

BIZness as usual

*Exploring the forces that shape
BIZmodels in Dutch inner cities*



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Preface

Dear reader,

Before you lies my master thesis, a research on the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch inner cities. It was performed as part of the master Economic Geography, which I now finish with the completion of the thesis. During the process of performing the required research for the thesis, I was in an internship at the economic department of the municipality of Amsterdam. During the internship, which lasted from November 2017 to May 2018, I did not only focus on the subject of the thesis, I also experienced being part of the BIZ-team of this department. Furthermore, I contributed in a research of the municipality that examined the developments of BIZs in Amsterdam. Finally, the internship granted the opportunity to elaborately discuss the contents of my thesis with people that are currently active in the field of BIZ. These conversations were of indispensable value in reshaping specific aspects of the research and contributed greatly in improving the quality of the thesis. For this reason, I would like to thank the BIZ-team of Amsterdam, in particular my internship-supervisor Hennie Loos and research analyst Anouk Smeltink-Mensen, for their input.

In addition, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Freek de Haan for his guidance during the process and for his contributions to the research in the form of discussions, reviews and critical reflection. His knowledge of academic studies in relational geography and neoliberal political economy, which were both key concepts in my study, allowed for thorough discussions on the contents of the thesis.

A final word of thanks is addressed to the twelve respondents who were interviewed for the thesis. The respondents, who are employed by the municipality, consultant companies and knowledge centers, are all experts on the topic of inner city private partnerships. Each and every interview provided new and invaluable information which each contributed to my thesis in a unique fashion.

Wietze,

September 3, 2018

Abstract

The Bedrijven Investerings Zone (BIZ) is an increasingly popular model for structuring inner city private partnerships. Although the concept originates from the Anglo-Saxon BID-model, which is designed in a much more neoliberal political economic context, its core intention has been adopted by the Dutch government as permanent law. The main idea behind the development of the BIZ-model is embedded in a context of new regionalism, a new form of governance in which private entities emerge as influential actors in regional governance processes. Although the Dutch government is traditionally rooted in a focus on welfare provision, they are increasingly embedded by neoliberal principles of privatization, decentralization and deregulation. In order to enhance knowledge on Dutch BIZ-models, the following research questions is designed: *‘What forces shape the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities?’*

The varieties of capitalism approach suggests that policies are subject to processes of convergence, where policies become increasingly similar due to neoliberal forces. However, there is a significant amount of variance within BIZ-models. This questions the powerful impact that neoliberal forces are supposed to have. Simultaneously, governmentality approaches assume that policy is the result of contingent and unstructured processes of localized regulatory experimentation. Contrarily, a great amount of commonalities is apparent in within different BIZ-models, which suggests that policy productions are governed by macro-spatial institutional frameworks. To overcome these problems, the thesis uses a framework proposed by Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207), which represent a dual conceptualization of variegation. The result are context-specific BIZ-models that are unique for their particular institutional landscape, but not bereft of the neoliberal commonalities that led to their development.

The research is conducted using a methodology of relational comparative analysis. In this approach, phenomena are not studied separately and compared on their apparent differences, but it focusses on understanding how phenomena are mutually constituted: how they arise from the interrelation between object and events, while not ignoring territorial histories that shape their production. Interdependence and uniqueness of places are treated as two equally important and closely related issues. For doing research, semi-structured interviews were performed on twelve respondents in the BIZ-field of expertise. The city of Amsterdam was selected as a single-case study, due to that opportunities that the internship provided as well as exceptionally large share of Dutch BIZs in Amsterdam. However, regarding the methodology of the research, the single case study includes a relational disclaimer. For this reason, interviews were conducted with respondents from different municipalities as well, since developments from different places are simultaneously affecting the production of BIZ-models in Amsterdam.

The first research question, which examined endogenous local-specific forces and how they affect the production of BIZ-models, delivers an insight in particular variables on which BIZ-models show variety. The most frequently reoccurring variables give rise to the development of a framework of types of Dutch BIZ-models. Four types are selected, based on the level of impact on the area the BIZ is located in. Each type allow for unique capacities and opportunities. The second research question reveals the presence of different neoliberal

forces of convergence, most notably forces of competition and emulation. It can be concluded that although such forces lead to particular commonalities amongst BIZ-models, they are limited in their influence compared to endogenous forces of the local-specific context. Furthermore, even though theoretical BIZ-models that would be expected given its neoliberal character would assume large sizes, activities of strategic long-term investments and the inclusion of real-estate owners, the share of Dutch BIZs that actually achieve such forms is rather limited. The bulk of Dutch BIZs are still of relatively small size, perform small-scale activities of basic nature and mostly only involve entrepreneurs. These observations confirm the relatively weak role of neoliberal forces.

Table of contents

Information page	III
General information	III
Front page source	III
Preface	V
Abstract	VI
Table of contents	VIII
Abbreviations	XI
Concepts and definitions	XII
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction and relevance	1
1.1.1 The context of BID and BIZ laws	1
Business Improvement Districts	1
New regionalism	4
Bedrijveninvesteringszones	6
1.1.2 Scientific relevance	7
1.1.3 Societal relevance	7
1.1.4 Key literature	8
1.2 Research objective and research question	10
1.2.1 Problem and research objective	10
1.2.2 Research questions	11
1.2.3 Conceptual framework	12
1.3 Reading guide	13
2. Theoretical Framework	14
2.1 Introduction to the theoretical framework	14
2.2 Theoretical framework	14
2.2.1 Political economy	14
Scales of exception	16
2.2.2 Variegated neoliberalism	17
Varieties of capitalism	18
Governmentality approaches	18
Variegated neoliberalism	19
2.2.3 Diffusive mechanisms	20
3. Methodological framework	22
3.1 Relational comparative analysis	22

3.1.1 Comparative analysis	22
3.1.2 Relational approach	22
3.2 Semi-structured interviews	24
3.3 Case studies	26
Relational disclaimer	27
4. Results	29
4.1 The role of local-specific contexts	29
BIZ size	30
Activities	31
Participants	33
Role of the municipality	34
4.2 External forces	36
Economic forces	36
Governmental forces	39
Epistemic communities of experts	40
5. Conclusion	43
5.1 Opening conclusion	43
5.2 Conclusion per sub question	43
5.2.1 The role of local-specific contexts	43
The neoliberal BIZ, product of convergence	44
Towards a framework of BIZ-model variegation	44
Type 1 - Low impact	45
Type 2 – Medium to high impact	46
Type 3 – Neighborhood to city-wide impact	46
Type 4 – Absence or failure to install a BIZ	47
5.2.2 External forces	48
Forces of coercion	48
Forces of competition	48
Forces of learning	49
Forces of emulation	50
Implications for neoliberal theory	50
5.3 Final conclusion	51
6. Discussion	53
6.1 Validity	53
6.2 Discussion of research results	54
6.2.1 Explanation of results	54

6.2.2 New insights	56
6.3 Conclusion of the discussion	56
6.3.1 Policy recommendations	57
6.3.2 Recommendations for future research	59
References	XIV
Appendix	XVII
A. Quote translations	XVII

Abbreviations

BID	Business Improvement District
BIZ	Bedrijven Investerings Zone
KvK	Kamer van Koophandel (Dutch chamber of commerce)
SHV	Schoon, Heel, Veilig
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Concepts and definitions

Bedrijven Investeringszone	The Dutch variant of Anglo-Saxon BID-model. Once a specific threshold is reached for people that vote for the installment of a BIZ in an area, every entrepreneur and/or real estate owner is obliged to pay a levy. The resulting funds are free to use by the BIZ-participants to invest in their area.
Business Improvement District	The original Anglo-Saxon model for gathering funds to improve in the quality of a street or area.
Comparative approach	A theory rooted in social sciences, defined by Ward (2010) 'to compare means to examine more than one event, object, outcome or process with a view to discovering the similarities and/or differences between them' (p. 473). By measuring the experiences and performances of others, comparison has recently been introduced in geography studies to enhance knowledge of the global. Theory on comparative methods provides insights into modes of urban governance and is effective in reducing the many pathways of different cities to a variety of ideal types.
Governmentality	The assemblage of organized practices (mentalities, rationales and techniques) through which subjects are governed (Mayhew, 2009).
Leids Model/Ondernemersfonds	An alternative model for collecting private funds, differing from the BIZ-model in that every non-residential entrepreneur and real estate owner in a municipality as a whole is obliged to pay a levy, based on a percentage of the properties' worth.
Neoliberalism	The 20 th -century resurgence of liberal ideas which are associated with a withdrawal of the government, including policies of privatization, austerity and deregulation.
New regionalism	A modern institutional setting in which governments are no longer seen as the center of governing and focus is shifted to different institutions. These institutions are often of private or voluntary nature. Additionally, the national state has lost power to governments on smaller scales, to the local/regional level.
Relational comparative analysis	An expansion of traditional comparative analyses, adding a relational disclaimer. Reasoning in terms of units of comparable levels

comes short in the entangling of networks in sociospatial relations. Rather, concepts of scales require relational rationales, 'the superseding of traditional (...) notions of geographical scale with approaches that emphasize evolution, fluidity, motion, process and sociospatial contestation' (Ward, 2010: p. 479).

