

The changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers



A learning trajectory for (future) shrinking cities

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Master Thesis Spatial Planning

Nijmegen School of Management

Radboud University

December 2018

The changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers:

A learning trajectory for (future) shrinking cities.

Colophon:

Description: Master thesis Spatial Planning
Specialization: Planning, Land and Real Estate Development
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Word count of main text: 32997
Image cover: Own picture made of the Markt in Helmond.

Radboud Universiteit



Preface

I am proud to present my master thesis about the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers. This subject has piqued my interest because I like to visit city centers for shopping and other facilities. I have noticed that not only have more buildings become vacant in city centers, but media attention has also increased on this topic. In fact, the media has reported an increase in the bankruptcy of well-known retail shops in the Netherlands. My interest is in why these shops have become bankrupt and how city centers have dealt with the increased number of vacancies. However, finding a topic within the retail structure that contributes to the scientific field was a challenge for me. Nevertheless, I discovered that vacancies are intensified in regions with shrinkage and in areas in which shrinkage is predicted for the future. Therefore, I decided to investigate the changing retail structure in a shrinking context.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the people who helped me during the writing process of this thesis. First, I would like to thank Dr. F. Sharmeen for her support, expertise and patience as my supervisor. Not only has she assisted me in improving my thesis, but she has also helped me to become less insecure about my own knowledge and ability. Second, I would like to thank the people who took the time to participate as interviewees for this thesis. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who supported me during this writing process.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

Tanya van Eck
Arnhem, December 2018

Summary

This master thesis investigates the coping mechanism of city centers with regard to the changing retail structure and the resultant vacancies in retail buildings, with particular attention to shrinking regions. The focus is on (future) shrinking regions, because Dutch studies of governmental institutions and consultant agencies have demonstrated that the retail structure has the most impact in these regions with a higher number of vacancies (ABN AMBRO, 2013; Compendium voor de Leefomgeving [CLO], Centraal Planbureau [CPB], 2016; Dynamis, 2017; Evers, Tennekes & Dongen, 2015; Goudappel Coffeng BV, 2017; Stijnenbosch, 2015). Therefore, this research has the aims to identify these city centers' coping mechanisms to the changing retail structure and vacancy, and to propose a learning trajectory for other (future) shrinking cities. The focus is on mid-sized cities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000 residents. In addition, this research asks the following questions:

How do cities cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers?

Are these experiences different in shrinking regions and what can other (future) shrinking cities learn from this?

The investigation is conducted with the qualitative research method of in-depth interviews and it includes a comparative case study design. This design consists of contrasting cases in terms of demographics and it includes Heerlen as the shrinking case study and Helmond as the growing case study. These cases are compared to provide the learning trajectory on how (future) shrinking cities can cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in their city centers. Moreover, the study takes place with the in-depth interviewing method as well as a policy analysis of the two cases. Input for the interview questions is provided from the theoretical framework of this research, which includes the resilience theory and the theory on co-creation. These theories have provided the direction for this research and have served as an evaluation framework in the discussion chapter of this work. Furthermore, the following subquestions are asked to direct this research:

- What are the challenges of the retail structure?
- Are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?
- How do policy makers cope with those challenges?
- What have been the successes and failures of these policies?
- What recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy?

Overall, the cities particularly deal with the same challenges and have the same recommendations to other cities; however, their policies differ because of different interests. The focus in Helmond is on attracting large businesses, while in Heerlen it is accepted that the city is not attractive for those businesses. This has resulted in different policies. However, shrinkage is not included in city center policies; therefore, it is not seen as an issue in coping with the changing retail structure and vacancy. So cities deal with the changing retail structure in different ways, but they recommend the same strategies, such as collaborating and consulting with other stakeholders, providing clarity to other parties, creating a

compact retail core, providing structural solutions, helping starting entrepreneurs and providing experiences in city centers and retailers' businesses. Moreover, accepting shrinkage and not accentuating shrinkage in policies is what other (future) shrinking cities can learn from this.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem indication

The Dutch retail structure has become under pressure due to the bankruptcy of many shops in retail centers. Not only small independent shops (Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014), but also large retail chains have problems maintaining enough revenue. In fact, more than 40 well-known retail chains have gone bankrupt since 2012 in the Netherlands (“Overzicht winkelketens die”, 2018). Given this bankruptcy, consultant agencies and governmental institutions on research have analyzed the Dutch retail structure and the future use of city centers. These studies indicate mainly that the retail structure is changing and that structural vacancy has increased (ABN AMBRO, 2013; CPB, 2016; CLO, 2017; Dynamis, 2017; Goudappel Coffeng BV, 2017; Hoogerbrugge, van Dijken & Gastkemper, 2017; Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving [PBL], 2014; Stijnenbosch, 2015; Ter Beek, 2015). Apart from this, the retail structure has experienced the most pressure in mid-sized cities, especially those cities located close to the boarder (ABN AMBRO, 2013; CLO, 2017; CPB, 2016; Dynamis, 2017; Evers et al. 2015; Goudappel Coffeng BV, 2017; Stijnenbosch, 2015). As a result, governments have started to create policies to respond to the changing retail structure and vacancy. The policies are directed specifically at city centers, because these are the main retail centers of the Netherlands.

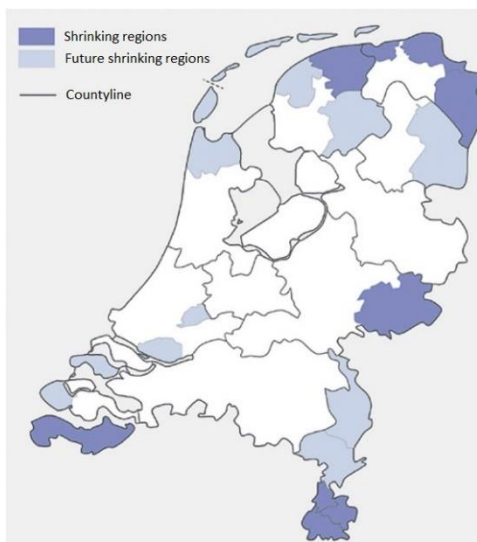
The studies claim that the retail structure is changing due to e-commerce, the changed interests of customers, economic developments and demographic developments. First, people buy more products online which means less purchases in city centers (CPB, 2016; Hoogerbrugge et al., 2017; PBL, 2014). In addition, Dynamis (2017) and ABN AMBRO (2013) claim that physical shops need to append experiences or services to their products in order to compete with e-commerce. Second, the interests of customers have changed with an increased convenience culture. People travel to city centers for experiences, social gatherings, food facilities, leisure activities and services, which ask for a different supply from the retail center (ABN AMBRO, 2013; Dynamis, 2017; Goudappel Coffeng BV, 2017; Ter Beek, 2015). Third, the economic crisis has affected and changed the retail structure because of the decreased revenue in retail (ABN AMBRO, 2015; CPB, 2016; Ter Beek, 2015). A higher number of vacancies has consequently occurred due to the crisis (Evers, 2011; PBL, 2014; Stijnenbosch, 2015). Fourth, demographic changes have influenced customer demand—not only population but also aging and changes in the household composition have impacted that demand (ABN AMBRO, 2013; CPB, 2016).

The developments that changed the retail structure have caused an increase in structural vacancy and an oversupply of retail floor area (ABN AMBRO, 2013; CLO, 2017; CPB, 2016; Hoogerbrugge et al., 2017; Stijnenbosch, 2015). A building becomes structurally vacant when it is empty for more than three years. However, a short-term vacancy of less than a year can be described as healthy because it provides space for businesses that are looking for premises (Evers et al., 2015; PBL, 2014). For the Netherlands the general vacancy rate of gross floor area was 9% in 2017 with 3% as structural vacant gross floor area. This is 1% less than in 2016, but the vacancy rate of the gross floor area has risen since 2008 (CLO, 2017). According to the Centraal Planbureau[CPB] (2016), structural vacancy occurs on the edges of the city center because the efficiency for shops in those locations is lower. To deal with structural vacancy and the changed demand of customers, studies by consultant agencies and governmental institutions suggest

the transformation of land use functions on the edges of the city center. This means a transformation of the retail function to other functions such as leisure, housing or food facilities (CPB, 2016; Dynamis, 2017; Stijnenbosch, 2015; Ter Beek, 2015). Moreover, to deal with the changing retail structure and the resultant vacancies in retail buildings, and to prevent a disrupted retail market, ABN AMBRO (2013), Stijnenbosch (2015) and Voss (2016) recommend collaboration between stakeholders of the city center.

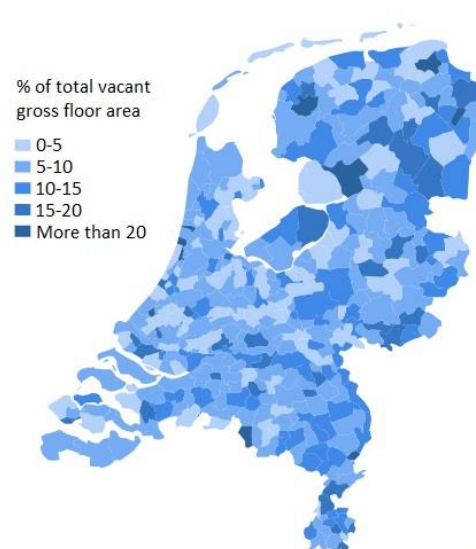
The changing retail structure affects primarily mid-sized cities, especially those in regions close to the border. Mid-sized cities experience greater struggle because larger cities have become more attractive to visit due to improved mobility options. Larger cities consequently attract people by their places of interests and investors thus look into these cities (Dynamis, 2017). Therewithal, mid-sized cities in regions close to the border struggle the most because of their peripheral position and demographics. With regard to demographics, some regions have a high aging rate and (start to) deal with shrinkage (ABN AMBRO, 2013; CLO, 2017; Evers, 2015; Goudappel Coffeng BV; Stijnenbosch, 2015). In fact, the Netherlands deals with nine shrinking regions already and it is estimated that 11 other regions will begin to face population losses before the year 2040 (Rijksoverheid, n.d.) An overview of these regions is provided in Figure 1. The prognoses also include the mid-sized cities Den Helder and Emmen as future shrinking cities and Heerlen and Terneuzen as recent shrinking cities (Kooiman, de Jong, Huisman, van Duin & Stoeldraije, 2016). Compared to the vacancy, the rate of vacant gross floor area is higher in these regions (CLO, 2017; CPB, 2016; Evers, 2015; Stijnenbosch, 2015), of which an overview of this vacancy is demonstrated in Figure 2. This can be explained by the declining population in these regions, which causes less demand for retail space in city centers (ABN AMBRO, 2013; Stijnenbosch, 2015). The causes of shrinkage in the Netherlands are aging, deindustrialization in the past and migration of the youth to other cities (Elzerman & Bontje, 2015; Hoekveld & Bontje, 2016; Kooiman et al, 2016).

Figure 1: The shrinking regions and future shrinking regions of the Netherlands.



Source: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties (2016), and own elaboration.

Figure 2: Degree of vacant gross floor area in the municipalities of the Netherlands.



Source: PBL (2017) and own elaboration.

So not only is the impact of the changing retail structure and vacancy larger in mid-sized cities in regions close to the border of the Netherlands, but it is also projected that these regions will deal with more shrinkage in the future (Kooiman et al., 2016; Rijksoverheid, n.p.). For this reason, the focus of this research is on mid-sized cities in (future) shrinking regions. The aim is to provide a learning trajectory for (future) shrinking cities on how they can cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers. The research aim and the research questions are discussed in the next subchapter.

1.2 Research aim and research questions

As the problem indication has highlighted, the focus of this research is on mid-sized cities in (future) shrinking regions—more precisely, the focus is on city center policy on how to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy. This leads to the following research aim:

Research aim

Identifying the coping mechanism of city centers with regard to the changing retail structure and vacancy, with particular attention on shrinking regions, and proposing a learning trajectory for other (future) shrinking cities.

To propose a learning trajectory for other future shrinking cities in the Netherlands, a comparison is made, using a comparative case study design, between a Dutch shrinking city and a Dutch non-shrinking city. Helmond serves as the case study for a non-shrinking city and Heerlen as the case study for a shrinking city. More information about the methodology of this research is provided in Chapter 3. Furthermore, this research answers the following research questions:

Research questions

**How do cities cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in their city centers?
Are the experiences different in shrinking regions, and what can other (future) shrinking cities learn from this?**

To help answer the research questions, subquestions are asked to guide the research. Those subquestions are as follows:

- What are the challenges of the changing retail structure?
- Are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?
- How do policy makers cope with those challenges?
- What have been the successes and failures of these policies?
- What recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy?

Some notes can be made about the scope of the research. The main focus is on mid-sized cities of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The Netherlands contains of larger cities such as Maastricht and Groningen, that are located in shrinking regions; however, these cities manage to grow and the projections are that these cities will continue to grow. The cities' growth can be explained by the presence of educational

institutions that attract young people to migrate to those cities (Kooiman et al., 2016). Therefore, the focus is on mid-sized cities that do not function as student cities in particular. Another note is the exclusion of rural areas from this research. The focus is only on urbanized areas with the above-mentioned population range.

1.3 Societal relevance and scientific relevance

The societal relevance of this research relates to the effects of vacancy in city centers. As stated in Chapter 1.1, mid-sized cities deal with more structural vacancy, especially those close to the border that deal with population decline (in the future). These cities are consequently more prone to decay, which calls for governmental intervention (Buitelaar, 2014; CPB, 2016; Evers, 2015; PBL, 2014). To be more precise, vacant buildings have a negative effect on the surrounding area and centers can therefore fall into a downward spiral or vicious circle of further vacancies and finally decay (Buitelaar, 2014; Hospers, 2016; PBL, 2014). According to Hospers (2016), vacancy has two consequences for a city center that strengthens the vicious circle of vacancy and decay. First, Hospers points out that vacancy is a reason for less visits to the city center. Second, shops that want to settle in the city do not want to be located in an area with much vacancy. These consequences result in a less attractive area with less visitors for the shops therein. For that reason, shops have problems maintaining their businesses and can become bankrupt. The vacancy thus increases when shops become bankrupt. So, governmental intervention is legitimate to prevent decay (Buitelaar, 2014; CPB, 2016; Evers, 2015; PBL, 2014). The contribution of this research is to identify the governmental interventions that are needed to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy, and hence to overcome vacancy and prevent decay.

The scientific relevance of this research is the amplification of the literature on the changing retail structure and vacancy because the emphasis is mostly on specific disruptions, such as the economic crisis, e-commerce and the changed interests of customers, that induce shifts in the retail structure (Astbury & Thurstain-Goodwin, 2014; Findlay & Sparks, 2012; Weltevreden & van Rietbergen, 2007; Zhang, Zhu and Ye, 2016). These disruptions are investigated as independent disruptions in a wider context rather than collectively in specific city centers. Therefore, the relevance of this research is its contribution to the literature on multiple disruptions that affect the changing retail structure.

Nevertheless, since the last decade, there is a growing body of literature on the changing retail structure in city centers and the corresponding policy. In fact, Wrigley and Dolega (2011) are seen as the first scholars who investigated the impact of those disruptions on retail centers (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015; Singleton, Dolega, Riddlesden & Longley, 2016). They concluded that retail centers are affected by those disruptions in a structural manner. However, the literature on this topic is still scarce (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015), so this research amplifies the existing scientific literature on the changing retail structure in city centers by focusing on multiple disruptions and on city center policies.

The literature is scarce not only on the changing retail structure in city centers in general, but also on the changing retail structure of city centers in a shrinking context. In other words, not much is written about disruptions to the retail sector in the city centers of shrinking areas. The only aspect scholars point out is that demographic changes impact the retail sector in terms of customer demands (Balsas, 2014; Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015; Singleton et al., 2016). Apart from this, the emphasis of the scientific

literature on shrinkage is mostly on the whole city instead of specifically on the city center. Moreover, the changing retail structure is not taken into account in urban shrinkage. For these reasons, this research amplifies the existing scientific literature as well by taking the shrinking context into account with the investigation of the changing retail structure in city centers.

1.4 Structure of thesis

The thesis is structured in eight chapters. The first chapter has introduced this thesis by presenting the problem indication, the research aim and research questions, and the relevance of this research. The theoretical framework is provided in Chapter 2, in which Chapter 2.3. includes the conceptual model of this research. The methodological aspects are discussed in Chapter 3, which includes the research approach, the research methods, operationalization, research analysis and a discussion on the quality of the research. The case studies of this research are comprehensively described in Chapter 4 and the policy analyses thereof are provided in Chapter 5. The results of the in-depth interview method are provided in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. First, the results on the challenges of the retail structure are presented in Chapter 6 and they answer the first two subquestions of this research. Second, the results of the policies on the retail structure are presented in Chapter 7, and they address the third, fourth and fifth subquestions of this research. Furthermore, the conclusion, discussion and recommendations on scientific research are provided in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework on how to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers is provided in this chapter. This is done to offer direction to this research. First, resilience theory is of interest for its signification of the changes to the retail structure. The theory is applied to city centers and retail centers to determine how they respond to the disruptions to the retail structure (Balsas, 2014; Dolega & Celinska, 2015; Erkip, Kizilgün & Akinci, 2014; Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014; Kärrholm, Nylund, de la Fuente, 2014; Singleton et al., 2016; Wrigley & Dolega, 2011); this is of interest for the construction of the learning trajectory on how to cope with the changing retail structure. Second, the theory on co-creation is of interest for the organizational operation of the changing retail structure. To be more precise, the concept of co-creation is a method for stakeholders to cope with societal challenges (Bason, 2018; Verschuere & Steen, 2015; Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers, 2015). In addition, Chapter 1.3 has demonstrated that the changing retail structure is conceived as a societal challenge. So the theory of resilience and the concept of co-creation can help to construct the learning trajectory. Other theories on the revitalization and regeneration of city centers are not included in this research. This is because those theories start from dilapidation, while the focus in this research is on preventing dilapidation.

2.1 Resilience theory

Resilience theory originates from Holling (as cited in Erkip et al., 2014; Kärrholm et al., 2014) in ecological studies to measure a system's persistence to change and disturbances without reorganizing the system; however, it has since been applied in other scientific fields with own interpretations. In general, three interpretations are distinguished on resilience. First, the engineering resilience interpretation found in physical science assumes that shocks can move a system off its equilibrium growth path, but the self-correcting forces and adjustments of the system bring it back onto the equilibrium growth path. Second, the ecological resilience interpretation found in biological science assumes that systems have multiple equilibriums where a return to the pre-shock stage is not required. It is about the number of disruptions systems can absorb before they are damaged and moved to the new form that is the equilibrium state. Third, the adaptive resilience interpretation found in complex system theory focuses on the anticipation of and reaction to the system's organization to minimize the impact of disruption and to stimulate further development. It does not include equilibrium states. (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015; Martin, 2012; Simmie & Martin, 2010; Singleton et al., 2016). According to Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015), the adaptive interpretation is based on the evolutionary approach to economic systems by Simmie and Martin (2010) that denies the equilibrium state of economic systems. This means economic systems continually adjust and reconfigure themselves in the long term instead of returning to a previous stable state (Simmie & Martin, 2010).

The adaptive resilience interpretation is pertinent to the implementation of resilience in retail. In fact, Wrigley and Dolega (2011) state that city centers must continually adjust and reconfigure themselves to external shocks in order to function well, which is in conformity with the adaptive resilience interpretation. They are seen as the first scholars who investigated the resilience of retail in city centers (Dolega and Celinska, 2015; Singleton et al., 2016), and their adaptive resilience interpretation on retail is followed by scholars such as Balsas (2014), Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) and Singleton et al.

(2016). While not all scholars mention their resilience interpretation such as Erkip et al. (2014) and Fernandes and Chamusca (2014), Kärrholm et al.'s (2014) interpretation of resilience is remarkable compared to the other scholars. This is because Kärrholm et al. (2014) expose retail resilience from the ecological interpretation despite their denial of the equilibrium conception as well. They mention retail resilience as the process of “staying in the game;”, however, this also resembles the adjusting and reconfiguring aspect of the adaptive interpretation. Despite the different interpretations of resilience, it is noticeable that scholars refer to the same definition to implement retail resilience. This definition takes the system’s equilibrium into account. Retail resilience is defined as;

“The ability of different types of retailing to adapt to changes, crisis or shocks that challenge the system’s equilibrium without failing to perform its functions in a sustainable way”

(Balsas; 2014, p.161, Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015, p.17; Erkip et al., 2014, p.113; Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014, p.171; Kärrholm et al., 2014, p.121).

Shocks to the retail structure have been the reason to investigate the resilience of that structure. Wrigley and Dolega (2011) have focused on the economic crisis and, to a lesser extent, e-commerce as external shocks to which retail structures must continually adjust and reconfigure themselves. According to Wrigley and Dolega, the economic crisis has caused a decreased income for households and consequently a decreased market in retail. In addition, Singleton et al. (2016) claim that e-commerce has caused continuously increasing competition for shops, especially when their products can be easily found online (Singleton et al., 2016). In comparison, Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) also mention shocks to the retail structure, but they suggest that the shocks are long-term processes or slow burns. Apart from e-commerce, they mention demographic developments such as aging and changes in household composition, an increased convenience culture because of technical innovation, and large-scale retail development by large chain stores. These large-scale retail developments disturbs the functioning of small and independent stores, according to Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz. The aforementioned shocks to the retail structure are illustrated in Figure 3. However, Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) claim that the nascence and degree of external shocks vary by location.

Figure 3: Components of the changing retail structure.



Aspects are drawn from Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015), Singleton et al. (2016) and Wrigley and Dolega (2011).

The resilience of retail can be conceived in two ways, namely economically and spatially. First, retail resilience can be approached as the economic sector or retail structure of a city or region (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015). It refers to the types of retail shops in a place, such as independent shops and retail chains. Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) link the definition of retail resilience to this approach; however, they argue that resilience in economic geography studies is usually associated with a place

instead of an economic sector. Second, retail resilience can be approached spatially as a place that comprises of retail, such as shopping streets and city centers. Not only are the retail stores important, but other aspects of the area also determine the resilience, such as the maintenance of public areas, the attraction of tourists to the area and the image of the area (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015). In comparison, Kärrholm et al. (2014) address retail resilience under the assumption that it is one aspect of the whole urban landscape. The spatial approach of retail resilience is of interest in this research, because the focus is on city centers. Apart from the definition of retail resilience, Kärrholm et al. provided the following definition of spatial resilience, which retail resilience is a part of:

“The ability of spaces to cope with diversity and change while retaining their identity, bearing in mind that spaces are always related and dependent on spaces other than themselves”
(Kärrholm et al., 2014, p. 122).

Spontaneous responses and controlled responses are distinguished to achieve resilient retail centers. Erkip et al. (2014) suggest that spontaneous responses, such as longer opening hours, increased sanitations and services of home delivery, are from individual retailers and that controlled responses are plans made in collaboration with public authorities such as associations and municipalities. According to Erkip et al., spontaneous responses have the chance to fail when they are not in tune, and they are more vulnerable to the impacts of change. Therefore, Erkip et al. suggest a controlled response to achieve resilience in retail centers. Similarly, Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) suggest a controlled response with multiscale coordination from involved actors on the horizontal and vertical levels to build adaptive capacity for a resilient retail center. This means collaboration between public and private actors as well as collaboration among different governmental levels. In comparison, Fernandes and Chamusca (2014) recommend making decisions on the regional level in order to prevent solutions that involve the acquisition of money only locally over a short term. Apart from this, Wrigley and Dolega (2011) suggest that small independent retailers and retailers of retail chains need to create relationships in order to be resilient. Furthermore, Balsas (2014) state that public authorities can learn from the actors of the private sector regarding how to maintain city centers. Wrigley and Dolega (2011) also suggest appointing a city center manager and instituting a business improvement district (BID). Nevertheless, Balsas (2014) is critical of appointing a center manager because, according to him/her, it does not contribute to long-term resilience.

Apart from collaboration on different levels, scholars mention other factors for achieving a resilient city center. First, the city center’s image and maintenance and the attraction of tourists to the center are mentioned by Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015) in the spatial approach of retail resilience. In addition, Balsas (2014) and Erkip et al. (2014) also mention the maintenance of retail centers to achieve resilience and attract visitors. Second, Balsas and Erkip et al. mention accessibility, such as a suitable public transportation and optimal parking management. Similarly, Wrigley and Dolega (2011) suggest a supportive parking policy. Third, the balance between retail and other functions is mentioned by Erkip et al. (2014) and Kärrholm et al. (2014). Erkip et al. claim that retail centers need to include restaurants and cafes to meet customer demands, while Kärrholm et al. mention the functions of housing and working areas to make the center more lively, also in the evening. Fourth, the fine-tuning of centers is mentioned by Balsas (2014), who highlights that the development of new retail area will weaken old retail areas when there is no additional demand. Fifth, to achieve resilience, a database of vacancy is important to obtain insight into the city center’s operation regarding vacancy (Erkip et al., 2014). These aspects are summarized in Table 1 on the next page, which provides an overview.

