other hand are not inclined to change easily, next to that cooperation between stores seems to be a problem. This consideration gives me the 'right' to ask about the future of governance in such an area. Important questions are: What should be the role of the government? How should retailers cooperate? One could argue that the most recent change in the shopping landscape is that of a shift of a more functional approach to a more experience approach. The experience of an area determines whether consumers go and shop somewhere. On the other hand I would like to state that one should not forget that there are still people of course, who purely shop with a goal in mind. So, a change to more experience based shopping is a good one, it will create more liveable cities, on the other hand the secondary shopping centres need to stay liveable as well. Another step that has to be taken as well by entrepreneurs is an adaptation to an Omni-Channel approach of retailing. As mentioned above Omni-Channel retailing is an integrated sales experience that combines the advantages of physical stores with the information rich experience of online shopping. This step will be a step towards total retailing. This chapter has steered the process towards direction formulation into three different traces with one overarching theme. The overarching theme in this respect is the need for the retailers, governments and property-owners to turn the shopping centres/districts into experiences. The three traces that are distilled from the theoretical chapter are the institutional side of the change, the physical change and the governance change. Since the first part of the research is grounded theory research I do not want to give any substance to these track. The tracks are solely made to guide my vision creation process.

These tracks have been used to create a semi-structured interview guide. This interview guide can be viewed in the appendix. Considering the above a clear conceptualisation of the previous chapters is noticeable.

5. First outcomes

Question central in this chapter is: *How does a city adapt to new forms of shopping?* The main goal of this chapter is to develop a theory on a wide empirical basis. This theory is thereafter tested in Venlo. The process of creating the directions will be touched on only briefly, since this has been done in large part in the second chapter. In this chapter I will first explain the coding process and the coming to a network explaining what the respondents told me. Thereafter a 'story line' is presented. This storyline is nor the opinion of the author nor the concrete measurements an actor has to act on. It is merely a first step in creating a 'theory' on adaptation. Next to that the author knows that not all possibilities for concrete actions are presented.

5.1. Coding process and creating a network

There were two options in presenting the output of the coding process. The first option was not showing the output and start immediately with presenting the possible directions in which cities can adapt. This way the reader would have less to read, on the other hand it would not have been clear how I have come to these possible directions. Therefore I have chosen a second option in which I show parts of the network. This way the reader has a clear view on how I came to this specific network and directions.

5.2. Open coding phase

The first step in analyzing the data is the open coding phase. The open coding is done via the program Atlas.ti. This computer program helps researchers that are conducting a qualitative research to code various forms of data. It also ensures a more systematic way of analysing data. The open coding process is done via line-by-line analysis and asking the questions: What is this? What does it represent? Ending up with too many codes no real story line could be written yet. Below you will find an example of the coding process and the coding categories. As seen in the figure sentences are coded with specific labels representing that line. The name of the label is something the researcher has to think of himself. No preset description is given by Straus and Corbin to do this.
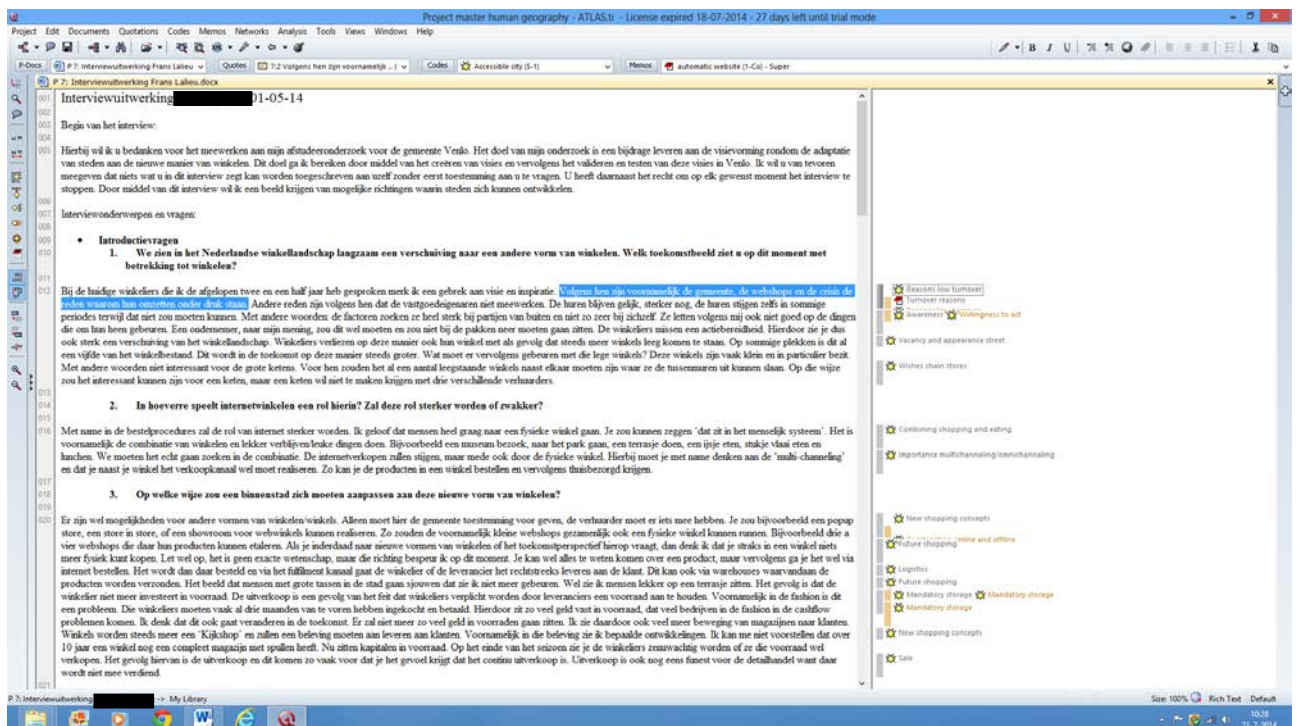

Figure 12: Coding process in Atlas.ti

In order to get some idea of what the most important categories were I decided to make a network for my own use. This network provided some ideas on what the most important codes were in the raw data. These codes are the most important nodes in the network. These nodes all have their own story. So, it was essential that these nodes would be axial coded as well.

5.3. Axial coding

The axial coding is done by linking the subcategories to a category in a set of relationships. These relationships are: the casual conditions, the phenomenon, the context, the intervening conditions, the actions/interactions strategies and the consequences. For the axial coding phase I reviewed the data for a second time. Making sure I did not miss important points. Below you will find an example of the network made in Atlas.ti. Because these networks are hard to read, simpler looking networks are presented in the actual text.
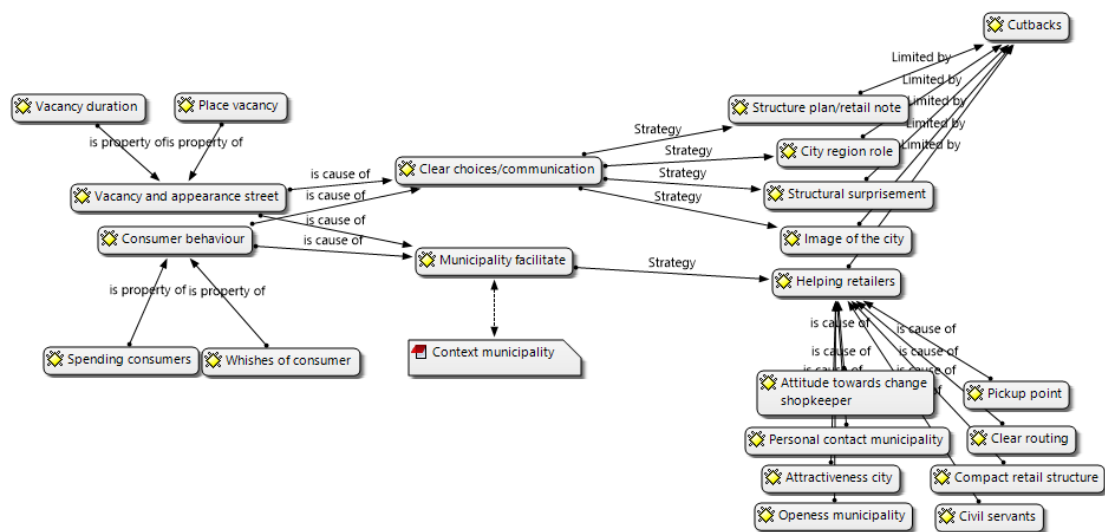
Figure 13: Example of a network made in Atlas.ti

As seen in the above example the network made in Atlas.ti is basically the same as the networks presented in chapter five. The difference is the readability of the networks. The networks in Atlas.ti are less readable than the networks made by hand. As researcher I have to confess that since I used semi-structured interviews the outcome of the first round of interviews is somewhat steered. This 'steering' was intended and is explained in the methodological approach. This research started with a brief theoretical chapter. Pure grounded theorist would not have agreed with my starting point in this research. On the other hand as seen in the second chapter some theoretical starting points actually help in creating more interesting questions to ask to the respondents. Especially in a very broad field such as the 'new shopping' paradigm.

From the interviews it became clear that especially 'roles' played by various actors were mentioned as important and open for change. These roles also give me insights into directions of change made possible by these actors. Next to that the experience economy is something that is mentioned as a game changer in future developments. These categories are thus the outcomes of the axial coding phase. And are thus explored in deep in the data.

In order to make my thinking process as well as the implications of the directions I have taken the liberty to first highlight the roles that should be played according by the actor. The description of the roles is the selective coding phase, where I write a story line. Distilling

from these roles directions are made. This produces an extra layer in my direction making process. At first only four different categories where made (Experience economy, governance, physical change, and cooperation). After the interviews and my analysis the roles played by various actors seem to be more important than the categories mentioned. As seen from the network the most important nodes are:

- Experience economy
- Municipality
- Shopkeeper
- Property owners
- Chain stores

I will use these categories to start my explanation of the directions. On the other hand I will not let go of the previous established categories that easy. They will be used in the explanations of the directions. I end each direction with a couple of examples strengthening my argumentation. The description will start with the experience economy. In explaining the direction per subdivide following a pre-set 'formula' gives me something to hold on to. Therefore I will use pre-established steps. These steps are the steps made by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In order to explain a phenomenon the following model is used.

(A) Causal conditions → (B) phenomenon →

(C) Context → (D) Intervening conditions → (E) Action/interaction strategies →

(F) Consequences

According to Straus and Corbin (1990), the causal conditions refer to the events or incidents that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon. The phenomenon itself is the central idea, event, happening about which a set of actions/ interactions is directed. The context represents the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon. The intervening conditions are the broader structural context pertaining to a phenomenon. The action/interaction strategies are directed at handling the phenomenon. The consequences are the outcomes of the action/interaction strategies. Some links with other nodes have been lost this way. These links will be restored in the next paragraph. This way it becomes clear what is used and what is not used. The second step is explaining what this part of the network is built of. A value free description of the nodes and relation in brief is made. The last step is identifying what concrete measurements have to be taken according to a description of the direction. This last step will be a paragraph where the main directions will be summarized.

5.4. The story line and axial coding

Below the story line per phenomenon is written out in detail. This story line has served as the basis of the validation round of this research. The story line consists out of five phenomena:

- Experience economy
- The role of the municipality
- Role of the small shopkeeper
- Role of the chain store
- Role of the property owner

5.4.1. Experience economy

- **Causal condition:** Changing consumer behaviour. Respondents state that due to this change a new type of shopping becomes a must.
- **Phenomenon:** Increased importance of experiencing in shops and shopping areas. This outcome does not come as a surprise since the notion of experience (although not always explained the same way) is deeply embedded in the Dutch shopping landscape. Almost all respondents state that experience is something that will be the main driving force in certain types of shopping
- **Intervening conditions:**
  - Governmental retreat (cutbacks)
  - Awareness shopkeeper
  - Budget shopkeeper
  - Physical limitations
- **Context:** Under conditions of a middle sized Dutch city with international consumers. The context where to place this phenomenon is in this research a bit more difficult than in other researches. This due to the fact that the respondents have a varied background. Therefore the context is not that important in this case. Next to that the axial coding phase is more an exercise to steer the researcher in thinking in a more analytical way.

Actor	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
Municipality	• Creating events • Accessibility • Story telling/city marketing	• Physical change
Shopkeeper	• Creating events • Hospitality towards consumers • Combining on- and offline	• Changing attitude • Personalisation shopping experience
Property-owners	• Facilitating shopkeepers	• Physical change
Chain stores	• Hospitality towards consumers • Combining on- and offline	• Personalisation shopping experience

Table 4: Experience economy highlighted

Municipality:

According to one interviewee: *'experience entails that you are constantly stimulated' (10a)*. An event is reported as such a stimulus. *Events* can entail various kinds of things, ranging from cooperate 'tastings' to big sporting events. Another explanation of events is things that happen out of the blue. Events are therefore heavily linked with surprisement. The role of the municipality in this sense is being able to steer the events in a positive way. This means that the events should be contributing to rather than disturbing the retail.

The *accessibility* for the municipality concretely means that the parking policy has to change. In what way it has to change is not that clear. Moreover parking policies are always for discussion.

The *image of the city* is something mentioned very often. And seems to be linked heavily with *marketing and branding*. This marketing and branding is mainly reported as a task for the municipality. To quote a respondent: '*Marketing and branding are an important aspect of the policy [of the municipality] (11a).* On the other hand *storytelling*, *appearance of the city*, *public space*, *mix of big and small retailers*, and *green space* are important.

Shopkeeper/ chain stores:

Hospitality is part of the experience in shopping areas. Interviewees reported to me that hospitality is something that increases the experience of consumers and thus has a positive effect on the 'return ability' of the consumer. Creating more hospitality seems to be done via having a smile on your face and treating the customer well. Of course hospitality is something of importance in shops.

The feeling of the customer is a rather soft part of the experience economy. Easily stated, when the customer feels well the experience of the customer seems to be positive. But, how does the customer get a nice feeling? This seems to be linked with '*showing what you bought*', '*combining shopping and eating*', '*resting moments*', '*live contact*', and a '*clean street*'. *Activities in shops* such as live demos trigger the customer in another state of mind. Showing the customer what he or she can do with the products is very important. The activities in the shop are as important as the *accessible store*.

The accessible store is very heavily linked these days with '*Omni-Channelling*'. Omni-Channelling was already identified in the previous theoretical chapter as the future of shopping. It therefore seems that this concept (although not always named this way) is something that has found its way in the minds of people. The precise way this Omni-Channelling is implemented stays rather vague. Interviewees reported the use of tablets and screens as important features. To quote a respondent: *'this means [sales in store] all salesmen have a tablet and thus can serve the customer 'Omni-Channel' (10a)*. Next to that the combination between online and offline is an important aspect. The concept of Omni-Channelling is of course linked with the use of a website or web shop (as can be seen in the appendix). Next to Omni-channelling, the *location of the store, contact with the products, accessible city* and *collection* are important parts of an accessible store.

Property-owner:

Property-owners do not seem to have a prominent role in creating an experience based shopping environment. They should however be able to implement the ideas of shopkeepers. This is especially true in areas where a property-owner owns a large part of the buildings. They state that they could help in the creation of a WIFI-network. Some go a step further and even want to help implementing ideas in the store.

Consequences:

The retailers would have to have a changed attitude towards their clients. This means that the shopkeepers and the municipality should make an effort changing from a product oriented view to an experience oriented view. This also means that an effort should be made to change the inner city physically. The inner city and the shops should be as clean and organised as possible. The retailers should make an effort to personalize the shopping experience. One way of doing this is using neuro-marketing.

5.4.2. The role of the municipality

The municipality's role is a rather vast one. The table below strengthens this message. I have to mention by forehand that keeping in mind the type of respondents is helpful in analysing the theoretical construct. Since I have interviewed multiple retailers the role of the municipality gets sometimes overstated, by them. Next to that the specific role of the municipality directly linked with new forms of shopping is not yet clear. Especially the indirect effects are things to be tackled by the municipality. Although these effects are not

always seen as caused by the new shopping paradigm. Another thing to take in mind is the fact that the interviews are done with a 'healthy' aversion of pre-established roles. The question is asked: *'What should be done?'* A mere description of the answer will lead to frowning, as will be seen in this paragraph.

- **Causal condition:** Causal conditions strengthening the call for government acting are the vacancy in shopping areas and the changing consumer behaviour. The theoretical chapter explains this direct link in more detail.
- **Phenomenon:** Municipality has to facilitate and the Municipality has to create clear policies.
- **Intervening conditions:** Cutbacks national government.
- **Context:** The specific context I chose for is that of a middle sized city facing cutbacks and has an international set of consumers.