Relational geography

A recent shift in geography in understanding cities and regions. It advocates an holistic conception of geographical entities, in which networks are embedded in the sociospatial constitution of individual local-specific contexts. Although endogenous factors are required, they are insufficient in explaining the ways in which extra-local institutions shape developments.

Variiegated neoliberalism

An attempt by Brenner et al. (2009) to bring together the Varieties of Capitalism approach and Governmentality approaches. They propose a dual conceptualization of political economic frameworks.

Varieties of capitalism

An approach which recognizes two main strands of political-economic frameworks: the Anglo-Saxon model of Americanization and the Keynesian Rhineland model. At the very least, it can be said that it is accepted that variegated capitalism is no longer limited to the binary opposition of liberal and coordinated market economies. Liberal principles have penetrated the Rhineland model to the extent of financialized forms of growth and market-oriented institutions.

1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce a general outline of the master thesis. Section 1.1 will present economic and social developments in which BID and BIZ laws emerged in Anglo Saxon countries and the Netherlands respectively. After explaining how BID laws developed, it introduces the concept of new regionalism to explain the rationale behind the law. Subsequently, the development of the Dutch variant of the law (BIZ) is discussed alongside the main ways it differs from the Anglosaxon version. Additionally, the focus and limit of the research are elaborated on. Section 1.1 will also include both the scientific and societal relevance, in which it is explained why this research is important to perform and how both the academic as well as society can potentially benefit from the outcomes. The section will close with a brief overview of key literature that is used in the thesis.

Section 1.2 more accurately defines the actual problem resulting from section 1.1 and discusses the research objective and related research questions in order to solve that problem. To illustrate the processes at play regarding this topic, a conceptual model is presented and explained.

In section 1.3, the chapter is closed with a reading guide, which briefly goes over the different chapters in this master thesis and explain their function in achieving the research objective.

1.1 Introduction and relevance

1.1.1 The context of BID and BIZ laws

Business Improvement Districts

In order to counter impoverishing and declining city centers, Canada and the US assigned specific areas to be 'Business Improvement Districts' (BIDs). The core task of BIDs is that entrepreneurs and/or real estate owners in that area together decide which measurements should be executed to improve the attractiveness of a shopping area for customers, in order to enhance profitability. A supplementary tax is enforced on every entrepreneur in the designated area, of which the income will be fully available for the improvement of the area. The funds that are derived from these taxes are then used to finance a wide range of issues, which are covered in Figure 1. These functions and services are categorized in four hierarchical groups, each group increasing in degree of publicness (based on the framework proposed by Mörçol & Zimmermann, 2006: p. 19-20). Although further in this section it is argued that American BIDs differ from their Dutch counterparts, such a division still provides a clear overview and useful framework of the functions and services that BIDs provide.

Degree of publicness	Category	Functions and services
1.	Business services	Consumer marketing (festivals, events, self-promotion, maps, newsletters)
		Economic development (tax abatements and loans to new businesses)
2.	Policy advocacy	Policy advocacy (promoting public policies, lobbying)
3.	'Traditional' public services	Maintenance (trash collection, litter removal, washing sidewalks, tree trimming, snow shoveling)
		Parking and transportation (public parking systems, maintaining transit shelters)
		Security (security guards, electronic security systems, cooperating with police)
		Social services (aiding homeless, providing job training, youth services)
		Capital improvements (street lighting, street furniture, trees, shrubbery)
		Strategic planning (the design of public spaces)
4.	Comprehensive governmental authority	Public space regulation (managing vendors, panhandlers, vehicle loading)
		Establishing and operating community courts

Figure 1. Framework for the nature and implications of the expanding BID functions and services (based on Mörçol & Zimmermann, 2006).

The first category, business services, are predominantly self-interested activities and are of private nature. Secondly, policy advocacy refers to the attempts to shape public policy by private groups and organizations. Within the third category, 'traditional' public services, the division between the public and private realm softens. According to Mörçol & Zimmermann (2006), the 'BIDs' 'intrusion' into these service areas shows the changing nature of the public service delivery system in the United States' (p. 20). The final level refers to functions of governmental authority, where only the larger and economically more powerful BIDs operate

in. It implies strategic planning, or actually land-use planning, conventionally a function only operated by the public domain. Because of the abovementioned roles a BID can take, they can be described as 'the intersection of the traditional definitions of public agency and the for- or nonprofit organization' (*ibid.*: p. 22).

While the exact number of BIZs in the Netherlands is unknown, in 2014 it was estimated that approximately 150 of such zones exist in the Netherlands (Timmermans, 2014). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that they differ in various ways from American BIDs (Menger et al., 2005). Most importantly, the US institutions differ greatly in responsibility of the government, which is not as responsible for the quality of public space as in the Netherlands. In the US, BIDs embodied a necessary counter to the 'pauperization' of city centers, while in the Netherlands the value of BIZs lies in the added quality of public space that enables companies within commercial areas to function properly.

Yet, Menger et al. (2005) mention several forces that are active in the Netherlands that led to the introduction of BIDs in North-America. To name a few: municipality governments try to decrease their expenditures; various groups of citizens (like rich people and people with a lot of children) have left the city; and that people now buy their goods from places far from their residence. These processes led to heavy competition between not just cities themselves, but also with downtown areas and huge malls in the outer city. Also, although regional-economic policy of the Netherlands has traditionally focused on supporting weaker regions, a shift in policy has occurred from 'justice' to 'expediency', which implies a larger role for cities. This is similar to an American approach of 'strengthening the strong'.

Nonetheless, the Dutch government is accountable for the quality of public space. So for the implementation of BIDs in the Netherlands, participating entrepreneurs have serious concerns if services are maintained correctly, if responsibility is shifted from the public to the private sphere. However, some similar, simplified forms of BIDs have emerged. Since the end of the 1980s, there has existed a certain form of 'area management' (*gebiedsmanagement*) in larger Dutch cities. It arose from the realization that the sum of component parts - corporations and the municipalities - does not automatically result in an attractive area for consumers (Menger et al., 2005). This form is easier to manage in new areas (rather than existing), since a collective tax that can pay for this management can be incorporated in the contracts of new renters. Existing business areas are much harder to convince, for, given the lack of contractual agreement, it rests on a voluntary basis - obviously in fear of freeriders. It is very hard to convince every shop owner to participate (Timmermans, 2014). In the case BIDs, when the majority agrees to install a BID management in an area, *everyone* is obliged to pay the mandatory tax. Freeriders exist for various reasons, not just because some people just want to enjoy the benefits without having to pay anything. For instance, the share of shops that are part of a large chain heavily increased over the last years, which are often bound to a centrally decided corporate policy and are linked to local circumstances. They are footloose and can just choose a new place to settle, of which the public space best fits their demands.

Menger et al. (2005) believe that BIDs can provide an expansion of city center management. The latter often loses in capacity due to lack of agreement over which areas should be tackled, causing many initiatives to fail (Berndsen et al., 2012). It should not be a direct copy of BIDs in North-America, rather provide a solution to bottlenecks that emerge from the

center management process. BIDs will ensure structural finances and creating a business relation with the municipality (instead of a relation based on subsidy dependency). For it to succeed, it requires a precise definition of what the division of tasks among the private and the public spheres are ought to be. Addressing people that do not want to participate and would rather remain freeriders, it is essential that they are assured that their voices are heard well and that the distribution of costs is just and fair.

New regionalism

The scope of private authority has been expanded over the last few decades, including a capability of private policymaking and service delivery. BIDs are institutionalized forms of public-private partnerships, which explains why they grew so large in number in the 1980s in the US: during those years, there was an increase in privatisation policy (Morçöl & Zimmermann, 2006). Given the abandonment of urban areas, it was argued that the private sector should be able to take over some of the public service deliveries in order to revitalize downtown areas. At the same time, city government revenues dropped: processes of suburbanization derived city cores from their tax bases. External budgets in the form of private finances could provide an alternative money source for services, granting additional validity to BIDs. Especially since commercial buildings have replaced traditional residential building in downtown areas.