Table 1: Aspects that contribute to a resilient city center.

<i>Actions in planning the city center</i>
Interaction and collaboration between public authorities on different governmental levels and private parties (retailers, investors).
Maintenance of the city center
Accessibility of the city center
A mix of retail and the integration of other functions into the planning of city centers (leisure, services, food).
Fine tuning of retail centers.
Database on the level of vacancy in order to gain more insight into the operation of the city center.

The aspects are drawn from Balsas (2014), Dolega and Celinska-Janowicz (2015), Erkip et al., (2015), Fernandes and Chamusca (2014), and Kärrholm et al., 2014).

The resilience of a retail center can be determined by the level of vacancy and by the mix of retail (Dolega & Celinska-Janowicz, 2015; Wrigley & Dolega, 2011), which are also included in Table 1. First, the vacancy rate can be measured as a percentage that implies either the empty floorspace or the empty units of all store units. However, the percentages will be different when both types of measurements are executed (Wrigley & Dolega, 2011). Furthermore, Wrigley and Dolega (2011) state that vacancy becomes a problem when the building is vacant for longer than two years, but they view short-term healthy because it responds to the demands of the users. Second, the mix within retail is mentioned as an indicator of a resilient center. Not only diversity within retail shops but also large retail chain shops that attract visitors called anchors are mentioned. Especially food-related anchor shops are mentioned by Wrigley and Dolega. Nevertheless, while chain stores can put city centers on the map, it can make a center less distinctive because small independent stores add distinctiveness to the center (Dolega and Celinska, 2015; Wrigley & Dolega, 2011).

This subchapter has discussed the resilience theory in relation to the changing retail structure and vacancy. The next subchapter discusses the theory on co-creation.

2.2. Co-creation

The concept of co-creation originates from marketing studies in literature as a tool to create more valuable products and to achieve competitive advantages in the private sector. Co-creation refers to the organizational change of a firm's operation model, in which the top management must involve customers in the production processes in order to create value (Gouillart & Billings, 2013; Gouillart & Hallet, 2015; Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Shamim & Ghazali, 2014; Voorberg et al., 2015). Not only are customers seen as the end users in co-creation, but they are also seen as sources of new value creation. In co-creation, customers can share their experiences on a platform created by the firm. These experiences can improve the products; therefore, the value of those products can increase. In other words, co-creation is a continuous process of value creation by taking the experiences of customers into account in production processes (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2009). According to Payne et al.(2008), the focus of Prahalad and Ramaswamy is on providing experiences to customers in order to create valuable products; however, an indication of experience is lacking in the definition of co-creation in more recent research by Ramaswamy (2011). Co-creation is defined by Ramaswamy as

“The practice of developing systems, products, or services through collaboration with customers, managers, employees and other stakeholders”
(Ramaswamy, 2011, p.195).

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) and Shamim and Ghazali (2014) discuss the relevance of applying co-creation in retail. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that the traditional operation of firms is challenged by several changes and forces on the market, such as globalization; deregulation; the outsourcing activities of industries; and customers who have become more informed, connected, empowered and active on the market. Owing to this, firms have difficulties in differentiating on the market and customers will purchase the cheapest product available when there is no differentiation. As a consequence, the Walmartization of the market can occur, which means that large chain stores move into a region and devastate local business because of the low prices those stores offer. However, customers are not satisfied with the Walmartization supply on the market and they want choice of valuable products. For this reason, co-creation emerges as the tool to create differentiated and valued products (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Similarly, Shamim and Ghazali (2014) highlight the changes in demand on the retail market, such as the focus on experiencing, entertaining and communicating as well as a different demand for products because of the changes in demographics. Moreover, they state that the environment in which customers shop needs to be attractive. According to Shamim and Ghazali, customers are more inclined to provide feedback on products when they can have experiences and when customers are shopping in an attractive environment. That feedback can be used to improve the products and therefore increase the value of products. However, the statements by Shamim and Ghazali are suggestions; they require further investigation in order to be reliable sources (2014).

Apart from the consideration of co-creation in the private sector, authorities in the public sector have started to consider co-creation in policy making as a tool for value creation. For instance, Bason (2018) considers co-creation as an element of achieving public sector innovation, while Gouillart and Hallet (2015) and Voorberg et al. (2015) mention it as a new reconfiguration strategy of a government's organization. In this reconfiguration strategy, stakeholders participate in the design and delivery of public services. This means that some of the government's work and costs are outsourced to those who participate (Gouillart & Hallet, 2015; Voorberg et al., 2015). In comparison, Bekkers and Meijer (2010) claim that co-creation in the public sector is about the contribution of stakeholders to the developments and executions of policies as well as the involvement of those stakeholders in the government's agenda. According to Bekkers and Meijer, stakeholders include citizens, firms, associations, experts and societal organizations. Moreover, Franzen (2011) and Gouillart and Hallet (2015) point out that stakeholders mostly aggregate in communities of shared interests. According to Franzen (2011) co-creation in the public sector focuses mostly on shopkeepers/entrepreneur associations. Furthermore, Uppström and Lönn (2015) point out that in addition to economic value, on which private companies focus, public authorities must also include social value and demographic value into their policy.

The concept of co-creation must not be confused with the concept of co-production or with the concept of interactive policy in policy making, despite the fact that these terms are used interchangeably in literature according to Voorberg et al. (2015). Bekkers and Meijer (2010) highlight the differences between the terms co-production, interactive policy and co-creation. They state that co-production refers to participation in the implementation of policy, while interactive policy refers to participation in the design of policy. Co-creation in the public sector refers to the participation of parties in the implementation and design of the policy. In other words, the scope of participation in co-creation is broader compared to co-production and interactive policy (Bekkers & Meijer, 2010). In comparison, Bason (2018) highlights the differences between co-creation and co-production: co-creation is about creating solutions with people, while co-production is about improving the governmental services offered by people with their own resources. Apart from these different interpretations, Verschuere and Steen (2015) claim that co-production refers to the participation of citizens, while co-creation refers to the participation of people with several roles such as business owners or other stakeholders. In addition,

Verschuere and Steen (2015), as well as Bekkers and Meijer (2010), refer to the participation ladder that rates the level of participation; however, this ladder focuses only on citizens in general instead of stakeholder groups. Therefore, this research does not take the participation ladder into account.

Co-creation is considered by public authorities because of the incentives, according to several scholars. First, as described in Chapter 1.3, co-creation is mentioned as a manner in which to deal with societal challenges such as climate change and aging (Bason, 2018; Verschuere & Steen, 2015; Voorberg et al., 2015). Second, co-creation is suggested as a method for dealing with the decreased budgets of governments (Verschuere & Steen, 2015; Voorberg et al., 2015), in which Gouillart and Hallet (2015) mention that public money will be saved when governmental work is outsourced to stakeholders in co-creation. Third, it is mentioned as a tool to improve the quality of a policy and to gain knowledge on the policy’s subject (Bekkers & Meijer, 2010; Dörk & Monteyne, 2011; Uppström & Lönn, 2015). Dörk and Monteyne (2011) claim that new ideas emerge because of the stakeholder’s knowledge that is taken into account. In fact, those stakeholders dispose of the spatial knowledge of citizens. Moreover, Bekkers and Meijer (2010) claim that governments strive for the support of important parties as well as a policy that is representative. Fourth, Bason (2018) and Gouillart and Hallet, (2015) state that co-creation is a process to achieve innovation in public sectors, which those scholars mention as a requirement for governments. Fifth, Bekkers and Meijer (2010) suggest that stakeholders have interests and therefore participate in order to fulfill those interests. Nevertheless, Voorberg et al. (2015) are skeptical about the results of co-creation. They claim that less is known about the outcomes of co-creation and they argue that co-creation is considered to be a value itself in studies.

Gouillart and Hallet (2015) have formulated five steps to develop co-creation in the public sector. These steps involve the appliance of co-creation and the attitude towards co-creation, and they are collectively referred to as “the path of co-creation”. These five steps are summarized in Table 2. First, the public sector needs to decide who is of interest for policy making in co-creation. Gouillart and Hallet mention this as identifying the communities or stakeholders that are of interest. Second, the public sector must create engagement platforms to attract the stakeholders who are of interest. Third, the public sector needs to tender for interactions between stakeholders—the engagement platforms can be used to find new types of interaction between these stakeholders. Fourth, those stakeholders’ individual experiences, which are formed during the interaction processes, need to be enabled. Fifth, these experiences create value for the public sector when the previous steps are followed (Gouillart & Hallet, 2015, p.43).

Table 2: The path of co-creation by Gouillart and Hallet (2015).

1: Identify the communities/stakeholders that are of interest.
2: Create engagement platforms.
3: Encourage interactions between the stakeholders.
4: Enable the individual experiences of the stakeholders.
5: Gain new value.

Source: Gouillart and Hallet (2015, p.43) and own elaboration

Apart from the incentives to apply co-creation, scholars discuss how to have a successful appliance of co-creation as well as the attitude towards co-creation. Gouillart and Hallet (2015) present five building blocks or principles for successful co-creation in the public sector. First, they suggest that a co-creation initiative must be put into wider perspective to achieve long-lasting results. This means the initiative must be considered in multiple sectors such as the economic, societal and environment sectors within the governmental organization. Second, they suggest a bottom-up approach to fit into the local context

of ideas and practice, instead of an initiative that is transferred from another place. Third, they suggest that governors need to trust the process and stakeholders as well as let go of controlling every step. Fourth, the focus needs to be on the people within the process instead of on the process itself. This enables people to devise experiences and initiatives that are not steered by the process itself. Finally, (digital) engagement platforms must be introduced to have live meetings and workshops for the participants, which is in line with the five steps for developing co-creation proposed by Gouillart and Hallet themselves. (Gouillart & Hallet, 2015). Furthermore, Gouillart and Hallet point out that the rules and laws enacted by the public sector are not negotiable with other stakeholders, so co-creation needs to fit into this legal framework in order to be successful. Other scholars highlight that governments need to become more transparent and less bureaucratic to achieve successful co-creation (Dörk & Monteyne, 2011; Uppström & Lönn, 2015). These points are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Aspects of a successful appliance of co-creation.

Approach the co-creation initiative from a wider perspective.
Approach the co-creation initiative from the bottom-up.
Trust the process and the stakeholder; public authorities need to let go of control.
Put people first instead of the process.
Introduce (digital) engagement platforms.
Include the legal framework that consists of laws and regulations.
Become more transparent.
Become less bureaucratic.

The aspects are drawn from Dörk and Monteyne (2011), Gouillart and Hallet (2015) and Uppström and Lönn (2015).

The theory on co-creation was discussed in this subchapter. The conceptual model, which includes the theories of resilience and co-creation, is discussed in the next subchapter.

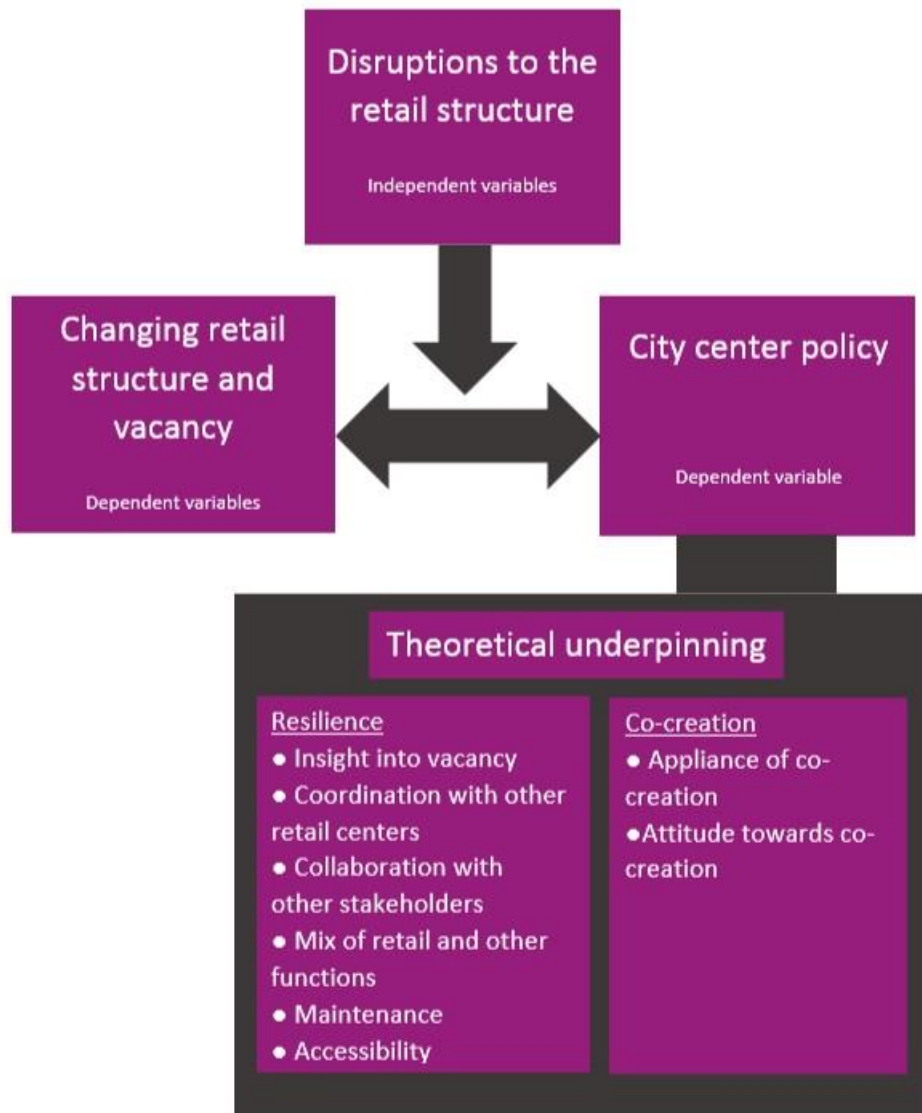
2.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model is demonstrated in this subchapter to explain how the theoretical concepts relate to this research. The model consists of independent and dependent variables—see Figure 4 for the graphical display. To begin with, disruptions to the retail market, such as the economic crisis and e-commerce are designated as the independent variables. This is because investigations on the nascence of the disruptions are not included in this research. Nevertheless, disruptions have changed the retail structure and have caused vacancy, according to the studies by the governmental institutions and consultant agencies, as discussed in Chapter 1.1. The studies highlight that the impact of the disruptions differs per area. In fact, according to these studies, mid-sized cities and cities that deal with population decline (in the future) face a changing retail structure and vacancy to higher extents. Therefore, the changing retail structure and vacancy are dependent variables in this research. Furthermore, the studies indicate that governments have started to develop policies; however, these policies depend on the extent and impact of the changing retail structure and vacancy. This means that the city center policy is also a dependent variable in this research, because it depends on the effects of the changing retail structure and vacancy. On the other hand, the city center policies influence the effect of the changing retail structure and vacancy; therefore, a two-sided arrow is depicted in the figure between the variables of the changing retail structure and vacancy, and the city center policy.

The theoretical framework is relevant to the city center policy variable, which is in focus in this research. The city center policy and the effects on both the changing retail structure and vacancy will be

investigated, underpinned by the theory, in order to propose the previously mentioned learning trajectory. The above-mentioned theory includes policy measures and is thus part of the city center policy variable of the conceptual model in Figure 4. The figure demonstrates what aspects of the theories are taken into account to create the learning trajectory. The operationalization of these and other methodological aspects are discussed in the next chapter, in which the operationalization can be found in Chapter 3.2.1.

Figure 4: Conceptual model of this research.



Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodological aspects of this research are explained in this chapter. First, the research philosophy, as well as the approaches of induction and deduction, is discussed in Chapter 3.1. Second, the research methods and the operationalization are discussed in Chapter 3.2. Third, the data analysis is discussed in Chapter 3.3. Finally, the quality of this research is discussed in Chapter 3.4.

3.1 Research approach

The researcher's philosophical position, which relates to epistemology and ontology (Walliman, 2016), is discussed in this subchapter. Epistemology is described by Walliman (2016) as the way in which knowledge can be conceived as well as what can be conceived as acceptable knowledge. Ontology is described by Walliman (2016) and Boeije, 't Hart and Hox (2009) as the social structures and the perception on what exists. According to Boeije et al. (2009), the doctrine of ontology refers to how social reality is built up and if social structures can be influenced by people. So, the aspects of epistemology and ontology hold a view on reality and are of interest in relation to the philosophical position of the researcher. In comparison to this research, the ontology doctrine relates to the existence of the changing retail structure that has caused vacancies. This perception is determined by the experiences of the people regarding the changing retail structure and vacancy, which relates to the epistemology doctrine. In other words, knowledge in this research will be conceived based on how people experience and interpret the changing retail structure and vacancy. For this reason, this research presumes the philosophical position of an interpretivist, who focuses on the different interpretations and experiences of a social reality (Walliman, 2016).

This research takes on an inductive approach, wherein general conclusions are drawn from specific observations with inductive reasoning (Walliman, 2016). The aim of this research is to create a learning trajectory for other (future) shrinking cities, which means the conclusions of this research are generally applicable to those cities. However, Walliman (2016) points out that it is difficult to clearly distinguish between induction and deduction because insight into theory is necessary to know what information should be gathered. According to Walliman, this means that the research should also include a deductive approach for the above-mentioned insight theory and to offer direction.

3.2 Research methods

The applied research methods that tend to answer the research questions are discussed in this subchapter. The research questions are repeated in Box 1, along with the research aim.

Box 1: The research questions and the research aims.

Research aim

Identifying the coping mechanism of city centers with regard to the changing retail structure and vacancy, with particular attention on shrinking regions, and proposing a learning trajectory for other (future) shrinking cities.

Research questions:

How do cities cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in their city centers?

Are the experiences different in shrinking regions, and what can other (future) shrinking cities learn from this?

The research questions and aims conform with qualitative research methods that focus on situations and people (Boeije et al., 2009). To be more precise, this research has its point of focus on the situation of the changing retail structure and vacancy, as well as on the people who deal with this situation. Qualitative methods tend to describe, interpret and declare the experiences of people within specific situations. In other words, qualitative methods are used to investigate what meaning people assign to their social situations (Boeije et al., 2009). Therefore, in-depth interviews were held as the qualitative research method in this research along with desk research to prepare these in-depth interviews. This was done with a case study design that includes a comparative approach. Furthermore, the case studies were visited to gain additional insight into the cases.

Comparative case study design

A case study design with a comparative approach consists of two opposite cases whose characteristics are compared (Walliman, 2016). The cases are comprehensively analyzed and the comparison thereof can generate new theoretical insights (Bryman, 2012). This study consists of a case study design with a comparative approach, in order to gain insight into how shrinking cities can cope with the changing retail structure. The opposite of a shrinking city is a growing city; therefore, these two types of cities are the comparative cases in this study. Furthermore, because this study focuses on mid-sized cities, the cases must represent a mid-sized city with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents.

Heerlen and Helmond serve as the mid-sized shrinking city case and the growing city case respectively. Heerlen, on the one hand, was chosen because it is currently the only shrinking city in the Netherlands, with a population of 86.840 residents (Gemeente Heerlen, 2018). Helmond, on the other hand, has a population of 90.911 residents (Gemeente Helmond, 2018). The national government appointed the city as a center of urban development in the 1980s. As a result, people have started to settle in Helmond and the city has begun to grow (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b). Moreover, the number of residents in Helmond is comparable with the number of residents in Heerlen. Figure 5 demonstrates where Heerlen and Helmond are located in the Netherlands, and further information about the cases is provided in Chapter 4.

Desk research

Desk research involves collecting and analyzing secondary data that is relevant for this research. Secondary data refers to data that is already collected in other research (Boeije et al., 2009). This data is from scientific studies and published documents of consultant agencies and governmental institutions. It was checked to determine what is already written about the changing retail structure and what influences this structure has on city centers. Moreover, the data was checked to gain insight into the societal impacts of the changing retail structure in city centers and to provide direction to this research. The studies of governmental institutions and consultant agencies have been discussed in Chapter 1 and the scientific studies have been presented in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the

Figure 5: Location of Heerlen and Helmond.



Source: Wikipedia (2016) and own elaboration.

policy documents of the two case studies are also taken into account in the desk research. The relevant aspects of those policy documents are described in Chapter 5.

Field research

Field research in this work involved conducting in-depth interviews with stakeholders of Helmond and Heerlen. These interviews were prepared with interview guides, which contain a list of questions for the interviewees. The stakeholders were categorized and each category had its own interview guide. Apart from the questions in the interview guide, there was room for other questions during the interviews. For example, questions about the opening hours were created during the interviews when the interviewees mentioned the policy on these hours as an issue. This means that the interview process took place in a semi-structured form, because there was room for questions other than those in the interview guides (Bryman, 2012). The interview questions can be found in Annex 1. In addition, the results of the field research are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

The aim was to interview seven stakeholders in each city to gather a sufficient amount of data—this equates 14 interviews in total. However, the division of the stakeholders groups differs in the two cities, and the division of interviewees representing the stakeholder groups consequently differs in each city. Heerlen consists of multiple intermediaries, while Helmond consists of one intermediary. The stakeholder groups of the municipality and shop owners share the same number of interviewees in the two cities—one who represents the municipality and three shop owners in each city. The operationalization and creation of these interview questions are discussed in the next subchapter.

3.2.1 Operationalization

The interview questions in the field research were formed during the operationalization process with input from the theoretical framework and the policy analysis. This means that for every subquestion of this research, the indicators are checked, and these indicators are retrieved from the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 and the policy analysis in Chapter 5. The conceptual model in Chapter 2.3 has demonstrated what variables are included to provide the learning trajectory on how to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers. The variables were used to steer this research and to form the interview questions. To reiterate, this includes insight into the level of vacancy, fine-tuning with other retail centers, collaboration with other stakeholders, mix of retail and other functions, maintenance, accessibility, the appliance of co-creation and attitudes towards co-creation. Moreover, the policy analysis is included in the operationalization to ensure that this research captures the relevant aspects that relate to the changing retail structure and vacancy. For instance, the policy analysis revealed a focus on the proliferation of the city in order to cope with the changing retail structure and to attract visitors. Furthermore, the results of the different parts of this research are compared in Chapter 8.2. This comparison also includes the studies of the governmental institutions and consultant agencies, which have been discussed in Chapter 1. These studies have functioned as the motive for this research. Table 4 on the next page presents an overview of the operationalization process.

Table 4: Operationalization of this research.

Subquestions	Indicators	What is answered by what?	Interview questions	To which parties asked?
A: What are the challenges of the changing retail structure?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changing retail structure challenges (This is asked in general to investigate what the changing retail structure consists of) ● View on vacancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Policy analysis (Chapter 5) ● Interviews (Chapter 6) 	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13	M, Co, I, R, S
B: Are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographic developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews (Chapter 6) 	26, 27, 28, 31	M, Co, I, R, S
C: How do policy makers cope with those challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy instruments ● Collaboration ● Attitude towards co-creation ● Appliance of co-creation ● Proliferation ● Coordination with other retail areas and city centers ● Insight into vacancy ● Content of policy (Accessibility/maintenance/mix of retail and other functions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Policy analysis (Chapter 5) ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33	M, Co, I, R, S
D: What have been the successes and failures of these policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Successes and failures of city center policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	21, 22, 23, 24, 34, 35	M, Co, I, R, S
E: What recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommendations of city center policies ● Improvements in collaboration and co-creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	20, 36, 37	M, Co, I, R, S

The operationalization process is done by taking the subquestions of this research into account. For each subquestion, the following are determined: what indicators are important, what part of the research answers the subquestions, what interview questions can be asked to answer the subquestions and who answers these interview questions. The overview of all interview questions is provided in Annex 1. However, not all variables that are in the theoretical underpinning square in the conceptual model are explicitly asked in the interview questions. The reason to not have explicit questions on, for instance, maintenance and accessibility is to maintain an open attitude in the interviews. Specific questions can steer an interview in a direction that does not represent the experiences of the interviewees on the topic. In other words, specific questions can shift the focus of what interviewees will otherwise say on the subject (Bryman, 2012).

With regard to the parties to which the interview questions are asked, the stakeholders are categorized in five groups: the municipality (M), intermediary (I), shop owner (S), real-estate owner (R) and consultant (Co). The groups have their own question lists that fit their cognitions because each

stakeholder group has different tasks and interests in the city center. Nevertheless, some questions are imposed to multiple stakeholder groups, see Annex 1 for an overview of the interview questions. The data collection and analysis processes of the interviews are discussed in the next subchapter.

3.3 Data analysis

The data analysis of this study's field research comprised several steps. They are as follows: finding stakeholders who were willing to participate, conducting the interviews with these stakeholders, forming transcripts of the interviews and coding and analyzing the interview data.