Actor	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
Municipality	• Clear retail note • Focus on region role • Structural surpricement • Helping retailers • City marketing	• Clear routing • Less vacancy • Pick-up point • Compact retail structure • Attitude civil servants • Open municipality • Personal contact

Table 5: The role of the municipality

The main parts the municipality has to keep in mind in the future according to my respondents are: providing some sort of *facilitation* and producing clear *policies.* Next to these aspects the specific contemporary role of the municipality is often criticised. These critiques give some substance to what the role of the municipality should be.

The specific role of the municipality is often described as not ideal. The specific role of the municipality is sometimes 'confused' with the role the civil servants play. It seems that thinking with the entrepreneurs is something that at the moment is lacking: '*I think they [the municipality] have to think more in line with the entrepreneurs*' (1a). So, the *taking shopkeepers serious* are something to work on. Something mentioned that is illustrative for this role is: '*I think you [the municipality] have to surprise positive on a structural basis'* (8a). Especially as mentioned before the role of the civil servants is criticised a lot. But it does have effect on the *openness of the municipality* as organisation. Liming factors of the role of the municipality are the *cutbacks.* To quote: '*this [on what the tasks are] is a hard discussion, since our budget is under pressure of cutbacks (13a).* So, although the will for another role is there, there are limiting factors creating a role that does not suit the needs of this day and age. As we will see in the rest of this paragraph there is an urgent need for a municipality that makes hard choices, clear policies, and puts time in helping retailers.

The urge for clear choice making in combination with the use of policies seems to be deeply embedded when conducting the interviews. The *clear choice* making is linked with *harmonisation of the policies* which is linked with what I have called *retail note*. To quote: '*We [interest organisation] call on to municipalities to make a good retail note. In this vision you can make a distinction between areas that have chances and areas that don't'* (6a). Another quote: '*a good vision where you [the municipality] pinpoint areas that will be developed and that will not be developed are attractive for developers'* (7a). But it is not only the interest organisations and the property owners that want these choices to be made. To

quote a shopkeeper: *'it is a pity they [developer] build that extra retail space. I am concerned they will not be filled in the future' (9a)*. So if a municipality wants to be attractive for future investments it should make very clear in what way they develop the area. This is logical since more retail space entails more competition. Next to that interest organisations have made it their call to pinpoint the importance of a small retail structure. Special attention should be paid to the functions of the approach roads in the inner city. The vacancy that gets its hold on these streets decreases the potential for these streets. *'The vacancy in the street starts to become a problem. The large vacant building across the street is an obstruction for the entrance to the city' (5a)*. Positioning new functions in these streets is vital for the liveability in these streets. Things such as office space or even residential functions are named as possible solutions. Another important point is the clear routing an inner city has to have. This clear routing is helpful in steering the customer in the city. Although this tactic mainly works on the 'fun shopper' since this customer is the one without a pre-planned objective. The routing is often named in various situations ranging from 'sightlines' to 'signposting' to the 'grid' of the street. Another important but locally embedded problem is that of the district areas. Since this problem is locally embedded I will not attach too much weight on it for making the general directions. Comparison with other municipalities is necessary for tacking his problem. In general terms the future of the district area as we know today is not bright. To illustrate this some quoting from the interviews: *'I think the small district shopping areas have no future' (3a). 'I don't think people want to open a clothing store in a district area' (3a). 'I ones said jokingly, you just don't want shops there anymore' (9a)*. These district areas will become and in some ways are already serious problems. Cutting them loose from non-financial support seems to be a rather hard way of dealing with the situation. On the other hand the cutbacks municipalities are confronted with simply do not allow actions in these areas.

Another important part in the future role of the municipality will be *facilitation,* and is mentioned by virtually every respondent. Facilitation is very closely linked with *helping retailers.* To quote an interest group*: 'this could be a temporary bonus or subsidy, in order to make it possible for the retailer to move to another area where there is less vacancy'* (11a). Facilitation therefore seems to be linked with (financial) support.

5.4.3. Role of the small shopkeeper

As seen in the previous sub-paragraph the role of the municipality is a rather vast but concrete one. The role of the shopkeeper is even bigger but diffuser. This diffuseness sits in the fact that the shopkeeper is actually in the frontline of the invasion of the new shopping. These shopkeepers awaits the unhuman task to implement wishes from a more and more individualising and fluent customer, fight the increasing power of chain stores, implement technologies that change on a weekly basis, and stand their ground against the big property owners. I do not intently want to picture them as 'victims' or as 'sad' since rightly said by one of the respondents: *'they are entrepreneurs, it is their task to be able to change and implement new technologies' (2a)*. Distilling from the interviews the following is created:

- **Causal condition:** Increased internet sales, changing consumer behaviour, and increased need experience economy
- **Phenomenon:** Willingness to change and implement new ideas of the small shopkeeper.
- **Intervening conditions:** Help from the municipality, strategies chain stores, and keeping independence.
- **Context:** Under conditions of a middle sized Dutch city that has international consumers.

Actor	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
Small shopkeeper	• Implementation of internet based technologies (being fast and innovative) • Gathering knowledge about the consumer • Establish cooperation between shopkeepers • Be aware of your surroundings	• Different attitude shopkeeper • Consumer oriented shop keeping • Cooperation of shopkeepers • Aware shopkeeper

Table 6: Role of the shopkeeper

The *shopkeeper* himself will serve as the starting point of my description. The small shopkeeper is seen as a player that has to meet certain requirements in order to have willingness to act. This willingness to act is a vital element for establishing strategies, for example creating cooperation between shopkeepers. Simply stated the *background of the shopkeeper* linked to the *roots in the municipality,* and the *idea founding the store,* creates willingness to act. An important point retailers made to me in the interviews is the independence they want to keep. To illustrate this: *'if we [shopkeepers] could decide where to spend the money [normally invested by municipality], that would be very nice' (2a).* Apparently there is the will to have some independence, on the other hand as seen in the previous sub-paragraph the municipality should also facilitate things. Since the speed of change I think this deeply grounded will for independence should be used to the fullest. Other important points are *awareness* and *attitude.* These two points actually make up the biggest part of the ability to change. Here is a large quote to strengthen my line of argumentation:

'Yes, absolutely. Only you have to first go through the harness of the shopkeeper, retailers are very opinionated. At the moment the shopkeeper admits that he himself is to blame the fact that he is behind on the internet sale and he does nothing, is a sign of bad management. Shopkeepers keep themselves a bit out of the blame by saying that the crisis is to blame for the declining sales. There is an absolute denial that the Internet is the problem. I do not know why they do not see the problem.' (1a)

As a retailer you should have a drive to see important innovations and you should have the ability to implement these innovations. When retailers lack this the municipality could help them, although one has to ask themselves if this is desirable. Although there is some doubt whether this is desirable, the civil servant interviewed was playing with the thought. *'We are trying to show the retailers that they have to be nice to the customers. If you want to develop something in the inner city it is maybe desirable to give meetings for awareness' (3a).* Another thing that has to change in the future is the attitude of the *employee.* Although this code is linked to the experience economy I have not mentioned it in that respect. This is because the retailers had an important task in this attitude. They have to 'educate' them in being a host, advisor to the customers, and the eyes of the shopkeeper in the store. This is not only a problem in the small stores but also and more heavily in the chain stores. Awareness also links to knowing what the customer wants and knowing what customer to attract. As shopkeeper a thorough knowledge about the wishes of the customer should be your main point of focus. Knowing the difference between and identifying a 'run shopper' and a 'fun shopper' should be your second nature.

The internet technology use of shopkeepers is a very important one. Being a *fast and innovative entrepreneur* is vitally important in the future. This code has gotten an 'elite' status after the axial coding phase. But what does this entail? Being fast and innovative means:

wanting to implement technological innovations as fast as possible, being a pioneer, being open for change, etc. This element thus determines whether the shift to Omni-Channel retailing is made. The website itself is seen as something informative. Even the web shop is seen as informative rather than a channel for sales. *'On a daily basis people come in the store that first looked at our web shop to see if we had it in stock' (9a).* What will be important in the future and what is even seen by the most stubborn retails as necessary is the use of *social media* (today Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). This channel should be fully integrated in the business model of the shop. It is useful for advertisement and maybe even *neuromarketing* in the future. The two biggest problems for retailers to implement an internet strategy are the big competitive power of the pure players and the budget of the store. *'We have looked into using an app for our store, but it is simply too costly at the moment' (17a).* A clear vision of the use of hardware internet technologies in the store was absent. Although thought about these implementations where there, a real will to implement them were not found. This does not mean that it is not important. It means that knowledge about these elements is absent.

The third part about the shopkeeper that is important is the cooperation between them. It seems that this cooperation is both wanted and on the other hand not wanted at all. The small shopkeepers will have a hard time in the future keeping their heads up if they won't cooperate. *'They have to work together; otherwise they will not be an entrepreneur in the future' (1a).* The biggest problem in cooperation is the *cost of cooperation*; this is not cost in terms of money but rather cost in terms of giving up independence. Working together is something that will have a negative impact on your store's image. One expression of cooperation that is locally but also to some degree national embedded is the making of a Business Investment Zone. This BIZ is seen by the shopkeepers as a tool that gives them more control on their environment.

The consequences for the implemented strategies could be the following ones. At first the attitude of the shopkeepers will have to change to be able to be fast and innovative. One has to be interested in future developments and should be able to implement them. Another important consequence is that the shopkeeper will have to become consumer oriented. This means that the shopkeeper has to search for the needs of the customer. The customer should be the central point in the shop. The customer should also be tackled online. Making sure that you at least talk to your customer ones a month via the internet is essential. Another important consequence is the cooperation between shopkeepers. For small shopkeepers no cooperation will mean less income. When thinking about cooperation one should think about cooperating in product delivery, internet strategies etc. The last consequence is the aware shopkeeper. The aware shopkeeper is one that knows what is going on in his or her business.

5.4.4. Chain stores

Apart from the cooperation, most of what has been said on the attitude of the shopkeeper is implementable on the chain store as well. For the change of the city other elements specific for the chain store are interesting to discuss.

- **Causal condition:** Directive restrictions that limit the manager of a local chain store to cooperate in a shopping area/district.
- **Phenomenon:** The role of the chain stores at the moment is one of *free riders*. *'Many chain stores simply won't cooperate. Mainly because the board doesn't allow this cooperation with the small retailers'* (1a). The chain stores are not very involved in the local practice. It seems that due to the low responsibility of the local managers there is no real commitment to act on a local scale. Although this is partly explainable due to the fact that they operate in many local situations, the avoidance of responsibility is rather

shocking. The direction of chain stores simply prohibits working in the local context. On the one hand they serve as catalyst for a shopping area. Attracting people to a shopping area. On the other hand they want no responsibility for the area they are located.

- **Intervening conditions:** Willingness to cooperate between shopkeepers, and willingness to act shopkeepers.
- **Context:** Chain stores in Dutch cities and villages.

Actor	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
Shopkeepers and municipality	• Creating BIZ • Other ways to make them problem owner	• Chain stores will have to change their strategies in shopping areas

Table 7: Role of the chain store

It is questionable whether special directions have to be made to tackle the free riders. The problem emerged out of the interviews as a serious one. On the other hand those stores are the ones that force a change in the city indirectly. They are the parties that implement change and attract consumers. The only thing steering these parties are the wishes of the consumer. One possible strategy though is the creation of a Business Investment Zone (BIZ). Such a BIZ could function as a tool to integrate the chain stores in the local practice. To make them a problem owner so to say. Of course there are other ways to let them pay such as an advertisement tax. The down side of such taxes is that they are a passive tool, meaning that on the one hand they have to pay but on the other hand do not need to show initiative. The willingness of the other shopkeepers to cooperate determines whether a BIZ could be successful. In order to establish a BIZ a certain amount of voters is necessary. Another related intervening condition is the willingness to act by the shopkeepers. Sometimes feeling like a fight with no end, you as shopkeepers have to have a drive to make something out of the situation.

A consequences for the chain stores are to change their strategies in shopping areas. Due to increased internet usage by customers chain stores are mainly focussing on their internet strategies. Although this is understandable the inner city will remain a vital place in a city. Therefore it is essential to keep focussing on the inner city.

5.4.5. The role of the property-owner
The role of the property owner is a concrete and big role in the adaptation to new forms of shopping. The network below will again support my line of reasoning.

- **Causal condition:** The new shopping landscape demands the same sort of flexibility. As we all know some shopping concepts stand the test of time, others simply disappear before we even notice them. So, the causal condition for the need of an increase in flexibility of the property owner is the increase in shopping concepts.
- **Phenomenon:** Flexibility of the property owner.
- **Intervening conditions:** A big limiting factor in this flexibility is the Landlord and Tenant Law as we know it today. The security of tenure is an obstruction for the property owners. 'The leases are infinite in the Netherlands. They can only be terminated if the rental payment is always late. In fact you can never kick your tenant out. This gives you a great uniformity in Dutch shopping areas; you see the same chains everywhere'. Finding a way to build in some flexibility while on the other hand protecting the tenant is something interest organisations are putting all their time in. It seems that when this is resolved, there will come more room for implementation of new shopping concepts and lower rents.

Lowering rents at this time is unthinkable since a lower rent means less value of your property.

- **Context:** Local and national property-owners.

Actor	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
Property owner	• Adaptation of the landlord and tenant law • Willingness to create new contracts	• More room for new initiatives • New shopping concepts • Broader range of shops in shopping areas

Table 8: Role property owner

Another important aspect in the role of the property owner is the power they have in steering developments, and steering the mix of retailers in an inner city. This role is important since the property owners essentially decide whether new shopping concepts will be implemented or not. *'New shopping concepts are used as temporary filling of vacant property. It may not generate a lot of money, but it will create some commotion' (15a). Zones for experimental function* are named as zones where interesting things could happen. In general one could say that for new shopping concepts clustering of these concepts is important. *'The new shopping concepts need to be clustered, whether it by in one building or street. When this clustering is absent the visitor does not know where to find these concepts' (16a).*

5.5.   Conclusion and general picture

The main question going into the interviews was: In view of changes in shopping behaviour due to internet usage what are the possible directions on adaptation to these new forms of shopping? In creating these directions I kept in mind a division into four different tracks. These tracks where: city elements, forms of shops, forms of governance, and technologies. The interviews where set up in such a way that these tracks where discussed in an open way. As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter these tracks did not seem the most prominent ways to deal with adaptation to new forms of shopping. The shopping landscape tends to be a very complex thing. In part this complexity lies in the amount of stakeholders involved in the shopping landscape. To name a few: the consumer (fun shopper and run shopper), the shopkeeper, the chain store, the property owner (local and institutional) and the municipality. On the other hand this complexity lies in the fact that almost nobody knows what the consumer wants. Reported is the importance of cooperation the shopping landscape. In fact this cooperation is seen as the most important developmental direction the shopping landscape has to go through. This also means that when one chooses to cooperate more the role of the municipality is different than proposed in this chapter. It then changes from clear choices of the municipality to clear choices made by the entrepreneurs in cooperation with the municipality. The need for creating more experiences within shops and the inner city is widely acknowledged by all respondents. In fact this is the lack of a well set up business idea or not very imaginative public space is seen as a sin. On the other hand nobody knows what the best way to tackle this problem is.

The first outcomes presented in this chapter have been tested as proposed in the methodological chapter in Venlo. The outcomes of that are presented in chapter 7. Chapter 6 will introduce the case (Venlo) in which the story line is tested.

6. Retail and e-commerce in Venlo

In this chapter the focus will be on the retail developments in Venlo. In this research the choice is made to only look at the inner city and the sub-centres Blerick and Tegelen. An option would have been to also look at the GDV 't Trefcenter. Researching this part of the city as well would be in time given for this internship almost impossible. The main question asked in this respect is: what changes in the retail structure of Venlo can be identified? Next to that a more in depth analysis of the recent policy of the municipality will be given.

6.1. General description

This research focusses on three elements of the retail structure in Venlo. These elements are: the inner city and the sub centres Blerick and Tegelen. Knowing what the strengths and weaknesses are of a shopping area gives an image of that area. To show the reader immediately what the strengths and weaknesses compared to 2006 (the previous survey by BRO) are, information provided by BRO (2014) is translated into English. The tables below give some idea on what the strengths and weaknesses are per part of the city researched. A serious problem, obviously coming from the tables is vacancy.