Wolf (2006) takes on a perspective of 'new regionalism', where BIDs are seen as part of a new governance. This is an approach to urban governance, in which BIDs 'have emerged as important actors in a region's governance processes' (*ibid.*: p. 53). Traditionally, governments were seen as 'a unitary state directed and legitimated by the doctrine of ministerial responsibility' (Stoker, 1998: p. 19). In governance, governments are no longer seen as the center of governing and focus is shifted to different institutions. These institutions are often of private or voluntary nature. Additionally, the national state has lost power to governments on smaller scales, to the local/regional level.

The outcomes of governance parallel those of traditional government: it is rather a difference in processes that produce those outcomes (Stoker, 1998). The shift to governance came with an increase of self-government networks of actors. Governance is not externally imposed, but rather the product of the interaction of a multiplicity of actors. Public-private partnerships are used to achieve public purposes, which rest on a voluntary basis. New regionalism is essential in contemporary society, since it is required to work with a large range of organisations. Given the increasingly fragmented structure of the economy and politics, a large range of organisations are required to work together in order to achieve public ends. This implies that responsibilities and boundaries have become blurred. Whereas conventionally the government was accountable for policy enactment, private or voluntary groups have now taken over traditional tasks of the government. This can prove to be problematic, especially since it enhances the possibility of blaming other parties for failures and difficulties.

In order to achieve goals, it is essential that parties exchange information and resources. This creates important power dependencies. It is possible that one organisation can dominate during the process of exchange. However, no single party has the capacity to tackle problems on their own, so there is an dependency upon others. Given power

dependencies, it is important to keep in mind that intentions do not always lead to intended outcomes. An organisation does not have full control over the other parties that it is working with. Unintended outcomes, however, are not necessarily undesired outcomes. Due to this, governance policy creators have to deal with a lot of uncertainty and opportunistic behaviour.

BIDs play an important governance role regarding new regionalism, although they operate on a relatively small scale. Because their impact affects other activities in its respective area, they become important political and economic actors in that area. Furthermore, BIDs are an ideal form of public-private partnership that fits well in the idea of new governance. The participants of BIDs work together with local governments and other organizations to tackle the issues that are present in the area. However, Wolf (2006) has shown in a case study of BIDs in Washington, DC that the nature of the public-private partnership might be somewhat ambiguous and contradictory. Parties have a tendency to remain distant. In the case of Washington, DC, the BID executives disregarded any close identification with the local government, to stress that they are part of the private sphere rather than public. They did so to retain legitimacy in the business community, while not being extensively involved with the local government. On the other hand, the local government also showed signs of distancing by not playing an active accountability role. Stoker (1998) also mentions that people generally put more trust in bodies that are governed by elected councils, rather than some form of private organization. This may also explain why local governments are careful in associating too much with their private partners. Wolf (2006) concludes that the Washington, DC BIDs do not represent an ideal new governance public-private partnership. Rather, they served as 'extensions of local government activities that [...] the city government does not provide' (p. 71).

Morçöl & Zimmermann (2006) regard Molotch's (1976) growth machine theory and Stone's (1989) urban regime theory as good explanations of the roles of business interests in urban governance. Molotch (1976) is convinced that both political and economic elites are naturally attracted to each other to a certain extent, since each fraction is concerned with the well-being of the locality. They may have their differences, but they form coalitions which he terms 'growth machines', which directly and indirectly have their influence on local government policy. Stone (1989) calls these political coalitions 'urban regimes', and focuses on the function of both public and private entities in policy creation. In their theories, they acknowledge the role of macroeconomic factors, but emphasize that there is an active role for business elites in generating capital and economic growth. It is in this environment, they believe, BIDs can emerge and be sustained. Business leaders actively bring parties together and encourage them to form BIDs, aiming at growth in their areas. Such representations of BIDs are directly in line with traditional conceptions of the public interests, since originally private interests were regarded as conflictual with public interests. The coalescence of both interests is ensured through procedural accountability, and requires a new conceptualization.

A last interesting notion that is concluded by Mörçöl & Zimmermann (2006) is that different BIDs acknowledge that they must hold regionalist perspectives. BIDs compete with each other in their quest of attracting customers, businesses and public revenue. However, this competition also requires them to cooperate with other, neighbouring BIDs in order to enhance the metropolitan area they are operating in. This often induces joint projects or communal meetings. The elites within a BID may even help to set up BIDs in other parts of their metropolitan area. Such an attitude ensures that they are willing to listen to rules set up

by local and regional public governments, since they admit that the role of those governments contribute to the well-being of their respective communities. Aligning to the policy of governments also means that BID leaders are also relieved from a heavy bureaucratic burden in terms of procedures.

Bedrijveninvesteringszones

In order to test how BIDs would work out in the Netherlands, the ministry of economic affairs and the ministry of agriculture and innovation have introduced an experimental law: BIZ. It is aimed at creating cleaner, safer and more attractive business locations (Berndsen et al., 2012). The experimental law was installed at the 1st of May 2009 and would expire at the 1st of July 2015. It effectively allowed the municipality to assign zones over which a 'bestemmingsheffing' (designation charge) could be taxed. Its returns would serve to finance extra services, decided upon by the payers of that charge. These services should serve the common interest of the entrepreneurs, as well as the public interest. It is important to note that it should not be a replacement of the basic services of the municipality, but rather an addition to those. During the experiment, a BIZ was restricted to exist for a maximum of five years, after which the appliance procedure should be retaken - including an examination for support. Examining and gathering support is a tough procedure, yet given that mandatory taxation is a very rough measure, it is required (Berndsen et al., 2012).

From the 1st of January 2015, the experimental law BIZ was installed as a permanent law, since it was well received. However, due to recommendations proposed by the evaluation report by Berendschot (Berndsen et al., 2012), adjustments were made to the law. Now, owners of property can participate as well, whereas formerly only users of that property could participate.

As mentioned before, the Anglo-Saxon BID-model derived from Canada, the US and the UK differs from the contextual setting in the Netherlands. Yet, various authors (e.g. Brenner & Theodore, 2002a; Hoyt, 2003a; Ward, 2006) argue the emergence of international and intercontextual policy transfer in which policymakers are looking for 'quick fixes for local social problems' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a: p. 372), in which a particular 'best-practice' policy model is decontextualized and applied in a distant area. The rationale behind this switch in process is that it greatly reduces transaction costs (Hoyt, 2003a).

Over the last few decades, neoliberal politics have increasingly changed Dutch society (Van Apeldoorn, 2009). Even though the Dutch government is traditionally rooted with a focus on welfare provision, the government is increasingly embedding neoliberal principles. Hobma (2012) provides three of those principles which have been adopted: privatization, decentralization and deregulation. The implications of these concepts are extensively discussed in section 4.1.1, for this section it is solely required to examine to what extent the neoliberal wind has infiltrated Dutch governance. The Dutch polder model illustrates that neoliberal principles never took over the political economy of the Netherlands to the extent that it did in Anglo-Saxon countries and that social cohesion and welfare provision remained fundamental cornerstones for the Dutch government (Van Apeldoorn, 2009). Yet, there followed an inevitable policy of cuts in public budget and a reorientation of the welfare state. It also featured a retreat of the government in favor of marketization.

Hobma (2012) argues that there is indeed a growth of private sector involvement in urban development in the Netherlands. Drafting land-use plans was formerly a public affair, designed by municipal staff. An alternative way of planning is outsourcing the process to a private consultant. However, the municipal executive remains the initiator of the respective land-use plan. This alternative is currently widely used in the Netherlands. This differs from the extremity in which Anglo-Saxon countries have adopted neoliberal principles, where it is much more common for private entities to initiate the draft of a land-use plan. Nevertheless, the government heavily depends on private sector development initiatives. Consequently, the procedure of land-use planning always includes an agreement with private entities prior to its initiation. Such an agreement includes financial contributions from the private developer, but can also extend to the developer actively drafting the plan. Given that the municipalities rely on private financial input, the planning powers of local authorities diminishes.

A different aspect of private governance involves the private management of public spaces. In the Netherlands, BIZs are a private entity with the legal capacity to manage public spaces. Furthermore, this power is restricted to single spaces, as opposed to entire neighborhoods, as well as being limited to businesses with customers of that respective public space. Additionally, it is important to note that BIZs are meant to complement a selection of activities from the municipality, mainly concerning maintenance and surveillance.