The first step was to find stakeholders for the interviews. This was done by checking policy documents and the Internet for the names of stakeholders who could be potential interviewees. These names were checked online for their email addresses in order to ask them if they would be willing to participate. The municipalities of both cities, along with a real-estate owner and two intermediaries in Heerlen responded and indicated their willingness. However, a real-estate owner in Helmond responded that he/she was not willing to participate and a consultant in Helmond stated that he/she was too busy. Nevertheless, a consultant agency in Helmond was found with help from the municipality of Helmond. Moreover, an intermediary in Helmond did not respond to the emails; however, during a visit to the office, he/she indicated his/her interest in participating. Similarly, there were no responses to the emails and reminders. For this reason, shops were visited to ask the shop owners face to face if they would be willing to participate. Those who were willing to participate in Heerlen are not involved in city center policy, while for Helmond, the three shop owners who were interested are involved in city center policy. This is because the shop owners in Heerlen who are active in city center policy provided responses stating that they were not interested in being part of the study. This difference must be taken into account for the quality of the results. Furthermore, a real-estate agent was not found for participation in Helmond despite the suggestions and contact details from other stakeholders. This resulted in six interviewees for Helmond and seven interviewees for Heerlen.

The second step was to collect the data through in-depth interviews with the stakeholders who were willing to participate. The interviews took place from September 29, 2017 until November 2, 2017. For Heerlen the interviewees are one person from the municipality, a real-estate owner, two intermediaries and three shop owners. For Helmond the interviewees are one person from the municipality, one intermediary, two persons from a consultant agency and three shop owners. In addition, the two persons from the consultant agency were both present during the interview. This means that seven interviews took place for Heerlen and six interviews took place for Helmond. Moreover, the interviews were recorded with the Audio recorder program on a mobile phone.

The third step was to create transcripts of these interviews on a computer. This was done by typing out the text of the recorded audio files word for word in the Microsoft Word program. In addition, the audio files were checked twice to ensure that the transcripts include the correct text. This process took place in October, November and the first two weeks in December of 2017. Moreover, the transcription process was done in an anonymous way because some interviewees requested that their names or organizations not be published. The names of the interviewees were changed into codewords. The first letter of the

codeword is the organization they represent—M for municipality, I for intermediary, Co for consultancy, R for real-estate owner and S for shop owner. The second letter of the codeword consists of the letter A or B. The interviewees who represent Heerlen were assigned the letter A, and the respondents from Helmond were assigned the letter B. The codewords are followed by a number when there are more interviewees from the type of organization they represent. The order of the number is based on the order of the interviewees. As a result, the interviewees are mentioned as MA, MB, IA1, IA2, IB1, RA, SA1, SA2, SA3, SB1, SB2, SB3, CoB1 and CoB2. The consultancies were present in the same interview, which means that there were 13 interviews in total. More details about the interviewees are provided in Table 5. However, the table does not include the names of organizations/companies because of the requested anonymity.

Table 5: The interviewees, the organizations they represent and their professions.

Heerlen			Helmond		
<u>Interviewee's codename</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Interviewee's codename</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Profession</u>
MA	Municipality	Alderman	MB	Municipality	Program manager
IA1	Organization that supervises starting entrepreneurs, commissioned by the municipality	Chairman	IB1	Helmond Stadsmarketing	Center manager
IA2	Wants to remain anonymous about the function of the organization	Chairman	CoB1, CoB2	Consultant agency that operates in Helmond	Director & staff member
RA	Real-estate company that owns a retail center in Heerlen's city center	Head of asset manager institutional	-	-	-
SA1	Retailer	Owner	SB1	Retailer	Owner
SA2	Retailer	Owner	SB2	Retailer	Owner
SA3	Retailer	Owner	SB3	Retailer	Owner

The transcripts were coded and analyzed as the next step based on the coding practice of Charmaz (as cited in Bryman 2012), which consists of the steps of initial coding and focused coding. To begin with, initial coding was comprehensively performed by providing a code for every mentioned theme in the transcripts. This was done in the Word program by adding comments that represent a code to every theme found in the text of the transcripts. After the coding process in Word, the transcripts and the codes were put into the coding program Atlas.TI. This program counted 798 codes in this phase. Later on, focused coding was done in multiple steps to form codes that are of interest for this research. Not only were codes that share the same meaning merged, but a selection was also made of codes that are relevant to this research. In the end, the number of codes was reduced to 89 codes. This process was comprehensive and took much time, because of the large amount of information gleaned from the interviews. To be precise, the coding and analysis processes took place from January until July of 2018 to find the relevant data for this research. The quality of the research is discussed in the next subchapter.

3.4 Quality of the research

Scholars such as Golafshani (2003); Krefting (1991); and Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) have discussed the use of the validity and reliability criteria in qualitative research to determine the quality of the research. These criteria originates from quantitative studies, and the discussion is about whether the criteria fit into qualitative research. This is because the psychological position, the epistemology and the ontology differ in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Krefting (1991) and Golafshani (2003) argue that different criteria fit better into qualitative research, while Morse et al. (2002) argue that the criteria of validity and reliability are applicable to qualitative studies. Out of these three studies, Krefting's study (1991) is the most comprehensible because it includes a conceptual model on the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Therefore, the aspects that Krefting has discussed are taken into account in this research to determine the quality and trustworthiness.

The model of Krefting takes into account the criteria of Guba (as cited in Krefting, 1991) and Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Krefting, 1991), with strategies on how to accomplish a qualitative and trustworthy study in qualitative research. First, it considers credibility, which indicates that qualitative research includes multiple realities. Multiple questions on the same topic—such as multiple questions on the policy processes and improvements for the city center— were asked in the interviews to take the correct information into account and to prevent socially preferred answers. Member checking was also done to check whether the correct information is taken into account. This consisted of sending the transcripts to the interviewees. Second, transferability, which determines whether the results of a research can be applied to similar contexts, was taken into account. This was addressed by focusing on multiple directives such as shrinkage and a mid-sized city between 50,000 and 100,000 residents. These directives determine the contexts in which this research is relevant. Third, dependability, which refers to the consistency of the processes done in the research, was taken into account. This was done by describing the processes of this research in detail in this chapter and by including all data such as transcripts, audio records and coding files. Fourth, confirmability, which implies the support of the results by the theory and the participants of this research, was also taken into account. Member checking, which contained of sending the transcript to the interviewee, is also done to ensure support. Furthermore, addressing the theory in the conclusion chapter is a strategy to determine the fit of this research (Krefting, 1991).

Apart from the above-mentioned strategies, triangulation is another method of addressing the quality and trustworthiness of the research (Krefting, 1991). Three forms of triangulation were applied in this research. First, triangulation on data methods is applied by executing policy analyses and by having field research that consists of the in-depth interview method. Second, triangulation on data sources was applied by interviewing multiple stakeholder groups to gain insight into possible different point of views. Third, theoretical triangulation was applied in this research by considering theories from different fields, namely resilience theory and the theory on co-creation.

The methodological aspects were discussed in this chapter. The case studies are presented in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Case descriptions

The cases of Heerlen and Helmond are comprehensively described in this chapter to provide insight into the two cases. The Heerlen case is presented in Chapter 4.1, and the Helmond case is examined in Chapter 4.2.

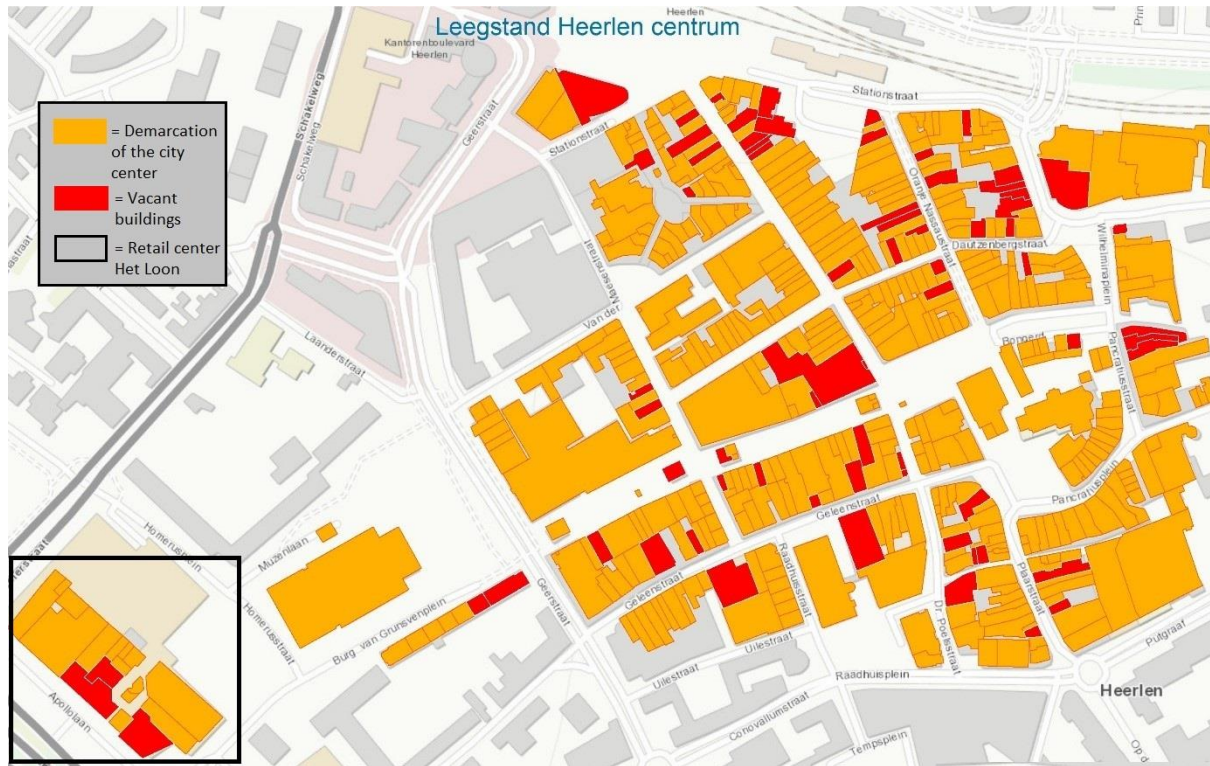
4.1 Case of Heerlen

Heerlen is a shrinking city that is part of the shrinking Parkstad Limburg region located in the province of Limburg, and contains 86,840 residents in 2018 (Gemeente Heerlen, 2018). To demonstrate the population loss, the city had 89,019 residents in 2012 (Parkstad Limburg, 2018b). Moreover, the overall Parkstad Limburg region also deals with population decline (Rijksoverheid, n.p.). In fact, the region had 245,165 residents in 2017, compared to 250,792 residents in 2012 (Parkstad Limburg, 2018b). Nevertheless, Parkstad Limburg is more urban compared to other Dutch shrinking regions that are more rural. The region has become urban due to the mining industry that provided economic and demographic growth between 1900 and 1965. However, the mines were shut down between 1966 and 1973 and this has caused a high unemployment rate. Despite attempts by the government to provide work in the region, people have left the area and the youth still migrate out of the region for higher education (Elzerman & Bontje, 2015; Gemeente Heerlen, 2008). As a result, the population has begun to decline in Heerlen and Parkstad Limburg. In the future, it is predicted that Heerlen will have 84.000 residents in 2040 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2016).

Apart from the population losses, Heerlen and Parkstad Limburg deal with a higher aging rate—particularly, the rate of residents aged 65 and older, in comparison to the average rate of the Netherlands. In general for the Netherlands, this rate was 18.5% in 2017 (Eurostat, 2018), while the rates in Heerlen and in Parkstad Limburg were 22% and 23.3% respectively in the same year (Parkstad Limburg, 2018a). The region has forecasted that the aging rate in 2030 will be 33% in Parkstad Limburg and 25% in the Netherlands in general (Parkstad Limburg, 2011).

The city center of Heerlen deals with the changing retail structure and vacancy (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016) and has not filled the void of the mine closures because of its nascence. To be more precise, Heerlen consists of a network of districts without a historical core (Gemeente, Heerlen, 2008). In addition to the vacancy in Heerlen, Dynamis (2017) reveals the vacancy rates of the city center. In 2017 21% of the supply was vacant, while the vacancy rate of gross floor area was 18% in 2017. According to Dynamis, the available supply in the city center has decreased by 8% between 2016 and 2017 (Dynamis, 2017). Figure 6 presents a map that indicates the buildings that were vacant in 2017 in the city center in red. This includes functions other than retail too. The figure also includes the retail center Het Loon, which can be found in the bottom-left corner. The city center policies of Heerlen on the changing retail structure and vacancy are analyzed in Chapter 5, but first, the case study of Helmond is discussed in the next subchapter.

Figure 6: Map of vacant buildings in the city center of Heerlen.



Source: Locatus (2017a) and own elaboration.

4.2 Case of Helmond

Helmond is a growing city located in the province of North Brabant; it is part of the de Peel region and the metropolis region of Eindhoven. The city includes former villages such as Stiphout and Brouwhuis that are now neighborhoods of the city (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b). The national government designated Helmond as a city of growth in 1980, and the city received financial resources to improve its living and working environment. As the result, the population has grown from 58,500 residents in 1980 (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b) to 90,911 residents in 2018 (Gemeente Helmond, 2018). For the future, the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS] (2016) predicts that Helmond will grow to 100,800 residents in 2040. However Helmond deals with aging, but the aging rate in this city is lower than the national aging rate—the aging rate in Helmond was 16.8% in 2018 (Gemeente Helmond, 2018) and the national aging rate was 18.5% in 2017 (Eurostat, 2018). Moreover, the municipality claims that other municipalities of de Peel region deal with aging to a higher extent; however, exact numbers are not provided (Gemeente Helmond, 2016). In comparison, the document “Afsprakenkader detailhandel in de Peel,” which is written by the municipalities of the de Peel region, highlights that other regions except Helmond will experience a stabilization or a slight decline in the number of residents within the next 10 years. The document states that the region has a population of 206,000 residents (Gemeente Asten et al., 2015), but more recent numbers are not provided by one of the municipalities of de Peel. In addition, the Helmond municipality claims the city is relatively young despite the aging process because the city has attracted young people (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b).

While the city center of Helmond functions as the heart of the de Peel region, it deals with the changing

Chapter 5: Analysis of policy documents

Policy documents about the retail structure and the city center are analyzed in this chapter. The policy documents of Heerlen are analyzed in Chapter 5.1, in which particular attention is paid to the Bidboek document in Chapter 5.1.1. The policy documents of Helmond are analyzed in Chapter 5.2, with a particular focus on the Centrum perspectief document in Chapter 5.2.2.

5.1 Heerlen

The relevant policy documents are analyzed in this subchapter to gain insight into the city center policy of Heerlen. The analysis includes the municipal documents “Stadsvisie Heerlen 2026” (Gemeente Heerlen, 2008) and “Structuurvisie Heerlen 2035” (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015), the regional document “Retailstructuurvisie 2010-2020 Parkstad Limburg eindrapportage” (Parkstad Limburg, 2011), the provincial document “Winkelmonitor Limburg 2016. De Limburgse winkelmarkt in beeld” (Provincie Limburg, 2017) and the document “Herijking detailhandelsvisie Limburg” of MKB Limburg (MKB Limburg, 2015). An overview of this analysis is provided in thematic order. Furthermore, the municipality of Heerlen has created a policy document for the city center called the “Bidboek urban Heerlen”, and an overview of the analysis of that document is provided in Chapter 5.1.2.

The policy documents describe the catchment areas of the city centers in Parkstad Limburg; however, MKB Limburg (2015) claims that these areas overlap despite the municipalities’ arrangements. Particularly, the documents state that Heerlen is the primary center of Parkstad Limburg and that the other city centers in this region are inferior to Heerlen’s city center. This means Heerlen has a catchment area on the regional level and the other places in Parkstad Limburg have a catchment area on the local level. Therefore, the municipalities within Parkstad Limburg need to coordinate their retail policy on the region level. (Gemeente Heerlen, 2008; Gemeente Heerlen, 2015; MKB Limburg, 2015; Parkstad Limburg, 2011; Provincie Limburg, 2017). Nevertheless, MKB Limburg (2015) argues that the city centers of Parkstad Limburg deal with overlapping catchment areas that contains an oversupply in retail, increased vacancy and competition. Apart from the overlap in catchment areas between the cities, this overlap in catchment is also found within Heerlen. To be more precise, Heerlen’s city center deals with competition and an overlapping catchment area from the retail center Het Loon, which is located at the edge of the city center in the east, see Figure 8 on page 32 for the location (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015; Parkstad Limburg, 2011). Parkstad Limburg (2011) suggests creating clear profiles of both centers to deal with the competition—the municipality (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015) suggests using Het Loon for daily shopping and the city center for fun shopping.

Apart from the overlapping catchment areas, the city centers deal with e-commerce, the changed behavior of customers, demographic developments and vacancy. Because of these developments, the city center policy has been adapted (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015; MKB Limburg, 2015; Parkstad Limburg, 2011; Provincie Limburg, 2017). First, the perception has been that Heerlen lacks a varied supply in retail (Gemeente Heerlen, 2008; Parkstad Limburg, 2011) and that Heerlen needs to expand quantitatively and qualitatively to serve as the primary center of the region (Parkstad Limburg, 2011). Later documents reveal that the city center must not quantitatively expand, but that the retail core needs to become smaller to deal with the changing retail structure and vacancy (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015; MKB Limburg, 2015). The emphasis in the later policy documents is on mixed land uses. This means providing experiences and amusement as well as a qualitative, mixed supply in retail, food, culture and leisure (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015; MKB Limburg, 2015; Provincie Limburg, 2017). Moreover, the policy documents include the ambition to embrace the pluralistic characteristics of Heerlen in the city center.

This means embracing the remnants of the medieval and Roman periods and modernistic architecture (Gemeente Heerlen, 2008; Gemeente Heerlen, 2015). Furthermore, according to the municipality, the demographic developments such as shrinkage and aging can be seen as opportunities for retailers to respond to in terms of product ranges (Gemeente Heerlen, 2008). Nevertheless, the province (Provincie Limburg, 2017) is more skeptical because it claims that people who are aged 65+ spend 30% less on fashion, food and personal care.

The city center policy includes the involvement of stakeholders in order to deal with the changing retail structure. The municipality aims to communicate with stakeholders on the development processes and to allure them to devise initiatives in which the municipality takes on a facilitating role (Gemeente Heerlen, 2015). Similarly, MKB Limburg (2015) states that public and private parties need to work together to make the retail structure sustainable. However, MKB Limburg argues that collaboration and tuning between municipalities of Parkstad Limburg can be done better and need to be done on a regional or provincial level. Apart from this, MKB Limburg (2015) states that it is difficult to make the city center more compact because there are many stakeholder interests, such as those of retailers and the real-estate owners.

5.1.2 The Bidboek policy document

The main policy document on the city center is the “Bidboek urban Heerlen,” which has its emphasis on the city’s urban profile (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016). The province of Limburg has directed cities to create an own identity in order to have powerful and vital cities. As a result, the Bidboek document includes the urban profile, which relates to the pluralistic characteristics of Heerlen and determines the identity of this city. Moreover, the profile operates as a framework for initiatives and developments in the city center. This is done by dividing the ambitions of the Bidboek into four domains that include the urban profile. The four domains relate to the functions of the city center, and they are geographically clustered in the center, as depicted in Figure 8 on the next page. The figure also demonstrates the demarcation of the city center by Locatus (2017a) in black, and it indicates the location of the retail center Het Loon. Apart from this, the municipality defines urban as; *‘Unfinished, rare on places, challenges to experiment and has a contemporary experience, is innovative, young and creative in spirit’* (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016, p.10).

Figure 8: Map of the division of the four urban pillars in the Heerlen's center



Source: Gemeente Heerlen (2016, p.10) and own elaboration with information from Locatus (2017a).

The area of urban experience is of particular interest because it represents the main retail area (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016). The focus is on settling creative entrepreneurs with the Streetwise organization in order to be distinctive and to reduce vacancy. Moreover, the municipality aims to reduce the retail floor space by 40% because of the economic downturn of the mining industry, e-commerce and retail chains' focus on the largest cities. This means that the retail function will be transformed into other functions such as housing and food facilities. Adjustments also need to be made to land use plans in which the municipality also wants to allow mixed land uses. The policy on urban living includes the transformation of retail into housing, which is included in the plans of Maankwartier and Schinkelkwartier that originally consisted of retail. In addition, the retail center Het Loon is included in urban living with the ambition to serve as a daily shopping center instead of being a competitor for the city center. The policy on urban culture is to strengthen the culture scene and to transform retail into housing, workplaces and cultural stages where people can create, meet, share, live and experiment. Moreover, the municipality calls Heerlen the mural capital of the Netherlands and wants to expand the murals in the city center. The policy on urban heritage is to bring back historic elements because of the belief that history determines the identity of the city center. Apart from this, the objectives include improvements to the public spaces and facades. The aim is to fulfill the above-mentioned goals by the

year 2020 (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016).

The Bidboek includes ambitions of collaboration to make the city center more attractive for the residents of Heerlen, Parkstad Limburg, the province and Euregion Meuse-Rhine (Gemeente Heerlen, 2016). First, the municipality has set up an advisory group with real-estate owners who will be involved in the city center developments. Second, the center-managing organization Heerlen Mijn Stad (HMS) participates, along with the municipality, entrepreneurs, residents, students and other stakeholders, in providing experiences and activities in the city center. Third, the Streetwise organization is part of the municipality and supervises starting entrepreneurs. Fourth, the IBA Parkstad, which is a method for experts to gain ideas on how to develop the region (IBA Parkstad, n.d.), is taken into account in the Bidboek and the city center developments. Furthermore, the Bidboek includes the aim to approach residents, entrepreneurs, developers, investors, real-estate owners, societal organizations, experts and both the national and the European governments for collaboration to execute the ambitions (Gemeente Helmond, 2016).

5.2 Helmond

The relevant policy documents for Helmond are analyzed in this subchapter to gain insight into the city center policy. The analysis includes documents from multiple governmental levels and is provided in a thematic order. First, it includes the municipal documents, which are the “Detailhandelsbeleid 2013” (Gemeente Helmond 2013a), “Helmond werkt Stadsvisie 2030” (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b) and “Structuurvisie Helmond 2030” (Gemeente Helmond, 2014). Second, it includes the document “Afsprakenkader detailhandel in de Peel” (Gemeente Asten et al., 2015) from the subregional level of the de Peel region. Third, it includes the document “Regionale detailhandelsvisie” (Metropoolregio Eindhoven, 2015) from the regional level of the metropolis region of Eindhoven. Fourth, it includes the document “Ambitie vereist keuzes. Adviezen voor een vitale en toekomstbestendige detailhandelsstructuur in Brabant” (Expertteam detailhandel Noord-Brabant (2013) from the provincial level. Moreover, the policy analysis include the external document “Position paper centrumvisie Helmond” (ter Beek, 2016) from a consultant agency, which is written to consult the municipality on city center policy. In addition, the municipality has created a policy document called the “Centrumperspectief Helmond 2030”, which is specific to the city center (Gemeente Helmond, 2017). This document is examined in Chapter 5.2.2.

The policy documents of the metropolis region of Eindhoven (Metropoolregio Eindhoven, 2015), the de Peel region (Gemeente Asten et al., 2015) and the municipality (Gemeente Helmond, 2013a) point out the necessity to tune the supply of retail on a regional level. This means that the regional vision of the Metropolis region of Eindhoven (Metropoolregio Eindhoven, 2015) serves as a framework, but that policy needs to be translated into the policy of the de Peel subregion and into the local policy of Helmond. This is necessary to prevent competition in the own region; however, the city center policy and retail policy are local responsibilities. Given the regional and supralocal function of Helmond’s city center, the other municipalities need to align their ambitions at the local level. This means the city center of Helmond must focus on recreational retail while the other city centers must focus on the daily segment of retail. However, Ter Beek (2016) is critical of the primary position of Helmond to serve the de Peel region. According to Ter Beek, Helmond loses its own residents to the city center of Eindhoven, and this makes it challenging for Helmond to serve its own residents. Ter Beek states that serving the region is an even larger challenge (2016). The municipality of Helmond has acknowledged that the city deals with growing competition from the city center of Eindhoven that is 17 kilometers away from Helmond (Gemeente Helmond, 2013a; Gemeente Helmond, 2014).