Inner city:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Renewal of shops**	• Real inner city pullers are vacant
• **Independent retailers still have a shop**	• Vacancy on the edge of the city increases
• **Interest from the market increases**	• Vacancy Maasboulevard
• **Basic conditions are ok**	• Locations are awaiting a new destination
• **New cultural facilities**	• Routing inner city
• **Active policy on vacancy**	

Table 9: Strengths and Weaknesses Inner City (BR0, 2014)

Blerick:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Dumbbell-model as basis**	• Long stretched incoherent structure
• **Presence two full-service supermarkets**	• Poor spread of sub-pullers
• **Presence of some pullers in the non-daily sector**	• Poor culinary supply
• **Parking on short distance to the centre**	• Vast and prolonged vacancy
	• Competitive power in relation to paid parking
	• Pressure on independent retailers

Table 10: Strengths and Weaknesses Blerick (BR0, 2014)

Tegelen:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Complete offer of daily and frequent non-daily products**	• Big vacancy problem
• **Supermarket cluster with plenty parking space**	• Kerkstraat long stretched
• **Cultural heritage**	• Centrum Passage is outdated
• **Contemporary appearance**	• Peak in parking on busy moments
• **Accessibility**	• Deteriorating support
• **Free parking**	

Tabel 11: Strenghts and Weaknesses Tegelen (BR0, 2014)

It is clear that the sub-centres Blerick and Tegelen are suffering from increased vacancy. The inner city on the other hand is doing rather good according to BRO. The retail structure in the

inner city of Venlo is somewhat different than the usual retail structure. This because of the vast amount of German visitors, which go shopping in the supermarket Die 2 Brüder von Venlo. This supermarket located in the so called 'German corner' focuses specially on the German consumer that is interested in coffee and canned products. This supermarket alone attracts about 4 million (mostly German) visitors annually.

Picture 2: Die 2 Brüder von Venlo

In 2014 Venlo had a shopping offer of 2.454m2 shop floors per 1000 inhabitants. In referential municipalities this number lies about 500 m2 below that number. Partly this is explainable due to the massive flow of German consumers. The vacancy of shops (which mainly concentrates in secondary shopping areas) is about 20.7%. The vacancy of floor space is about 6.4%. When we compare this with referential municipalities (16.8% shops, and 9.1% floor space) we see that Venlo suffers from vacancy in small shops. This is explainable due to the presence of large scale supermarkets (BRO, 2014). The ambitions of the late vision can be summarized as follows. It is important to keep and improve a good and attractive shopping offer. This by offering a quantitative and qualitative package of shops and related facilities. Improvement of the competitive position of Venlo, by only strengthening the inner city. It is mainly important to increase the importance of the inner city by refurbishing the inner city. The other secondary shopping areas have gotten less attention. The choice was made to focus more on the inner city rather than the secondary shopping centres. The thought was that these centres would eventually become smaller and of lesser importance. Against all odds, these centres actually survived quite well.

In 2012 the municipality of Venlo (2012) developed a vision on the city centre. The goal of this vision is to give the directors of the municipality some support in the developments in the inner city the next 10 years. Next to that the vision also gives some tools on the management of the developments in the inner city. The city council has communicated their ambition to become the centre of the Euregion. This means that in the city centre an increase in the amount of facilities is essential. Another goal is to also strengthen the other cores of the municipality. The retail structure of Venlo is determined by the inner city, the main areas Blerick and Tegelen, and 'T Trefcenter (PDV/ (GDV)) (BRO, 2006).

As seen above the vision on the city focuses mainly on the inner city. The municipality will not take an active role tackling this vacancy. According to the municipality combatting the vacancy is no task for the municipality. On the other hand the municipality has taken action in helping the retailers with constructing a fund which can help in transforming the area. Another problem in the Venlo shopping landscape is the 'attitude' of the shopkeepers. Even when they got the chance to install a Business Investment Zone (BIZ) in the inner city in 2010 the shopkeepers hampered themselves by not installing such a zone.

The table below (table 2) shows the distribution of the number of visitors per weekday. It is clear that due to the crisis the number of visitors generally has declined. Next to that the Sunday seems to become more important as a shopping day. This is partly explainable due to the fact that Venlo has 52 days of Sunday shopping per year. On the other hand the data used by Locatus is manipulated in such a way that the Sunday shopping days are equalised. So, if a municipality has 12 days a year reserved for Sunday shopping this is equalised to 52 Sunday shopping days.
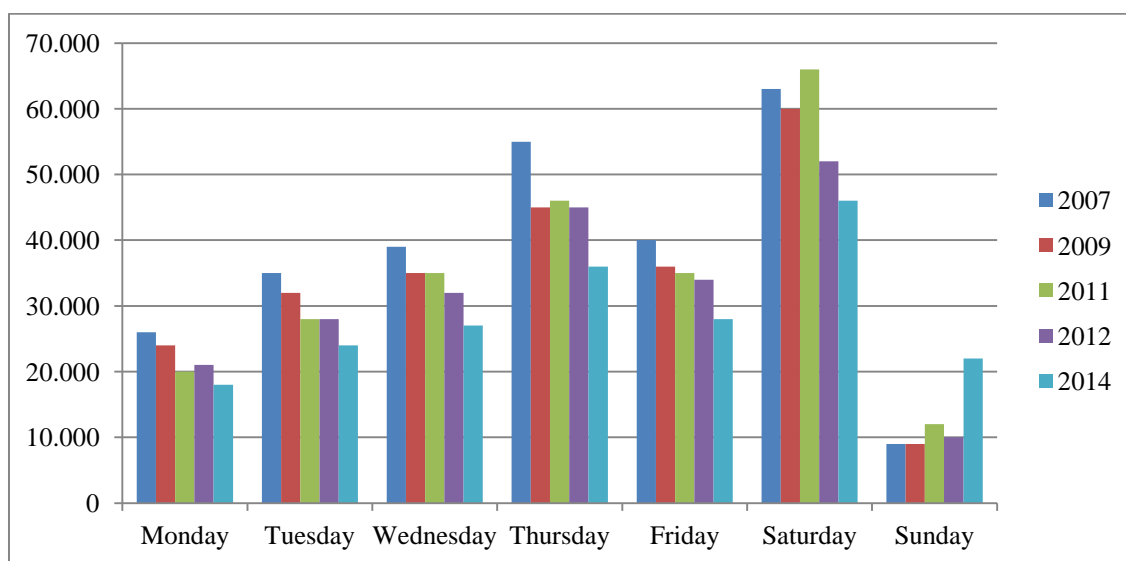
Figure 14: Number of visitors throughout the week. Adapted from Locatus data

6.2. The Retail brief

On the eighth of April 2014 the municipality of Venlo held a 'Detailhandelsnota bijeenkomst' (retail brief meeting). This meeting held at the 'Maaspoort' (theatre) in the centre of Venlo served as the kick off for the next Retail Note. About 2.000 business owners and shopkeepers, where invited to talk about what they want retail wise in the future. Only 170 of them took the opportunity to come to the meeting. The general picture of the meeting was that the business owners where still happy about the lines laid out in 2006. On the other hand, the business owners where not satisfied about the fragmented shopping landscape. According to them it would be important to invest in concentrating retailers in more liveable areas. The scale of the inner city should consequently shrink as well. To recap bluntly everything that increases competition is perceived as something bad, next to that it is more important to increase the shopping supply of the higher segment of shops. For the government this means that they have to increase their interference in the inner city. For the secondary shopping centres another picture is sketched. There is some bickering about the use and function of small supermarkets. On the one hand the increased mobility makes these supermarkets obsolete on the other hand these supermarkets are the perceived 'backbone' of some neighbourhoods. It is expected that the fine grained structure is decreasing nationally due to this increased mobility

(Evers, et al, 2011). Also the shrinking of the secondary centres Blerick and Tegelen is part of discussion. These centres that obviously suffer from vacancy do not, according to the business owners, need to shrink. The municipality could according to BRO (2014) create some sort of transformation fund to facilitate the moving of retailers to other parts of the city (BRO, 2014).

Picture 3: Entrance to the theatre the Maaspoort

In the forthcoming retail brief some changes are made in the mind-set in which the note is situated. The previous note was made in an economic booming period. In the new note the demand of the consumers is 'surprisingly' the leading framework. Shopping in the inner city is becoming more and more in line with the previous chapter a leisure activity. Also the concentration of shopping activities becomes more important. New types of shopping concepts also need to be concentrated and followed as much as possible. For the new nota the divide between various forms of shopping is leading in creating a new retail structure. In the map below (map 1) the future vision of the retail structure in Venlo is sketched. The new role of the municipality is one of steering and not so much action. Goal of the plans stated in the retail brief should be inviting others to invest in the inner city. The future has to show if this course of action is beneficial.
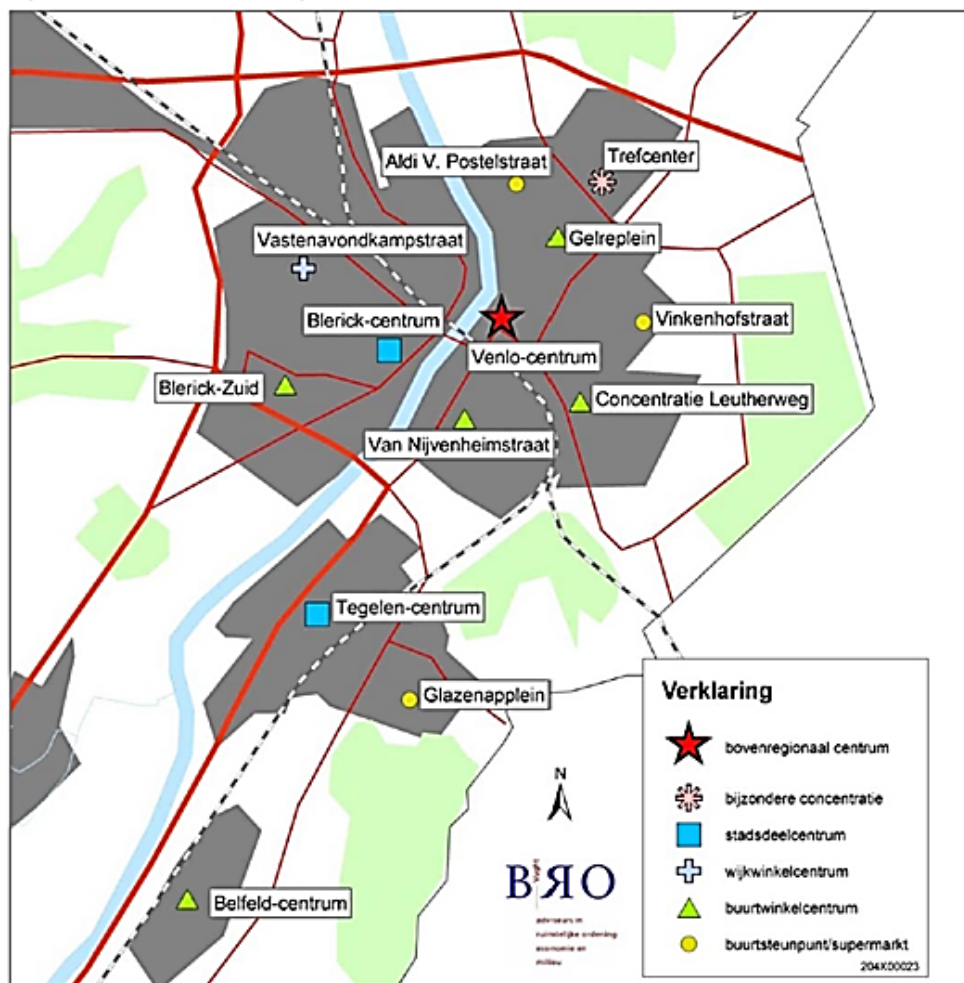
Map 1: Future retail structure Venlo. BRO (2014)

According to the survey the inner city of Venlo is mainly visited by people from, the own municipality (65%). About 14% of the visitors are from Germany, on 'German' days (Tag der Deutsche Einheid, etc) this percentage is, and feels a lot higher. The most important reason to visit the inner city is shopping (56%) followed by walking around (17%). This shows that leisure is an important function of the inner city. About 55% of the respondents in Venlo state that they shop at least once per three months via the internet.

6.3. E-commerce in Venlo

In general the e-commerce in the municipality of Venlo is the same as in other municipalities. Of course the chain stores all have their own web shops to serve the customers. The small retailers I have talked to almost all had a website or web shop. Some independent retailers did not have a web shop since this put too much stress on their business. Another reason these shopkeepers did not have a web shop was the fact that they do not have enough budget to implement a clear e-commerce strategy.

The general web portal for Venlo made by the city marketing branch Venlo Partners is the site www.venloverwelkomt.nl this start page is an informative one. In this day and age almost all municipalities have their own marketing web site. So, one could not say this is very special. All the shopkeepers associations have their own website. None of these website exceed beyond giving information. Only the website of the Klaasstraat (www.klaasstraat.nl) comes close to the website made for 'the nine streets' in Amsterdam (see

http://www.de9straatjes.nl/). This cooperation between shopkeepers is seen as an example for other shopping areas in the Netherlands.

On the next page the business per street is displayed. In a few years' time the number of visitors per street has not changed that much. On the other hand the number of visitors to the Maasboulevard has changed somewhat. It seems that the number of visitors on the Maasboulevard is declining. The Vleesstraat has kept the number of visitors on the course of time. On the other hand the approach roads are shrinking in numbers as well. This proves that the statements made in the theoretical chapter are applicable on the situation in Venlo.

Map 2: Maasboulevard in 2011

Map 3: Maasboulevard in 2012

Map 4: Maasboulevard in 2014

Map 5: Inner city in 2007

Map 6: Inner city in 2012

Map 7: Inner city in 2014

Intensiteit
passanten per wegsegment

0 tot 2.500
2.500 tot 5.000
5.000 tot 10.000
10.000 tot 15.000
15.000 tot 25.000
25.000 tot 40.000
40.000 tot 80.000

Legenda
bouwblokken

Bouwblokken
Oriëntatiepunten

Legenda

Tuin
Water
Voetgangersgebied
Openbare parkeergarage
Openbaar parkeerterrein
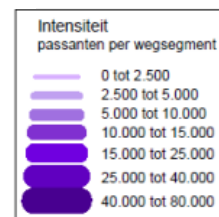
Locatus, maart 2014

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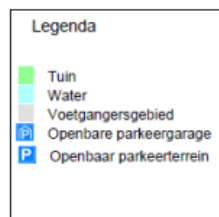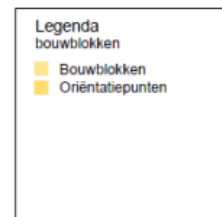
6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter the retail developments in the Municipality of Venlo are discussed. The sub-question answered in this chapter is: *can the changes be identified in the municipality of Venlo?* In doing this I provided some context for the rest of this thesis.

The above posed question can partly be answered by the above given framework. What essentially became clear is the fact that the retail structure in Venlo suffers from vacancy. The retail structure in Venlo characterises itself by a very fine grained structure on daily commodities. The inner city thanks its existence in part from German consumers visiting Die 2 Brüder von Venlo. As seen above the retail structure is rather large for a municipality the size of Venlo. Next to that, there is a strong divide between the inner city and the secondary shopping centres Blerick and Tegelen. These shopping centres are losing their bond with the consumers at a very fast pace. Another important shopping area in Venlo is 't Trefcenter. This large-scale retail area is doing pretty well at the moment. The development towards shopping as a leisure activity is identifiable in Venlo. The Sunday is becoming more important as a shopping day.

Vacancy is already mentioned above as a big problem in approach roads in the inner city and in secondary shopping centres. The municipality has chosen to act moderately in these centres. If this is a wise choice has to be seen in the near future. Specific e-commerce strategies are not identifiable in Venlo.

The inner city of Venlo may call itself the best inner city until 2015. The goal of the municipality is to become the centre of the Euregion in a couple of years' time. In speaking out this ambition the municipality committed to a specific plan. According to this plan more emphasis has to be put on the inner city.

So, partly one can argue that in Venlo some of the changes identified in chapter 2 are seen. On the other hand, specific e-commerce strategies are missing. Concrete ideas on beacon grids or pick-up points (to name a few) are missing. Of course the individual retailers do have their websites and the occasional web shop. Not speaking about the chain stores that have their respective (inter) nationally e-commerce strategies.