1.1.2 Scientific relevance

The theory on BIDs and BIZs is heavily rooted in a discussion of the neoliberal political context in which it is developed. In chapter 2, it is argued that neoliberal forces affect policy productions with forces of convergence, whereas the endogenous local-specific context of an area act as counter-forces against such convergence. Since this dual conceptualization of neoliberal forces is applied to processes of BIZ-model production, this research enhances knowledge on this subject. While Brenner et al. (2009) propose this dualistic conceptualization, this research will not only examine how exactly these processes take place, but also how these forces are constituted, as well as a consideration under what circumstances these forces interact and in what the result of these processes are for BIZ-model productions.

1.1.3 Societal relevance

BIDs provide a solution to what Mörçol & Zimmermann (2006) call 'the public administration problem' (p. 23). BIDs offer the opportunity to take over functions and services which traditionally belonged to governmental institutes. This is required, since public spheres have had gradually decreased access to funds, which disable them to fully deliver the services they are expected to deliver. Meanwhile, an increased fragmented society, in a social, political or economic context, requires policy creators to bring polarizing parties together. Consequently, this calls for an approach in which public administrators cooperate with a wide range of actors, of private and nonprofit nature, in order to govern adequately. BIDs form a logical overlap between both spheres, since, although they are initiated from a

private, profit-enhancing ambition, they are capable of performing public functions of service delivery.

Given the fact that BID is a fairly recent phenomenon in the Netherlands, it should prove useful to investigate how it plays out in the Netherlands. Several evaluation reports exist covering this issue, however, since the law has been adjusted and received permanent status, it requires further investigation. The research could provide new insights not only how BIDs play out in the Netherlands as opposed to in the North-American continent, but also how BIDs work in general around the globe.

Even though BIDs work differently in the Anglo-Saxon sphere than they do in the Dutch political-economic context, its usefulness should not be entirely neglected. Although not to the extent like it did in other countries, neoliberal forces have increasingly infiltrated Dutch politics since the 1990s. Consequently, national public responsibilities have increasingly shifted upwards to the global level and downwards to the local scale. Additionally, these responsibilities have been outsourced from the public sphere to private and civil entities, due to municipal budget cuts, which precipitate the need for external private finances. This atmosphere also calls for an obligation to work with a wide range of actors in an increasingly fragmented society.

It becomes clear from the literature that BIDs provide an excellent concept to address to the issues mentioned above. It is for this reason that it is currently undoubtedly relevant to investigate how the Anglo-Saxon BID model is implemented in the Netherlands. The outcomes of this research will contribute to the knowledge on the correct implementation of the BIZ-model in the Netherlands.

1.1.4 Key literature

Although every article, book or chapter contributed to the research, there is a selection of literature that was particularly important in assembling the thesis. They provided key insights and therefore function to an extent as the foundation upon which the thesis is built. Since these works are mentioned so often throughout the thesis, this section will provide a brief overview of what they contain and in what ways they contributed to this thesis.

Berndsen et al. (2012) - Evaluatie experimentenwet bedrijven investeringszones (BIZ)

This report, performed by consultancy firm Berenschot, was the first evaluation that was performed during the period that the BIZ law was installed in its experimental form. It critically reflected on the implementation of the law and contributed to a large extent the construction of the final BIZ law in 2015. Key findings by the report are: an identification of the need for collective investments due to governmental budget cuts, lack of voluntariness amongst entrepreneurs and therefore the validation for a law that eliminates freeriders, a problematic constriction of activities BIZ can perform, the problematic exclusion of property owners, lack of transparency concerning the execution of activities and finally that, although the BIZ is a large administrative burden on the municipality, the benefits vastly outweigh the costs.

Brenner et al. (2009) - Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways

The authors of this article identify three influential strands of political economy: the varieties of capitalism approach, historical materialist international political economy, and governmentality approaches. Each of these approaches functions to explain contemporary processes of neoliberal restructuring, however they all lack focus on the uneven, variegated character of such processes. This article's approach shows how 'cumulative impacts of successive "waves" of neoliberalization upon uneven institutional landscapes' (p. 182) led to regulatory restructuring under post-1970s capitalism. The approach was of great importance in understanding the processes at play of BID-policy exchange, since it highlighted the interconnectedness of policy relays and the frameworks within which regulatory experimentation unfolds.

Brenner & Theodore (2002a) - Cities and the geographies of actually existing neoliberalism

This article introduces the concept of 'actually existing neoliberalism', which highlights the contextual embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring. Neoliberal market forces do not operate according to immutable laws, but are defined by the institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices and political struggles which they inherit. Neoliberal restructures are described as 'geographically uneven, socially regressive and politically volatile trajectories' (p. 349). Another important observation for this research is the important role of urban spaces, where cities play the role of strategically crucial geographic places in which neoliberal initiatives are articulated.

Dobbin et al. (2008) - The global diffusion of markets and democracy

This book focuses on the role actors, such as governments, international organizations and communities of experts, in changing policies and politics. The most important contribution for this research is the identification of four mechanisms by which policy is diffused through interdependent decision-making: 1. coercion and the impact of powerful countries and international actors; 2. economic competition for markets and investment; 3. learning from experiences of other countries; and 4. emulation among countries. This classification of diffusive mechanisms enabled the results of the thesis to be properly structured.

Mörcol & Zimmermann (2006) - Metropolitan governance and business improvement districts

This article provided a solid understanding on how BIDs developed within a context of the privatization movement in American governments and within which BIDs function as a new form of private government. In the article, a clear framework is presented in which various BID-functions are placed according to their degree of publicness. The framework was very useful in distinguishing between BIDs that function solely for the self-interest of private actors and BIDs that expanded their activities into the realm which was formerly exclusive to the government. This framework was crucial in explaining how Anglo-Saxon BIDs differ from the Dutch BIZ-model and to reflect critically to what extent Dutch BIZs venture into public affairs.

Ong (2008) - Scales of exception. Experiments with knowledge and sheer life in tropical Southeast Asia

The important contribution by this work is that it tempers the importance that various other authors attach to capitalist forces in explaining the creation of new spaces. The configuration of spaces are rather highly dynamic and contingent, in which neoliberalism is not so much a

doctrine restricted to the market domain, but has been adopted as a mode of governance looking for optimal outcomes. This results in a perpetual experimentation of installing spatial constellations of exception, differentiating from prevailing arrangements. Ong's insights are useful in researching the forces behind the production and reproduction of BID-models, since she stresses the importance of multiple and contingent spaces and how they are formed, instead of a mere description that they are a result of blatant capitalist forces.

Ward (2006) - Policies in motion, urban management and state restructuring: the trans-local expansion of business improvement districts

This article is invaluable for the thesis, since it describes the processes that led to the introduction of the BID model in the UK. It provides important insights in the changing ways governance is executed, as well as a thorough examination of how policies come into existence. Ward notes that policy creation is not an accident, it is rather a reflection of diffusion channels and networks that facilitate particular sorts of policies from one place to another - stressing the geographical aspect of the process.

Ward (2010) - towards a relational comparative approach to the study of cities

In this article, Ward takes up the work of comparative urban studies, drawing on contributions from across the social sciences. He discusses the limits to the research and observes how it comes short in theorizing place, scale and causality. In order to overcome these limits, he proposes a relational comparative approach, which takes in account territorial and relational geographies. Given the nature of the thesis and the acknowledgement that cities play a crucial role in BID policy exchange, this article by Ward is an important foundation of the methodological chapter of the thesis.

1.2 Research objective and research question

1.2.1 Problem and research objective

As discussed in section 1.1.1, the political-economical contextual setting of the Netherlands differs from the Anglo-Saxon countries. Neoliberal principles, which have emerged following the global economic crises of the 1970s, have not infiltrated the Dutch political economy to the extent that it did in Anglo-Saxon countries. For the latter, it seems only natural that BIDs have emerged over the last few decades. In the US, for instance, BIDs form a necessary counter to the impoverishment of inner cities, since local governments are much less responsible for the quality of those areas. In the case of the Netherlands, although neoliberal principles have been adopted in the political economy, the public sector provides much more means to improve the quality of inner cities. There seems to be a disparity between the Anglo-Saxon BID-model and its direct implementation in the Netherlands.

Since there seems to be much less incentive in the Netherlands than in the Anglo-Saxon world to enhance the opportunities of entrepreneurs and real estate owners to influence the public spheres, it raises questions of what forces exactly drive the implementation of BIZ-models in Dutch cities. The knowledge on Dutch BIZs can be greatly increased by researching to what extent cities that use the BIZ-model do so out of necessity, or that there are other reasons at play. Additionally, not every city uses the BIZ-model in the same

fashion: in the city of Eindhoven, a large single BIZ for the whole inner city has been established, on the contrary there are currently over 60 BIZs active in Amsterdam which operate on a much smaller scale. Moreover, not all cities invest as heavily in the BIZ as other cities and not every city in the Netherlands even uses the BIZ-model. The knowledge on BIZ-models in the Netherlands can be enhanced by looking for explanations of these observations, of why BIZ-models show a certain variegation.