Apart from competition, the city center also deals with the economic crisis, e-commerce and dynamic customer demands, all of which have caused vacancy (Metropoolregio Eindhoven, 2015) and have led to an emphasis on a mix of functions in city center policy. This is done by designating a retail core area where retail developments can take place; outside the retail core, the land use function of retail will change to other functions such as housing, culture, leisure, meeting spots and green public spaces. This means that the expansion of retail can only occur in the retail core area (Gemeente Helmond, 2013a; Gemeente Helmond, 2014; Metropoolregio Eindhoven, 2015). Exceptions to this policy are only allowed in limited areas such as the train station area (Gemeente Helmond, 2014). Furthermore, Expertteam Detailhandel Noord-Brabant (2013) states that, in general, city centers must respond to changing customer behavior, which consists of more diffused motives and moments to visit the city center. Similarly, Gemeente Asten et al. (2015) suggest focusing on the food sector as a complement to the retail sector in order to respond to customers' demands. This means tendering for daily food facilities and connecting the opening hours of retail shops to the food facilities in the evening. However, in the 'Structuurvisie Helmond 2030' document, the municipality claims that the land use plans must become more flexible to respond to the changing retail structure (Gemeente Helmond, 2014).

The development of the Suydkade on the southern side of the city center can contribute to the expansion of functions in the city center, including developments of leisure facilities and a hotel (Gemeente Helmond, 2013a; Gemeente Helmond, 2014). However, Ter Beek (2016,) is critical of the developments of the Suydkade and suggests that they can conflict with other parts of the city center. Later, the municipality decided to not include the Suydkade in the delineation of the city center area (Gemeente Helmond, 2017).

In addition to the mix of functions and a compact retail core, the policy documents highlight other aspects. To begin with, the Metropoolregio Eindhoven (2015) points out that cities need to have a distinctive character with their own identity within the metropolis region of Eindhoven. This is translated for Helmond in the "Helmond werkt Stadsvisie 2030" document (Gemeente Helmond, 2013b), in which the policy focuses on quality, singularity and diversity of retail concepts and other functions in the city center. Moreover, the center ring needs to be improved in terms of accessibility to attract more visitors (Gemeente Helmond, 2014). Furthermore, policy documents suggest collaborating with other parties such as private parties, universities and center managers in the creation of regional retail visions and the design of new retail developments, in which the municipality must play a facilitating role (Gemeente Asten et al., 2015; Gemeente Helmond, 2014). According to Ter Beek (2016), Helmond takes the lead in city center developments in the province of North-Brabant because a center manager is appointed. Furthermore, the municipality suggests that the new law (Omgevingswet) will contribute to flexible policy tools to maintain the developments in the retail market (Gemeente Helmond, 2014). However, Ter Beek (2016) states that Helmond needs to think smaller because investors are only interested in the largest cities, and Helmond is not part of them.

5.2.2 The centruperspectief policy document

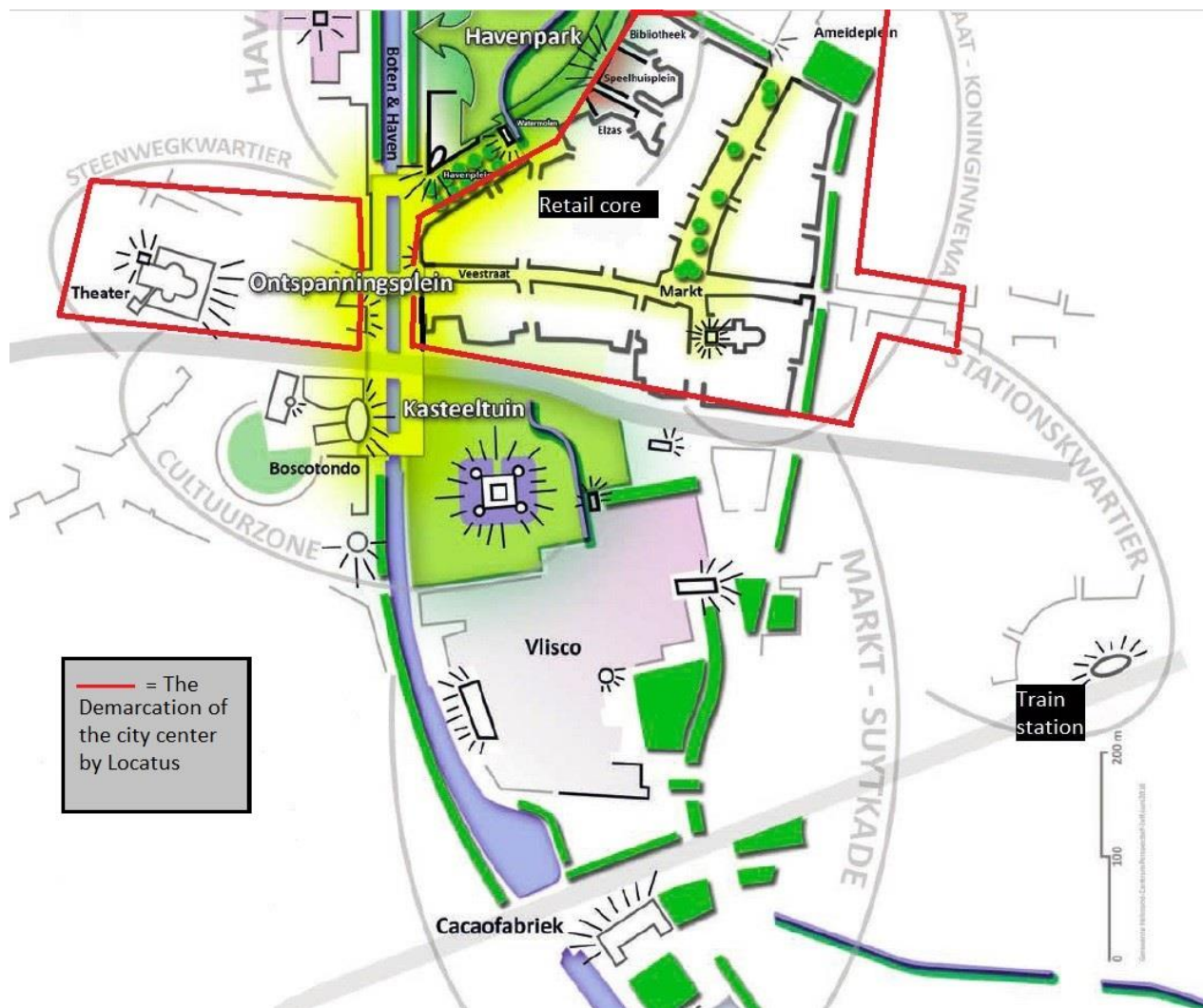
The municipality has created the policy document "Jouw centrum van Helmond!—Centruperspectief Helmond 2030" with input from stakeholders, and the direction of the city center policy is established therein (Gemeente Helmond, 2017). The input from stakeholders who, according to the municipality, are the people who visit, work or live in the city center, is collected on two participation evenings and is taken into account in this document. The municipality also aims to involve the stakeholders in the future as well as to stimulate initiatives by (starting) entrepreneurs, residents, artists and other stakeholders on events and to solve vacancy. One of the roles of Helmond Marketing and the center manager, who is

part of Helmond Marketing, is to assemble and promote these initiatives. The municipality plays a facilitating role and focuses on the alignment of opening hours, the accessibility of the center and the maintenance of public spaces. In addition, the different sectors, such as retail, culture and food, need to work together, which can be stimulated by the center manager. Furthermore, the document includes the ambition to support (starting) entrepreneurs—stakeholders have alleged that more support is needed in this regard. In particular, the focus is on small initiatives because of the scale of Helmond compared to the scale of Eindhoven. The period is until 2030; however, there will be a checkup every 2 years to evaluate whether the policy still fits into users' demands and market developments (Gemeente Helmond, 2017).

The policy document highlights the identity of Helmond to differentiate the city in terms of facilities, spatial quality and the experiences of the users, and it consists of five characteristics (Gemeente Helmond, 2017). The first one is the building scale, which is the urban appearance with a low density. Second, the special industrial heritage represents the history of Helmond being an industrial city. Third, other historical features are mentioned as a collective characteristic of Helmond, for example the medieval street pattern; monumental buildings, such as the castle; and the canal through the city center. In addition, the municipality tends to bring back the historical features in the city center, such as the old river, the Aa, and authentic facades. Fourth, modern themes are mentioned as a combined characteristic; these themes consist of innovation and the architecture of Helmond such as the pile dwellings and the Boscotondocomplex. Finally, the communities in different parts of the city center are mentioned as the fifth characteristic; these communities are comprised of entrepreneurs, real-estate owners and residents who live in the city center. The municipality wants to strengthen the city center with these five characteristics in mind (Gemeente Helmond, 2017).

The municipality wants to make the retail core more compact and amplify the other functions in the city center (Gemeente Helmond, 2017). This is done by dividing the city center into different parts; see Figure 9 on the next page. The compact retail core area includes retail, food facilities and housing above the shops. A quantitative expansion of retail is no longer desired because of developments such as e-commerce, demographic changes and the focus of retail chains on the largest cities. However, qualitative expansion is desired because the center lacks higher segment shops and innovative concepts. This is also desired in the food sector, especially concepts for the youth and daytime concepts. Moreover, structural vacancy must be prevented, and the maintenance of areas can be improved such as the rear of the Elzaspassage. In comparison to the demarcation of the center by Locatus (2017b), Locatus takes the Steenwegkwartier into account in the retail area, while the municipality marks only the square on the right as the retail core. The demarcation of Locatus is marked in red. The mixed zones areas do not have a strict border, but the goal is to have mixed functions in housing and food facilities to overcome the structural vacancy in these areas. The land use plans need to be adjusted to make mixed land uses possible. The Cultuurzone area in the city center contains cultural facilities, which the municipality wants to expand. The vision for Het Ontspanningsplein is for it to become the area for leisure activities and food facilities on both sides of the Canal, and the aim is to abrogate the traffic function of the Kanaaldijk. Steenwegkwartier consists of qualitative concepts, which the municipality also wishes to expand. Furthermore, the document includes ambitions to improve the connections between parts of the city center and the development of the Havenpark. The Suydkade is not taken into account as a part of the city center and is not demonstrated in Figure 9 (Gemeente Helmond, 2017).

Figure 9: Map of the division of the areas in the Helmond's city center



Source: Gemeente Helmond (2017) and own elaboration with information from Locatus (2017b).

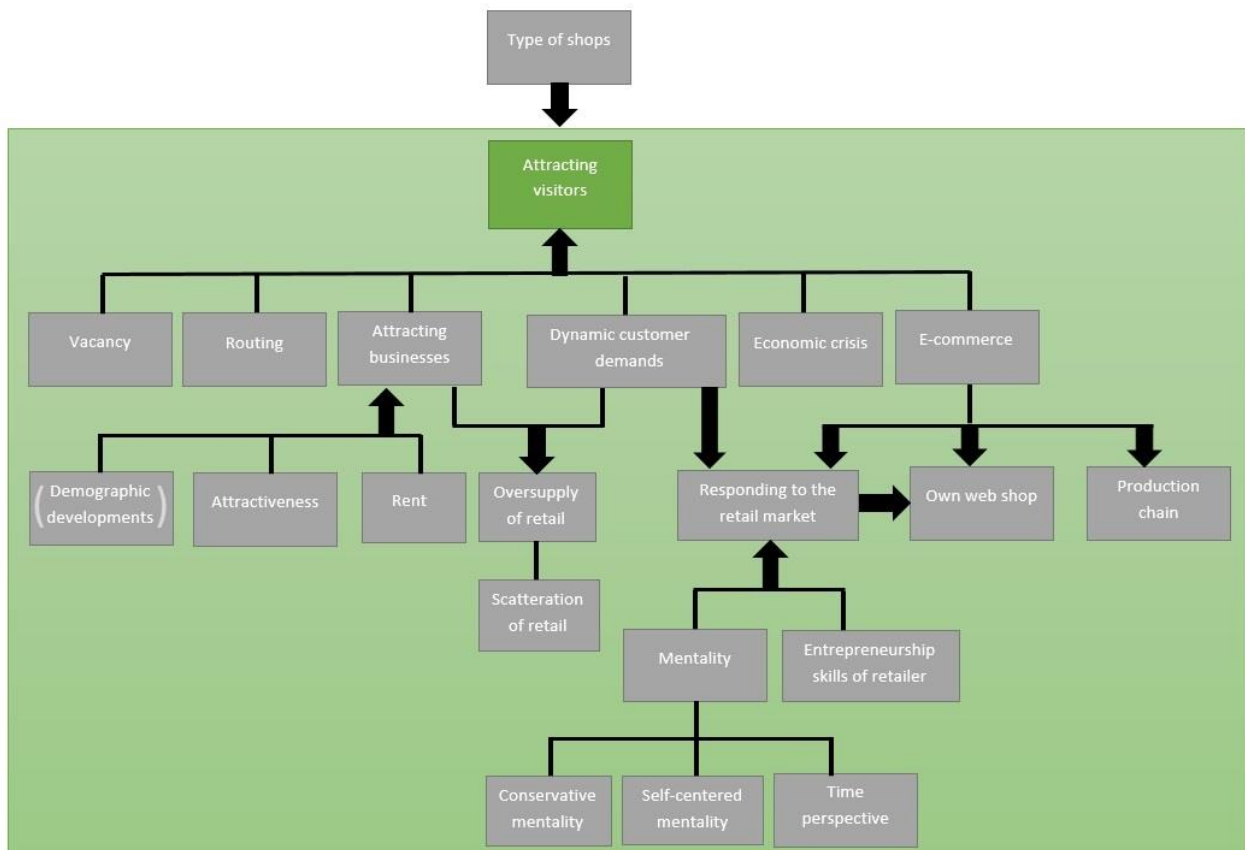
Chapter 6: The challenges of the retail structure

The results of the field research on the retail structure's challenges are presented in this chapter, with the aim of answering the first two subquestions of this research. These sub-questions are as follows: "what are the challenges of the retail structure?" and "are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?" An overview of the results in Heerlen is provided in Chapter 6.1 and Helmond in Chapter 6.2. The two subquestions are answered in Chapter 6.3.

6.1 Heerlen

The seven interviewees from Heerlen mentioned 21 challenges that relate to the retail structure; the analysis of these challenges reveal an emphasis on attracting visitors to the city center. This means that the interviewees mentioned challenges that relate to the attracting visitors challenge. In addition to the connection of challenges with the attracting visitors challenge, there are other connections between the challenges. These are demonstrated in Figure 10, in which an overview is provided of the challenges of the retail structure and the connections between them. This subchapter is structured according to the scheme of Figure 10. As mentioned before, the interviewees are as follows: MA, representing the municipality; shop owners SA1, SA2 and SA3; the real-estate owner RA; and intermediaries IA1 and IA2.

Figure 10: The mentioned challenges and their connections in Heerlen



The scheme demonstrates a square where the type of shops challenge is excluded; this is because the extent of the challenges depends on the type of shops (Interview IA2, Interview SA1, Interview SA2). To be more precise, IA2 and SA1 claimed that there are well-known shops that, on their own, attract people to the city center and that there are shops—often small independent retailers—that supplement the retail supply in the city center. This results in both types of shops having different interests and dealing with the challenges of the retail structure differently. In addition, IA2 highlighted that well-known shops perceive the attracting visitors challenge to a lesser extent, because they attract people without much effort. Moreover, IA2 argued that the location can be a challenge for shops that supplement the retail supply because these shops alone do not attract people. Similarly, SA2 mentioned the type of shops as a challenge with the division between well-known retail chains and small independent shops. According to SA2, the closure of a retail chain store affects the independent shops because the retail chains attract people to the city center. Furthermore, SA2 argued that the closure of a small independent shop has more of an impact on its owner than the closure of retail chain stores has on their owners. SA2 stated the following:

“When you are part of a retail chain, then it does not matter that much. If the shop in Heerlen closes, the retail chain would not care much. For us it would be different. If we have to close, everything will be gone for us”

(Interview SA2, see quotation 1 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Attracting visitors to the city center

Within the square of the scheme in Figure 10, the attracting visitors challenge is at the top with connections to the challenges of attracting businesses, e-commerce, routing, the economic crisis, the dynamic customer demands and vacancy. The interviewees mentioned the attracting visitors challenge in combination with the previously stated challenges, except MA who mentioned the challenge explicitly. To be more precise, MA mentioned attracting visitors as the largest challenge of the retail structure, intensified by the challenges of attracting businesses and e-commerce. The latter two challenges are elucidated in more detail later in this subchapter because these challenges were frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

First, the other challenges that relate to the attracting visitors challenge are exposed. The routing challenge was mentioned by SA1 as the basis for an attractive city center for visitors, which is missing according to SA1. Moreover, the economic crisis challenge was mentioned by SA3, who claimed that the crisis has led to less visitors, declined sales and the encouragement of retail transformation. Furthermore, RA and SA3 mentioned the dynamic customer demands challenge, which retailers need to respond to. Real-estate owner RA mentioned the example of the changed spending of customers because of the development of mobile phones, and SA3 mentioned the bankruptcy of the shop V&D. According to SA3, V&D has become bankrupt because the supply has not matched the demand of customers. Furthermore, the vacancy challenge was mentioned by SA2 and SA3, who argued that vacancy makes the center unattractive to visit, and this can result in fewer customers. SA3 pointed out that vacancy can create a negative atmosphere, and there are therefore fewer customers. SA2 explained why the city center is less attractive when there are many vacant buildings:

“When people see that there is more vacancy, they find it less attractive to visit the city center. Then they think Heerlen.. 6 out of 10 shops are vacant, there is nothing to do there. That has an impact on us when people decide to visit Maastricht or Aachen first. (...). So that people easier decide to not go to Heerlen”

(Interview SA2, see quotation 2 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Attracting businesses

Not only was attracting businesses mentioned as a challenge by MA, but it was also explicitly mentioned by the shop owners and RA with regard to the attractiveness of Heerlen, which is considered to be a challenge. SA1 stated that some well-known retail chains are missing in Heerlen, and SA2 claimed that Heerlen has become less popular. In comparison, RA stated that Heerlen is not attractive for retail chains to settle in. In fact, RA suggested that retail chains are already located in Heerlen or they have left for a reason. As a result, RA claimed it is difficult to attract retail chains to Heerlen. In addition, SA3 and MA stated that Heerlen does not have the attractiveness that the city of Maastricht has. According to MA, this is because Heerlen does not attract tourists naturally in comparison to historical city centers such as Maastricht:

“You see it also in the Netherlands that some cities remain to be the winners, often these are the cities with a historical city center. We have a city like this nearby, which is Maastricht, and those cities attract the retail chains. Middle-sized cities like Heerlen tend to lose these retail chains. (...) When businesses get out of bankruptcy, they decide in what places they return. Then they come to a city such as Maastricht and not in Heerlen. And that is because Heerlen does not have the attractiveness like the historical city centers that attracts people or tourists naturally. And that is of course important for the retail (...). How sweet or nice you act, they don’t come (...). They will only come when they recognize that a city is recovered”

(Interview MA, see quotation 3 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Demographic developments are perceived as a challenge by IA1 that relates to the attracting businesses challenge because of older policy; however, the other interviewees did not mention the demographic developments as a challenge. Therefore, they are set in the scheme in Figure X in parentheses. Intermediary IA1 mentioned that demographic developments are a challenge because of Heerlen’s older policy, which has had an emphasis on population loss. According to IA1, this has created a negative image of Heerlen that is not in line with reality. As a consequence, large investors have stopped looking at Heerlen, which IA1 mentions as a failure. On the other hand, the recent policy has accepted both shrinkage and that large investors do not look at Heerlen (Interview MA). Therefore, according to MA, demographic development are not a challenge. In comparison, IA2 RA, SA1 and SA mentioned demographic developments as an opportunity to respond in terms of a product range. For instance, SA1 and RA stated that the elderly have more money to spend on products because of their pensionable income. Apart from this, RA suggested selling the real estate that the owner possesses when there are no longer any visitors due to population decline; however, RA mentioned that this is not the case for Heerlen despite the shrinkage.

Related to the attracting businesses challenge, rent was mentioned as a challenge by the shop owners. According to SA2, rent needs to be lower because Heerlen cannot be compared with Maastricht. Moreover, SA1 argued that rent is established in times of economic welfare, which is no longer realistic for the current state of the economy. Furthermore, SA2 and SA3 argued that high rent is not attractive for retailers to start businesses. However, RA stated that vacancy will not be reduced by lowering the price of rent. According to RA, there is no interest in those vacant buildings at all. Intermediary IA2 highlighted the point of view of real-estate owners on lowering the rent and alleges that they will deal with a lower property value when they lower the rents.

The oversupply of retail was mentioned by MA as a challenge that is caused by the dynamic customer demands challenge. However, other functions such as food facilities partly take over the retail land use function (Interview MA). Similarly, IA1 pointed out that the customer demands are changing from buying

products to gaining experiences, and the food sector fulfills these demand. In addition to the oversupply of retail floor area, shop owners SA1 and SA2 pointed out that the city center of Heerlen deals with retail that is too scattered. This means that a cluster of retail stores is missing in the center, according to SA1. Moreover, SA2 mentions that retail shops are spread out too much and all over the place.

E-commerce

E-commerce was mentioned by MA as a challenge that intensifies the attracting visitors challenge. According to MA, the e-commerce market is growing, which consequently leads to fewer visitors in the city center. However, the shop owners and RA mentioned that e-commerce is a challenge that cannot disappear with any policy; therefore, it needs to be accepted. In other words, retailers need to respond to the developments of the e-commerce market, in which responding to the retail market was also mentioned as a challenge by these interviewees. In addition, an own web shop was mentioned as a challenge by shop owners who have experiences with an own web shop to respond to the e-commerce market. However, they all pointed out that it is difficult to compete with large companies online. According to SA1 and SA3, a web shop is labor-intensive and costs more money than it earns. Apart from this, shop owner SA3 stated that a web shop does not guarantee the selling of products, because the shop owner must order early from the manufactures and that order cannot be easily adjusted:

“Within two weeks I have to buy the winter collection for the next winter, so I am buying that in this winter. When I sell those products online I have to say in that moment okay I do not want six jackets of those, but I want 12. But I have no idea if I am going to sell those online. So I have to deposit a big order that is actually a bit difficult.. I do not know if I get 1,000 customers, maybe I get 100,000 customers or only 10. That is very difficult, do you understand?”

(Interview SA3, see quotation 4 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

The e-commerce challenge has intensified the production chain challenge, according to SA3. To be more precise, SA3 needs to buy the collection almost a year before the season for that collection starts. The manufactures need to produce the products, which takes some time; however, at the same time larger companies have a more stock of those products than small independent shops. This causes an uneven competition for SA3, especially because customers can find the stock of those larger companies online. Moreover, the larger companies can offer discounts, whereas SA3 cannot lower his/her prices to compete. SA3 has tried to respond by buying the products on time, but also suggests a fixed time for companies to have sales in order to have more even competition. SA3 also claimed that other retailers become bankrupt because of the uneven competition that e-commerce causes. Furthermore, SA3 stated that the municipality or organizations such as HMS cannot do anything to improve the situation. It is all because of the developments of e-commerce, according to the shop owner.

Entrepreneurship skills and the mentality to respond to the retail market

The entrepreneurship skills of the retailer were mentioned as one of two challenges that connect to the responding to the retail market challenge. To be more precise, the entrepreneurship skills of the retailer challenge refers to the proficiency of the retailer to respond to the developments on the retail market. Being innovative was mentioned as a factor by SA1, SA3, RA and IA1 with regard to entrepreneurship skills and responding to the retail market. According to SA1 and IA1, Heerlen lacks innovative shops, and RA and SA3 revealed that shops such as V&D have become bankrupt because of the lack in innovation and entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, providing experiences was mentioned as a component of entrepreneurship skills and as a manner in which to respond to the retail market. According to SA2, retailers need to respond to the e-commerce market by providing experiences in offline shopping. Similarly, SA3 pointed out that retailers need to distinguish themselves on price, quality and exclusivity,

and they need to sell product that cannot easily be found online. Nevertheless, IA2 is critical and stated that even though retailers can sell qualitative products, this does not directly mean they provide experiences to their customers. Similarly, RA is critical and mentioned entrepreneurship skills as the largest challenge in retail. According to RA, retailers require these skills to cope with changing customer demands. Real-estate owner RA explained this challenge by describing the communication with retailers who are renters:

“But when I ask what is your most important product group? What is your conversion? Who is your most important competitor? Questions like that, a lot cannot even answer those. And then I think to myself, how can you, when you do not know all this information, serve your customer well or get new customers? That is in my opinion a big problem”

(interview RA, see quotation 5 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch)

Mentality was mentioned as the second challenge that is associated with responding to the retail market challenge and it consists of three other challenges. First, the conservative mentality of retailers was mentioned as a challenge by MA and IA1, who stated that there is a noticeable division in retail in relation to responding to the retail structure. This division is not only on disposing entrepreneurship skills but also on the recognition that responses to dynamic customer demands are needed. To be more precise, IA1 explained that retailers with entrepreneurship skills invest and dare to borrow money, while the traditional retailer is complaining and protesting against the municipality with products that do not fit into the changed customer demands. Intermediary IA1 claimed that retailers with a progressive mindset are successful. Second, MA and SA1 mentioned the self-centered mentality of retailers as a component of the mentality challenge. This means that retailers focus on their own businesses instead of on the developments in the city center that have an influence on their businesses (Interview MA, Interview SA1). Third, the time perspective was mentioned as a component of the mentality challenge. Intermediary IA2, MA from the municipality and shop owner SA3 reveal that retailers think about the short term, while the government has to consider the long term. According to IA2, it can be a challenge for retailers to adjust to the time perspective of the municipality.