7. Vision validation

In this seventh chapter of this research into adaptation on new forms of shopping, a validation of the in chapter 6 proposed directions is made. According to the methodological strategy a second research round is built in to test the 'groundness' of the 'theory' presented above. The question central in this chapter is: *what insights are raised in analysing these three parts of the city and do the directions need to be adapted according to the insights raised?* In answering this question a second interview round was proposed. In doing so 11 interviews were conducted, a mix of chain stores, municipalities, association of undertakings, and retail experts.

7.1. Validation method

In this second interview round a specific method is used. Before the interview the vision document as seen in the previous chapter is send to the respondent. This has specifically done to ensure that the respondents have a clear cut idea on what the interview is about. To make sure the respondents had the opportunity to read the document, it was sent one week before the start of the interview. Next to that the document was kept small and readable. It seemed that almost all respondents had read the document (visible notes and paper folds). Next to that the respondents where content about the quality of the document. On the other hand some respondents noticed the lack of concrete measurements in the document. This was actually intended, to provoke more ideas from the respondents. The interview itself was a semi-structured interview. For the interview guide see the appendix. The outcomes are described based on the chapters of the vision document.

7.2. Validation outcomes

This paragraph is divided in five different sub-paragraphs in line with the vision document as can be seen in the appendix.

7.2.1. Importance of creating experiences

The first chapter of the vision document was on the importance of creating experiences in inner city shopping areas. If creating some experience value is important, does not seem to be a question. Especially according to one of the respondents due to the increased 'filialisation' of shopping areas. Importance of utilising your city's DNA is acknowledged. Feedback on the DNA was that it actually entails the city's history and presence of small shopkeepers. The market should implement and act accordingly some reported. On the other hand others agreed on the use of city marketing tools to implement this DNA. Some argued that this DNA should be visible in the public space. Inner cities are transforming from place to buy to place to meet. Although not all city centres are making this transformation. Some inner cities keep their strength as a buying centre. One should make the question: *'how are you going to create experience value?'(3b)* concrete. This question asked by one of the respondents is an interesting question. After directly asking the respondents on their ideas, it seems to be about the usage of green public space, events, diversity in shops, and the appearance of the shopping area. Events seem to be something that has to be tackled more efficiently. Although events increase the bond between inhabitants and potentially attract more visitors. They can also lock the inner city, making it for consumers impossible to shop. On the other hand due to the increased internet usage to buy products, people have an urge for more comfort in the inner city. In the secondary centres Blerick and Tegelen experience economy is of a lesser value. Events could help in these centres, although the centre of gravity lies somewhere else. In these centres it is mainly important to focus effort on increasing the appearance of the streets and making parking for free. Retailers noted a strong increase of in store collection of products ordered online. To facilitate a new way of managing the flow of products is essential.

Especially in the secondary shopping areas new ways of dealing with this is important. Retailers showed the problems that occurred due to the fact that not all customers picked-up their orders. The secondary shopping areas could be used as pick-up point one responded noted. Pick-up points flourish when they can be placed on 'slipper distance'. Allowing car's in special areas to pick-up the products could be beneficial in these areas. In general comfort making actions should be left to the market. Municipalities should not intervene in creating pick-up points. Many market players are trying to implement these ideas, only making them profitable on the other hand seems to be a problem. Specific for Venlo implementing the experience economy is something to be done in the inner city. Events (sporting events, festivals) along the river the 'Maas' can potentially increase the amount of visitors. Next to that, investing time and effort of the city marketing budget in the Maasboulevard can increase the amount of visitors in that area. City marketing is a task that is often done by municipalities. Some respondents noted the possibility of using a commercial bureau for performing the city marketing. At the moment the Maasboulevard according to the interviewees, does not have an experience value. They reported it as 'cold', next to that the vacancy in the area does not contribute to a lively area. The comfort of the inner city can be increased by changing the parking policies. In general parking seems to be the number one problem according to retailers. According to them parking affrays consumers to come to the city centre. Another problem in the inner city is the use of the title: best inner city. The title best inner city is an initiative of the platform inner city management. The title is a quality label showing the effort made in an inner city to improve it. The title is dived in two categories, large inner city, and medium large inner city. That is the reason why there are two best inner cities at the same time (www.bestebinnenstad.nl). At the moment the retailers in the inner city are not satisfied with the implementation of the title. Therefore effort has to be made especially in this day and age where almost every city is best in something, to use the title in a satisfying manner. At the moment this is and will stay the task of Venlo Partners.

7.2.2. The role of the municipality

The municipality of Venlo has its own specific problems. A strong divide is made between the inner city and the secondary shopping areas. Especially Blerick which is located within a kilometre of the inner city. The question exists whether there is enough room in the municipality for two shopping areas that are next to each other. It is the task for the municipality to, in cooperation with the shopkeepers, make clear choices in respect of this issue. For both Blerick and Tegelen reconsideration has to be made on the scale of the centres. Vacancy creates unattractive streets in these centres. Permitting other functions in these streets could increase the attractiveness of these streets. Actually helping retailers to move to more future proof areas is more important. In the vision document a special role for municipalities has been reserved. Distilling from the first interview round, clear choice making was important. The described role for the municipality is agreed on by most of the respondents. Especially the clear choice making is an important point. '*The most important task for a municipality is making clear choices' (3b).* Although this seems to be a clear cut argument, making these choices is partly the task of a City Council. City Councils tend to have problems with making these kinds of choices. Entrepreneurs want to know beforehand where they can tap into a market. '*Municipalities should make it clear what the developments per street are' (3b).* The shrinkage of the retail structure is also explainable in this line of reasoning. When the structure shrinks competition is shrinking as well. On the other hand this somewhat turns into a vicious circle. Next to that not all respondents agreed on this. '*Communication is important only you should not let everything depend on big players' (5b).* Some others argued that diversity in shops is more important than a smaller retail structure. The individual retailers are the ones that put more liveliness in the inner city. Municipalities

should make an effort 'helping' these retailers. '*Vacancy should only be addressed by the municipality if it creates dangerous situations or loss of face' (9b).* An important task for municipalities is to get the players in a shopping area at the table. Next to that the instalment of investment funds is seen as an important task for municipalities. Another strategy heard is creating a bid book. A bid book could be used to show investors, retailers, and property-owners what future developments are possible. This so called 'temptation planning' is argued as useful in shopping areas. Municipalities should also act on making the zoning plans more flexible. '*Only by making zoning plans in approach roads more flexible, other functions like lunchrooms are possible' (2b).* When talking about facilitating e-commerce developments, creating funds seems to be important. The retailers should on the other hand come with the ideas on e-commerce. When the retailers have ideas, it is the task of the municipality to facilitate the ideas. Next to that a municipality should never pay for all developments. To quote a respondent: '*giving things to retailers for free makes it literally worthless' (9b).* So, co-funding e-commerce activities seems to be the best way to tackle this problem. Another interesting feature is the role of the civil servants. As seen in the vision document, promoting personal contact seemed to be the way to create more understanding for their role. Another dimension to their role is becoming experts on e-commerce. '*The most important task of the municipality is the transfer of knowledge to shopkeepers' (7b).* Although partly agreeing on this, knowledge collection is the task of the shopkeeper. Shopkeepers should be able to survive in a faster changing environment. '*It is important for you as retailer to become the fittest' (3a).* Next to that lots of retailers do not even notice the policies of the municipality. '*I'm not noticing the municipality all that much' (1b).*

7.2.3. The shopkeeper

Because of the size of the municipality of Venlo (about 100.000 inhabitants) chain stores will not easily do everything to serve the customer. Numerous times people report that Venlo is not their biggest priority. Next to that the inner city of Venlo is unfortunately alike many other inner cities. For an independent retailer it is therefore important to be distinctive. Written in the vision document a call for retailers to be fast and innovative. Not acting in this manner will eventually lead to a bankrupt store. In testing this it seemed that this was only the case with independent retailers. '*In this [retail] world it stays important to keep adapting to the changing conditions' (3b).* For chain stores this adapting is mostly done by the headquarters. '*The headquarters does research into adaptation. We as mangers need to implement the roadmap' (1b).* The difference made in independent retailers and chain stores thus stays important. Implementing an experience based idea in your store seems to be difficult. For independent retailers it is important to focus on the personal contact with customers. For franchise implementing experience value is difficult, since they have to use the corporate identity. On the other hand, this should not prevent the franchise to give a personal touch to the store. For stores in the secondary shopping centres, offering something extra seems to be service towards customers. One should ask the question whether this is something that can be called an experience. On the other hand the supermarket Die 2 Brüder is a supermarket that seems to provide some sort of experience towards its customers. This is shown by the fact that many of these customers go to the supermarket because of its (in)famous status as a big shopping centre. Especially in secondary shopping locations experiences play no role. '*People come here to buy. It is more important to look into the wishes of the customer, and thus improve their comfort' (6b).* This strengthens me in my argument that this 'experience economy' is a say it all word. People say that it is important but what it entails stays vague. Respondents do not go further than seeing it as hospitality. '*It is important as retailer to be enthusiastic' (5b).*On the other hand some retailers argued that this importance of hospitality is decreasing. '*Hospitality used to be important. Now a day's not all customers are interested*

in a polite retailer' (4b). Retailers do see a shift towards more internet orders. *'You notice a strong shift towards internet shopping. We now days have over 40 orders per week' (6b).* A concern on the effects of this on the budget, and floor space of small retailers was identified in the first round of interviews. In this second round this concern was partially agreed on. Although some said that entrepreneurs have to take risks (entrepreneurship is a tricky business), others agreed on the problems. *'As a shopkeeper you need to be active on social media. Whether a web shop is necessary is doubtful. In order to make the web shop profitable (doubtful if it is even possible) you will have to see it as your second job' (5b).* Some retailers even had doubts about the necessity of extra storage. *'I would like to say that the internet orders actually make our operations more tuned in' (3b).* An important new feature that came up in this second interview round was the necessity of a personalized customer database. After the first interview round no real distinctive corporate strategy was identified by the researcher. In this second interview round the importance of a personalised customer database accompanied with the use of beacons was stressed. Whether the technology changed in the course of a couple of months or whether people where more familiar with the technology stays guessing. As researcher I would like to think the vision document made the respondents more sensitive for these statements. *'With a platform targeting customers, retailers can push personalised messages towards customers. Next to that it is important that retailers do this together. Nothing is more confusing than multiple platforms' (7b).* When thinking about these platforms one should think about apps that allow customers to see products and advertisements. An important feature is installing a so called 'beacon grid'. So, slowly the technological innovations proposed (such as Geo-fencing, Kiosk, mPOS RFID, and Mobile coupons) are finding their way to the minds of the people. One has to take into account although that the people that propose these ideas to the researcher are fast and innovative entrepreneurs. These people take these ideas and make them their own. A rightful question that has to be answered is: *'do customers want this' (8b).* In the jungle of these technological innovations it seems to be that customers actually want this. On the other hand no real functioning platform has been launched at the point of writing.

7.2.4. Cooperation

Cooperation between entrepreneurs in shopping areas is, as seen in the previous chapter not something that is obvious. Although in the first interview round respondents stated that cooperation is the most important. Cooperation is due to various reasons virtually impossible. Identified is the problem of free riders, the problem of lack of time, the problem of communication, etc. In essence the picture described in the previous chapter is unanimously confirmed. Some reported it as the most important chapter in the document. *'I think that the chapter about cooperation is the most important' (8b). 'Implementing new sales channels is virtually impossible without cooperation' (7b).* The problem of non-cooperating chain stores is confirmed as well. On the other hand they report that the problem is inevitable. *'The problem of free riders is an age old problem' (3b). 'The only way to tackle this problem is by installing a fund on mandatory basis'(5b).* The managers at chain stores that are in no way an independent owner of the store report that they simply are not allowed to act in cooperation. A simple measurement to start the cooperation is by asking all the retailers in a shopping area their e-mail adress. A simple newsletter few times per year can do wonders. Next to that my argumentation for creating a BIZ is agreed on numerous times. *'A BIZ is a fine way to cooperate. You can make a plan of action beforehand, and really stick to it' (4b).* In order to make a BIZ successful a specific plan of action has to be taken according to respondents. First of all a poll under retailers is important. Preferably two locally well-known retailers go door by door showing what can be done in a BIZ with a bid book. The second step would be creating a good delineation of the BIZ area. Since every object has a voting right making this

delineation has to be done with care. Thirdly being honest about the number of votes is important. Chain stores will not vote as will non-stores. Fourthly a flexible notary is important. In order to get enough votes actually collecting the votes seems important. When the BIZ is installed a commercial party has to have the power over the daily board. The shopkeepers should have the power to assess the work of this manager. For me as researcher dealing with this highly political question was not intended. Not so much adaptation to shopping is seen as important. Rather the behaviour of other players in the shopping landscape is important.

In Venlo, the creation of a BIZ has failed. At the first voting round it was obvious that not enough potential voters had used their vote. Many independent retailers were and are still under the impression that a BIZ could have done the city well. The evaluation showed that the timing of the ballot as the focus was not in order. In Tegelen, in 2011 they did manage to create a BIZ. This BIZ is mainly used to improve appearance of the street. Through the proper use of the budget a number of things are adequately addressed. In Blerick the cooperation of entrepreneurs is strongly thinking about implying a BIZ. The main reason is that one wants to let the free riders pay for the appearance of the shopping area. Free riders also note in addition, that a BIZ gives them more freedom in determining where the money goes. The interviews revealed that mainly the costs of cooperation were estimated higher than the yields. People are afraid that if too much time in the collaboration is invested, one is incapable to have time for their own store. Partly entrepreneurs have a point. The store is, after all, the place where they earn a living. When these costs of cooperation are very high, it is thinkable to propose a collaboration manager. A local person should be the number one option. Numerous times people in the interviews addressed to importance of local knowledge. That person could consequently put all his time and energy in creating partnerships. The question is whether the chain stores in all shopping areas are interested in cooperation. From the interviews it is strongly suggested that these stores have no interest in cooperation at the local level. The reason for this is that the owners of these stores are not allowed to do so by the leadership at the national level. In order to solve this problem, it is important to intensively invest time in the improvement of communication between the different retailers.

7.2.5. The problem of vacancy

In the vision document described above a separate chapter was written on the problem and solutions for vacancy. Vacancy creates problems especially in secondary shopping areas as well as approach roads. Intentionally the document was written somewhat straightforward hoping for a lively discussion. This approach was partly successful. Undoubtfully the problem of vacancy is partly market based, partly political, and partly lack of knowledge. This process has already been described in the previous chapter. The intensively discussed Landlord and Tennant Law has been left out of the second interview round. This law has to be dealt with on a national level. Next to that although it is an important part in the shopping landscape it seems to be used by property owners to justify their acting. On the one hand property-owners state that the law prohibits future developments. On the other hand the retailers state that the problem lies in the amount of shopping meters. In the vision document the urge for clear developments was stressed, by using the word 'temptation planning'. '*One had to make the retail policy interesting in order to attract investors' (3b).* Creating a bid book is often stressed as a way to attract investments, or show retailers what future developments could be possible when they cooperate. For a municipality it indeed seems to be important to, if necessary actively intervene in a market. An active approach consists out of two directions. '*One the one hand we stimulate the market by actively searching for dialogue between the most prominent owners of the inner city. On the other hand investment funds for property are developed in order to let people invest. One has to think about subsidies to refurbish old*

buildings' (2b). Another approach is to not invest in dealing with vacancy. An argument that was used a lot was: '*You can't come with money to deal with vacancy. In essence you support the property-owner' (9b).* Therefore changing functions in vacancy stricken streets is more effective. This is also more in line with the call on national level to shrink the retail structure. Even on the local level the call for changing functions in suffering streets is imminent. Almost all respondents note that changing functions in approach roads or secondary shopping centres is an important step to take. The question remains how to do this. The most heard answer to this question is by simply making the zoning plans more flexible. Making the rules for gastronomic activities more flexible seems to make previously suffering streets more liveable. '*The funny thing is that since we made the rules for gastronomic activities more flexible, small coffee businesses seem to appear' (2b).* Next to changing functions in streets talking to local property-owners can help in generating the possibilities for investments. The necessity for good contact is stressed a lot.

7.3.   Conclusion and directions

As seen in this chapter on the validation of the vision document, almost all respondents agreed on the picture made. This second interview round has strengthen the story even more. Providing me with an additional layer of detail the respondents in this round enjoyed talking about the subject. The question central in this interview round is: *what insights are raised in analysing these three parts of the city and do the directions need to be adapted according to the insights raised?* In answering this question a step by step approach is taken, discussing each chapter.