This research will try to solve the issues mentioned above by achieving the following research objective:

‘Gaining insights in the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities.’

Providing insights in the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities will contribute to a reinforced understanding of the configuration of BIZ-models in the Netherlands and will help in explaining what affairs the BIZ actually seeks to address. Although the BIZ-model is a reflection - or a Dutch adaptation - of the original Anglo-Saxon BID-model, transfer of Northern-America and UK policies should not be the only source of information in the examination of forces that produce the BIZ-model. A thorough analysis of the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities is required in uncovering all other main forces that shape its production process. The next section will break down this analysis in a research question and consecutive sub questions in order to achieve the research objective.

1.2.2 Research questions

In order to achieve the research objective, it has to be transformed into an actual research question and subsequently broken down into several sub questions. The main research question will address the research objective as proposed above. To gain insights in the production and reproduction BIZ-models, it is required to research what forces are at play. Accordingly, the research question will be:

‘What forces shape the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities?’

Section 2.2.2 discusses in detail how neoliberalist policies are produced through the concept of variegated neoliberalism. Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207) present a model, which they call the dual conceptualization of variegation:

1. The first conceptualization is the uneven development of neoliberalisation. There is a multitude of different regulatory frameworks, contending the varieties of capitalism approach of converging neoliberal practices.
2. The second conceptualization is the neoliberalization of regulatory uneven development. Regulatory experimentation and cross-jurisdictional policy transfer do not emerge in a contingent, unstructured disorder, but are processes which are continually governed by macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks.

For an elaborate explanation of this model, refer to section 2.2.2, specifically under the header ‘variegated neoliberalism’. For this section, it is sufficient to look at the implications of this model for the research question.

The first conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207) refers to endogenous forces in the development of neoliberal models. It explains the emergence of uneven developed neoliberalist policies, which are variegated through different places because of preeminent local-specific contexts through which neoliberal ideologies are mediated. Therefore, the first sub question will focus on local-specific, endogenous forces:

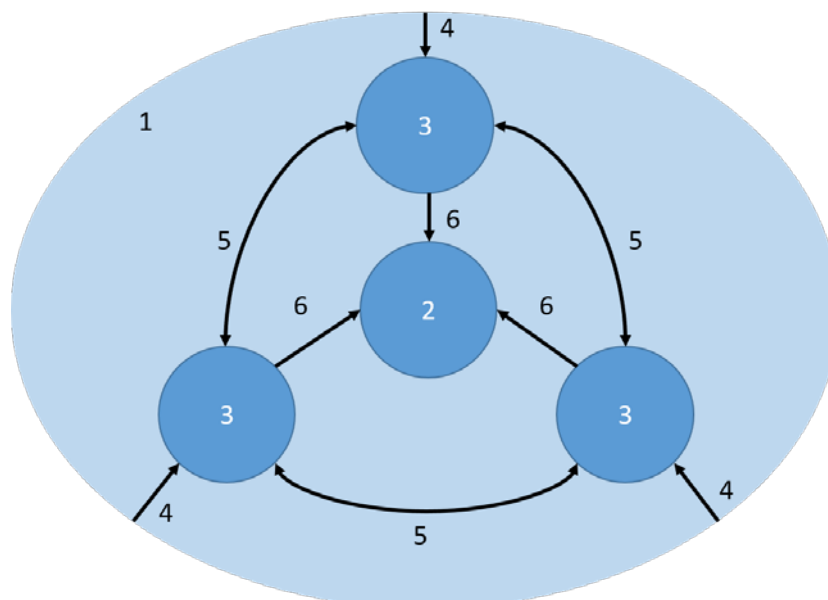
‘What is the role of the local-specific context in shaping the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities?’

The second conceptualization argues that, although there is an apparent local-specific institutional context which shapes BIZ-models, this does not mean that neoliberal forces have no influence. Brenner et al. (2009) argue that policy experimentation does not emerge in a contingent, unstructured disorder. The presence of neoliberal commonalities between different BIZ-models throughout different cities confirm the existence of macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks, which continually govern the production and reproduction of BIZ policy models. This translates to the second sub question:

‘What is the role of external forces in shaping the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities?’

Regarding the second research question, it requires an identification of these external forces. In section 2.2.3, it is shown how Dobbin et al. (2008) set out four main forces of neoliberal policy transfer: coercion, competition, learning and emulation. They conclude that, even though all four diffusion forces are present, emulation is the most successful in explaining neoliberal policy diffusion. They argue that ‘epistemic communities of experts may act as missionaries facilitating the transfer or policy ideas among countries’ (p. 353). Consequently, it is required to examine both the existence and the extent of their effect for particular BIZ-models.

1.2.3 Conceptual framework



The figure above represents the conceptual framework which is used in throughout the research to visualize the processes at play. In the framework, **(1)** represents the macro level, the economic political context. Via various diffusion practices **(4)**, which are elaborated on by Dobbin et al. (2008) in section 2.2.3, neoliberal forces influence practices of different institutions **(3)** These external forces represent the second conceptualization by Brenner et al. (2009). The second focus of this research lies on uncovering to what extent these institutions are influenced by these diffusive forces, how and if they process that information and to what extent they communicate **(5)** with other institutions within and across different municipalities to share their expertise and experiences. All these forces, together with local-specific situations and practices, simultaneously and contingently shape **(6)** the development of different BIZ-approaches **(2)**.

1.3 Reading guide

This first chapter set out the introduction for the thesis and presented the context, relevance and research objective and subsequent questions of the research. In the next chapter, relevant literature will be reviewed and discussed to come to a theoretical framework, which will form the lens through which the eventual data outcomes will be viewed. Chapter 3 sets out the methodology which is used to properly inquire data required for answering the research questions. The resulting outcomes will be presented in chapter 4, in which each sub question will be discussed separately and then summarized. The research will be concluded in chapter 5, in which the research question will be addressed and tried to be answered. The conclusions will be discussed in chapter 6, which addresses an explanation for the results and a discussion of the value of this research for existing knowledge on the research topic. It then follows with recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction to the theoretical framework

Various theoretical perspectives are used in order to explain the phenomena of Business Improvement Districts. According to Didier et al. (2013), most of the analyses focus on 'neoliberal urbanization' (p. 122). In contemporary literature, BIDs are mostly regarded as the product of neoliberal forces, such as privatization and fragmentation. Over the last few decades, there has been an institutional change which thoroughly changed the way policies were created and public services were delivered. Those services have increasingly become the responsibility of both private and civil forces, due to a new approach of public entrepreneurialism. Neoliberal ideologies were triggered by global recessions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which experienced 'declining profitability of traditional mass-production industries and the crisis of Keynesian welfare policies' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a: p. 350). Such an ideology justified the decline of state control over the private sector and aimed at reducing taxes and other regulations.

Although this theoretical framework conceives BIDs as a predominantly neoliberalist concept, its neoliberalist classification should not be taken for granted. There are various authors (e.g. Rankin & Delaney, 2011) who contest neoliberal explanations for every BID event or procedure. However, the question of whether or not the BID-model is a neoliberal instance is not so much of importance for this research. As will be explained in section 3.2, this research makes use of very empirical, from the ground up methodological assumptions in analyzing BIDs. In other words, inquiry will make clear to what extent BIDs are conceived as a neoliberal concept. However, neoliberal theories, notably the concept of variegated neoliberalism as discussed in section 2.2.2, provide invaluable insights in theory on policy transfer.