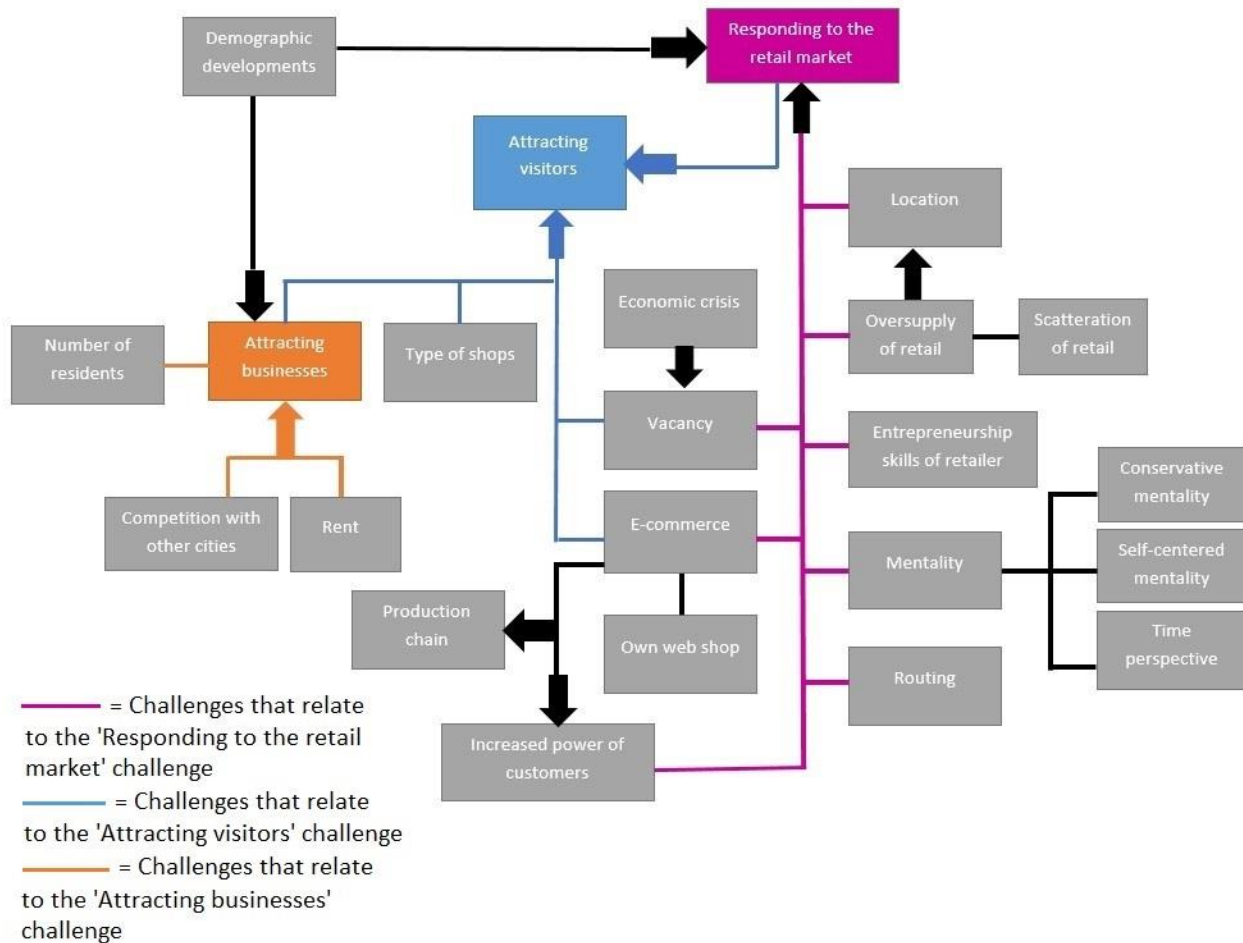
The conservative mentality of real-estate owners, estate agencies and investors was mentioned as a challenge of the retail structure too (Interview IA1, Interview IA2). First, IA2 mentioned the mindset of real-estate owners as a challenge. This is because of the difficulty to get in touch with them about city center developments and to convince them of the added value of those developments. This has been the case with temporary solutions to fill up vacant buildings (Interview IA2). Second, IA1 mentioned the mindset of estate agencies as a challenge. When estate agencies do not investigate the business plans of starting retailers, real-estate owners run the risk of renting the building to an unsuccessful retailer. Third, IA1 pointed out that the mindset of investors is a challenge. According to IA1, investors often only look at large retail parties, while small independent entrepreneurs/retailers are the successful parties in retail.

6.2 Helmond

The six interviewees of Helmond mentioned 23 challenges that relate to the retail structure. Through the analysis of these challenges, an emphasis on the following three connected challenges was detected: attracting businesses, attracting visitors and responding to the retail market. Similarly to Heerlen, connections were discerned between the mentioned challenges of the retail structure in Helmond. These challenges and their connections are elucidated in this chapter. Moreover, the challenges and their connections are demonstrated in the scheme of Figure 11 on the next page. As mentioned previously,

the interviewees are MB, representing the municipality; the shop owners SB1, SB2 and SB3; intermediary IB1; and consultants CoB1 and CoB2.

Figure 11: The mentioned challenges and their connections in Helmond



Attracting businesses

To begin with, attracting businesses is one of the overarching challenges and consists of three subchallenges, as illustrated Figure 11 in the color orange. First, the number of residents challenge was mentioned as a component of the attracting businesses challenge by IB1, CoB1, SB2 and SB3, who pointed out that Helmond is not large enough to attract retail chains. They mentioned that Helmond is not on the priority list of retail chains and investors, because they only focus on cities with more than 100,000 residents. Second, the high rents was mentioned as a challenge that relates to the 'attracting businesses' challenge. According to SB1 and SB3, rent in Helmond is too high in comparison to Eindhoven. Shop owner SB3 suggested that the rent is too high to attract innovative concepts. As a result, those innovative concepts are implemented in shops that are opened in Eindhoven instead of Helmond. On the other hand, IB1 alleged that the property value will decrease when the rent is lower, and this intensifies the rent challenge. Third, the competition with other cities was mentioned as a challenge in attracting businesses and has a connection with the rent challenge. According to CoB1,

CoB2, IB1, SB2 and SB3, the position of Eindhoven causes competition for Helmond. SB2 suggested that Helmond is a rural city that must not compete with Eindhoven, but it must focus on mediocrity to complement Eindhoven. CoB1 highlighted the travel time between both cities:

“I live at the side of Eindhoven in Helmond. I am within 17 minutes in the city center of Eindhoven and I am within 12, well 10 to 12 minutes in the city center of Helmond. With a difference of five minutes in time I drive to Eindhoven. How can I concentrate on Helmond with this in my mind?”

(Interview CoB1, see quotation 6 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Attracting visitors and responding to the retail market

Apart from the attracting businesses challenge, attracting visitors and responding to the retail market are the overarching challenges in Helmond. The blue line in Figure 11 indicates the challenges that relate to the attracting visitors challenge and the purple line depicts the challenges that relate to the responding to the retail market challenge. Shop owner SB3 explicitly mentioned attracting visitors as a challenge because people buy the same products that SB3 sells in another place. In addition, SB2 mentioned the type of shops as a challenge when attracting people and businesses. According to SB2, the Steenweg, located west of the canal, has a different experience and atmosphere with small independent shops than the area east of the canal that consists of retail chains. Furthermore, the scheme shows a line to the attracting businesses challenge. CoB1 wondered whether the businesses that Helmond attracts also attract visitors to the center.

Challenges were also mentioned that relate to attracting visitors challenge as well as to responding to the retail market challenge. First, vacancy is a challenge that determines the attractiveness of the city center according to MB, CoB1 and CoB2. The consultancies claim that vacancy has increased since the economic crisis. In addition, the areas of the Markt and Elzaspassage deal with more vacancies (Interview CoB1 and CoB2, Interview SB2). Second, MB from the municipality, intermediary IB1 and shop owners SB1 and SB3 mentioned e-commerce as a challenge to which retailers need to respond in order to attract visitors. E-commerce has caused more competition with unfair prices according to SB3. However, SB1 and SB2 argue that the impact of e-commerce depends on what products are sold. With regard to attracting visitors to the center, SB1 mentions e-commerce in general as a challenge; however, the shop owners sell products and experiences that are more difficult to find online. Moreover, SB2 believes that the e-commerce challenge is too exorbitant and that it will never take away from physical shops in a retail center. In addition, CoB1 argued that e-commerce can create opportunities for the physical retail market because online shops start to open physical shops.

An own web shop, the production chain and the increased power of customers were mentioned as challenges that relate to the e-commerce challenge. First, SB2 and SB3 mentioned having an own web shop as a challenge. According to SB3, an own web shop is not profitable because of the unfair prices that e-commerce has caused. However, the shop owner feels pushed to have a web shop in order to respond to the e-commerce market. Similarly, SB2 state that an own web shop is not profitable, because of the costs and retours it entails. Second, IB1 and SA3 mentioned the production chain as a challenge. According to IB1, it is a challenge for small independent retailers that buy their collections from traditional brands. IB1 explained that those retailers have to buy in their collections almost a year before the season of that collection. This is problematic because those retailers experience problems responding to customer demands on time. Similarly, SB3 claimed that it is a challenge, because it is difficult to adjust the order when customer demands turn out to be different than expected. Moreover, SB3 argued that large retail stores have the first choice when buying collections, which is problematic and frustrating for small independent retailers. Third, e-commerce has led to the challenge of increased

power of customers, according to IB1, who provided the following description of this shift in power:

“Look everything is transparent. You can find anything on the internet. Ehm the supply was decided in the past by the retailers. They told the customers what it was, this is what is going to be and that you can buy it on what times in their shops. Now that world has turned, because the customer can find anything on its own and online. The customers go shopping whenever it fits them”

(Interview IB1, see quotation 7 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Routing, oversupply of retail floor, and location were mentioned as challenges that relate to the responding to the retail market challenge. First, CoB1 mentioned that routing not logical, especially when the weekly market is structured. Consultant CoB1 pointed out the market stalls derogate the food businesses located on the Markt, which the municipality needs to respond to with policy. Second, the gross floor area was mentioned by MB and SB2. According to SB2, there is generally too much gross floor area, which causes more competition for the retailer. In comparison, MB pointed out that Helmond has an oversupply of gross floor area that is also too scattered. Third, MB mentioned the location as a challenge because of the oversupply of retail floor. According to MB, the challenge is to position the retailers in the correct location because the government plans to make the retail area in the city center more compact. Nevertheless, according to the consultant CoB2, retailers want to choose the location for their shops on their own without any interference from the government. In comparison, SB1 made the decision to move in order to be more accessible for customers. This was done without any interference from the government, but the economic crisis was a motive to move. As a result, according to the shop owner, turnover has doubled (Interview SB1).

The entrepreneurship skills challenge also has connections to the responding to the retail market challenge. According to MB, retailers need to educate and develop themselves further with respect to dealing with the developments in the retail market. In comparison, IB1 highlighted the change of focus on using the city center from products purchases to leisure activities, and retailers need to respond to this. In addition, CoB1 stated that retailers need to provide experiences with craftsmanship, and SB2 claimed that it is important as a shop owner to make one's shop innovative and special in comparison to other shops. However, SB2 pointed out that not all retailers are entrepreneurs; nevertheless, it is important as a retailer to respond to all the developments in the retail market.

Mentality was mentioned as another challenge that links to the responding to the retail market challenge, it and consists of component challenges. First, IB1 and MB mentioned the conservative mentality as a challenge because some retailers do not respond to the changing retail structure. In addition, IB1 claimed that retailers still blame the economic crisis for their loss of sales, when in fact their mindset needs to change regarding how to meet the customer demands. Second, the time perspective of stakeholders was mentioned as a challenge by MB, who pointed out that retailers have a different thinking scope in scale and time than the government. Third, the self-centered mentality was mentioned as a challenge by SB2, SB3 and CoB1, who argued that every stakeholder of the city center has his/her own interests and that it is difficult to make others aware of those interests. According to CoB1, the center manager does not negotiate with the real-estate owners and this is a problem. Furthermore on the mentality challenge, CoB1 claimed that parties have forgotten to look at the bigger picture. According to CoB1, this means focusing on measures that make Helmond attractive for shops to set up, start routing in the center and attract visitors.

Demographic developments

Demographic developments were mentioned as a challenge that relates to two overarching challenges, namely attracting businesses and responding to the retail market. To begin with, demographic developments are linked to the challenge of attracting businesses because of the number of residents required to attract retail chains. However, MB and CoB1 did not see these demographic developments as a challenge. According to MB, Helmond can serve as the second core of the urban metropolitan Eindhoven. Moreover, CoB1 mentioned the developments of neighborhoods such as Brandevoort where young people settle. According to CoB1, Helmond will grow by a maximum of 10%, which means that the aging process in Helmond is not extreme. In contrast, SB3 mentioned aging as a challenge, arguing that if there any less young people in the city center, then this will be a problem for the type of business the retailer owns. In comparison, SB1 and CoB1 suggested responding to demographic developments such as aging. Therefore, the demographic developments are linked to the challenge of responding to the retail market challenge.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter the focus has been on the challenges of the changing retail structure. Based on the findings, the following two subquestions can be answered:

- What are the challenges of the retail structure?
- Are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?

In particular the challenges of the retail structure are vacancy, attracting visitors and businesses, e-commerce, responding to the retail market, the entrepreneurship skills of the retailer, and the mentality of retailers and other stakeholders; however the emphasis is different in each of the two cities. The emphasis in Heerlen is on attracting visitors, and the other mentioned challenges are secondary. Nevertheless, the interviewees from Heerlen revealed that the extent of the challenge to attract visitors is dependent on the type of shop a retailer owns—a retail chain copes with the changing retail structure differently than a small independent retailer. In comparison, the emphasis in Helmond is on three challenges, namely attracting visitors, attracting businesses and responding to the retail challenges while the other mentioned challenges are secondary. The divergent emphasis is because of a different focus in the two cities. The focus in Helmond is on attracting businesses, while in Heerlen, there is an acceptance that the city is not attractive for large businesses. Furthermore, Helmond deals with competition from Eindhoven, whereas Heerlen does not face competition from a larger city. Moreover, responding to the retail market was mentioned in Heerlen as a challenge that is part of other challenges such as e-commerce, the dynamic customer demands and indirectly attracting visitors, while in Helmond responding to the retail market was mentioned as one of the overarching challenges to which other challenges are inferior. Apart from this, in Helmond, the challenge of attracting visitors is also dependent on the type of shop.

According to the responses provided by the interviewees, the challenges are not intensified in cities of shrinking regions. In fact, more emphasis is placed on demographic developments in the growing city, Helmond, than in the shrinking city, Heerlen. This is because of the different focus in each city. Attracting businesses was mentioned as an overarching challenge in Helmond because this city does not have a sufficient number of residents to attract retail chains according to the interviewees. In comparison, IA1 mentioned that because of the focus on shrinkage in the previous policy, investors have stopped looking into Heerlen. Nevertheless, MA from the Heerlen municipality stated that the municipality has accepted

that Heerlen is not an attractive city for retail chains. Therefore, attracting businesses is not an overarching challenge in Heerlen. Moreover, with regard to demographics, demographic developments were mentioned as a challenge in responding to the retail market. However, they were not mentioned by the interviewees from Heerlen as a stand-alone challenge or issue that intensifies other challenges because of being a shrinking city.

Chapter 7: City center policies

The results of the field research on policy are analyzed in this chapter with the aim of answering the third, fourth and fifth subquestion of this research. The third subquestion is about the policy on the challenges of the retail structure and asks how policy makers cope with those challenges? With regard to the third subquestion, the fourth subquestion is about the successes and failures of these policies. The fourth subquestion is as follows: what have been the successes and failures of these policies? Finally, the fifth subquestion asks, what recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy? The city center policies of Heerlen are analyzed in Chapter 7.1, and the successes and failures of these policies are analyzed in Chapter 7.2. Moreover, the city center policies of Helmond are analyzed in Chapter 7.3, and the successes and failures thereof are analyzed in Chapter 7.4. Then, the recommendations are discussed in Chapter 7.5, and the subquestions are answered in Chapter 7.6. To highlight the difference with Chapter 5, this chapter contains an analysis of the results from the in-depth interviews, while Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the policy documents.

7.1 The policy in Heerlen

The city center policy of Heerlen is analyzed in thematic order. It includes the Bidboek, fine-tuning retail centers, policy on vacancy, other policy tools and co-creation.

Bidboek

The Bidboek was created by the municipality to offer direction on the city center policy, and reducing retail floor space and changing land use functions are important topics therein. An acquisition plan to attract retail chains to fill up the vacant buildings is not realistic according to MA, because Heerlen is not on the retail chains' priority list. As a result, the municipality needs to reduce the retail floor space itself because this will not be done by the market. This means that the municipality will change the land use function from retail to other functions such as housing and food facilities (Interview MA). For instance, the retail land use function of Schinkel-zuid will be transformed to housing in a park-like landscape. This can be done because the owners of Schinkel-zuid have sold the area to the municipality under the assessed value after having negotiations with the retail chain Primark, which did not open a shop in Heerlen because of a lack of demand (MA, personal contact, December 2, 2017). Moreover, the transformation of land use functions has been applied in the development of Maankwartier. The development plan originally took retail into account; however, this has been adjusted to food facilities. Moreover, the Maankwartier development includes housing (Interview MA).

According to MA, there is sufficient demand for housing despite the population loss in Heerlen. MA from the municipality claimed that the housing of the Maankwartier is in high demand and that it is important to create a mix in housing because most houses in the center are intended for the elderly. In addition, MA said that enough people will remain in the future to maintain all facilities in the city, but the population loss is also accepted. However, MA stated that it is not realistic to invest in the youth, because they migrate out of the region when they begin to study. MA from the municipality also suggested that people between the ages of 25 and 40 are of particular interest because they might return to their hometown. Moreover, an oversupply of housing related to population loss will be reduced on the edges of the region (Interview MA). Furthermore, MA revealed that the municipality wants to make the land use of housing possible on the ground floor of buildings that are located on the edge of the city center, in order to reduce the retail floor area.

Other aspects of the Bidboek are a city profile and the creation of experiences. The city profile urban is

established together with HMS—the center managing organization—to determine the identity of Heerlen and to attract people to the center (Interview MA, Interview IA2). First, the profile represents the street culture in Heerlen that consists of a strong hip-hop scene, dance scene, skate and BMX events, and murals. Second, the profile represents a contrast in city identity to historical city centers such as Maastricht. The city's identity is more modern where things are possible (Interview MA). In addition, MA highlighted that there is no connection between the profile and demographic developments. Apart from the profile, the municipality has focused on creating experiences that consist of two components, namely programmatic and physical components, according to MA. First, the programmatic component involves organizing events to attract people to the center. The goal of these events is to continually attract people from surrounding places, which means that these people keep returning to Heerlen. Second, the physical component refers to the appearance and atmosphere of the city center, for which the municipality has set up a façade fund with a budget of 700,000 euros to improve the appearance. This means that entrepreneurs receive a compensation of 50% when they improve their facades (Interview MA). In comparison, the real-estate owner RA pointed out that it is the task of the municipality to ensure that the streets are clean and that the lighting works properly. Moreover, MA stated that it will be easier to improve those components when the retail area has been reduced.

Fine-tuning of retail centers

MA pointed out that the fine-tuning of the city center with other retail centers is strong, with the exception on the retail center Het Loon. The fine-tuning is done by the administrative committee of economics for Parkstad Limburg and the alderman of economics for Heerlen. However, MA pointed out that some municipalities go their own way in planning retail. Furthermore, MA mentioned the retail center Het Loon as being problematic because it competes with the city center. However, the municipality is open to a land use change or to allow Het Loon to function as a retail center within the daily segment, so it does not compete with the city center anymore. MA explained why Het Loon is built and why it has not been demolished yet:

“Het Loon (...). It is built as an American retail mall, one of the first in the Netherlands. And it is built in the mine period (...). This was the wealthiest region of the Netherlands (...). Then the thought was to build a retail mall like this. Next to the highway, which makes it easily accessible. (...). Only it should never have been built. The shops that are located there, are the same shops as in the city center. (...). The city center competes with Het Loon, it is too close. (...). But it is now expiring. A few years ago a prolapse happened. (...). Then the discussion has started if the crisis should not be seen as an opportunity to fix the problem of Het Loon. We have started to negotiate with the province and owner (...) of the retail part. Only the timing was not right. (...). It was such a big decision to make before the elections, which we did not dare to make yet. (...). Now it is still there as a retail center and it shows that it becomes more vacant. The owner (...) thinks what must we do? This is not going to work. But we are open to several changes in the land use”

(Interview MA, see quotation 8 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Other policy tools

Apart from the Bidboek, the municipality has policy on vacancy at its disposal. According to MA, vacancy in city centers is a market failure; therefore, policy is needed. Vacancy is a particular problem for real-estate owners according to RA, MA and IA1; however, it has become a problem for the municipality because of decay and unattractive areas (Interview MA, Interview IA1). The policy on vacancy includes a register where owners of vacant buildings must report to the municipality when their buildings are empty for 6 months. As a follow-up, the municipality begins by having conversations with the owners on how to cope with the vacant buildings. Vacancy on the edges of the city center are accepted by the

municipality because the land uses in those areas are changed from retail to other functions such as housing (Interview MA). Moreover, the policy also includes temporary solutions for vacancy by dressing up the storefronts (Interview IA2). According to the interviewees, there is sufficient insight into vacancy. Apart from the municipal database, MA, IA1 and IA2 pointed out the databases of Locatus and the Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving [PBL].

The policy consists of two other tools. First, it contains a subsidy regulation for entrepreneurs who start a business in a building that is vacant for more than 6 months. This subsidy is to bridge the first costs that those entrepreneurs incur (Interview MA, Interview SA3). Second, the Streetwise organization is deployed as a policy tool to help starting entrepreneurs with their businesses and consequently to reduce the vacancies. The organization began as a citizen initiative to identify the real-estate owner's problem, and the province of Limburg provided capital to help Streetwise to start off. The organization has since grown as a tool under the wing of the municipality to help starting entrepreneurs with entrepreneurship skills and business models, as well as to mediate between the starters and owners on rents (Interview MA, Interview IA1).

Co-creation

Heerlen consists of organizations that are involved in the city center policy. First, MA, IA1, IA2, SA1 and SA2 mentioned Streetwise. IA1 stated that Streetwise does not make policy, but it thinks along with the municipality based on its experiences with other stakeholders. Second, MA, IA2, SA1 and SA2 mentioned the center-managing organization HMS, which focuses on communication between the municipality and retailers/entrepreneurs. To be more precise, the organization provides information and feedback to those parties (Interview IA2, Interview MA). Moreover, SA2 mentioned that HMS takes care of making the city center more attractive. To ease the interaction between entrepreneurs, HMS and the municipality, the city center is divided into four quarters. The alderman of economics and the alderman of planning visit these quarters twice per year for communication (Interview MA). Furthermore, RA mentioned that the promotion manager of RA's company has joined HMS. Third, the municipality has set up a platform for real-estate owners to involve them in the city center developments. The municipality negotiates with the real-estate owners on their interests once every 6 weeks (Interview MA, Interview RA). In addition, RA pointed out that while the real-estate owners are more involved in the content of policy, they cannot really impact the policy. Similarly, Intermediary IA2 also stated that his/her organization can think about the development of public spaces, but for privacy reasons, it is not mentioned who IA2 is representing. Apart from these organizations, RA also mentioned the ondernemersfonds (entrepreneur house), and SA2 mentioned the retail association the Corio Center. However, both interviewees said that these organizations do not collaborate with other stakeholders on city center developments.