The first chapter on the experience city has led to a deepening of the use of the word experience. The experience economy in inner cities should be based on the DNA of a city. Therefore a strong city marketing policy is important. Next to that DNA actually entails the city's history and presence of small shopkeepers. Answering the question how to make the experience economy in the inner city concrete is virtually impossible. It seem to be something that is already present in some inner cities. The concept needs to be linked, in the researchers understanding more towards the following already used quote: '*In our world of globalization, hyper-capitalism, and mass-individualism, there seems to be no escape from having and parading a personal identity, no escape from the commercial template for seductive urban shopping spaces' (Van Houtum and Spierings, 2008, p. 899).* Strengthened by the conduct of many interviews and the strong difference in answering the questions about experience based actions, experiences do not seem to be something that can be forced onto people. To recall, the simple definition of experience is something that is memorable (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). When is something memorable? Memorable things differ per person I would like to stress. Concrete measurements could be aimed at the following: making the city's DNA visible in the public space, creating events that are aimed at proudness and togetherness, and making the inner city more comfortable. The creation of pick-up points, WIFI networks, Beacon grids, etc. should be left to the market. The retailers should be the ones to propose these measurements.

The most important new insight raised into the role of the municipality is mainly aimed at having a wait-and-see policy as municipality. Municipalities should firstly try to make zoning plans in suffering streets and secondary areas more flexible. Secondly you should not constrain new ideas from retailers. Keeping in mind that making rules is essentially prohibiting things, the opposite should be the policy. When ideas come from retailers (installing a beacon grid) municipalities should co-fund these activities. Co-funding these activities makes two parties responsible for the correct implementation.

The respondents agreed on the picture sketched in the vision document. An extra feature in the experience store is the importance of creating an individualised consumer database. This database than has to be set up with a group of retailers. Experience in secondary shopping areas plays no role. People come there to buy. More important is to focus on making it the consumer as easy as possible.

Cooperation between retailers is seen as the most important chapter in the vision document. It seems that cooperation can improve the future possibilities of independent retailers. Cooperation is due to various reasons virtually impossible. Identified is the problem of free riders, the problem of lack of time, the problem of communication, etc. More insights into establishing a BIZ are raised. The BIZ is seen as the way to cooperate. On the other hand installing a BIZ is a highly political game.

In offering solutions to vacancy one should first be familiar with the political game causing this vacancy. Changing functions in approach roads and secondary shopping areas could help in decreasing the vacancy. Next to that stressing the importance of a smaller retail structure is important. Moving shops or buying out shops is a difficult story. Should the community pay for shopkeepers that did not do their jobs correctly? Distilling from the interviews this should only be done if nothing else works. For Venlo specific one can argue that the respondents recognised the picture. The only thing missing in the document were concrete measurements to be taken in specific areas. In agreeing on this I would like to take the opportunity to use the conclusion (chapter 8) to present a list with actions to be taken right away subdivided per actor. A table consisting of choices per phenomenon and consequences of those choices is used to recap the story so far.

Phenomenon	Choice(s)	Consequence(s) of choices (utopian view)	Consequence on choices other phenomena
Increased importance of experiencing in shops and shopping areas.	• Importance of utilising your city's DNA. • Creating events. • Creating more comfort.	Consumer increases the amount of free time in the inner city.	These choices can be made independently or as a part of a cooperation form on mandatory basis. When the choices are made independently it seems to be best to as municipality facilitate a climate wherein shopkeepers/entrepreneurs can implement these choices.
Rol of the municipality	• Municipality has to facilitate. • Municipality has to create clear policies.	More attraction of investors. Shopkeepers have a better understanding of their role and opportunities.	The more a municipality acts the fewer entrepreneurs care about for instance public space.
Attitude shopkeeper.	• Creating a personalized customer database. • Be active on social media. • Being a fast innovator. • Compete on experiences.	Entrepreneurs act on their own in an innovative way.	When entrepreneurs see that their attitude has to change and that they can create a better inner city together. The need for a strong role of the municipality declines.
Free riders (chain stores)	• Creating cooperation on a mandatory basis.	Chain stores are forced to act together with other entrepreneurs.	When cooperation on mandatory basis is installed all other phenomena/choices become obsolete except the problem of vacancy.
Vacancy	• Temptation planning. • Dealing with vacancy actively.	Vacancy is tackled actively.	No real consequence on other choices.

Tabel 12: Choices and consequences

7.4. What to do in Venlo?

In this paragraph concrete recommendations to practice and theory are given. The practical recommendations are given to the municipality of Venlo, since this research has been done for the municipality. In giving the recommendations the specific roles of the actors are kept in mind. The recommendations to the theory have been done in outlining questions that came up in this research.

For the municipality:

• Improvement of the Maasboulevard by implementing a range of soft measurements. Such as investing in green spaces, implementing the DNA of the Maas, improving the routing to the Maasboulevard. Acquisition of brands that appeal to the German consumer. Partly this is under construction by means of improving the grid of the street.

- Enter into dialogue with retailers and property-owners on the possibilities and needs for relocation. This should only be done in the case where the retailer initiates the movement, to avoid a buying out problem.
- Clear communication of policies and future developments. Think about describing per street what has to be done and what should not be done. A bulletproof way is letting a group of stakeholders create a bid book showing what could be done.
- Understanding that events create movement and strengthen the inner city.
- Adapting the policy on events in the inner city to the contemporary time. This means that events should be aimed at the following: enhancing proudness of inhabitants, strengthening the retail and hospitality industry, and attracting more visitors. This also means not putting fences in front of shops.
- Seeing civil servants as advisors and facilitators of ideas of entrepreneurs.
- Investing time in creating a transformation fund.
- Acquisition of brands that appeal to the German consumer in the Vleesstraat and Maasboulevard.
- Linking parking tariffs to other expenses.
- Creating more cooperation in Blerick by firstly inventorying the contact details of the shopkeepers.
- Adapting the parking system in Blerick to a comfort based understanding of the shopping area.
- Seeking dialogue in Blerick with retailers and property-owners on the moving of shops to the main street.
- Seeking dialogue in Tegelen with retailers and property-owners on the moving of shops to the main street.
- Adapting the zoning plan in Tegelen to a more flexible plan allowing housing in the main street.

For the shopkeeper:

- As independent retailer not choosing for a web shop to make money, but more, seeing it as an information channel. As a consequence investing in a digital customer database is essential. A widely amount of apps/databases are available to do this.
- Implementing an experience economy based element in your shop is essential for making something memorable.
- Contacting other retailers to establish partnerships.
- Realizing that you as an independent retailer are partly responsible for the feeling of a shopping area.
- Local managers of chain stores should realise that they should bring something to the table to get information about, for example opening hours.

To get cooperation in a shopping area:

- In the case of a small shopping area firstly inventorying the contact details is essential. The second step is contacting them monthly via a newsletter. The maker of the newsletter could be subsidized by the municipality.
- In a bigger shopping area creating a BIZ is seen as essential. In order to establish this BIZ the following steps need to be taken: First off a poll under retailers is important. Preferably two locally well-known retailers go door by door showing what can be done in a BIZ with a bid book. The second step would be creating a good delineation of the BIZ area. Since every object has a voting right making this delineation has to be

done with care. Thirdly being honest about the number of votes is important. Chain stores will not vote as will non-stores. Fourthly a flexible notary is important. In order to get enough votes actually collecting the votes seems important. When the BIZ is installed a commercial party has to have the power over the daily board. The shopkeepers should have the power to assess the work of this manager.

Role of the property-owner:

- Urge for a new way of dealing with rental contracts. Possibilities could be a turnover dependent contract or a contract that has an increasing rent.
- Shout-out to property owners to invest in ways to temporary facilitate experimental shopping ideas.
- Improvement of ways to communicate with the municipality about desired future developments.

8. Conclusion

In this final chapter of this master thesis research into the adaptation of cities to new forms of shopping a conclusion is written. In doing so, firstly the problem definition written in chapter one is repeated. Secondly the sub-questions asked are systematically answered. Some room for discussion is reserved in this. The main question will be answered in a systematically way as well. The second paragraph will discuss the contributions to theories in the thesis's domain. This paragraph will have a discussion format, and will also discuss the use of the methodological approach. Lastly the limitations of this research are described in a critical reflection of the research, results, and recommendations.

8.1.   What directions?

The historically driven shift from a city based on modernistic ideas towards a city based on post-modernistic ideas has arguably led to increased effects of *Information and communication technologies* (ICT). The only thing that links the elements in cities are theoretically speaking these technologies. One of those technologies is the internet. A strong rise of internet sales is reported in chapter 4. As a consequence the buying process of the consumer and the business model of the shopkeeper/entrepreneur has changed. A reaction on this change is the emergence of Omni-channel retailing, and its related technologies. Because the traditional shop is virtually out priced by big pure players, a new business model becomes a must. Experiences seem to be something retailers can use in order to compete with web shops. The experiences an area can generate determines whether consumers go and shop somewhere. On the other hand consumers shop for various reasons, these may not include a specific goal or need for a product. They, for example need entertainment, recreation, social interaction, or intellectual stimulation. As a consequence the same retail environment causes different experiences depending on the goal of the shopper. It seems to be more helpful for retailers to first focus on offering a shopping environment based on hospitality. This may seem to be an open door. On the other hand chain stores have a hard time implementing a hospital environment. Hospitality has been lacking in the shopping environment since the turn of the century some respondents stated.

In order to research how cities adapt to the new forms of shopping presented above, a grounded theory research has been conducted. This way a theory based on a broad empirical basis is constructed. Cities adapt by creating an experiences based shopping area. This means that shopkeepers have to have more hospitality towards the consumers. The image of the city needs to change as well, events can be used to create a more liveable shopping area. The municipality should act accordingly. There is need for clear and implementable city marketing policies. The municipality should act on helping retailers (e.g. helping starting retailers with business plan, etc). Accordingly they should implement clear policies on what is and what is not allowed in certain areas. This actually is the complete opposite many policies and theories are built on. Often vagueness is used as a protection mechanism. In order to keep all options open (some) vagueness is required. A downside of this approach is that not all people understand the policies and can act accordingly. Small shopkeepers should act on creating more willingness to implement experiences and new technologies. This seems to be the only way an independent retailer can survive. Importance of cooperation in shopping areas was stressed as the most important developmental direction for cities. A serious problem is the fact that chain stores are not allowed to cooperate. To tackle this problem chain stores have to be forced in cooperation via a form of cooperation on obligatory basis. Another problem is the vacancy in shopping areas. In order to tackle this problem active policies on vacancy have to be used by governments of municipalities.

An important question is whether these ideas/theories stand their ground in an actual case. In order to test this the case Venlo is used. After doing the case study a few additions to the theory above have been made. It is important to stress that experiences in a city are built from the city's DNA, which is its history and local entrepreneurs, and the shopping comfort. In Venlo specific the local DNA is awarded with a title (Best Inner City). Although one could argue about the way these titles are given or the power of such a title. It essentially is a golden ticked to implement some of the ideas above. The comfort part comes from researching the needs in secondary shopping areas Blerick and Tegelen. Experiences do not play a very important part in these areas. An important question raised by entrepreneurs is: *how are you going to make experiences concrete?* In paragraph 8.2 this is discussed in detail. Interviewees reported on the importance of clear choice making. This is mainly important due to the vacancy problem. Some shopping streets in Venlo suffer severely from pressure of vacancy. Making clear choices helps in determining where a municipality acts on this vacancy. Due to the fact that the shopping landscape of Venlo is characterised by shopping districts close to each other questions were asked about the utility of a lot of shopping space. It is reported that in the future big amounts of shopping meters become obsolete. The case Venlo did not lead to new insights into the role of the small shopkeeper. Experiences are seen as having hospitable attitude. In paragraph 8.2 this phenomenon is further discussed. One thing that is rather remarkable is the view that there is no real use in a web shop for a small shopkeeper. On the other hand the implementation of new technologies is slowly appearing in the shopping landscape. The importance of cooperation especially to internalise the free riders is seen as important. In Venlo it seems to only work in very small well definable entities. Therefore it was possible to implement it in Tegelen and possibly in Blerick. In the main shopping area it seemed to be undoable to create a BIZ.

So, In view of changes in shopping behaviour due to internet usage what are the possible directions on adaptation to these new forms of shopping in the municipality of Venlo? At the end of chapter 7 a table is presented stressing the consequences and the effects of the choices on other choices. The most important first step in making a step into the future is creating cooperation in the shopping landscape. The players in this landscape should know that it is undoable not to be part of the shopkeeper's community. As municipality you should be hesitant on acting to implement experiences and new comfort enhancing technologies. It is important to recognise that this is mainly the task for entrepreneurs. Specific things that can be done in Venlo are described in chapter 7.4.

8.2. Discussion

An important notion in the theoretical chapter was the shift to a postmodern city. It was doubtful if it was even possible to see postmodern elements in Dutch cities. Dutch cities will have a strong hierarchical build up as long as the planning system stays as it is. We do not yet see a strong shift to keno-capitalism in the Netherlands. The importance of telecommunication is however visible. It is true that the only thing fixing some elements together are the telecommunication networks. The postmodern city stays a very theoretical concept. This theoretically sits in the fact that space stays important, although the possibilities of the internet increase. Random patterns as proposed by Dear and Flusty are almost absent in the Netherlands. Explaining the concept to interviewees posed difficulties as well. On the other hand the design principles wherein functionality is shifted towards mixed use are visible. Vacant industrial sites are used in different mixed experimental form today. Special industries are clustered.

A link was made between the postmodern city and the need of implementing the experience economy of Pine and Gilmore. It would be recommended to research the

implementation of this experience economy. In this research some first elements are identified. A grounded theory research could be done to get more focus on what this experience economy actually entails. Right now it is used as a say it all word. This posed difficulties on finding ideas on how these experiences can be made concrete. Coming from this research experiences in the inner city can be created via events, implementing the city's DNA, and offering comfort. In the course of this research the question what experiences are has been answered by the respondents numerous times and always in a personalised form. An individualised society will lead to more individualised and less stereotype choices. It is questionable whether this can be implemented in concrete behaviour or consequences. In addition to that, not all behaviour is done conscious. Therefore the fixed experiences of Pine and Gilmore are almost unworkable for retailers that want to implement this economic activity of creating experience value. Making a specific plan to create experiences may work in Disneyland but not so much in the local bookstore. Arguable the holistic definition of Gentile is more workable. On the other hand one should ask the question whether a very unique individualised thing such as an experience is conceptualiseble. It is therefore open for discussion whether this economic activity is worthwhile in the shopping landscape. It seems to be more important to simply implement a better business model. Especially when you consider that the consumer is used to buy everything everywhere and anytime due to technological innovations. The choice to buy something is therefore more easy to make ad hoc and on basis of the needs and situation at that point in time.

Theories on e-commerce are scares. The effects of e-commerce are not that obvious. This made it for me as researcher difficult to create a clear theoretical chapter on this phenomenon. E-commerce seems to be still a very practical thing. In interviewing persons Cor Molenaar is often referred to as 'the specialist'. Although I question the work of Molenaar (since it is mostly based on experience) it seems to have some points of truth. The five threats e-commerce has on the retail structure according to Molenaar are almost all identified in my research.

Ideas about Omni-Channel retailing are scares as well. It is difficult to test these ideas as well. Persons interviewed had no clear idea on how this could be implemented. It is urged to research these ideas. Although I think this subject is more for business administration than human geography.

8.3. Reflection

This research was partly done in a grounded theory way making this a partly deductive research. I as researcher am therefore partly dependent on the answers my respondents give me. In essence this is a big shortcoming in grounded theory research. When someone asks me whether this or that is important I can only state that from the interviews a theory is constructed. The method of the construction of the theory is also questionable. The researcher decides based on his or her knowledge whether something is important or not. Even the naming of the categories is in the researcher's hand. This makes it very difficult to make the research reproducible. The method I used was showing in the appendix what steps were taken. On the other hand grounded theory has tested my abilities as a researcher. It is such an intensive method that it is challenging to do this kind of research in a good and thorough way in an internship.

The data collection itself was rather difficult. Finding suitable interview partners was an extensive task. Finding a way into the retail landscape of a for me strange city was no easy task either. This is partly resolved by introducing me and my research through someone else's network. The biggest problem was getting in touch with the chain stores. On a national level

this was impossible. On the local level I succeeded by simply walking into the stores and asking whether they wanted to participate in my research. Although I conducted 29 interviews it still feels that there was more room for interviews. The length of an internship (in this case 5 moths) is a limiting factor.