Section 2.2 will cover the theoretical framework. First, theories are examined which discuss the political economic context of the last few decades and demonstrate how BIDs emerge within this context. These theories will then be linked to the concept of 'variegated neoliberalism', a concept proposed by Brenner et al. (2009) in order to overcome the problematic bipolar rendition of capitalism. As will be shown, the concept is invaluable in examining to what extent neoliberal concepts and policies are shaped by both macroeconomic forces and local contexts. Section 2.2 will close with a theory proposed by Dobbin et al. (2008), which identifies four diffusive mechanisms of neoliberal policies and concepts. Given the objective of this research - gaining insights in the forces that shape BIZ-models - diffusive mechanisms that are behind the production of such models are crucial to examine.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Political economy

Theories of political economy on BIDs focus on the role of the neoliberal context in explaining the processes that constitute BIDs in contemporary urban politics. Brenner & Theodore (2002a) argue that, although the neoliberal ideology is a geo-economic project, it had powerful impacts on the structure of subnational scales, such as cities. Ward (2006) explores a policy that reflects changes in urban governance and management, which he calls 'entrepreneurial urbanism' (p. 55). The focus of policy in the contemporary city shifted from public service to one of private management. Eick (2008) describes how global developments in the past thirty years have contributed to the (re)privatization of state tasks, the destruction of 'keynesianischer Artefakte' (p. 365) such as public housing and public space. He illustrates this by showing how different types of urban areas (ranging from private to public) are now policed (surveilled) by groups of different nature (of private, public or civil nature). The neoliberal shift of privatizing state tasks gives room to BIDs. The 'neo' in that term is important, since although liberalization implies a world in which relations of exchange dominate, the public is not entirely eliminated (Ward, 2006). Brenner & Theodore (2002a) illustrate this by showing that a pure neoliberal ideology does not exist, it is always embedded in a regulatory landscape of policies and practices. Although a free market is a principle in the neoliberal ideology, it is structured by the public in terms of market regulation. Furthermore, the globe is not in a sort of neoliberal end-state, but there is rather an ongoing process of neoliberalization. It is a 'market-driven sociospatial transformation, rather than as a fully actualized policy regime, ideological form, or regulatory framework' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a: p. 353). Cities are particularly subject to the institutional shift generated by neoliberal mechanisms, which emerged from increasing local competitiveness, higher economic uncertainty and major budget cuts from the state. This institutional shift led to deregulation, privatization, liberalization and increased fiscal austerity. Cities are now reliant on local sources of revenue, instead of budgets from the state level. This led to 'incentive structures to reward local entrepreneurialism' (*ibid.*: p. 369). Regarding a wide range of services that were previously provided by the state, cities are now responsible. Simultaneously, cities have been mobilized to foster market-oriented economic growth. This process caused the destruction of national models of capitalist growth in favor of development areas on the sub-national scale and mobilization of glocal strategies to 'globally connected' local/regional agglomerations' (*ibid.*: p. 371).

BIDs exemplify the growth of political influence of sub-national economic spaces, where the state is depending on local capital in realizing urban redevelopment. According to Ward (2006), BIDs are used for this new representation of urban political economy, because they seem to work. They can govern public space much more efficiently and swifter than traditional models of local governance can. Because of their private characteristics, they are capable of flexible and cooperative mechanisms in responding to local needs. They are less bound to bureaucratic procedures and civil services rules. Consequently, BIDs become more than just a way to manage city centers: they embody a critique to governmental intervention in cities. It also goes against an ideology of a big city with a large government and budget. The BID model replaces such an ideology to one of compact, local networks in governing city centers. Consequently, the role of the government is changing to one of regulating

parcels of urban space and establishing partnerships with local BIDs. It is not implied that the role of the government decreases, but rather that governance is executed differently: for instance, the way of managing is now on arm-length rather than top-down policy enforcing. Eick (2008) mentions 'glocalisation' in this aspect, to emphasize that there is both a shifting of regulations upwards (to the global level), as well as downwards to the local level. Apart from shifting responsibility to different scales, there is simultaneously a pluralization, or fragmentation of public services to the civil and private spheres. Eick (2008) regards BIDs as a confirmation of the private property process. However, an important note was made by Hoyt (2003a). She argues that it is essential to keep in mind that the privatization of public services typically create 'space based inequalities in service delivery' (p. 21). Since most BIDs operate and originate from a private interest foundation, municipalities should monitor that areas that lack special funding do not fall behind.

Ward (2006) notes that it is very important to consider how policies came into existence, since they never appear from nowhere. Policy creation is a very political matter, through a range of actions and strategies. Because of this, it 'is not an accident (...); it reflects the strong diffusion channels and distribution networks that exist to facilitate the transfer of policies of a particular type from one place to another' (p. 70). Consequently, policy creation is a remarkably geographical process. The BID model, although it was created in the US and Canada, has been taken up by very different places (e.g. Japan, Belgium, Australia, Norway) each with a differing cultural and political context. All these specific spaces were constructed to face similar issues and therefore in need of similar solutions. Such an equalization of interests greatly reduces transaction costs (Hoyt, 2003a), since policies and practices can directly be taken over from one context to another. Brenner & Theodore (2002a) also argue that policymakers have eroded context specific approaches and look for 'quick fixes for local social problems' (p. 372). Consequently, actors build a network together which shares policy beyond the domestic context. This also implies that they rely on that particular network to innovate in their respective policy. It is crucial to understand how local policies and practices are constructed to models which are adapted in different places all over the world. Yet, Ward (2006) argues that is not well-known what processes of neoliberalization shape these policies.

Scales of exception

Another explanation for the emergence of the BID-model can be found in the literature on scales of exception by Aihwa Ong (2008). She holds an approach that stresses the highly dynamic and contingent configuration of spaces, instead of giving primacy to the force of capitalism in making new spaces. Political cartography is mutating constantly and subject to shifting alignments of both global and local elements and the instability of constellated networks. Consequently, in order to cope with the perpetual emergence of challenges in turbulent environments, political assemblages are forced to take on a dynamic play of strategies of 'constantly situating and resituating populations in particular scales of regulation' (*ibid.*: p. 118).

For instance, global-market advancements have caused states to reproduce their spaces and scales to relate to these conditions. Brenner & Theodore (2002) similarly note how older arrangements were destroyed to allow for new institutions for implementing neoliberal policies. Notable here are 'rescaling practices of statecraft' (Ong, 2008: p. 119): the creation

of subnational spaces subject to regulatory regimes which promote market activity, as well as rescaling to supranational institution like the EU to formalize neoliberal ideologies.

In this manner, there is a shift in focus of inquiry from capitalist forces to strategies of regulating spaces. This process of ordering people and space differently across and beyond the national terrain is coined variegated sovereignty by Ong (2008). Neoliberal decisions interact to create a variety of spaces of governing, which are linked yet not limited by preexisting political cartography. Existing administrative units are not the building blocks for a global scale of capital, since these spaces overlap and are multiple and contingent. Moreover, there is no direct causal link between capital accumulation and space making. They are rather constituted by a process of assembling technologies, politics and actors, of which the outcome cannot logically be predicted a priori - partly since of the emergent properties of assemblages, which are by definition subject to unstable and unanticipated problems. Human agency is key to this approach, where situated practices, relationships and interactions form the process that mediates global flows.

In her approach, Ong (2008) views neoliberalism 'not as a doctrine but as a technology of governing for optimal outcome at the level of individuals and populations' (p. 121). They are no longer restricted to the market domain but have been adopted as a mode of governance: political entrepreneurialism. This results in an ongoing experimentation of optimization of wealth, health and security by the installation of spatial constellations of exception, differentiating from prevailing arrangements. Such neoliberal exceptions can advocate a self-enterprising mentality while the same ethos is discouraged in its overarching political sphere.

In this context, the emergence of BID-like models can be explained. In order to cope with an ever changing environment, political institutions are forced to adapt their administrative structure. In light of the new regionalism ideas (section 1.1.1) with dropping governmental revenues and other processes which indicated that traditional governmental structures could not function adequately anymore, local governments had to look for a shift in alignments. The usefulness of Ong's insights for this research is that they focus on strategies on regulating spaces, rather than inquiry solely based on capitalist forces. It is important to look closely to these multiple and contingent spaces and who decides how they are formed, instead of a mere description that they are a result of blatant capitalist forces. It is required to look at the precise assemblage that molded the BID-model across space and stress specifically the role of situated practices, relationships and interactions in mediating neoliberal and other global flows.

2.2.2 Variegated neoliberalism

This section elaborates on the processes of policy exchange that were mentioned in section 2.2.1. In this section, the concept of variegated capitalism is used to explain to what extent neoliberal concepts and policies are shaped by both macroeconomic forces and local contexts.

Brenner et al. (2009) argue that the neoliberal concept is increasingly used to analyze the basis of market-led regulatory restructuring. Interpretations of neoliberalism vary wildly: while some scholars regard it as a regulatory convergence and a 'reflection of realigned hegemonic interests' (p. 183), others reject the totality of the concept and emphasize its

hybridity and context-dependent practice. Brenner et al. (2009) seek to transcend such a binary opposition by examining how 'neoliberalization processes are *simultaneously* patterned, interconnected, locally specific, contested and unstable' (p. 184).

First, the theory on varieties of capitalism will be discussed. Afterwards, the opposite theory of governmentality is discussed. The conflicting nature of these two theories will be consolidated under the header 'variegated neoliberalism'.