The interviewees highlighted processes where stakeholders are involved, and they mentioned the role of the municipality. The Bidboek was mentioned by MA as a process that took the involvement of stakeholders into account. It was created with input from other stakeholders such as retailers and the real-estate owners; however, MA stated that the municipality has kept control over the process. To be more precise, the stakeholders have offered instructions and corrections on the city center policy, but the core is designed by the municipality (Interview MA). The Bidboek includes the distinction between projects and areas—projects are plans that the municipality wants to execute and areas are plans where stakeholders can submit initiatives within the guidelines of the municipality. In other words, the municipality provides space for stakeholders to come up with ideas for the plans mentioned as areas in the Bidboek. Apart from the Bidboek, a new land use plan will be created for Schinkel-zuid with the inclusion of local residents in a participation project to determine how the area should look. Apart from

this, IA2 and RA stated that the role of the municipality is as a facilitator. According to IA2, the municipality needs to facilitate permits when new entrepreneurs or concepts are going to be settled in the city center. Similarly, RA mentioned that the municipality needs to play a facilitating role when it comes to initiatives of new concepts or opening hours. Even though, the municipality has not mentioned any policy on opening hours, RA, SA1 and SA3 discussed the demand of customers in this regard. Furthermore, the shop owners of Heerlen, who participated in this research, are not involved in the city center policy processes.

7.2 Successes and failures of policy in Heerlen

The successes and failures of the city center policy of Heerlen are analyzed in thematic order. The themes are the policy tools, the supply of retail and food facilities, the content of policy and co-creation. The subchapters also include opinions on policy and improvements that the interviewees provided.

The policy tools

The subsidy regulation and Streetwise are perceived by MA, IA1, IA2, SA2 and SA3 as successful policy tools to reduce the vacancy issue. IA1 mentioned some successful results of Streetwise apart from the decreased vacancy level. First, IA1 pointed out that the national average rate of starting entrepreneurs who have failed is 50%, while that of starting entrepreneurs who have failed with the help of Streetwise is 10%. Second, IA1 stated that there is more trust created for a real-estate owner when a starting entrepreneur can present a business plan. Real estate owners have consequently started to invest in their buildings to cater to starting entrepreneurs. Third, the municipality has more control over what is established in the vacant buildings with the appliance of Streetwise, according to IA1. Fourth, IA1 claimed that Streetwise has brought young entrepreneurs to the city center while there is aging, which IA1 mentioned as a success. In addition, IA1 claimed that new retailers who succeed have entrepreneurship skills. Moreover, MA stated that the subsidy regulation is especially successful when it is combined with Streetwise. However, SA2 pointed out that this regulation is not applicable to A-locations such as the Corio Center and that Streetwise does not operate in A-locations. Apart from this, IA1 and IA2 pointed out the importance of positioning retailers in the correct location into which the concept fits. According to the intermediaries, this has been a challenge in the past.

Other policies on vacancy were mentioned by MA, IA1 and IA2 as less successful. For instance, IA1 stated that it is not profitable to invest in pop-up shops, because structural shops are still seen as new in Heerlen when they are in their respective location for 2 years. Therefore, pop-up shops would not be recognized enough according to IA1. On the other hand, IA2 mentioned that temporary solutions to the problem of vacancy can make vacant buildings more attractive; however, it is difficult to persuade the real-estate owners to collaborate on temporary solutions because of different interests (Interview IA2). In comparison, SA1 and SA2 are positive about filling up vacant buildings using temporary solutions—SA2 claimed that stimulation for pop-up shops is missing from these solutions. Moreover, with regard to the vacancy regulation of the register, MA claimed that it is not that effective, because it does not include a vacancy tax or sanctions for the owner. However, the subsidy regulation and Streetwise are effective policy tools to reduce vacancy and are sufficient, according to MA.

Supply of retail and food facilities

The interviewees mentioned not only some successes but also some failures related to the mix of shops and food facilities that are located in the center. The small shops that are guided by Streetwise were highlighted as successes by SA2 and IA2. They also pointed out that it is a success that TK Maxx has opened a shop in Heerlen. In contrast, SA1 misses some large retail chains, and SA3 misses the variation

of shops. Moreover, the shop owners mentioned the Primark's canceled plan to open a store in Schinkel-zuid as a failure. According to the shop owners, Primark would attract more visitors to Heerlen, and it would create routing in the city center. IA2 understands the disappointment of the shop owners but argues that it is not guaranteed that shops such as Primark would draw in more visitors to the whole city center. People can also visit Heerlen only for a shop such as Primark. Moreover, MA, IA1, IA2 and SA3 view the food facilities as a success. According to MA, people from surrounding places such as Kerkrade have started to visit Heerlen again for its restaurants. However, SA2 argued that the restaurants lack quality, and SA1 argued that there is an oversupply of food facilities. In comparison, SA2 believes that even though Heerlen has gained many food companies, there is not an oversupply yet. IA2 also pointed out that there is sufficient demand for food.

Content of policy

There are mixed opinions about the policies of events and the profile urban that are aimed to attract visitors. The Serious Request event was mentioned as a success by MA, RA, SA1 and SA2—MA stated that the event has attracted people permanently to Heerlen, and SA2 stated that the event has brought budget to improve the public spaces. Moreover, MA and SA1 mentioned that Heerlen has won the title of “event city of the year 2016”, but RA and SA1 have missed a follow-up to the Serious Request event. In addition, SA1 believes that the municipality misses opportunities because some events can be done on a larger scale to attract people to the center. Apart from this, there are mixed opinions about the profile urban. According to SA1 and SA2, urban does not fit for the city center of Heerlen. The concept of urban must be incorporated into the events, and SA1 does not understand the incorporation of urban into all events. According to SA1, not all events relate to urban such as Kidsweekend. Similarly, SA2 argued that the profile of urban does not attract the whole population that visits Heerlen, such as the people who own a large amount of money. Shop owner SA3 was not aware of the urban profile but thinks that urban fits well for Heerlen. On the other hand, IA2 is positive about the profile and argued that people do not understand it yet. Intermediary IA2 argued that Heerlen does not need to become urban, because it is already urban. This can be found even in the smallest things, according to IA2. Furthermore, IA2 is positive about having a profile because it provides a framework for developments. In addition, MA and RA stated that investments in culture in the last decade are a success and have paid off in the attractiveness of the city.

The interviewees mentioned the developments and policy of Schinkel-zuid, Maankwartier and the Het Loon retail center as failures, except for MA who mentioned the land use transformations of Schinkel-zuid and Maankwartier as successes. As mentioned before, the shop owners mentioned the Primark's canceled plan to settle in Schinkel-zuid as a failure. Moreover, RA, SA2 and SA3 also discussed that Maankwartier should not be built. According to RA and SA3, the plan of Maankwartier goes against the goal to make the retail core smaller. In addition, SA2 and SA3 pointed out that Heerlen thinks too big and that the plan of Maankwartier is too large for a city such as Heerlen. Furthermore, SA3 stated that a retailer has protested against Maankwartier, but that the municipality has not listened to that person. The shop owner has agreed with the protesting retailer. On the other hand, SA2 and SA3 pointed out that it might be too early to have an opinion about Maankwartier, which could be a success in the end. Furthermore, SA1, SA3 and RA argued that Het Loon needs to be demolished because it does not add anything to the city center. Real-estate owner RA and shop owner SA3 said that the demolition is aligned with the objective to make the retail core smaller. In comparison, SA2 suggested that Het Loon can function as a retail center for the daily segment while the city centers functions as an area for recreational shopping.

The interviewees discussed the policy about the appearance of the center, the opening hours and the parking costs. First, SA1, SA2 and IA2 talked about the appearance. For instance, SA2 has rather seen that the façade of buildings are renewed instead of the Maankwartier development. Moreover, SA1 argued that the murals do not offer an appealing image of the center to all population groups such as the elderly. Furthermore, IA2 suggested providing regulation on the appearances of buildings when people move out. According to IA2, the state of vacant buildings can be a failure because the old tenants do not clean up their mess. Second, RA, SA1 and SA3 argued for different opening hours. They wanted to replace the opening hours on Thursday evening with opening hours on Friday and Saturday. The opening hours for retail would then be in line with the opening hours of food facilities, which could attract people, according to RA, SA1 and SA3. Furthermore, RA argues that every retailer must be open on Sunday. However, SA3 pointed out that it is difficult to estimate when customers come to the store. In comparison, the opening hours are not included in the ambitions of the Bidboek. Third, the policy on parking costs were discussed by MA, RA, SA2 and SA3. Shop owners SA2 and SA3 argued that the parking costs are too high to go to the center for one product. In addition, SA3 highlighted that the surrounding villages have free parking, which is more attractive. Real-estate owner RA pointed out that the parking costs policy is customized per city, and free parking would not work for Heerlen because the parking lots would then be used by administrators and employees of shops. The real-estate owner suggested a saving or discount system. However, MA pointed out that during events, parking costs are not an issue, because the parking lots are almost fully occupied. MA rather focused on the aspects of the Bidboek.

Co-creation

All interviewees stated that it is important to work together; however, SA2 and SA3 pointed out that collaboration for city center policy is not a priority. They stated that the functioning of their shops is more important and that they have less energy and time to deal with city center policy. In addition, SA3 argued that collaboration does not take away the problems of e-commerce and the production chain. However, other interviewees emphasized the importance of working together. Intermediary IA2 mentioned that collaboration is important to gain feedback to improve the policy. Moreover, RA point out that times have changed. Real-estate owners need to collaborate with retailers to attract people and to ensure that businesses do well. If retailers do not succeed in acquiring enough customers, then the real-estate owners will not receive their rent. Real estate owner RA paid some voluntary contribution to the retail center's budget to organize events in the center. In addition, IA1 claimed that the local people need to respond to the developments instead of responses taking the form of a top-down approach. MA from the municipality point out that collaboration is also needed to prevent tunnel vision on policy and to gain support. However, MA said that within co-creation, the municipality needs to maintain control to achieve results:

“they are all beautiful stories about co-creation. We are going to sit together and we are going to brainstorm in equivalent positions, but that is al nonsense. You can do that, but that gives few results. People also look at the government on direction and guidelines”

(Interview MA, see quotation 9 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

According to SA1, SA2, SA3, RA and MA, collaboration can be improved, particularly within the operation of the center-managing organization HMS. For instance, SA1 stated that HMS functions well on communication, but it has too many tasks to perform. Moreover, SA1 argued that it would be better if retailers join HMS for more optimal collaboration; however, there must be a representative selection of retailers to prevent a self-centered attitude. Similarly, MA pointed out that the connection between HMS and retailers is difficult because the retailers are not organized and are self-centered. This has been the case for the Bidboek too. MA stated that it is unknown whether the process of the Bidboek was better

with the involvement of more retailers, but it helps in gaining support. In addition, RA pointed out that HMS can function better when a person is appointed who functions as an intermediary between all stakeholders. Furthermore, SA2 and SA3 argued that they have never seen a representative of the quarters in which they are located, which HMS has installed in the center. However, IA1 has a negative view on having a center manager and shopkeepers associations because they do not have a progressive mindset, according to IA1. Furthermore, IA2 stated that the contact with real-estate owners can be improved, but the interviewee wanted to remain anonymous about what organization the intermediary represents. Nevertheless, IA2 mentioned that his/her organization is in discussions with other organizations in Limburg about how to improve the contact with real-estate owners. According to IA2 and RA, this can be improved by setting a BID. Intermediary IA2 stated that it is the municipality's responsibility to improve the contact with stakeholders.

The governmental procedures are mentioned as a failure compared to the developments in the city center. MA pointed out that the compartmentalization of policy can be a problem and that higher governmental levels can help to prevent this, for instance policy on developing dwellings in the city center. Moreover, IA1 argued that regulation, particularly on realizing food facilities, is a problem that needs to be improved. The issue is that the regulation forbids some developments; however, this would no longer be a problem once the developments are implemented, according to IA1. Furthermore, RA pointed out that the government deals with bureaucratic procedures that take much time and with politics that do not take into account the public interests. However, the politics have been stable for the last 12 years despite the elections, according to MA. On the other hand, shop owner SA1 and intermediary IA1 recognized differences between political parties and their interest for entrepreneurs. The recent political party in Heerlen, which is the Social Party (SP) has hardly any interests in entrepreneurs, according to IA1.

The mentality of the government and the provision of information to other stakeholders were mentioned as improvements. Mentality was mentioned by IA1, RA and SA3. According to SA3, the municipality has no idea what retailers do, and retailers do not know the activities of the municipality. In addition, IA1 stated that while the government does not have a realistic view on what is happening, Streetwise helps the municipality to gain insight, according to IA1. Moreover, IA1 claimed that the municipality lacks knowledge and capacity on what is best for the center. Apart from this, the information provided to other stakeholders can be improved, according to RA, SA2 and IA2. This means that the information on developments can be provided earlier, before the developments have started. In addition, the shop owners demonstrated the feeling that the municipality does not listen to the retailers in the center.

Apart from the improvements, the interviewees mentioned successes that relates to the city center policy or to collaboration. First, the Bidboek has raised money from the province and the IBA for developments. According to MA, there is a budget of 32 million in total, of which 11 million comes from the municipality. Similarly, IA1 is positive about the Bidboek because it includes the conceptions of the stakeholders in the center. Second, RA mentioned the real-estate platform as a success, and MA mentioned contact with the real-estate owners as a success related to the creation of the Bidboek. As a result of the real-estate owners platform, MA noticed that the real-estate owners put forward their own initiatives. Third, SA2 is positive about the promotion manager and the owner of the real estate that SA2 rents. According to SA2, they are often in the city center and are interested in their tenants. Fourth, in spite of the statement by IA1 on improving the regulation and mindset of the municipality, he/she pointed out that the municipality is further advanced in mindset than other municipalities. Fifth, IA2 mentioned the initiative of entrepreneurs to decorate the Geleenstraat as a success because it has

improved the appearance of the Geleenstraat. Moreover, IA2 claimed to be positive about the collaboration with the municipality.

7.3 The policy in Helmond

In this section, the city center policy of Helmond is analyzed in thematic order. It includes the Centrum perspectief document, policy on attracting businesses, vacancy regulation, deregulation and co-creation.

Centrum perspectief

The Centrum perspectief policy document was mentioned by MB as the bible of city center policy. This document includes approximately 35 projects to respond to changing customer demands and e-commerce. It also includes the ambition to reduce the retail area, which involves land use transformations from retail to other functions such as housing. This means that the land use plans need to be renewed to allow these land use transformations (Interview MB, Interview IB1). Shop owner SB2 also pointed out the land use transformations from retail to housing. In addition, MB claimed that the location of retailers has become more important because of the reduction in the retail area. Similarly, IB1, SB1 and SB2 highlighted the location of retailers and claimed that some retailers might need to move into the reduced retail area. Intermediary IB1 and shop owner SB1 pointed out own initiatives of retailers to move to another area. For example, SB1 has moved to be more assessable, and IB1 mentioned that around five shops have moved to the retail core to be located in an A-location or to have a building that suits their needs. Furthermore, the document includes projects related to the appearance of the center, such as refurbishments of public spaces (Interview MB) and the Havenpark, whose design is complete (Interview MB, Interview IB1). The Havenpark has been a large public space in the center with no function. Moreover, with regard to appearance, IB1 mentioned it as the basic principle of an attractive city center to attract visitors and businesses. This means that the city center and its components such as benches and planters, as well as ambient lighting, must be well maintained (Interview IB1).

Policy on attracting businesses

The emphasis of Helmond's city center policy is on attracting businesses and visitors to the center. First, the municipality has worked on an acquisition approach to attract businesses to Helmond (Interview MB). IB1 stated that the approach is important for attracting retail chains. Instead of promoting Helmond as a city with 90,000 residents, it is promoted by the approach of a catchment area with around 225,000 residents. This catchment takes the de Peel subregion into account instead of only the residents of Helmond (Interview IB1). Second, IB1 highlighted the ambition to provide experiences in the center in the form of events in order to attract people to the center for a longer period of time. Third, the municipality, together with the center manager and retailers, has worked on a recruitment brochure, which can attract visitors and businesses to Helmond. The brochure includes a description of the characteristics of Helmond, along with pictures, and it operates as the city's profile; however, it does not include a specific slogan or theme. Nevertheless, IB1 claimed that the profile of Helmond can be summarized as the "city of doing things", and SB3 mentioned that Helmond also calls itself "the gate of de Peel". Overall, the brochure functions as the framework in which developments take place, and it is created to attract people (Interview MB, Interview IB1).

The policy on catchment is based on a growth scenario, which involves growing to 100,000 residents and developing more dwellings in the center (Interview MB). According to MB, the shops in the center will have more customers when there are more people living in the city, especially in the center. The focus is

particularly on becoming the catchment area for people who are looking for a dwelling near Eindhoven. However, the municipality expects a smaller growth in population than 10 years ago, so the plans on housing are adjusted to the new prognoses (Interview MB).

Vacancy regulation

The municipality has created an approach to solving vacancy, which includes some measures. First, an external agency has been hired for temporary fillings of vacant buildings (Interview MB, Interview SB3). This was done to drive momentum on solving vacancy, but it is ultimately the task of real-estate owners to fill their vacant buildings. However, MB argued that collaboration between the hired external agency and real-estate owners on these temporary fillings can be an obstacle because this hired party is using their buildings without paying rent. Second, the municipality and the center manager want to negotiate with the real-estate owners on the size of some of their buildings. When large buildings at the edge of the retail core are split into multiple buildings, they become more attractive to rent to businesses (Interview IB1, Interview SB1). The approach to solving vacancy does not include a vacancy tax. According to IB1, the tax is concession to the quality of the city center because the real-estate owner can rent the building to any party in order to not pay the vacancy tax. Furthermore, MB argued that the tool of subsidy stimulation on vacancy is not desirable for this phase in policy making. This is because another subsidy stimulation, which has been a subsidy for people who settled in a house above a shop in the center, has not had a substantial enough effect before (Interview MB).

There is insight into what buildings are vacant, according to the interviewees. Apart from the measurements of the municipality and Helmond marketing on vacancy, MB revealed that the Eindhovens Dagblad also executes measurements on vacancy (Interview MB). Nevertheless, MB pointed out the different numbers of the vacancy rate. Some are measured based on the amount of gross floor area that is vacant, whereas other rates are measured by the number of buildings that are vacant. Moreover, the area that is taken into account is also a factor in the calculation. In some measurements, the whole city center is considered, and in other measurements, only the retail core area is taken into account (Interview MB). However, IB1 pointed out the difficulty in gaining insight into vacancy for all retail centers in Helmond because the city contains retail centers on a neighborhood level and on former retail streets. The municipality works with the center manager on new retail policy for coping with those retail centers and determining what the role of those centers versus the city center will be (Interview IB1).

Deregulation

IB1 revealed that Helmond has joined the deregulation pilot, which allows retailers and other entrepreneurs more freedom to maintain their businesses. To be more precise, the municipality has slackened the regulation both on Sunday opening hours and on the policy regarding terraces. This means that entrepreneurs can design their own terraces, instead of being obliged to have the same chairs and umbrellas as other entrepreneurs. Moreover, entrepreneurs can erect a stage with musicians in the summer, without having to ask for a permit at the municipality (Interview IB1). In addition, SB1 pointed out that terraces are now allowed on the Kerkstraat, where they were not allowed before.

Co-creation

The municipality has involved other stakeholders in the creation of the Centrumerspectief document by holding participation evenings. This is done to gain insight into the necessities of stakeholders and to create support (Interview MB, Interview IB1). According to IB1, the outcome has been a need for more houses, particularly for the elderly and for two-income households. This is in line with the demographic developments in Helmond according to IB1. As a result, the Centrumerspectief document includes

plans for small dwellings that meet the needs of these population groups (Interview IB1). Moreover, the plan of the Havenpark has been created with input from other stakeholders (Interview MB, Interview IB1); however, MB revealed that involvement could be improved:

“If you look at the design of the Havenpark (...). Then we might have wanted more time to involve the city again. But that has also been harder because of practical circumstances. And then you might see when the plan gets presented in the upcoming weeks that people say they are not involved as much as they wanted. However, there is still space to change things. (...). But could have been done more extensive for more support”

(Interview MB, see quotation 10 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

A delegation of the retailers is involved in city center developments along with the center manager (Interview IB1, Interview SB1, Interview SB3). Shop owner SB3 is part of the delegation and mentioned that retailers call the group the Entrepreneurs Steering group Helmond (OSH)—Ondernemers Stuurgroep Helmond in Dutch. The OSH consists of one or two retailers from each part of the city center and those retailers represent their area in the OSH meetings. The center manager joins the OSH meeting once per month to obtain input from the retailers on city center developments. The two aldermen, who are responsible for the city center, join these meeting four times per year (Interview IB1, Interview SB1, Interview SB3). In addition, IB1 pointed out that the municipality is the authorizing officer and often takes the initiative for developments; however, this is done in conjunction with the retailers. In comparison, SB1 pointed out that even though retailers can contribute ideas, the municipality ultimately decides. Furthermore, SB2 pointed out that he/she is a member of the shopkeeper association in the area in which the owner is located; however, SB2 is not involved in policy. Similarly, the consultants stated that they are not involved in the policy processes in Helmond (Interview CoB1 and CoB2).

The shop owners revealed the developments in which the OSH are involved. First, the retailers have negotiated with the municipality to improve the path and streetlights in the center (Interview SB1). Second, SB3 mentioned the accessibility of the center. The retailers of the OSH have installed a workgroup to investigate the accessibility of the center, and the results have been presented to the municipality. As a result, the municipality has started to improve accessibility to the city center with signage (Interview SB3). Third, SB1, SB2 and SB3 mentioned negotiations between the municipality and retailers on the Kanaaldijk traffic situation, which is now also going to be addressed by the municipality. According to SB1, the Kanaaldijk is a barrier between the Steenwegkwartier and other parts of the center that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, MB pointed out that the municipality wants to involve the stakeholders in the creation of the land use plans in the future.

Apart from the OSH, the municipality attempts to collaborate with other stakeholders. First, the center manager is involved in meetings with the OSH and collaborates with the municipality. Moreover, the manager looks after the interests of retailers, entrepreneurs, real-estate owners and the municipality. These interests are, for instance, about organizing events to attract visitors, the opening hours on Sundays and the entrepreneurship skills of the retailer. The center manager connects retailers to an estate agent, franchise owner or real-estate owner if this is necessary for the retailer (Interview IB1). Second, the municipality attempts to start negotiating with real-estate owner again, which has not occurred because of municipal organizational matters and conflict with a large real-estate owner party (Interview MB). However, MB stressed the importance of negotiating with real-estate owners for the execution of the vacancy approach and the acquisition plan to attract retail chains. For this reason, the municipality has begun to pick up the conversations with real-estate owners again. Similarly, CoB1 and CoB2 pointed out that the center manager has not negotiated with the real estate owners, and SB1

suggested that it is important that the municipality involves these owners in the city center development meetings. In addition, MB doubts whether real-estate owners are informed of this recruitment brochure. Apart from this, MB, CoB1, IB1, SB1 and SB3 pointed out that the municipality has the task of providing frameworks and regulations on land uses and facilitating requests and initiatives from other stakeholders.

7.4 Successes and failures of policy in Helmond

The successes and failures of city center policies in Helmond are analyzed in thematic order. The themes are the content of policy, the supply of retail and food facilities, the recruitment brochure and having a profile, deregulation and co-creation.

Content of policy

The creations of the Centrumerspectief document and the acquisition plan were mentioned as successes by MB; however, the consultants and SB3 were critical of these developments. According to the consultants, the Centrumerspectief document lacks uniqueness, and it is the same as any other city center policy document. In fact, CoB2 argued that Helmond can be replaced with any other city within the Centrumerspectief document because the measures taken are relatable to other city center policies. This means the consultants believe that Helmond does not have a policy that demonstrates the uniqueness of the city (Interview CoB1 and CoB2). Despite the statement of MB that the creation of the Centrumerspectief is a success, MB claimed that it is too early to determine the effectiveness of the policy. In comparison, SB3 mentioned the content of the Centrumerspectief document as a success but wondered whether the municipality has started on time. According to MB, the retailers have a different time perspective than the municipality, and the former consequently think there is hardly any progress. This is partly because the previous city center policy was cancelled and replaced with the Centrumerspectief document, according to MB. In addition, CoB1 claimed to see no successes yet in Helmond and argued that it is at the very beginning of improving the city center. Moreover, CoB1 claimed that the policy on fine-tuning retail centers is inconsequential and suggested that the municipality must intervene.

The appearance and maintenance of the center were discussed—in particular, the design of the Havenpark. The creation of the Havenpark plan was mentioned as a success by MB, SB2 and SB3; however, SB1 is skeptical about whether the plan can be realized and has rather seen something else. Shop owner SB3 is positive about the design but wonders if it caters to the acquisition of the city. However, CoB1 is negative on the Havenpark design because the consultant cannot imagine that people use the park while they have heavy shopping bags. Moreover, SB3 wonders whether it would not have been better if the signage or the vegetation in the whole center was improved first. In addition, the appearance of the center can be improved, according to SB1, SB2 and CoB1. In particular, the maintenance of the city center and the weed control were mentioned by SB1 and SB2. Moreover, CoB1 mentioned that the backside of the Veestraat looks grim. However, the center manager has arranged Christmas lights and planters to improve the appearance of the center, which are seen by MB as successful contributions to the city center.