The use of a second interview round has proven to be an important step. Only after interviewing for a second time a clear picture on future directions could be made. This interview round partly felt like a relief because of the chronic uncertainty a grounded theory research causes. Partly this uncertainty comes from the fact that the story was based on the ideas of 18 persons. This poses serious limitations to the research. In ironing out these limitations I also interviewed people from other municipalities. Another limitation of this research is the use of only interviews in gathering data. In the beginning of the research the need for observations was present. After seriously trying to make use of observations a well-founded way of doing these observations was absent. What could be observed was the shopping behaviour of visitors of the inner city. A better way to tackle the observations was by pre-establishing a time table for the observations. This has not been done making it impossible to implement it now.

The generalizability of this research is relatively good since national as well local stakeholders are interviewed. Even a special interview round has been done specifically asking respondents whether the picture sketched was recognisable. On the other hand the interviews done with the 'Venlo' stakeholders cannot be generalised since Venlo has a very specific problem. The German consumers provide income but also provide traffic jams.

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Appendix 1: Glossary

Central Places Theory: theory of Walter Christaller that explains the spread of functions in space. On the basis of that theory goods and services that are needed daily are present in almost all settlements and less frequent needed goods and services in bigger towns.

Chain store: a retail outlet that shares a brand and central management, and usually has standardized business methods and practises. Examples of chain stores are H&M, Primark, etc.

Consumer: is an individual or a group that is the final user of a product or service.

Course grained: a situation wherein shops and shopping areas are situated on a relatively large distance from consumers. This often means a concentration in big shopping areas or malls.

E-commerce: the trade of physical goods over open (..) networks" (Savrul and Kılıç, 2011, p. 251).

Experience economy: a notion that intends to conceptualize a new trend in economic development, in which the driver is people's search for identity and involvement in an increasingly rich society.

Filialisation: the uniformisation of shopping areas.

Fine grained: a situation where there are relatively many shops and/or shopping areas within the reach of the consumer. This often means a big spread of shops in space.

Franchise: is a way of doing business by leasing the right to use a firm's successful business model and brand.

Fun shopping: shopping as a leisure activity without a well-defined motive.

Grounded Theory: is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Strauss and Corbin, 1998)

Independent shopkeeper: a business owner with an independent establishment that supplies goods to consumers for personal use.

Omni-Channel retailing: an integrated sales experience that combines the advantages of physical stores with the information rich experience of online shopping.

Property owner: another word for property owner is investor in property. A property owner dictates when and who will occupy a retail place. On basis of negotiation between owner and tenant the rent for the location is determined.

Retail: is the part of the distribution chain that couples producers and consumers. It is an important sector of the economy. Companies in the retail sector can be small (independent shopkeeper) or big (chain store).

Retail Note/vision: is the elaboration of a specific aspect of the 'normal' structure plan. In this note the positioning of and the perspective of the shopping areas are elaborated.

Run shopping: shopping with a specific buying motive.

Appendix 2: Interview guides

Interview guide retail experts

Begin van het interview:

Hierbij wil ik u bedanken voor het meewerken aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek voor de gemeente Venlo. Het doel van mijn onderzoek is een bijdrage leveren aan de visievorming rondom de adaptatie van steden aan de nieuwe manier van winkelen. Dit doel ga ik bereiken doormiddel van het creëren van visies en vervolgens het valideren en testen van deze visies in Venlo. Ik wil u van tevoren meegeven dat niets wat u in dit interview zegt kan worden toegeschreven aan uzelf zonder eerst toestemming aan u te vragen. U hebt daarnaast het recht om op elk gewenst moment het interview te stoppen. Doormiddel van dit interview wil ik een beeld krijgen van mogelijke richtingen waarop steden kunnen ontwikkelen.

- **Introductievragen**
    1. We zien in het Nederlandse winkellandschap langzaam een verschuiving naar een andere vorm van winkelen. Welk toekomstbeeld ziet u op dit moment met betrekking tot winkelen?
    2. In hoeverre speelt internetwinkelen een rol hierin? Zal deze rol sterker worden of zwakker?
    3. Op welke wijze zou een binnenstad zich moeten aanpassen aan deze nieuwe vorm van winkelen?
    4. Verschilt dit met een stadsdeelcentrum?
- **Experience economy**
    1. In hoeverre gelooft u dat een binnenstad een plek is waar men dingen kan beleven?
    2. Op welke manier zou op deze 'belevenis economie' moeten worden ingesprongen door winkeliers, ondernemers en gemeenten?
    3. In hoeverre zit er verschil tussen het implementeren van de 'belevenis economie' tussen binnensteden en stadsdeelcentra?
- **Fysieke veranderingen in de stad**
    1. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste punten waarop de stad zich fysiek moet aanpassen aan de huidige tijd?
    2. In hoeverre moet het huidige fysieke winkellandschap verder worden versmolten met het online winkellandschap? Hoe uit deze versmelting zich volgens u?
    3. In hoeverre zit er verschil tussen deze versmelting in het geval van binnensteden en stadsdeelcentra
- **Samenwerking tussen winkeliers**
    1. Dienen ondernemers in deze tijd meer of minder samen te werken?
    2. Op welke wijze dienen ondernemers samen te werken?
- **Rol van de gemeente**
    1. Wat is op dit moment de rol van de gemeente in het aanpassen aan het nieuwe winkelen?

2. Moet de gemeente meer of juist minder initiatief nemen?

- **Afsluiting van het interview**
  1. Zou u kort een beeld kunnen schetsen van de ideale binnenstad.
  2. Welke Nederlandse stad op dit moment zou model moeten staan voor andere steden qua winkelstructuur?

Bedankt voor uw medewerking aan dit interview. Ik zal het interview uitschrijven en naar u opsturen.

Interview guide winkeliers

Begin van het interview:

Hierbij wil ik u bedanken voor het meewerken aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek voor de gemeente Venlo. Het doel van mijn onderzoek is een bijdrage leveren aan de visievorming rondom de adaptatie van steden aan de nieuwe manier van winkelen. Dit doel ga ik bereiken doormiddel van het creëren van visies en vervolgens het valideren en testen van deze visies in Venlo. Ik wil u van tevoren meegeven dat niets wat u in dit interview zegt kan worden toegeschreven aan uzelf zonder eerst toestemming aan u te vragen. U hebt daarnaast het recht om op elk gewenst moment het interview te stoppen. Doormiddel van dit interview wil ik een beeld krijgen van wat ondernemers in de binnenstad van Venlo denken over mogelijke toekomstbeelden wat winkelen betreft.

- **Introductie over hun bedrijf**
  1. Zou u ten eerste wat kunnen vertellen over uw bedrijf?
  2. Wanneer heeft u uw bedrijf opgericht?
  3. Wat zijn de drijfveren achter uw bedrijf?
  4. Heeft u personeel in dienst?
- **Bezigheden online winkelen**
  1. Op welke wijze gebruikt u de mogelijkheden die het internet voor u bedrijf kan bieden? (naamsbekendheid, verkoopkanaal, contact met klanten)
  2. Welk deel van de omzet haalt u op dit moment uit online verkopen? Ziet u een stijgende lijn in deze verkopen?
  3. Bent u in de toekomst van plan meer omzet uit internetverkopen te genereren?
- **Omschakeling naar een beleveniseconomie (experience economy)**
  1. In hoeverre denkt u dat de (…binnenstad, Blerick, Tegelen) een belevenis moet zijn of worden voor bezoekers?
  2. Zo ja, op welke wijze moet zich dit dan uitten?
  3. Wat kunt u zelf als winkelier doen om het winkelen in uw zaak tot een belevenis te maken?
  4. Wat staat u in de weg om dit te verwezenlijken?
- **Fysieke veranderingen in de stad**
  1. Op welke wijze zou de fysieke infrastructuur van de stad moeten veranderen wil u optimaal kunnen ondernemen?
  2. Hoe staat u tegenover een gezamenlijk ophaalpunt (pick-uppoint) voor consumenten van de door hun gekochte producten in de stad?

3. Hoe staat u tegenover verdere integratie van internetwinkelen voor consumenten terwijl ze in de stad aan het winkelen zijn? Hierbij moet u denken aan meer gebruik van QR-codes, mobile self-checkout, etc.

- **Samenwerking met andere ondernemers.**
   1. In hoeverre werkt u op dit moment samen met andere ondernemers op het gebied van internetwinkelen?
   2. Zou u meer samenwerking op dit gebied wensen?
   3. Kent u andere ondernemers die op het gebied van internetwinkelen actief zijn?
- **Rol van de gemeente Venlo**
   1. Welke rol zou de gemeente Venlo moeten spelen wil u optimaal kunnen ondernemen?
- Afsluiting interview: Bedankt voor uw medewerking aan dit interview. Ik zal het interview uitschrijven en naar u opsturen.

2014

The Experiences City: Possible Retail Directions in Venlo

Onderstaande visies zijn gebaseerd op 18 interviews met retail experts, lokale Venlose winkeliers, landelijke organisaties en de gemeente Venlo. Aan u de vraag of u het eens bent met onderstaand beeld.

Laumen, Kristiaan (KJ)

Gemeente Venlo

22-9-2014

Appendix 3: Directions new forms of shopping

De Belevenisstad

De belevenis in winkelgebieden is en wordt steeds belangrijker. Onder druk van het veranderend consumentengedrag moeten binnenstedelijke winkelgebieden zich gaan kenmerken door evenementen, verassing, maar ook comfort. De consument die altijd en overal wil kunnen kopen, verlangt steeds meer van het winkelgebied waar hij zijn geld uit wil gaan geven.

De winkelbeleving van de consument is de nummer één richting waar winkeliers samen met vastgoedeigenaren en gemeenten op moeten inzetten. Het is onder meer van belang dat in samenspraak tussen alle partijen ingezet wordt op een bepaald DNA van het winkelgebied of winkelstraat. Citymarketing en branding zijn hierbij niet te vermijden. De beleving van de funshopper (consument zonder aankoopdoel) is van belang in de binnensteden. Aan de andere kant moet het comfort voor de runshopper (consument met concreet aankoopdoel) worden verbeterd. Dit houdt in dat het mogelijk moet zijn om online aankopen in winkels op te halen.

De beleving is niet overal even belangrijk, in stadsdeelcentra is ander maatwerk van belang. In deze centra moet voornamelijk ingezet worden op een comfortabele koopgerichte beleving. Deze centra moeten degelijke koopcentra worden waar makkelijk parkeren, laden en lossen van belang is. Misschien moet het zelfs mogelijk zijn om auto's in winkelstraten in deze centra weer toe te laten.

Foto 1: De consument in Venlo

In Venlo, Blerick en Tegelen

De binnenstad van Venlo is de uitgelezen plaats om in te zetten op beleving. Evenementen langs de Maas kunnen zorgen voor een extra stroom bezoekers. Daarnaast helpt het ook bij het 'bekender' maken van

Foto 2: Evenement

de Maasboulevard. Op dit moment voldoet de Maasboulevard niet aan de beleveniswaarde die hij zou kunnen hebben. Het comfort in de binnenstad is te verhogen door het parkeerbeleid opnieuw te bekijken. De titel 'beste binnenstad' is tot op vandaag nog niet genoeg benut. Duidelijk moet worden gemaakt dat Venlo dé beste binnenstad heeft en dat mensen die moeten bezoeken!

In de deelcentra Blerick en Tegelen is de beleving minder van belang. Evenementen kunnen hier helpen, maar het zwaartepunt ligt ergens anders. In deze centra is het voornamelijk van belang om in te zetten op schone straten, makkelijk en gratis parkeren. In Blerick kan daarnaast meer ingezet worden op het opvrolijken van de Kerkweg. Mensen moeten in de straat gelokt worden. Mensen parkeren nu bij Berden of de C1000. In Tegelen is het van belang het dorpse

Foto 3: Leegstand in Tegelen

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karakter uit te buiten. De leegstand in Tegelen belemmert nu de beleving in de winkelstraat. Door in te zetten op nieuwe functies kan de straat weer aantrekkelijk worden. Waarom zou men niet op de begane grond in een winkelstraat kunnen wonen? Daarnaast is het van belang om in te zien dat het belangrijk is om de bezoekers van de Albert Heijn te verleiden verder te straat in te lopen.

Faciliterende gemeente

Doordat de consument verschillende rollen speelt, verandert ook de rol van de gemeente. De rol van de gemeente is daardoor een van het maken van duidelijke keuzes en faciliteren van activiteiten van ondernemers. De rol van de gemeente wordt vaak omschreven als niet ideaal. Vanuit de ondernemers is er een roep om duidelijk beleid, faciliterende rol en tijd om de ondernemers te helpen.

Een prominente roep om duidelijke beleidsrichtlijnen leeft bij belangenverenigingen en ondernemers. Dit beleid moet voornamelijk zorgen voor een kleinere detailhandelsstructuur. Terwijl consumenten vraag hebben naar meer (verschillende) winkels, hebben ondernemers en belangenverenigingen baat bij minder winkels. Voor gemeenten is het belangrijk om toekomstige ontwikkelingen zo duidelijk mogelijk te communiceren. De uitgelezen manier om dit te doen is via een detailhandelsnota. Deze nota moet in overleg met de ondernemers worden gemaakt rond het thema toekomstige ontwikkelingen. Investeerders en ontwikkelaars kunnen zo goed kijken waar ze kunnen investeren. Speciale aandacht moet worden gegeven aan de aanloopstraten in binnensteden. Nieuwe functies zoals wonen kunnen deze straten weer levendig maken. Winkeliers in deze straten moeten de kans krijgen te verhuizen naar hoofdstraten. Het faciliteren van winkeliers wordt vaak genoemd als de belangrijkste taak voor de gemeente. Onder faciliteren wordt vaak verstaan het belonen van goed ondernemerschap. Faciliteren wordt sterk gelinkt aan het geven van financiële ondersteuning. De rol van de ambtenaren wordt vaak sterk bekritiseerd. Het bevorderen van persoonlijke communicatie tussen verschillende partijen kan er voor zorgen dat de rol minder heftig wordt bekritiseerd. Een andere belangrijk rol van de gemeente is het opzetten van helder citymarketingbeleid. Het liefst wil je als ondernemer dit beleid klakkeloos kunnen implementeren.

In Venlo, Blerick en Tegelen

De gemeente Venlo kent haar specifieke problemen. Zo wordt een sterk onderscheid gemaakt tussen de binnenstad van Venlo en het deelcentrum Blerick. Deze winkelgebieden liggen op nog geen anderhalve kilometer hemelsbreed van elkaar. De vraag bestaat of in de gemeente Venlo ruimte is voor twee winkelgebieden zo dicht bij elkaar. Het is dan ook sterk de rol van de gemeente om hierin in samenspraak met de ondernemers duidelijke keuzes in te maken.

Foto 4: Mogelijke woonruimte in Tegelen

Voor beide stadsdeelcentra geldt dat er een heroverweging gemaakt moet worden over de omvang van de centra. Leegstand zorgt voor onaantrekkelijke straten. Andere functies in deze straten kunnen zeker bijdragen aan een aantrekkelijker winkelgebied. Het lossnijden van financieel beleid met betrekking tot deze gebieden lijkt geen goede oplossing. Juist het helpen van de winkeliers zich te verplaatsen naar toekomstbestendige gebieden is van belang. Het parkeerbeleid blijft een heet hangijzer in de gemeente Venlo. Op Duitse feestdagen en zaterdagen is een tekort aan parkeerplaatsen. De vraag is of dan meer parkeerplaatsen gebouwd moeten worden of dat er slimmer omgegaan moet worden met het bestaande bestand aan parkeerplaatsen. In ieder geval is het belangrijk om de parkeertarieven te combineren met andere uitgaven. Het parkeergeld is vaak het laatste wat men betaalt in een stad.