Varieties of capitalism

The variegated neoliberalism approach is rooted in the literature on 'varieties of capitalism'. In this approach, developed during the 1990s, capitalism consists of two dominant models (Peck & Theodore, 2007). On one hand, there is the Rhineland model of Keynesian social equity and coordinated, long-term economic efficiency. On the other, the Anglo-Saxon model of Americanization, which focuses on liberal short-termism. Neoliberal tendencies are categorized as the latter. While the German coordinated market economies model stagnated in the 1990s, the American model experienced a sharp growth. This led to many questions about the fate of the Rhineland model regarding the variety of capitalism duality. It would be possible that the liberal market economy only prevailed because of rigged competitive conditions set by itself, that favored neoliberal principles (Brenner et al., 2009). If this process of convergence leads to a global neoliberal monoculture, it annihilates variety itself. At the very least, it can be said that it is accepted that variegated capitalism is no longer limited to the binary opposition of liberal and coordinated market economies. Liberal principles have penetrated the Rhineland model to the extent of monetized forms of growth and market-oriented institutions.

In summary, the varieties of capitalism approach reduces the political economic framework of countries to two distinctive sets of policies; a Keynesian coordinated economy or the Anglo-Saxon liberal economy. Brenner et al. (2009) claim that a bipolar rendition of capitalism is insufficient and propose an alternative approach, one which transcends the 'static, methodological nationalist and uniformly territorialist taxonomies of the VoC (varieties of capital, ed.) approach' (p. 188). The extent of liberal forces are to be conceived as spatially heterogeneous and temporally discontinuous.

Neoliberal forces create deeply interconnected, cross-jurisdictional policy relays, which collide with and modify inherited institutional landscapes. Although this is valid, the varieties of capitalism approach inadequately presumes a replication of Anglo-Saxon models which are implanted in varying political-economic contexts. Peck & Theodore (2007) describe how various authors anticipated a discourse of institutional convergence. This perception is inefficient in explaining the understanding of policy transfer dynamics and is shortcoming in considering policy transfer mutations, for instance mutations which are seemingly not influenced by Anglo-Saxon models. Liberal models rather fuse with existing institutions to assemble hybrid systems. This merging process does not occur in a linear transitional form: it generally follows successive rounds of restructuring, inspired by experimental policy transfer and learning processes from both local and extra-jurisdictional sources. In explaining neoliberalisation of particular places, it is essential to consider both its preceding institutional context as well as frameworks of interspatial policy transfer (Brenner et al., 2009).

Governmentality approaches

Governmentality approaches on neoliberalization disregard the varieties of capitalism analytic of neoliberalization as a national regime structure. They regard it as a more randomized, fluid circulation of experiments, independent of varying modes of governance. Consequently, governmentality approaches claim that there is a wide range of varieties of neoliberalism, each with a 'radical specificity of each 'ecosystem' of market-driven regulatory experimentation' (Brenner et al., 2009: p. 202) which is devoid of structuralist explanations. Neoliberalization is understood as an accumulation of context-specific, unique projects and experimentation of unstructured contingency.

Brenner et al. (2009) argue against this approach by pointing out that it forgets the 'context of context' (p. 202): although there appears to be a widely variegated neoliberalization because the uncountable different contexts they develop in, it should not disregard the 'macrospatial frameworks and interspatial circulatory systems in which local regulatory projects unfolds' (p. 202). Dobbin et al. (2008) even believe that diffusion processes of liberal models (see section 4.1.3) will continue to rise in importance in the future, assisted by shrinking space-time distance of the globe. Governmentality approaches additionally neglect a consideration of commonalities that frequently occur among, on first sight distinctive, contexts. In contrast to varieties of capitalism approaches, an emphasis on commonalities should not be confused with a tendency towards convergence theories of steamrolling neoliberal forces. Rather, it should be used as an analytic tool to decode different varieties of neoliberalism.

Variegated neoliberalism

The conceptualization of variegated neoliberalism is an attempt to combine the different approaches on neoliberalisation. Generally speaking, the varieties of capitalism approach assumes too much convergence and therefore fails in explaining 1. the differences between different BIZ-models and 2. aspects of BIZ-models which cannot be explained by neoliberalist reasoning alone. On the other hand, the governmentality approach assume too little convergence and are insufficient in interpreting commonalities between different models. Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207) propose a model which focuses on a dual conceptualization of variegation.

1. The first conceptualization is the uneven development of neoliberalisation. This conceptualization refers to the varieties of capitalism approach, which assumes too much convergence of policies and practices.
2. The second conceptualization is the neoliberalization of regulatory uneven development. This conceptualization refers to the governmentality approaches, which assume too little convergence. Regulatory experimentation and cross-jurisdictional policy transfer do not emerge in a contingent, unstructured disorder, but are processes which are continually governed by macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks. These macro influences are diffused by the mechanisms described by Dobbin et al. (2008), as described in section 2.2.3

As a consequence, neoliberalization processes of regulatory reform are co-evolving interdependently within their respective territorial jurisdictions. Each round of regulatory experimentation builds on preceding contexts, while drawing from shared vocabularies,

repertoires and institutional mechanisms. The result is context-specific policy that is unique for its particular institutional landscape, but not bereft of the neoliberal commonalities that led to its development. This model is compatible to the work on the diffusing mechanisms of neoliberalism by Dobbin et al. (2008), specifically to the theory on diffusion by emulation. They highlight the 'role of epistemic communities of experts dispersed around the world but bound together by a common world view' (p. 354). Although such epistemics are exogenous, rather than a country hiring pro-Americanization experts, they note that 'local conditions and conflicts also shaped the embrace of privatization – mediating the process of construction occurs with each and every adoption' (p. 354).

The process of ongoing neoliberal experimentation is driven by regulatory failure, which signals that propositions of institutional convergence or stabilization are inaccurate. There is no such thing as a 'neoliberal end-stage', to which neoliberal policies are ultimately predetermined to comply to. As a matter of fact, Dobbin et al. (2008) mention that various anti-capitalist epistemics have a considerable impact on openness of countries to neoliberal ideologies. This observation demonstrates a counter to the 'prevailing imagery of a world in which new ideas flow seamlessly from core to periphery' (p. 355). The path-dependent process of regulatory failure encourages regulatory restructuring and consequently generates variegated neoliberalism.

2.2.3 Diffusive mechanisms

Diffusion of liberal concepts and their implementation in inherited local-specific institutional contexts can occur in various ways, of which Dobbin et al. (2008) identify four main forces:

- Coercion: liberal concepts can be imposed by powerful forces such as strong economic powers or influential institutions. This can occur in a hard form, of rich countries exerting their will over poor countries, or in a soft form of a more voluntary nature. It is argued that the capacity of the powerful to impose neoliberal policies are contended and therefore improbable to be the main driving force of neoliberal diffusion. In the contemporary political economic configuration of decentralized networks, public officials have little capacity to impose liberal frameworks.
- Competition: countries can open up to liberalization in order to be able to compete with each other on the international market. Following the American model of marketization, countries hope to attract investors with low corporate tax rates. Contrasting to diffusion by coercion, countries do not "follow the leader" but rather follow their economic competitors' (Dobbin et al., 2008: p. 350).
- Learning: neoliberal policies can be adapted because of the positive effect it has on neighboring countries or regions. It should be noted that it can be complicated to distinguish diffusion by learning processes from competitive pressures. Additionally, there is evidence that countries adopted neoliberal policies, even though it was evident that they were deficit and not suitable for its new context. Dobbin et al. (2008) note that this might be the result of 'a modified theoretical approach emphasizing the role of global communities of experts' (p. 352) and that informational and inferential conditions are valued highly. This suggests that current economic theory forms a prerequisite for learning processes, simply because it seems to work. It can be very difficult, however, to measure the direct causal relation of an implemented neoliberal policy and the increase in national revenue. Consequently, although countries are inclined to adopt neoliberal policies from successful countries, this does not mean

they will show the same results in a different context. Therefore, in the case of learning processes, rational decision making inadequately explains governmental behavior regarding policy decision making.

- Emulation: diffusion by emulation is rooted in a constructivist approach which argues that 'epistemic communities of experts may act as missionaries facilitating the transfer of policy ideas' (Dobbin et al., 2008: p. 353). It is argued that interpretations of emulation are more successful than rationalist and materialist term in explaining neoliberal diffusion. Similar to processes of learning, however, governments are inclined to reject policy approaches that do not correspond to their dominant epistemic. Framing processes of how government regard policies are not explicable by rationalist analyses.