There are mixed opinions about the issue of vacancy in the center and the approach of resolving it. On the one hand, the consultants are critical of the policy on vacancy and the number of vacant buildings in Helmond. They state that it is urgent to take action to reduce vacancies in the city center. The consultants created a collage of vacant buildings located in Helmond to demonstrate the urgency. On the other hand, SB1 and SB2 claimed that vacancy has decreased in Helmond, which is a success. In

comparison, SB3 stated that this issue in Helmond is not that negative in comparison to other cities that are decayed; however, the vacancy in the Elzaspassage is a problem. Apart from this, IB1 mentioned two failures with respect to solving vacancy. First, IB1 pointed out the vacancy of former public buildings that the municipality owns, such as the old library that has been vacant for 8 years. According to IB1, initiatives for an atelier or other cultural concepts are not permitted. This is because the municipality deals with tenders or has a potential buyer for the building (Interview IB1). Second, IB1 highlighted the problem of filling up vacant buildings with cultural functions such as art because it does not include a revenue model. However, this is beyond the scope of this research because the focus is on the retail structure. Furthermore, IB1 stated that vacancy allows space for new ideas and entrepreneurs, so a level of zero vacancy is not recommended by IB1.

Supply of retail and food facilities

Small independent shops and food facilities were mentioned as successes, whereas the attraction of retail chains was mentioned as a failure. First, IB1, SB1, SB2 and SB3 mentioned small independent shops as positive components of Helmond, which make the city different than Eindhoven or the villages in de Peel. Small independent shops on the Steenweg were mentioned by SB2 as positive because they attract people from outside of the region for the mix of retail concepts and other functions such as culture, housing and food. According to SB2, while the focus has previously been on the other side of the canal, the municipality has recently acknowledged the strength of the Steenwegkwartier. Second, CoB1 and SB2 mentioned the food facilities as a success. The restaurant near the parking spot at the rear of the Veestraat was mentioned by CoB1 as a success, and SB2 said that the food facilities have contributed to the atmosphere of the center. However, CoB1 and SB1 argued that Helmond has missed the opportunity to establish some retail chains in the center. On the other hand, CoB1 has noticed a change in the mindset of real-estate owners. According to CoB1, these owners now realize that it is important to attract large retail chains. Shop owner SB3 mentioned the success of the retail chain Gerry Weber that has settled in the center, but also revealed that Helmond has lost some retail chains such as Halfords and Trekpleister. According to SB2, Helmond is not an attractive city for retail chains.

The recruitment brochure and having a profile

The recruitment brochure had not yet been published yet during the time of the interviews; therefore, the interviewees provided their opinions about having a profile and on the characteristics of Helmond instead of on the recruitment brochure. Intermediary IB1 requested that the recruitment brochure should not be taken into account in the other interviews because it had not been officially released during that time. Nevertheless, the other interviewees provided their opinions about having a city profile and the characteristics of Helmond that are established in the Centrum perspectief document. According to SB3, the characteristic of historical features are hypocritical because these features were demolished in the past. Moreover, MB referred to the new recruitment brochure and suggested that people will agree with the viewpoints therein. In addition, MB pointed out the tension between a concrete profile and a wide profile, and he/she suggested that people might not agree with the profile when it is concrete. However, CoB1 and SB1 argued that a profile needs to be concrete, but SB2 claimed that it is difficult to create such a concrete profile. Overall, the interviewees agree on having a profile in order to create focus.

Deregulation

The deregulation of the policy on terraces was mentioned by IB1 and SB1 as a success, and the deregulation of the opening hours on Sundays was discussed by the shop owners and IB1. The opening hours on Sundays are difficult for small independent shop owners to arrange, according to SB1 and SB3. This is because they must either work longer hours or hire more employees, the latter of which costs

them more money than they make. Intermediary IB1 also mentioned this issue and suggested redistributing the opening hours instead of adding more opening hours in a week, for instance, being open on Saturdays until 19.00 to connect to the opening hours of the facilities of leisure and food, and to abolish shopping at night during the week. SB3 agreed on the redistribution of opening hours; however, the owner claimed to be restricted to the shop owners association of the area in which he/she is located. The owner wants to be open during events, but most votes count in the association. However, SB2 does not see the added value in being open on Sundays or in redistributing the opening hours. According to SB2, people already have ample time to shop, and they do not take advantage of the extra opening hours. In addition, IB1 pointed out that the division in opinions on opening hours is a difficult task to tackle. For that reason, IB1 tries to inform retailers about the footfall of customers on Sundays to convince the retailers that the opening hours on Sunday are necessary. When not all shops are open on Sundays, this consequently sends out a poor signal to the customers (Interview IB1). Overall, IB1 is positive about the deregulation of the opening hours and permits. IB1 claimed that deregulation makes the city center more attractive for retailers and entrepreneurs to settle. However, SB3 indicated that permit processes could be simplified.

Opinions on co-creation

All interviewees are positive about the idea of co-creation and collaboration. CoB1, SB1, MB and IB1 stated that collaboration is necessary to cope with all the developments and challenges in the city center. According to IB1, the participation evenings in which stakeholders involved have been a success. However with regard to collaboration, Cob1 and SB2 argue that parties should not take over one another's role in collaboration. According to SB2, even though every party has its own knowledge field, awareness of one another is important. However, SB2 claimed at the same time, that retailers are self-centered, which makes the collaboration laborious. Every stakeholder should be willing to compromise on city center developments, according to SB2. In comparison, IB1, SB1 and SB3 are satisfied with the OSH group's collaboration with the municipality and the center management; however, SB3 pointed out that it is difficult to achieve agreement between all retailers. This is a disappointment for SB3, who also suggested that retailers should be better organized. In particular, the Elzaspassage and the other parts are two different groups of retailers, and this collaboration can be improved, according to SB3. Despite SB2 being positive about co-creation, it is not a priority for this shop owner to collaborate with other parties. However, SB2 claimed that it is important to have an active attitude as a retailer. According to SB1, there are active and non-active retailers with respect to collaboration; however, it is important that every retailer becomes active in collaboration.

While the collaboration between OSH and the center manager has resulted in successes, the parking policy was mentioned as a failure. First, IB1 mentioned collaboration on planning events with retailers as a success. The Halloween event has attracted more than 1,000 visitors to the center and has received positive reactions from them about the shops in the city center. Similarly, SB3 mentioned the events and activities in the center as successes. Second, the shop owners mentioned collaboration on accessibility as a success. Shop owners SB1 and SB2 said that the plan to close off the Kanaaldijk was a success, and SB3 mentioned collaboration regarding the signage of the center as a success. However, SB1 and SB2 states that the parking policy was a failure because the parking costs are too high for Helmond in comparison to Eindhoven. However, the municipality does not listen to the entrepreneurs on this issue, according to SB1. In addition, SB2 claimed that the municipality has increased parking costs without consulting with the other parties. Furthermore, SB2 mentions the designation in the center as a failure; however, SB3 pointed out that the municipality will start to address this designation with the input of OSH.

Collaboration with the real-estate owners was mentioned as a failure; however, MB, IB1 and SB1 pointed

out that they want to involve the real-estate owners. According to IB1, the real-estate owners and the retailers are not aware of each other's challenges. To raise awareness between both parties, IB1 suggested including the real-estate owners in meetings. However, CoB1 was critical of this, claiming that the center manager has never negotiated with the real-estate owners, because the center manager has been too busy. Similarly to IB1, CoB1 argued that the real-estate owners are self-centered and that they are poorly organized. On the other hand, CoB1 claimed that real-estate owners in Helmond have become more aware of the general interests in the city center. In addition, IB1 argued that there is a division of active- and passive real-estate owners in city center policy, in which Helmond is not a priority for the passive real-estate owners. Intermediary IB1 stated the following:

"We notice.. There are active and passive real estate owners. Active real estate owners are also looking for parties. They think along and conversate. Eh the passive, not to blame anyone, but those are often the big real estate parties. Eh yeah the building is empty and then you get the impression that they do not really care, because it is registered for a certain worth. So why shall they make an effort?"

(Interview IB1, see quotation 11 in Annex 2 for the original quotation in Dutch).

Communication between the parties in the center can be improved and was, in some cases, mentioned as a failure. For instance, SB1 pointed out that the communication from the municipality to the entrepreneurs and vice versa must become unambiguous. In comparison, IB1 claimed that the output of information on the Havenpark has been a failure after the participation evenings, and MB acknowledged that feedback could be improved. The municipality has not kept the stakeholders informed on the Havenpark design after the participation evenings, so an improvement is to have feedback moments with the stakeholders in order to garner support (Interview IB1, interview MB). Moreover, IB1, CoB1, SB1 and SB3 mentioned communication with the weekly market entrepreneurs as a failure. According to CoB1, the municipality granted permission for an initiative for an ice rink on the Markt; however, this initiative was not communicated to the people of the weekly market. In addition, CoB1 and IB1 mentioned that the entrepreneurs need to put away their terraces when the weekly market is erected, but those entrepreneurs want to set up their terraces for revenue. Apart from this, CoB1 stated that the market stalls threaten the routing in the center. Given the poor communication with the weekly market entrepreneurs, and to debate the position of the week market, SB3 and IB1 suggested that these entrepreneurs should join the meetings with OSH, the center manager and the municipality.

All interviews criticized the procedure of the municipality. According to IB1, CoB1 and SB3, the government deals with an unwieldy bureaucratic system where decision making takes much time. Similarly, MB discussed the capacity of civil servants, and stating that there is a limit on the amount of work that civil servants can do. Moreover, CoB1 argued that the municipality must change the mindset from "no, unless" to "yes, provided that" in order to ease the permit-related process. Furthermore, SB1 and CoB1 argued that many civil servants are not from the place where they work and therefore do not have a bond with the city. This is problematic in creating policy that fits into the context, according to SB1 and CoB1. In addition, IB1 highlighted the importance of informing the councilors of all developments related to the city center. Furthermore, SB2 argued that the municipality hires external companies to conduct research on the developments, but it does nothing with the subsequent advice it received. Apart from this, CoB1 mentioned the obstacle of the self-centered mentality of different departments within the municipal organization. The politics, on the other hand, are not an obstacle, according to MB, because every political party has the city center as an interest.

7.5 The recommendations on city center policy

The focus in this subchapter is on the recommendations that the interviewees provided to other cities on how to cope with the changing retail structure. To emphasize the recommendations, they are structured per topic instead of per case study.

Consultation with stakeholders

All interviewees suggest consulting with stakeholders on the city center developments and plans. MB and CoB1 suggest to do so gain support, and IB1 and SB2 suggest consulting in order to gain insight into the other stakeholders' interests. In addition, IA2 revealed that it is important to involve retailers in the process of reducing the retail core in order to gain support. Moreover, RA, SA2 and SB2 suggest a platform where all stakeholders come together. Furthermore, IA1 and MA recommend only focusing on progressive retailers that are willing to collaborate with the other stakeholders. SB3 suggests an organization such as the OSH for every city in which retailers collaborate in the city center developments. Similarly, SA1 suggests that retailers should be included in the center managing organization.

Business improvement district

Setting up a BID is recommended by RA and IA2 as a tool to connect the municipality, retailers and real-estate owners. A BID is an area where the real-estate owners, retailers and entrepreneurs all pay a levy to tend to the public interests or to improve the area and because of the levy, freeriding is not possible (Interview RA). According to RA, co-creation will be improved with a BID in an area. Moreover, IA2 state that a business improvement district helps to manage the real-estate owners. In addition, IA2 argues the tool can help to steer the city center developments more precisely when it is combined with the façade funds tool. The board of the BID can determine what buildings need to be improved, which is more purposeful than single requests from real-estate owners on the façade fund, according to IA2. The municipality of Weert is an example, according to IA2.

A clear vision by the municipality

MA and MB claim that it is important for the municipality to have a clear vision and to hold on to this vision despite any criticism. According to MA, companies start to anticipate with own initiatives for planning when there is a clear vision. Similarly, MB argues that a vision is needed to help steer the market in the right direction. A clear vision also means making strict choices; however, MB points out the importance of having support for the strict choices. In addition, the vision should include choices that are achievable in time, according to MB and SB1. Moreover, IA2 argues that it is important that the vision includes sufficient information about the entrepreneurs because they have a different time perspective than the municipality. Furthermore, a clear vision and strict choices are also recommended by SB2 and SA1. In addition, CoB1 suggests focusing on a main retail center that is located in the city center instead of focusing on multiple subcenters.

Have a clear profile

The consultants, RA and MB highlight the importance of having a clear profile for the city in order to make it attractive. This means a profile that presents the characteristics of the city that can be promoted. According to the consultants, different cities share a similar city center policy, and a profile can make this policy more specific. Moreover, CoB1 mentioned the location of Helmond that is close to Eindhoven, where a profile can make Helmond more attractive to visit. In comparison to Heerlen, IA2 and SA2 argue that the urban profile can be more propagated. For instance, SA2 suggests having a central mural in the city center to collect all the surrounding murals and to advertise the urban profile

more exhaustively.

Help starting entrepreneurs

Helping starting entrepreneurs, including starting retailers, is recommended by MA, SA3, the three intermediaries and CoB1. First, IA2 and CoB1 emphasize the importance creating perspective for starting entrepreneurs in order to build trust between those entrepreneurs and real-estate owners. Second, MA and IA1 recommend counseling the starting entrepreneurs on their business models, which creates certainty for them and for the real-estate owners. Moreover, MA claims that the policy tool of subsidy for starting entrepreneurs has more effect when they are counselled. Third, IB1, SA3 and CoB1 argue that the municipality and real-estate owners need to consider carrying the financial burden of those starting entrepreneurs. Intermediary IB1 recommends having differentiated rent with a growth model to ease the financial burden for starting entrepreneurs. According to IB1, there is one real-estate owner in Helmond who practices this model with success for entrepreneurs. Similarly, the starting entrepreneurs in Heerlen sign a 5-year lease agreement with a breaking point in the second year. The contract also includes a growth model to help them and to alleviate any risk for real-estate owners (Interview IA1). According to IA1, this lease agreement is a success.

Know the area

Intermediaries IA1 and IA2, and shop owner SB2 recommend creating knowledge about what area that fits best for which retailer and entrepreneur. Intermediaries IA1 and IA2 suggest creating ideal combinations of products and services in an area because this influences the performance of entrepreneurs. Moreover, SB2 suggests taking the catchment area into account to prevent competition with other cities. Intermediary IA2 recommends conducting investigations into customers' uses and demands for places and products in order to create businesses and land use functions that are desired. Furthermore, IA1 suggests counseling starting entrepreneurs in order to understand on who is located in the city center.

Make the retail area more compact and focus on structural solutions

MA and MB, from the municipalities Heerlen and Helmond, recommend making the retail area more compact and focusing on structural solutions. According to MA and MB, there is an oversupply of retail floor space, which needs to be reduced and concentrated in a more compact area. This means that the shops in the peripheral area of the city center need to be relocated to the retail core area. Similarly, RA points out the oversupply of retail floor space and claims that the gross floor area of retail needs to be reduced. For instance, RA suggests removing the Het Loon retail center from the market and relocating the shops to the city center. In addition, MA points out that there is no need for additional retail floor space, so a new retail center within the city center does not address the challenges. Moreover, MA and MB suggest transforming the land use function of buildings that are located in the peripheral area of the city center to other functions such as housing. Similarly, RA suggests taking measures with real-estate owners regarding transformation. Furthermore, MA suggests accepting vacancy in some areas where land use transformation takes place, and IA2 suggests using these developments to create powerful combinations of shops and land uses. Demolition is suggested by IA1 as a structural solution, and CoB1 suggest taking the city profile and all stakeholders into account to reach structural solutions.

Provision of experiences

Providing experiences is suggested for the retailers' businesses and for city center policies. First, SA1, SA2, SA3, SB1, SB2, IA2 and CoB1 claim that retailers need to provide experiences to customers in order to respond to the changing retail structure. Second, MA, SA1, SA2 and IB1 point out that the city center policy needs to focus on experiences. IB1 and MA recommend organizing events in the city center to

provide experiences to the customer. Moreover, IB1 and SA1 recommend focusing on daily activities with city center developments. Apart from the events, the city center developments must include a mixed supply of functions, such as food with terraces outside. This is important so that people can meet and create experiences, according to IB1. Furthermore, MA suggests that it will be easier to focus on experiences in city center policy once the retail core is reduced.

See vacancy as an opportunity

The three intermediaries and SB2 point out that vacancy can be seen as an opportunity instead of a problem or weakness. For example, vacant buildings can provide space for new concepts and entrepreneurs. However, IB1 points out that the consideration of vacancy as a problem is dependent on the amount of vacancy. In comparison, CoB1 argues that Helmond has a high vacancy rate, which is a problem. On the other hand, CoB1 states that it becomes easier to intervene with policy when there is a high vacancy rate. This is because a high vacancy rate enforces the belief that it is urgent to intervene (Interview CoB1). Moreover, IA2 suggests that vacant buildings can be used to provide experiences in the city center, and CoB1 suggests that the e-commerce market can respond to the vacancy. This means that e-commerce businesses can use vacant buildings to expand their businesses physically (Interview CoB1).

Collaboration between retailers

Shop owners SA1 and SB1, and consultant CoB1 suggest that retailers of the city center should collaborate to respond to the changing retail structure and to compete with other retailers. Consultant CoB1 mentioned Veldhoven where retailers collaborate and promote each other. According to CoB1, the collaboration has reduced the number of vacancies in Veldhoven and has created solidarity. In addition, SB1 suggests that retailers should work together on selling products. Shop owner SB1 provided the example of an online channel where all retailers of the city center offer their products.

Recommendations on demographics

The interviewees provided recommendations that relate to demographic developments in both cities. First, MA, MB and SB3 recommend accepting the demographic developments in the city. According to MA, the shrinkage in Helmond is a fact and should not be denied. In comparison, MB revealed that previous plans for Helmond have taken a larger growth scenario into account, but these plans have been adjusted to the recent developments. MA and MB suggest being realistic about demographic developments. Similarly, SB3 states that Helmond should accept that it is not a city for large retail chains. However, IB1 has a different point of view. According to IB1, Helmond has catchment area for the region and should therefore take acquisition of retail chains into account. Second, RA, IA2, CoB1, SA1 and IA1 recommend responding to demographic developments in city center policies as well as in retailers' businesses. Third, IA1 claims that shrinkage has led to a negative image of Heerlen that has discouraged investors from looking into the city. According to IA1, the focus should not be on shrinkage but on the quality that the city has to offer. IA1 provided the example of successful entrepreneurs in Heerlen as a form of quality.

7.6 Conclusion

To answer the third, fourth and fifth subquestions of this research, the focus of this chapter has been on the city center policy addresses the challenges of the changing retail structure. These subquestions are as follows:

- How do policy makers cope with those challenges?
- What have been the successes and failures of these policies?

- What recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy?

The municipalities of Heerlen and Helmond have created a policy document for their city centers; however, the cities cope with the challenges differently. The policy in Heerlen consists of policy tools such as a vacancy register, subsidy stimulation for starting entrepreneurs and supervision of starting entrepreneurs, which is done by the organization Streetwise. In addition, the Heerlen municipality has set up a real-estate owners platform and the center-managing organization HMS. In comparison, the emphasis of Helmond's policy is on co-creation, deregulation, vacancy and attracting businesses. The Helmond municipality consults and collaborates with the center manager and with a delegation of retailers on city center policy. Furthermore, the municipality has created a recruitment brochure to attract businesses to Helmond and an approach to vacancy. This approach includes splitting buildings into smaller units and hiring external companies to fill up vacant buildings. Furthermore, the Helmond municipality has applied a deregulation pilot in which the regulation on terrace-related policy, opening hours on Sundays and permits are mitigated.

These policies have entailed successes and failures. For instance, with regard to the former, the municipality of Heerlen and the municipality of Helmond recognize the creation of the city center policy documents as a success; however, the effects of these policies are not known yet. Moreover, in both cities, the land use transformations are mentioned as successes, along with the organized events and small independent retailers with innovative concepts that are settled in the centers. Furthermore, subsidy stimulation and the supervision of starting entrepreneurs are recognized as successful policy tools in Heerlen. In Helmond, deregulation, the creation of the recruitment brochure and collaboration with the delegation of retailers are mentioned as successes. With respect to failures, the parking policy and the fine-tuning of retail centers in both cities are considered to be failures. In addition, shop owners deem the cancellation of Primark in Schinkel-zuid and the development of the Maankwartier in Heerlen are recognized to be failures, while the municipality recognizes the land use transformations of Schinkel-zuid and Maankwartier as successes. Moreover, the control of real-estate owners and the self-centered attitude of retailers are mentioned as failures in Heerlen. Apart from this, there are mixed opinions about the city profile in Heerlen. Thus, the consensus among stakeholders on the above-mentioned subjects are failures. In comparison, collaboration with the real-estate owners, tuning of the weekly market and alignment on opening hours are mentioned as failures in Helmond. Moreover, the contribution of the Havenpark in Helmond for the city center is questioned.

Despite the different focuses on policy, the interviewees have provided the same recommendations, with the exception of the BIDs and the focus on progressive retailers that interviewees from Heerlen have recommended. Furthermore, the emphasis in the recommendations is on collaborating and consulting with other stakeholders, providing clarity to other parties in plans, creating a compact retail core, providing structural solutions, helping starting entrepreneurs, seeing vacancy as an opportunity instead of a problem, and providing experiences in the city centers and in retailers' businesses.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

After answering the subquestions in the previous chapters, the main research questions are answered in this chapter to provide a learning trajectory on how to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy. The research questions of this research are answered in Chapter 8.1. Then, the results and the quality of this research are discussed in Chapter 8.2, and the recommendations for future research are provided in Chapter 8.3.

8.1 Conclusions

This research included a comparative case study design with Heerlen as the shrinking city case and Helmond as the growing city case, in order to provide an answer to the following research questions:

**How do cities cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in their city centers?
Are the experiences different in shrinking regions, and what can other (future) shrinking cities learn from this?**

The challenges of the retail structure and city center policies were investigated to determine what the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers consist of, how policy makers cope with it, whether the experiences are different in shrinking regions and what other (future) shrinking cities can learn from this. This investigation has led to the following answers and conclusions:

First, it can be concluded that the retail structure deals with overarching challenges that consist of component challenges. In Heerlen attracting visitors is the overarching challenge, while in Helmond attracting businesses and responding to the retail market are the overarching challenges in addition to attracting visitors. Despite the difference in overarching challenges, the cities deal with the same component challenges such as e-commerce, vacancy, entrepreneurship skills and the mentality of retailers. The shrinking context has not intensified the challenges of the retail structure, because the population loss has not been extreme. In particular, the demographic developments are interpreted as a general challenge in both cities with respect to responding to the retail market with policy and with product ranges.

Second, it can be concluded that the cities have different interests and therefore different policies. In Heerlen the focus of policies is on local businesses and the reduction of vacancy, while the focus of policy in Helmond is on collaboration with stakeholders, deregulation and making the city attractive for large investors. The policies in Heerlen do not focus on attracting big investors because the municipality acknowledges that the city is not attractive for them. The findings suggest that the emphasis on shrinkage in previous policies has led to a disinterest in Heerlen among large investors; therefore, the recent policy does not focus on shrinkage or on attracting those investors. However, not attracting large investors and shrinkage are not seen as issues in the city center policies. So, the experiences are different in shrinking regions because of a different focus within the policies and not because of shrinkage itself.

Third, conclusions can be provided on the successes and failures of the policies and the recommendations on how to cope with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers. The policies that the cities focus on are mentioned as successes, whereas the policies that the cities focus on in a lesser extent can be improved or are mentioned as failures. However, the focus on a city profile as policy in Heerlen is an exception because the profile has caused mixed opinions. In spite of the different interests, policies and differences in demographics, it can be concluded that similar recommendations on city center policies and retailers' businesses are provided in both cases to other cities. These are

collaborating and consulting with other stakeholders, providing clarity to other parties in plans, creating a compact retail core, providing structural solutions, helping starting entrepreneurs, seeing vacancy as an opportunity instead of a problem, and providing experiences both in the city centers and in retailers' businesses. Apart from these suggestions, the recommendation to other (future) shrinking cities is to not put the emphasis on shrinkage. The findings suggest that the emphasis on shrinkage creates a negative image of the city, and investors are therefore less interested in the city.

8.2 Discussion

To determine the quality of this research, the conceptual model of Krefting (1991) was taken into account (see Chapter 3.4) with credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as criteria. The criteria of credibility, transferability and confirmability are discussed below, along with the strategies that were used to accomplish a qualitative and trustworthy research. The criterion of dependability involves the consistency of this research, and was taken into account by describing the research processes in detail in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the limitations of this research are discussed in this subchapter.