De beleveniswinkel

Foto 6: Flagship store

Als winkelier is het van het grootste belang snel en innovatief te handelen. Het nalaten van deze handelswijze leidt onherroepelijk tot een niet-functionerende winkel. Als winkelier moet je open staan voor verandering en pioniersgedrag niet schuwen. Wel moet in deze een onderscheid gemaakt worden tussen zelfstandige en ketenwinkels. De zelfstandige winkelier moet in deze tijd van geïndividualiseerde consumenten met speciale wensen, een degelijk winkelconcept neer kunnen zetten. Vaak wordt geroepen dat beleving de sleutel is tot een goed winkelconcept. Deze beleving wordt niet door iedereen hetzelfde uitgelegd. Tieners hebben een andere beleving bij de Primark dan hun vaders. Vaak hebben de conceptstores van de grote merken (Adidas, Nike, etc) een zeer grote beleveniswaarde. Zo worden de nieuwste voetbalschoenen als ware juwelen gepresenteerd. Bij winkeliers wordt de beleving vaak uitgelegd als gastvrijheid en beleefdheid. Eigenlijk zou dit vanzelfsprekend moeten zijn. Hieruit blijkt eigenlijk dat niemand precies weet wat deze beleving inhoudt. De budgets van zelfstandigen zijn bij lange na niet toereikend om dezelfde dingen in hun winkel te implementeren als ketenwinkels. Wel is het van belang om Omni-Channel bezig te zijn. Dit houdt in dat zowel het fysieke als het onlineverkoopkanaal geregeld moeten zijn. Present zijn op sociale media is belangrijk, ook 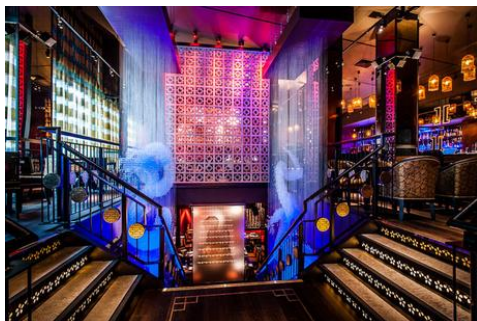al is het niet zeker of het veel invloed heeft op het koopgedrag van consumenten. Hele duidelijke ideeën of specifieke bedrijfsstrategieën met betrekking tot Omni-Channel verkoopkanalen zijn tot op heden niet veel te vinden. Grote ketenwinkels kennen deze strategieën wel. Dit verschil zorgt voor een kloof tussen ketenwinkels en zelfstandigen. De houding van winkeliers zou dus moeten veranderen van een gesloten naar een open houding.

Foto 5 Belevenis in winkels. Bron: www.retail2020.nl

In Venlo, Blerick en Tegelen

Venlo is een middelgrote stad. Het gevolg hiervan is dat winkelketens niet zo snel alles uitpakken om de klant te bedienen. De binnenstad van Venlo is helaas zoals zo veel binnensteden in

Foto 7: Die 2 Brüder

Nederland. Het is dan ook van belang dat je je als winkelier probeert te onderscheiden. Omdat het begrip beleving nogal complex is in dit opzicht is het beter je te richten op het persoonlijk contact met de klanten. Voor franchise ondernemers is het lastig echte beleveniswaarde in hun winkel te krijgen. Vaak moeten zij de huisstijl hanteren die van boven wordt opgelegd. Dit moet echter niet de ondernemer beletten toch iets extra's aan de klanten te bieden. Ook kan de ondernemer meedenken op nationaal niveau. Voor de winkels in de deelcentra speelt beleving meer op het niveau van service naar de klanten toe. De vraag is wel of dit nog beleving genoemd kan worden. Die 2 Brüder (weliswaar in de binnenstad van Venlo) is een supermarkt waar toch blijkbaar voor de Duitse consumenten een vorm van beleving bestaat.

Samenwerking ondernemers

Samenwerking tussen ondernemers in een binnenstad wordt in de toekomst van groot belang. Samenwerking tussen ondernemers is een lastig punt in binnensteden en stadsdeelcentra. Ondernemers willen zelfstandig kunnen ondernemen en hebben niet het gevoel dat ze andere ondernemers moeten voorschrijven wat ze moeten doen. Aan de andere kant kan heldere communicatie wel zorgen voor onderling respect.

Foto 8: Vleesstraat, Venlo

Samenwerking in het winkellandschap is niet vanzelfsprekend. Waarom zou je als zelfstandige ondernemer ook met ander ondernemers gaan samenwerken? Zijn die andere ondernemers wel te vertrouwen? Doen die andere ondernemers wel evenveel als jij voor het winkelgebied? Samenwerking heeft zoals veel dingen voordelen en nadelen. Voordelen zitten vooral in het feit dat door middel van samenwerking de wortels van de winkelier in de gemeente doet groeien. Immers inzet wekt verwachtingen. Daarnaast zorgt samenwerking voor meer afstemming in winkelstraten. Een betere afstemming zorgt voor een eenduidiger winkellandschap. Nadelen van samenwerking zijn gering. Samenwerking kost in het begin tijd en tijd kost geld.

Een speciale eigenschap van samenwerking is dat het partijen die niet willen samenwerken doet verbinden. De ketenwinkels zijn vaak de freeriders (meelifters) in winkelgebieden. Door het opzetten van samenwerkingsverbanden kunnen die freeriders aangepakt worden. In interviews is vaak het opzetten van een Bedrijfsinvesteringszone (BIZ) genoemd als een goede manier om de freeriders te verplichten samen te werken. Een andere veel toegepaste manier is het invoeren van reclamebelasting. Het nadeel van reclamebelasting is dat je als ondernemer niet veel meer hebt te zeggen over de besteding van de gelden.

In Venlo, Blerick en Tegelen

In Venlo is het invoeren van een BIZ mislukt. Bij de reguliere telling bleek dat niet genoeg mensen mee hadden gedaan met de stemronde. Bij veel zelfstandige winkeliers was toch de indruk dat een BIZ goed was geweest voor de stad. Uit de evaluatie bleek dat het tijdstip van de stemronde net zoals de aandacht niet op orde was. In Tegelen is het in 2011 wel gelukt om een BIZ in te voeren. Hier is voornamelijk op het uiterlijk van de winkelstraat ingezet. Door middel van het goed gebruiken van het budget zijn een aantal zaken die al langere tijd speelden aangepakt. In Blerick is men ook sterk na aan het denken over het invoeren van een BIZ. De voornaamste reden hiervoor is dat men de freeriders ook mee wil laten betalen aan de

uitstraling van het winkelgebied. Daarnaast geeft een BIZ meer vrijheid in het bepalen waar het geld naartoe gaat.

Uit de interviews bleek dat voornamelijk de kosten van samenwerking hoger werden ingeschat dan de opbrengsten. Men is bang dat wanneer er te veel tijd in de samenwerking wordt gestoken men geen tijd heeft voor de eigen winkel. Deels hebben ondernemers hier in gelijk. De winkel is immers de plek waar het brood wordt verdient. Wanneer deze kosten erg hoog zijn, is het voor te stellen iemand aan te stellen die de samenwerking coördineert. Het beste is om hier een lokale persoon voor te kiezen. Deze persoon kan vervolgens al zijn tijd en energie steken in het creëren van samenwerkingsverbanden.

De vraag is of de ketenwinkels in alle winkelgebieden interesse hebben in samenwerking. Vanuit de interviews komt sterk naar voren dat deze winkels geen interesse hebben in samenwerking op lokaal niveau. De reden hiervoor is dat de eigenaars van deze winkels dit niet mogen van de leiding op landelijk niveau. Om dit probleem op te lossen is het van belang om intensief in te zetten op het verbeteren van de communicatie tussen de verschillende winkeliers.

Meer doorstroming minder leegstand

Een groot probleem op korte termijn, maar ook in de toekomst, is de leegstand in winkelgebieden. Leegstand is geen gezicht en dus verlaagt het de beleving voor de consumenten. Ingezet moet worden op het verplaatsen van winkels naar kansrijke gebieden. Gestopt moet worden met het bijbouwen van winkelgebieden.

Veel secundaire maar ook binnenstad winkelgebieden in Nederland staan onder druk van leegstand. Redenen voor die leegstand zijn de teruglopende consumentenbestedingen, het veranderende consumentengedrag en de ouderwetse huurwetgeving. Manieren om de consumentenbestedingen weer aan te wakkeren zijn hierboven al gegeven. Interessanter is de huurwetgeving. Vanuit zowel de vastgoedeigenaren als de winkeliers is er een roep om een soepelere wetgeving. Aangegeven werd dat alleen een winkelier uit zijn winkel kon worden gezet bij extreem achterstallige betalingen. Het bleek dat het dus niet mogelijk was om een winkelier uit zijn winkel te zetten. Op zich is dit geen probleem, de zelfstandige winkelier kan best wat bescherming gebruiken. Aan de andere kant geldt deze regelgeving ook voor de grote ketenwinkels. Of deze winkels die bescherming nodig hebben is nog maar de vraag. Omdat de aanpassing van het huurrecht een stap te ver gaat in dit onderzoek is niet gekozen om dit verder uit te werken.

Wat wel van belang is, is het bij elkaar brengen van vastgoedeigenaren, gemeente en winkeliers. Het is de taak van de gemeente om een aantrekkelijk beleid te maken voor vastgoedeigenaren. Hierbij valt te denken aan 'verleidingsplanologie'. Vastgoedeigenaren samen met ontwikkelaars kunnen zo zien waar de interessante ontwikkelingen plaats gaan vinden. Vervolgens moet de gemeente samen met de winkeliers kijken naar, indien gewenst vervangende winkelruimte. De inzet moet zijn om langzaamaan de aanloopstraten in een

winkelgebied om te toveren naar straten met een andere functie. In het centrum van een winkelgebied moet vervolgens ingezet worden op een gedifferentieerd aanbod van winkels. Hierbij moet gedacht worden aan een mix van kleine zelfstandige en landelijke trekkers.

In Venlo, Blerick en Tegelen
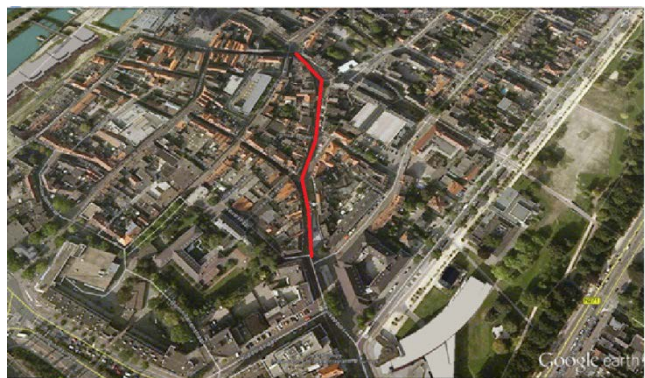
Kaart 1: Binnenstad Venlo

Een straat die hiervoor in aanmerking komt in de binnenstad van Venlo is: de Parade. Deze straat is langzaamaan zijn winkelfunctie aan het verliezen. Om dit in goede banen te leiden is het van belang om de overgebleven winkeliers een andere aantrekkelijkere plaats in de binnenstad aan te bieden. In samenspraak met de vastgoedeigenaren

Kaart 2: Tegelen

kan gekeken worden naar een interessante contractuele constructie. Op onderstaande kaart is te zien om welke straat het gaat.

In Tegelen zou ingezet moeten worden op het verplaatsen van de winkeliers richting de Albert Heijn. Op onderstaande kaart is te zien om welk gebied het gaat. De winkels die binnen de rode cirkel liggen zouden verplaatst moeten worden naar leegstaande panden in het centrum. De nieuwbouw aan het Wilhelminaplein zal omgezet moeten worden naar een andere functie.

In Blerick speelt de leegstand in het winkelgebied een minder prominente rol. Een algemeen advies is om om tafel te gaan zitten met vastgoedeigenaren, ontwikkelaars, winkeliers en gemeente om zo per straat in het winkelgebied uit te zoeken wat mogelijk is.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek, uitgevoerd in combinatie met een stage bij de gemeente Venlo, heeft als doel gehad een bijdrage te leveren aan de ontwikkeling van verschillende richtingen over hoe steden zich aan kunnen passen aan de nieuwe manier van winkelen. De reden voor dit onderzoek is het sterk veranderende consumentengedrag. Mensen kopen steeds meer online en verwachten een bepaalde beleving in winkelgebieden. Onderstaande figuur geeft in één oogopslag weer hoe de internetverkopen in Nederland zich ontwikkelen.
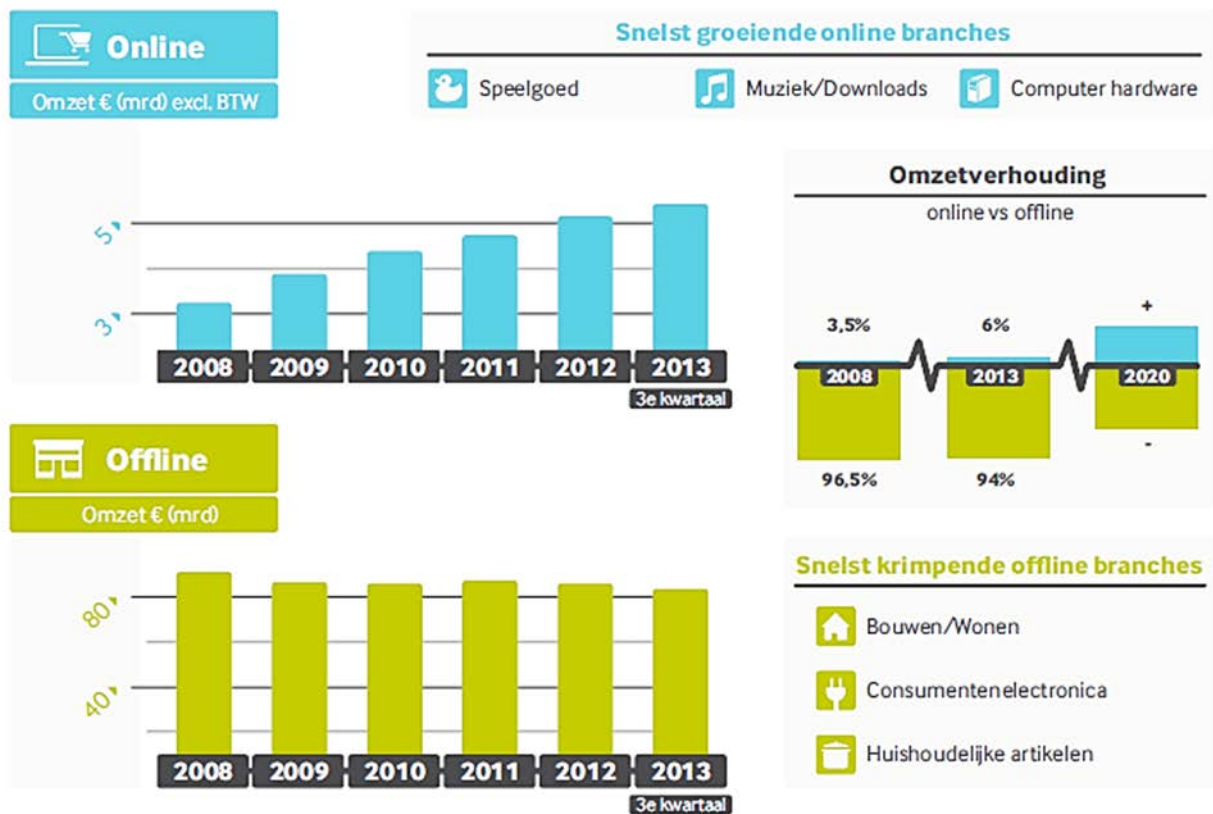
Figuur 1: E-commerce compared to offline spending in the Netherlands. Source: Platform31, 2014

Duidelijk is te zien dat de internetverkopen maar een klein deel zijn van de totale omzet in de detailhandel. De zogenoemde e-commerce zal wel duidelijke invloed gaan hebben op het Nederlandse winkellandschap. E-commerce geeft winkeliers nieuwe kansen klanten te bereiken. Aan de andere kant moeten steeds meer winkeliers, al dan niet als gevolg van de recente crisis, de deuren sluiten. Een bijkomend probleem is dat consumenten andere verlangens hebben bij een winkelgebied. Beleven wordt steeds belangrijker in winkelgebieden. Wanneer dit gecombineerd wordt met het Nederlandse strikte detailhandelsbeleid, zien we dat een sterk hiërarchisch system misschien niet de beste manier is waarop steden zich kunnen ontwikkelen. Aan de andere kant is geconcludeerd dat dit systeem in tegenstelling tot andere landen wel gezorgd heeft voor levendige winkelgebieden.

In het licht van veranderend consumentengedrag als gevolg van de toename in online winkelen, was de centrale vraag in dit onderzoek: Wat zijn de mogelijke richtingen waarop een gemeente als Venlo zich kan aanpassen?