The credibility criterion that indicates the presentation of multiple realities (Krefting (1991) was taken into account through member checking, asking multiple questions and triangulation on data sources. The feedback on member checking was positive, except from the shop owners who provided non-responses to emails and reminders to check the transcripts of their interviews. However, the audio files were checked twice to ensure that the correct text was captured. Furthermore, member checking can result in socially preferred answers because an interviewee might want to withdraw a controversial answer (Krefting, 1991). In this research, the interviewees did not withdraw their answers to interview questions; however, some asked to remain anonymous, and their requests were processed in this research. Anonymity ensures that socially preferred answers are not provided by these interviewees. Moreover, multiple questions were asked on improvements and co-creation, and similar answers were provided by the interviewees. This has strengthened the quality and trustworthiness of this research. Furthermore, triangulation on data sources was provided, which means that multiple stakeholder groups were taken into account in this research. As a result, multiple insights are provided, which also strengthen the quality and trustworthiness of this research. However, two notes can be made about the data sources. First, the case of Helmond lacks insight from a real-estate owner, but this was captured by the consultants who work with real-estate owners. Second, the shop owners in Heerlen are not involved in co-creation or city center policy; however, non-responses and refusals were provided by the active shop owners in Heerlen. Moreover, the other interviewees in Heerlen mentioned that retailers are self-centered and not active in city center policy. This is a useful indication of what the co-creation processes consist of and the attitude of the shop owners on city center policies and co-creation in Heerlen.

The transferability criterion by Krefting (1991) involves the application of the research in similar contexts, and it was taken into account by focusing on mid-sized cities containing between 50,000 and 100,000 residents and shrinkage. This research investigated the challenges of the retail structure, and the results are similar between the two mid-sized city cases. Moreover, while the approach to coping with the changing retail structure and vacancy is different in these two cases, the related recommendations are similar. This indicates that the results are applicable to other mid-sized cities despite the policies that are taken into account. However, Helmond deals with competition from Eindhoven, but Heerlen does not face competition. This means that competition is an aspect or challenge that not every mid-sized city deals with. This indicates that mid-sized cities can face their own challenges or issues that are not directly applicable to other mid-sized cities. Furthermore, Heerlen is currently the only shrinking city with

50,000 to 100,000 residents. Demographic prognoses include more cities with shrinkage; however, the retail market is dynamic and the situation regarding what the changing retail structure consists of might change in the future. Nevertheless, this study points out that the changing retail structure is not intensified in shrinking cities when the emphasis is not on shrinkage, and this is what other future shrinking cities can learn from this research. Apart from this, the study is applicable to Dutch cities because the city centers are seen as the main retail center in cities. This means that transferability is limited to comparable socio-political contexts.

The confirmability criterion by Krefting (1991) involves the support of the results by the theory and the participants of this research. The support of participants was taken into account through member checking, which has been discussed in the second paragraph of this subchapter. Therefore, this paragraph focuses on the support of theory as well as the support of the policy analysis. This includes the strategies of theoretical triangulation and triangulation of data methods. First, the theory consists of resilience theory and co-creation, where theoretical triangulation is applied. Resilience theory signifies that the changing retail structure and co-creation are of interest for an organization. Despite the fact that not all variables were explicitly asked in the interviews (see Chapter 3.2.1), all variables were mentioned during the interviews. This suggests that this research corresponds with the theory. Moreover, this research can enrich resilience theory with the insights that are provided on coping with the changing retail structure and vacancy in a shrinking context. Furthermore, this research can enrich the theory on co-creation because it has provided more insight into the co-creation operation and outcomes, especially the Helmond case. The results on co-creation in Heerlen contribute to knowledge about the current attitudes towards co-creation. In comparison to the policy analysis and therefore the triangulation of data methods, the policy documents highlight the ambition to collaborate and to co-create. However, the respondents from Heerlen provided a different image in the interviews on what the attitude is towards co-creation. Apart from this, the content of the policy documents are in line with the content of the interviews, which strengthens the quality of this research.

This research contains limitations. First, this subchapter has discussed the lack of insight from real-estate owners in the Helmond case, the lack of active shop owners in policy in the Heerlen case and the lack of other current shrinking mid-sized cities between 50,000 and 100,000 residents. Second, a potential problem is that the scope of the thesis may be too broad—the focus on the retail structure in city centers means the inclusion of other sectors because retail is being replaced by other sectors such as housing, culture, leisure and food. This means that the retail structure cannot be investigated as a standalone topic. As a result, this research has become comprehensive, which can derogate from the focus of and the overview in this research.

8.3 Recommendations for scientific research

Recommendations for scientific research are provided in this subchapter. First, this research revealed the challenge of the production chain in Chapter 6. This challenge indicates that the changing retail structure has impacted not only shops and city center policies, but also the production chain and manufactures that develop the products. This suggests that the challenge of the retail structure is larger, and this research therefore recommends investigating how production chains can cope with the changing retail structure. Second, the results demonstrate that art and cultural facilities replace some retail facilities; however, the former facilities are lacking a revenue model. This is beyond the scope of this research, so this research recommends exploring the establishment of art and cultural facilities in city centers. Third, this research includes the finding that BIDs are recommended, but the cases in this research have not

installed a BID. Therefore, it is recommended a study be undertaken to determine the contribution of a BID in coping with the changing retail structure and vacancy in city centers.

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Annex 1: The interview questions

The interview questions are demonstrated in this annex in both Dutch and English languages. The interviewees spoke the Dutch language and therefore the interview questions were asked in Dutch. However, the interview questions were translated into English in order to demonstrate them in this annex. Apart from this, the operationalization scheme is demonstrated again in the Annex Table to show the connection of the interview questions with this research's subquestions. This is demonstrated with colors. For instance, interview questions that relate to the first subquestion (A in Annex Table) gained the color yellow, and those that relate to the second subquestion (B in Annex Table) gained the color green. In addition, the parentheses behind the interview questions demonstrate to what parties the question was asked, in which the M stands for municipality, Co for consultant, I for intermediary, R for real-estate owner and S for shop owner.

Annex Table: Operationalization of this research

Subquestions	Indicators	What is answered by what?	Interview questions	To which parties asked?
A: What are the challenges of the changing retail structure?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changing retail structure challenges (This is asked in general to investigate what the changing retail structure consists of) ● View on vacancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Policy analysis (Chapter 5) ● Interviews (Chapter 6) 	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13	M, Co, I, R, S
B: Are those challenges intensified in the cities of shrinking regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographic developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews (Chapter 6) 	26, 27, 28, 31	M, Co, I, R, S
C: How do policy makers cope with those challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy instruments ● Collaboration ● Attitude towards co-creation ● Appliance of co-creation ● Proliferation ● Coordination with other retail areas and city centers ● Insight into vacancy ● Content of policy (Accessibility/maintenance/mix of retail and other functions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Policy analysis (Chapter 5) ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33	M, Co, I, R, S
D: What have been the successes and failures of these policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Successes and failures of city center policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	21, 22, 23, 24, 34, 35	M, Co, I, R, S
E: What recommendations can be made to other cities about city center policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommendations of city center policies ● Improvements in collaboration and co-creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) ● Interviews (Chapter 7) 	20, 36, 37	M, Co, I, R, S

List of interview questions:

1: INTRODUCTIE: Wie bent u en wat heeft u met de binnenstad van Heerlen/Helmond te maken? (M, S, I, Co, R)

(INTRODUCTION: Who are you and what is your role towards the city center of Heerlen/Helmond?)

2: INTRODUCTIE: Waarom bent u in deze binnenstad gevestigd? (S, R, I)

(INTRODUCTION Why are you located in this city center?)

3: Wat zijn de uitdagingen waar de detailhandel sector in de binnenstad mee te maken heeft? (M, S, I, Co, R)

(What are the challenges that the retail structure of the city center has to deal with?)

4: Wat moet er volgens u gedaan worden om te kunnen omgaan met deze uitdagingen, dus van de detailhandel sector (M, S, I, Co, R)

(What needs to be done to deal with the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy?)

5: Is leegstand voor u een probleem? Waarom? (M, S, I, R)

(Is vacancy a problem for you? Why (not)?)

6: In hoeverre is er inzicht volgens u op de leegstand in de binnenstad? (M, S, I, Co, R)

(To what extent is there insight on the vacancy in the city center?)

7: Wat moet er volgens u gedaan worden om te kunnen omgaan met leegstand in de binnenstad? (M, S, I, Co, R)

(What needs to be done to cope with the vacancy in the city center?)

8: Wat is de taak van de gemeente bij deze uitdagingen van de detailhandel sector en de leegstand in de binnenstad? (M, I, Co)

(What is the task of the municipality on dealing with the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy in the city center?)

9: Welke bijdrage levert uw partij bij de omgang van leegstand in de binnenstad en de uitdagingen van de detailhandel sector? (I, Co)

(What is the contribution of your party to the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy?)

10: Wat vindt u de taak van de gemeente bij deze uitdagingen van de detailhandel sector en de leegstand in de binnenstad? (S, R)

(What is the task of the municipality on dealing with the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy in the city center, according to you?)

11: Welke beleidsinstrumenten heeft de overheid om handen bij deze uitdagingen van de detailhandel en leegstand? (M)

(Which policy tools has the municipality to deal with these challenges?)

12: Hoe effectief zijn de beleidsinstrumenten? (M)

(How effective are those policy tools?)

13: Bent u getroffen door deze uitdagingen van de detailhandel sector of door de leegstand in de binnenstad? Zo ja, op welke manier? Zo nee, kent u wel iemand anders die getroffen is en op welke manier? (R, S)

(Are you, or anyone you know, affected by the challenges of the retail structure and/or vacancy, if so, how?)

14: Welke verbeteringen in de binnenstad wilt u zien? (M, S, I, R)

(What improvements do you like to see in the city center?)

15: Wat vindt u van het binnenstad beleid? (S)

(What is your opinion about the city center policy?)

16: Betreft het beleidsproces: In hoeverre bent u betrokken geweest bij de creatie van het binnenstad beleid? (S, I, R)

(To what extent are you involved in the creation of the city center policy?)

17: Wat is uw invloed geweest op het binnenstad beleid? (Co)

(What has been your influence on the city center's policy?)

18: Hoe staat u tegenover co-creatie met betrekking tot het maken van beleid voor de detailhandel sector en leegstand in de binnenstad, dus samenwerken met andere belanghebbende partijen? (M, S, I, Co, R)

(What is your opinion about co-creation in accordance to policy making, so working together with other stakeholders?)

19: Hoe gaat de samenwerking met andere partijen om met de uitdagingen van de detailhandel en leegstand in de binnenstad om te gaan? (M, S, I, R)

(How is the collaboration with other stakeholders on dealing with the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy?)

20: Wat kan beter qua samenwerking met andere partijen? (M, S, I, R)

(What can be improved in the collaboration with other stakeholders?)

21: Welke aspecten betreft het beleidsproces zijn een succes en welke kunnen beter? (M, S, I, R)

(What aspects of the policy processes are successes and what can be done better?)

22: Welke belemmeringen of barrières moeten overwonnen worden om beter met de uitdagingen van de detailhandel sector en leegstand om te gaan? (M, I, Co, S, R)

(Which obstacles are there to cope with the challenges of the retail structure and vacancy?)

23: Welke partijen kunnen hier een bijdrage aan leveren om de belemmeringen of barrières te overwinnen? (M, I, Co, S, R,)

(Why parties can help to overcome these obstacles?)

24: Welke aspecten betreft de uitvoering zijn al een succes en welke kunnen beter? (M, S)

(What aspects of the implementations are already a success and which could be done better?)

25: In hoeverre vind er afstemming plaats met omliggende winkelgebieden en binnensteden? (M, Co)

(To what extent is the city center's policy in tune with surrounding retail areas and city centers?)

26: In hoeverre houdt u rekening met demografische prognoses? (M, I, Co, R, S)

(To what extent do you take the demographic prognoses into account?)

27: Welke invloed heeft de demografische ontwikkelingen op de detailhandel sector en leegstand? (M, Co, I, , R)

(What are the effects of the demographic developments on the retail structure and vacancy?)

28: Welke invloed heeft de demografische ontwikkelingen op het binnenstad beleid? (M)

(What are the effects of the demographic developments on the city center policy?)

29: In hoeverre is er voor een proliferatie voor de binnenstad gekozen en hoe duidelijk wordt deze proliferatie naar buiten gebracht? (M)

(To what extent is there a profile for the city center and to what extent is this profile promoted?)

30: Waarom is er voor deze proliferatie voor de binnenstad gekozen? (Heerlen urban profiel/Helmond (M)

(Why is this profile chosen for the city center?)

31: In hoeverre zijn de demografische prognoses meegenomen in de keuze van deze proliferatie? (M)

(To what extent are the demographic prognoses taken into account in the choice of this profile?)

32: Bent u bekend met de gekozen proliferatie voor de binnenstad en wat vind u ervan? (S, I)

(What do you think about the chosen profile for the city center?)

33: Hoe staat u tegenover de proliferatie van een binnenstad? (Co)

(What is your point of view towards a profile for the city center?)

34: Welke successen heeft u meegemaakt in de binnenstad betreft de detailhandel sector en leegstand? (S, I, Co, R)

(Which successes have you experienced in the city center on dealing with the challenges of the retail sector and vacancy?)

35: Welke mislukkingen heeft u meegemaakt in de binnenstad betreft de detailhandel sector en leegstand? (S, I, Co, R)

(What failures did you experience in the city center on dealing with the challenges of the retail sector and vacancy?)

36: In hoeverre zijn uw bevindingen in Helmond ook van toepassing op andere steden? (Co)

(To what extent do your results of Helmond also apply to other cities?)

37: Wat zal uw aan anderen steden aanraden of afraden met betrekking tot het omgaan van deze uitdagingen? (M, I, Co, S, R)

(What do you recommend or not recommend on dealing with these challenges?)

Annex 2: The quotations

The interviewees' quotations, that were provided in Chapters 6 and 7, are presented in this annex in the English language along with the original text in the Dutch language. The original quotes were translated to the English language in order to fit into the text of Chapters 6 and 7.

Quotation 1:

Translated quotation: *'When you are part of a retail chain, then it does not matter that much. If the shop in Heerlen closes, the retail chain would not care much. For us it would be different. If we have to close, everything will be gone for us'* (Interview SA2)

Original quotation: *'Als je onderdeel bent van een keten, ja dan maakt het niet zoveel uit. Als de vestiging in Heerlen sluit, ja dat zal die keten heel erg weinig boeien. Voor ons zal dat wat anders zijn. Als we hier moeten sluiten dan is alles voor ons weg'* (Interview SA2).

Quotation 2:

Translated quotation: *'When people see that there is more vacancy, they find it less attractive to visit the city center. Then they think Heerlen.. 6 out of 10 shops are vacant, there is nothing to do there. That has an impact on us when people decide to visit Maastricht or Aachen first. (...). So that people easier decide to not go to Heerlen'* (Interview SA2).

Original quotation: *'Als mensen zien dat er steeds meer leegstaat vinden ze het ook steeds minder aantrekkelijk om de stad in te gaan. Dus dan hebben ze zoiets van in Heerlen... Zes van de tien winkels staan leeg, daar is dan toch niets te doen. Dat heeft dan een behoorlijke invloed ook op ons, dus dat eh mensen toch eerder besluiten om naar Maastricht te gaan of naar Aachen. (...) Ja dat mensen toch sneller de keuze maken om niet naar Heerlen te gaan'* (Interview SA2).

Quotation 3:

Translated quotation: *'You see it also in the Netherlands that some cities remain to be the winners, often these are the cities with a historical city center. We have a city like this nearby, which is Maastricht, and those cities attract the retail chains. Middle-sized cities like Heerlen tend to lose these retail chains. (...) When businesses get out of bankruptcy, they decide in what places they return. Then they come to a city such as Maastricht and not in Heerlen. And that is because Heerlen does not have the attractiveness like the historical city centers that attracts people or tourists naturally. And that is of course important for the retail (...). How sweet or nice you act, they don't come (...). They will only come when they recognize that a city is recovered'* (Interview MA).

Original quotation: *'je ziet het ook in Nederland dat een paar steden die blijven als een soort winnaars over, vaak zijn dat steden met een historische binnenstad. We hebben er eentje in de buurt liggen en dat is Maastricht en die trekken alle ketens naar zich toe en alle middelgrote steden zoals Heerlen en Helmond, die dreigen dat te verliezen. (...) bij een doorstart bepalen ze bij welke plekken ze wel doorgaan*

en welke plekken ze definitief niet meer terugkomen. Dan komen ze in een stad als Maastricht terug en in een stad als Heerlen niet. En dat heeft er toch echt mee te maken dat een stad als Heerlen heeft niet die aantrekkelijke openbare ruimte, die historische binnenstad die dat bijna van nature mensen trekt of toeristen trekt. Wat natuurlijk wel heel belangrijk is voor detailhandel. (...) Hoe lief of aardig je ook doet, ze komen gewoon niet. (...) Ze zullen ook pas als ze merken dat een stad weer oprabbelt' (Interview MA).

Quotation 4:

Translated quotation: *'Within two weeks I have to buy the winter collection for the next winter, so I am buying that in this winter. When I sell those products online I have to say in that moment okay I do not want six jackets of those, but I want 12. But I have no idea if I am going to sell those online. So I have to deposit a big order that is actually a bit difficult.. I do not know if I get 1,000 customers, maybe I get 100,000 customers or only 10. That is very difficult, do you understand?'* (Interview SA3).

Original quotation: *'Komende twee weken komen nu alweer de winter voor de volgende winter, dus komende winter ga ik dat inkopen. Als je dat online doet dan moet ik op dat moment al zeggen van doe mijn geen zes jassen van deze, nee doe maar twaalf. Maar ik weet niet of ik dat ga verkopen online. Dus ik moet daar een hele grote order neerleggen die eigenlijk een beetje moeilijk.. Je weet niet of je 1000 klanten krijgt, misschien krijg je wel 100.000 klanten of je krijgt er maar tien. Dat is heel lastig, begrijp je?'* (Interview SA3).

Quotation 5:

Translated quotation: *'But when I ask what is your most important product group? What is your conversion? Who is your most important competitor? Questions like that, a lot cannot even answer those. And then I think to myself, how can you, when you do not know all this information, serve your customer well or get new customers? That is in my opinion a big problem'* (interview RA)

Original quotation: *'Maar als ik dan vraag van wat is je belangrijkste productgroep?, wat is je conversie?, wie is je belangrijkste concurrent? Al dat soort vragen, een heleboel kunnen die nog geen eens beantwoorden. En dan denk ik bij mezelf, hoe kan je als je die informatie niet weet nou je consument goed bedienen? Of nieuwe consumenten naar je toehalen? Dat vind ik echt een heel groot probleem'* (Interview RA).

Quotation 6:

Translated quotation: *'I live at the side of Eindhoven in Helmond. I am within 17 minutes in the city center of Eindhoven and I am within 12, well 10 to 12 minutes in the city center of Helmond. With a difference of five minutes in time I drive to Eindhoven. How can I concentrate on Helmond with this in my mind?'* (Interview CoB1).

Original quotation: *'Ik woon aan de kant van Eindhoven zeg maar in Helmond. Ik ben in 17 minuten in de stad in Eindhoven, en ik ben in 12, 10 à 12 minuten in het centrum van Helmond. Met vijf minuutjes verschil rijd ik naar Eindhoven. Hoe moet ik mij nou concentreren op Helmond met dat in mijn*

achterhoofd?’ (Interview CoB1).

Quotation 7:

Translated quotation: *‘Look everything is transparent. You can find anything on the internet. Ehm the supply was decided in the past by the retailers. They told the customers what it was, this is what is going to be and that you can buy it on what times in their shops. Now that world has turned, because the customer can find anything on its own and online. The customers go shopping whenever it fits them’* (Interview IB1).

Original quotation: *‘Kijk alles is transparant. Je kunt alles op internet vinden. Ehm vroeger werd het aanbod bepaald door ondernemers. Die vertelde de consument van nou dit is het, dit gaat het worden en dan kan je dat op die en die tijden bij mij kopen. En nu is die wereld omgedraaid, want de consument vindt nu alles zelf op internet en die zoekt. Die gaat winkelen op de momenten dat het die consument uitkomt’* (Interview IB1).

Quotation 8:

Translated quotation: *‘Het Loon (...). It is built as an American retail mall, one of the first in the Netherlands. And it is built in the mine period (...). This was the wealthiest region of the Netherlands (...). Then the thought was to build a retail mall like this. Next to the highway, which makes it easily accessible. (...). Only it should never have been built. The shops that are located there, that are the same shops as in the city center. (...). The city center competes with Het Loon, it is too close. (...). But it is now expiring. A few years ago a prolapse happened. (...). Then the discussion has started if the crisis should not be seen as an opportunity to fix the problem of Het Loon. We have started to negotiate with the province and owner (...) of the retail part. Only the timing was not right. (...). It was such a big decision to make before the elections, which we did not dare to make yet. (...). Now it is still there as a retail center and it shows that it becomes more vacant. The owner (...) thinks what must we do? This is not going to work. But we are open to several changes in the land use’* (Interview MA).

Original quotation: *‘Het Loon (...). Het is ooit gebouwd als Amerikaans winkelcentrum. Eén van de eerste in Nederland, heel modern. En het is gebouwd in de mijnenperiode (...). Dit was de meest welvarende regio van Nederland. (...) Men dacht daar moeten we zo’n winkelcentrum bouwen. Langs de snelweg, goed bereikbaar. (...) dus eigenlijk hadden we het nooit moeten bouwen. De winkels die erin zitten, die zijn gewoon eigenlijk hetzelfde als de winkels in de binnenstad. (...) Binnenstad concurreert met dat Loon, ligt veel te dicht bij elkaar. Een paar jaar geleden is er een verzakking geweest. (...) Toen kwam de discussie, moet je de crisis niet aangrijpen om in één keer het hele probleem het Loon op te lossen. Dat hebben we opgepakt met de provincie en de eigenaar samen (...). Alleen is qua timing niet gelukt. (...) Het is zo’n groot besluit vlak voor de verkiezingen, dat durf je niet te nemen. (...) Daarna is het verder gegaan zoals het nu verder is gegaan en zie je dat het vanzelf leeg loopt. Dus de eigenaar (...), denkt wat moeten we er nou mee, dit gaat niet werken. Wij staan open voor allerlei functie wijzigen’* (Interview MA).

Quotation 9:

Translated quotation: *‘they are all beautiful stories about co-creation. We are going to sit together and*

we are going to brainstorm in equivalent positions, but that is al nonsense. You can do that, but that gives few results. People also look at the government on direction and guidelines' (Interview MA).

Original quotation: *'Het zijn allemaal hele mooie verhalen over co-creatie. We gaan bij elkaar zitten en brainstormen en we zijn gelijkwaardig, maar het is allemaal bullshit. Kun je allemaal doen, maar er komt dan te weinig uit. Men kijkt ook wel naar de overheid als het gaat om regie en echtlijn' (Interview MA).*

Quotation 10:

Translated quotation: *'If you look at the design of the Havenpark (...). Then we might have wanted more time to involve the city again. But that has also been harder because of practical circumstances. And then you might see when the plan gets presented in the upcoming weeks that people say they are not involved as much as they wanted. However, there is still space to change things. (...). But could have been done more extensive for more support' (Interview MB).*

Original quotation: *'Als je kijkt naar het ontwerp van het Havenpark dat nu voorligt (...) Dan hadden we daar misschien ook nog wel iets meer tijd gewild om de stad nogmaals daarbij te betrekken. Maar dat is ook door praktische omstandigheden wat lastiger gebleken. En zal je mogelijk zien als dat in de komende weken gepresenteerd wordt dat mensen zeggen we zijn niet zo intensief betrokken geweest als dat we hadden gewild. Hoewel er nog steeds ruimte is om dingen te veranderen.(...) Dat had misschien nog wat uitgebreider gekund voor meer draagvlak' (Interview MB).*

Quotation 11:

Translated quotation: *'We notice.. There are active and passive real estate owners. Active real estate owners are also looking for parties. They think along and conversate. Eh the passive, not to blame anyone, but those are often the big real estate parties. Eh yeah the building is empty and then you get the impression that they do not really care, because it is registered for a certain worth. So why shall they make an effort?' (Interview IB1).*

Original quotation: *'Kijk we merken dat je.. Je hebt actieve vastgoedeigenaren en passieve vastgoedeigenaren. Actieven die zijn zelf ook bezig om partijen te zoeken. Die denken mee, die praten mee. Eh en de passieven zoals ik dat dan noem zonder iemand mee voor zijn schenen te shoppen, maar dat zijn vaak de hele grote projectontwikkelaars. Ehm ja en het pand staat leeg en dan krijg je de indruk dat ze zich daar eigenlijk ook niet zo druk om maken, want het staat toch voor een bepaalde waarde in de boeken. Dus ja waarom zal ik moeilijk doen? (Interview IB1).*