Om die centrale vraag te beantwoorden is gekeken naar de (moderne) invulling van de stad. Het theoretisch idee van de postmoderne stad is gebruikt om aan te geven dat functies in steden in steeds mindere mate afhankelijk zijn van fysieke factoren. Zeker voor dienstverlening is plaats iets niet bestaand geworden, onder druk van telecommunicatie

(internet, etc). Wanneer we naar het winkelen kijken zien we, naast een toename in het internetwinkelen, een sterke toename in de beleving die bij winkelen centraal moet staan. Sommige geven aan dat winkelen in toenemende mate aan het veranderen is: van een functionele bezigheid naar een bezigheid met een sterke oriëntatie op beleving. Een discussie kan gevoerd worden over in hoeverre die verschuiving echt plaatsvindt. Daarnaast bestaat er geen sterk uitgewerkt idee over hoe die beleving in een winkelgebied of winkel gebracht moet worden. Beleving wordt in toenemende mate gebruikt als containerbegrip. Een belangrijk begrip in het hedendaagse winkelen is het 'Omni-Channel retailen'. Dit is een geïntegreerde verkoopervaring die de voordelen van de fysieke winkel met de informatierijke ervaring van het online winkelen verbindt. De klant krijgt steeds meer vrijheid om te beslissen welk kanaal voor welke aankoop het beste is. Ideeën over hoe dit in een winkel geïmplementeerd moet worden gaan niet veel verder dan mogelijke ideeën.

De detailhandelsomgeving van de gemeente Venlo is gebruikt als 'proeftuin' om te onderzoeken wat de mogelijke richtingen zijn. De detailhandelsstructuur van de gemeente Venlo kan gekenmerkt worden als een fijnmazig net. Dit houdt in dat op elk voorzieningen niveau een ruim aanbod van winkels is. Om het onderzoek uitvoerbaar te houden is gekozen om alleen de binnenstad van Venlo en de stadsdeelcentra Blerick en Tegelen te onderzoeken. De binnenstad van Venlo is een specifiek geval. Door aanwezigheid van een groot aantal Duitse bezoekers is de detailhandelsstructuur groter dan van andere vergelijkbare binnensteden. De deelcentra Blerick en Tegelen ondervinden op dit moment hinder van leegstand. In deze deelcentra is duidelijk te zien wat de gevolgen zijn van de crisis, maar ook het veranderende consumentengedrag. De e-commerce strategieën zijn in Venlo niet anders dan in andere gemeenten. De meeste winkels hebben hun eigen webshop en gratis WI-FI is in de binnenstad te ontvangen.

Dit onderzoek is in een grounded theory setting uitgevoerd. Deze manier van onderzoeken heeft specifieke gevolgen gehad voor de opzet van dit onderzoek. De belangrijkste gevolgen hebben betrekking op de wijze waarop de literatuurstudie is gebruikt en op de volgorde van het onderzoek. Door middel van twee interviewronden is de dataverzameling van dit onderzoek uitgevoerd. De eerste interviewronde onder 18 actoren in het winkellandschap heeft een beeld gegeven over wat de mogelijke richtingen zijn waarop een stad zich kan aanpassen. De tweede interviewronde is gebruikt om onder een groep van 11 actoren te vragen in hoeverre het beeld in hun ogen klopt. Deze tweede interviewronde is speciaal ingebouwd om een deel van de twijfel die een grounded theory onderzoek oproept weg te nemen.

Het onderstaande beeld is naar voren gekomen als mogelijke richtingen. Duidelijk is te zien dat deze richtingen niet zo zeer te maken hebben met beleving of Omni-Channel retailing. Het bleek dat deze op dit moment belangrijk zijn maar niet het belangrijkste. Omdat bepaalde rollen die gespeeld moeten worden voor de geïnterviewde belangrijker werden gevonden dan de richtingen alleen, is gekozen om per richting ook aan te geven wiens rol wat is.

Toevoegen van beleving

Wanneer we het hebben over het toevoegen van beleving is het in dit geval voor de gemeente Venlo belangrijk om te zien dat niet elk gebied deze toevoeging nodig heeft. Zo is het voornamelijk voor binnensteden belangrijk hier op in te zetten. De basis voor het toevoegen van beleving moet het stedelijk DNA en de daarbij behorende citymarketing zijn. Beleving houdt onder andere in dat vanuit de ondernemers in samenwerking met de gemeente ingezet moet worden op het creëren van evenementen die iets toe kunnen voegen aan de beleving in een binnenstad. Een duidelijke 'tegenbeweging' is het belang van comfort in binnensteden. Het bieden van comfort is voornamelijk een taak voor ondernemers. De gemeente moet hierin

een faciliterende rol hebben en aannemen. Dit betekent deels dat flexibel bestemmen belangrijker gaat worden in de toekomst. In stadsdeelcentra moet sterk gekeken worden naar manieren om meer comfort voor de 'runshopper' te bieden. Dit betekent onder andere gratis parkeren en misschien het creëren van pick-uppoints op 'slipper distance' van de bewoonde omgeving. Voornamelijk bij pick-uppoints is dit van groot belang. Wanneer iemand eerst een half uur moet rijden om gekochte producten op te halen werken pick-uppoints niet.

Specifieke rol van de Gemeente Venlo

Door de geïnterviewde groep is duidelijk een belangrijke rol voor de Gemeente Venlo benoemd. Ten eerste is meerdere malen uitvoering verteld over het belang van het maken van duidelijke keuzes. Het is vooral van belang om als gemeente duidelijk aan te geven en te communiceren waar ontwikkelingen plaatsvinden en waar geen ontwikkelingen meer plaatsvinden. Daarnaast wordt vaak aangehaald dat 'verleidingsplanologie' gezien wordt als manier waarop een gemeente bepaalde ontwikkelingen kan bewerkstelligen. In essentie is dit dus een andere rol dan een terugtrekkende overheid. Wel moet opgemerkt worden dat dit alleen geldt voor gebieden die in mindere mate iets op kunnen leveren.

Rol van de winkelier

Het implementeren van beleving in winkels is naar het schijnt erg lastig. Deels komt dit doordat het woord beleving door ieder individu anders uitgelegd wordt. Immers een beleving is iets memorabels en persoonlijks. Ook al wordt het gezien als iets wat in de toekomst steeds belangrijker gaat worden, is het beter om eerst in te zetten op een andere benadering van de klant. Zo is het vooral belangrijk om de klant duidelijk en vriendelijk te woord te staan. Door velen wordt dit ook al gezien als beleving. Dat vriendelijkheid als iets memorabel wordt gezien is apart, omdat dit eigenlijk vanzelfsprekend zou moeten zijn. Voor winkeliers is het vooral belangrijk om een consumenten databank op te bouwen of misschien zelfs ontwikkelen.

Belang van samenwerking

Het versterken van de samenwerking tussen winkeliers wordt gezien als de belangrijkste richting waarop in winkelgebieden moet worden ingezet. Deze samenwerking is niet zo voor de hand liggend. Ketenwinkels mogen genees samenwerken op last van het hoofdkantoor. Om het probleem van freerdiers succesvol aan te pakken is het van belang om een fonds op verplichte basis in te voeren. Een freerider profiteert van bepaalde goederen of diensten zonder daar voor te betalen. Naast dat winkeliers moeten samenwerken is het van belang dat de verbinding tussen de gemeente, winkeliers en vastgoedeigenaren wordt gezocht. Iedereen van deze groepen heeft belang bij een goed functionerend winkelgebied. Het grote probleem is echter dat deze partijen niet op een lijn zitten.

Foto 1: Opening van de Primark in Venlo

Aanbevelingen:

Voor de gemeente Venlo:
• Verbetering van de Maasboulevard in Venlo door het implementeren van een aantal zachte maatregelen. Investeren in groen, toevoegen van DNA (geschiedenis, lokale gebruiken, uitingen, etc.) van de Maas, verbeteren van de routing naar de Maasboulevard. Acquisitie van merken die iets toevoegen aan de beleving van de Duitse consument.
• Bestemmingsplannen voor aanloopstraten moeten minder stringent worden gemaakt. Op deze manier moet het mogelijk zijn om woningen en koffiezaakjes aan die straten toe te voegen. De Parade is typisch een straat waar dit goed kan.
• Ga in gesprek met retailers en vastgoedeigenaren over de mogelijkheden van verplaatsing van winkels.
• Duidelijke communicatie van beleid en toekomstige ontwikkelingen. Denk er over na om per straat te beschrijven wat gedaan moet worden en wat niet meer toegelaten wordt. Een uitstekende manier om dit te doen is om een groep van stakeholders een bid boek te laten maken en zo te laten zien wat allemaal ontwikkeld kan worden in een bepaald gebied.
• Begrijpen dat evenementen reuring in een stad creëren en zo de binnenstad zeker kunnen versterken. Het is dan ook aan te raden het aantal evenementen toe te laten nemen.
• Het aanpassen van het beleid op evenementen in de binnenstad naar de tegenwoordige tijd. Dit houdt in dat evenementen gericht moeten zijn op het volgende: versterken trots stad, versterken van de retail en horeca en het aantrekken van meer bezoekers. Dit houdt dus in dat dranghekken niet voor winkels geplaatst moeten worden.
• Zie ambtenaren als adviseurs en begeleiders van de ideeën van de ondernemers.
• Acquisitie van merken die de aandacht trekken van Duitse consumenten in de Vleesstraat en Maasboulevard.
• Link parkeertarieven aan andere uitgaven.
• Creëer meer samenwerking in Blerick door ten eerste de contactgegevens van de winkeliers te verzamelen. Vervolgens kan vanuit de ondernemersvereniging gesteund door de gemeente een drie maandelijkse nieuwsbrief uitgegeven worden.

• Gratis parkeren in Blerick (inmiddels besloten door de Raad).
• Stimuleren van dialoog in Blerick met winkeliers en vastgoedeigenaren over het verplaatsen van winkels naar het hoofdwinkelgebied.
• Stimuleren van dialoog in Tegelen met winkeliers en vastgoedeigenaren over het verplaatsen van winkels naar het hoofdwinkelgebied.
• Het aanpassen van het bestemmingsplan in Tegelen in een meer flexibel plan wat woonruimte in de hoofdstraat toelaat.

Voor de winkelier:
• Voor een zelfstandige winkelier is het van belang de webshop meer te benutten als een informatief kanaal. Het investeren in een digitaal klantenbestand is essentieel. Een wijdverbreide hoeveelheid apps en databanken zijn hiervoor in omloop.
• Het implementeren van een belevenis in de winkel is eigenlijk zorgen dat iets memorabel is.
• Contacteer andere winkeliers om partnerships aan te gaan.
• Besef als winkelier dat je gedeeltelijk verantwoordelijk bent voor het gevoel in een winkelgebied. Het is ook van belang die rol op te pakken.
• Lokale managers van ketenwinkels moeten begrijpen dat geïnvesteerd moet investeren om informatie te krijgen over bijvoorbeeld openingstijden.

Om samenwerking in een winkelgebied te krijgen:
• In het geval van een klein winkelgebied is het van belang om: een overzicht te maken van de contactgegevens van de winkeliers. De tweede stap is het contacteren van de winkeliers via een nieuwsbrief. De maker van die nieuwsbrief kan gesubsidieerd worden door de gemeente.
• In een groter winkelgebied wordt het creëren van een Bedrijveninvesteringszone als essentieel gezien. Om deze BIZ in toe voeren worden de volgende stappen aangedragen als belangrijk: ten eerste moet er een informatieve peilingsronde worden gehouden. Bij voorkeur worden twee lokaal bekende winkeliers op pad gestuurd om te laten zien door middel van een bid boek wat een BIZ voor toegevoegde waarde kan hebben. De tweede stap is het creëren van een goede afbakening van het BIZ gebied. Omdat elk object stemrecht heeft moet deze afbakening zorgvuldig gebeuren. Ten derde is het belangrijk om eerlijk te zijn over de verwachting van het aantal stemmers. Ten vierde is een flexibele notaris van belang. Om genoeg stemmen te krijgen is het voorts van belang om de stemmen op te komen halen. Wanneer het BIZ, geïnstalleerd wordt is het van belang dit door een commerciële partij op te laten pakken. De winkeliers moeten de bevoegdheid hebben om bijvoorbeeld een commerciële manager te beoordelen.

Rol van de vastgoedeigenaren:
• Een dwingende vraag aan de vastgoedeigenaren is in te zien dat huurcontracten dusdanig opgesteld moeten worden. Het zou mogelijk moeten zijn om een omzetafhankelijke of een in huur oplopend contract aan te gaan.
• Oproep aan de vastgoedeigenaren om te investeren in manieren om experimentele of tijdelijke invulling van panden te faciliteren in plaats van tegen te houden.
• Bevorderen van manieren om met de gemeenten te communiceren over de gewenste ontwikkelrichtingen.

Summary

The existence of shopping areas in the Netherlands is threatened by five different but related phenomena: sales are stagnating, the vacancy rate is increasing, the attractiveness is declining, the hierarchical system is stopping developments, and e-commerce is eating away consumer's spending. In order to tackle these problems a grounded theory research is conducted in the municipality Venlo. The main question in this research is: *What are possible directions on adaptation to new forms of shopping in the municipality of Venlo due to changes in shopping behaviour and e-commerce?* Special attention is given to the inner city of Venlo and the sub-centres Blerick and Tegelen. In two research rounds 29 interviews are conducted. The respondents varied from shopkeepers, retail experts, and municipalities to property owners. The outcomes of the first interview round where captured in a vision document. This vision document was tested amongst other retail experts, and grounded in Venlo. A 'to do' list was made in order to structure concrete recommendations to the municipality of Venlo. In conclusion, it is doubtful whether the experience economy of Pine and Gilmore is helpful in the shopping areas. Next to that cooperation between actors in shopping areas is missing. Creating cooperation is important.

What to do in Venlo:

For the municipality:

- Improvement of the Maasboulevard by implementing a range of soft measurements. Such as investing in green spaces, implementing the DNA of the Maas, improving the routing to the Maasboulevard. Acquisition of brands that appeal to the German consumer. Partly this is under construction by means of improving the grid of the street.
- Enter into dialogue with retailers and property-owners on the possibilities and needs for relocation. This should only be done in the case where the retailer initiates the movement, to avoid a buying out problem.
- Clear communication of policies and future developments. Think about describing per street what has to be done and what should not be done. A bulletproof way is letting a group of stakeholders create a bid book showing what could be done.
- Understanding that events create movement and strengthen the inner city.
- Adapting the policy on events in the inner city to the contemporary time. This means that events should be aimed at the following: enhancing proudness of inhabitants, strengthening the retail and hospitality industry, and attracting more visitors. This also means not putting fences in front of shops.
- Seeing civil servants as advisors and facilitators of ideas of entrepreneurs.
- Investing time in creating a transformation fund.
- Acquisition of brands that appeal to the German consumer in the Vleesstraat and Maasboulevard.
- Linking parking tariffs to other expenses.
- Creating more cooperation in Blerick by firstly inventorying the contact details of the shopkeepers.
- Adapting the parking system in Blerick to a comfort based understanding of the shopping area.
- Seeking dialogue in Blerick with retailers and property-owners on the moving of shops to the main street.
- Seeking dialogue in Tegelen with retailers and property-owners on the moving of shops to the main street.

- Adapting the zoning plan in Tegelen to a more flexible plan allowing housing in the main street.

For the shopkeeper:

- As independent retailer not choosing for a web shop to make money, but more, seeing it as an information channel. As a consequence investing in a digital customer database is essential. A widely amount of apps/databases are available to do this.
- Implementing an experience economy based element in your shop is essential for making something memorable.
- Contacting other retailers to establish partnerships.
- Realizing that you as an independent retailer are partly responsible for the feeling of a shopping area.
- Local managers of chain stores should realise that they should bring something to the table to get information about, for example opening hours.

To get cooperation in a shopping area:

- In the case of a small shopping area firstly inventorying the contact details is essential. The second step is contacting them monthly via a newsletter. The maker of the newsletter could be subsidized by the municipality.
- In a bigger shopping area creating a BIZ is seen as essential. In order to establish this BIZ the following steps need to be taken: First off a poll under retailers is important. Preferably two locally well-known retailers go door by door showing what can be done in a BIZ with a bid book. The second step would be creating a good delineation of the BIZ area. Since every object has a voting right making this delineation has to be done with care. Thirdly being honest about the number of votes is important. Chain stores will not vote as will non-stores. Fourthly a flexible notary is important. In order to get enough votes actually collecting the votes seems important. When the BIZ is installed a commercial party has to have the power over the daily board. The shopkeepers should have the power to assess the work of this manager.

Role of the property-owner:

- Urge for a new way of dealing with rental contracts. Possibilities could be a turnover dependent contract or a contract that has an increasing rent.
- Shout-out to property owners to invest in ways to temporary facilitate experimental shopping ideas.
- Improvement of ways to communicate with the municipality about desired future developments.