These diffusive mechanisms can be used to explain the role of external forces in the production and reproduction of BIZ-models. As described by Brenner et al. (2009) in section 2.2.2, regulatory experimentation and cross-jurisdictional policy transfer do not emerge in a contingent, unstructured disorder, but are processes which are continually governed by macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks. The diffusive mechanisms described above can be used to categorize the external forces which generate dispersion of neoliberal policies.

3. Methodological framework

This chapter sets out the methodological framework which is used to examine the research object in the right fashion. The chapter opens with a brief overview of traditional comparative analysis and will then show the shortcomings of this approach. Then, an enhanced version of the comparative approach, the relational comparative analysis is presented along with an explanation how the latter is more suitable for this kind of research. Section 3.2 explores what kind of research methods best fit the relational comparative analysis. Finally, section 3.3 dives into theory on case studies and argues how the single case study is the most viable strategy for this research, although with a relational disclaimer.

3.1 Relational comparative analysis

This section will discuss the method of comparative analysis. In section 3.1.1, a brief overview of traditional comparative (urban) analysis is presented. Section 3.1.2 then moves to a critique which seeks to infuse that method with the recent relational turn in geographical literature.

3.1.1 Comparative analysis

Ward (2010) describes how over the last few decades, there has been a “comparative turn’ in the imaginations of policy-makers’ (p. 472). According to him, theory on comparison research is rooted in social sciences, which is ‘intrinsically comparative’ (p. 474), which is used ‘to compare means to examine more than one event, object, outcome or process with a view to discovering the similarities and/or differences between them’ (p. 473). By measuring the experiences and performances of others, comparison has recently been introduced in geography studies to enhance knowledge of the global. Theory on comparative methods provides insights into modes of urban governance and is effective in reducing the many pathways of different cities to a variety of ideal types, or as Brenner (2004) puts it: ‘[to] relate contextually specific institutional dynamics and outcomes to broader, meso-level transformations’ (p. 21). Its usefulness lies in the capacity to distinguish context-specific regularities from universal processes, the general from the particular. It is common for comparative analyses to take on a similar system approach. For this approach, cases are selected by searching for similar independent variables, but with differing dependent variables (Pierre, 2005).

3.1.2 Relational approach

Despite its usefulness, Ward (2010) argues that traditional comparative analyses take up rather static understandings of place, space and scale. Relational conceptions have increasingly infiltrated geographic academics (Jacobs & Lagendijk, 2014), but has not fully been explored in the field of comparative urban studies.

Jacobs & Lagendijk (2014) describe how there has been a recent shift towards a relational approach in understanding cities and regions. Beaverstock et al. (2002) argue that local development is not a simple function of ongoing endogenous processes, but is dependent on a wider set of relations. Urban politics are constituted through a larger set of networks, increasingly produced on an international scale (Coe et al., 2004). Actions are relationally

constituted and these relations have structural outcomes. This does not mean that local-specific assets are to be neglected. Rather, Dicken et al. (2001) explain that the relational approach advocates an holistic conception, in which networks are embedded in the sociospatial constitution of individual local-specific contexts. Although endogenous factors are required, they are insufficient in explaining the ways in which extra-local institutions shape developments (Coe et al., 2004).

According to Ward (2010), literature on traditional comparative analyses takes each level of scale as 'ontological and epistemological givens' (p. 478). Reasoning in terms of units of comparable levels comes short in the entangling of networks in sociospatial relations. Rather, concepts of scales require relational rationales, 'the superseding of traditional (...) notions of geographical scale with approaches that emphasize evolution, fluidity, motion, process and sociospatial contestation' (Ward, 2010: p. 479). The relational approach does not reject any notion of scale, but rather calls for a critical reflection of such categorizations; one which moves away from fixed metrics and towards socially constructed geographical scales produced by 'social relations, actions and institutions' (p. 482). Apart from issues regarding fixed scales, Ward (2010) mentions a tendency within traditional comparison methods of treating cities as 'discrete, self-enclosed and analytically separate objects' (p. 479). Such an atomistic, territorial perception fails to grasp embedded and relational conceptualizations of cities. Contemporary urban spaces are constituted by a wide range of inter-urban networks that stretch beyond the physical sphere of the city.

During the internship at the municipality of Amsterdam, it became apparent very quickly that BIZ areas might be heavily influenced by external consultant companies. Although a BIZs are mostly initiated by private actors – entrepreneurs and owners of commercial property – they often call in professional help, since they lack the skills and expertise to successfully develop a suiting BIZ-plan. External professionals bring with them knowledge and experiences which they gained in other areas of the city or even from other cities. This information is then integrated in the formation of the BIZ-model. For this reason, it is very important to adopt a relational perspective in the traditional comparative analysis in order to perform a successful study of Dutch BIZ-models. A single BIZ-model is not an enclosed entity devoid of external influences, but is a product of knowledge and experiences from other places. Consequently, in order to fully understand how a BIZ-model is produced, it has to be studied how BIZ-models in other cities develop and how these experiences travel across space.

A final critique offered by Ward (2010) is how traditional comparative analysis handles causation. Most research of comparative nature is focused on identifying empirical regularities and then use this data to produce general law-like causations. He builds on the work of Sayer (1984) to prove that such a rationale is inadequate:

"[I]t is not enough that C always follows A and B. What is required is an understanding of the continuous processes by which 'A' produced 'B', if in fact it did, and 'B' produced 'C', again if in fact it did. Here the emphasis is not on causation per se, but rather on causal powers and liabilities" (Ward, 2010: p. 480, original emphasis).

A simple theoretical derivation based on empirical observed patterns is insufficient in explaining mechanisms that drive the comparisons between cities. Causal patterns are

important, but should not make claims about the relationship between separate phenomena. Coe et al. (2004) and Jacobs & Lagendijk (2014) respectively note that the outcomes of regional development cannot be predicted a priori, by means of an analysis of endogenous institutions. Causal claims should explore what an object is like and what its capacities are. Additionally, such claims can derive what that particular object will do in a specific situation, but should refrain from general, inevitable law-like causal claims. For instance, In the case of BIZ-models, this implicates that the coincidence of a neoliberal structure and a profit-driven mindset of entrepreneurs would not inevitably lead to a heavily revenue enhancing BIZ-model. Rather, it should compass a thorough understanding under *what* circumstances particular instances lead to different configurations of BIZ-models.

Consequently, comparison should not be about the search for uniqueness, nor should it claim that differences can be explained as local-specific configurations of universal powers (Hart, 2002). Relational comparative analysis abstains analysis of pre-given objects and rather investigates how those objects or events are mutually constituted. It treats phenomena as if they arise from the interrelation between objects and events, while not ignoring the territorial histories that shape their production. Both interdependence and uniqueness of places are, although they seem different, very closely related. Ward (2010) argues that 'the content and consequences of 'city politics' in one place is interconnected with the content and consequences in another' (p. 482).

Conclusively, relational comparative analysis is a tool to look beyond static approaches of traditional comparative analysis. It does not look for atomistic, context-specific comparison, but its focus should neither be reduced to an abstract conception of relational flows. It should be used to compare cities in a relational context, with respect to the processes that produces these relations while at the same time considering local-specific sociospatial and political economic contexts in which urban developments unfold.

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

In section 3.1, it is described how the relational comparative analysis method advocates an approach to cities 'as open and constituted in and through relations that stretch across space and that are territorialized in place' (Ward, 2010: p. 481). As a consequence, the relational feature of refraining from or questioning pre-given objects makes it unreasonable to apply a quantitative analysis of secondary data, since these objects have yet to be unfolded and defined during the research. As is clear from the table in Figure 2, it should practice a methodology of semi-structured interviews. Ward (2010) additionally suggests an ethnological methodology, but because of the suggested length of the ethnographic method (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2012) and considering the usual timeframe of the master's thesis research, it would not be appropriate for this research.

	'Traditional' comparative urban studies		Relational comparative urban studies
Ontological foundations	City as bounded and given, self-identifiable; scale as given and non-contested		City as open and constituted in and through relations that stretch across space and that are territorialized in place; scale as constructed and politicized
Epistemological foundations	Marxists/Neo-Marxists	Neo-Marxists/Neo-Institutionalists	Postcolonialists/Neo-Marxists
Methodologies	Quantitative (secondary data, questionnaires)	Quantitative (secondary data)/qualitative (semi-structured interviews)	Qualitative (Ethnography, semi-structured interviews)
Formative period	1970s	1990s	2000s
Disciplinary homelands	Sociology, Human Geography	Political Science	Anthropology, Human Geography
Key authors	Janet Abu-Lughod, Manuel Castells, John Walton	Alan DiGaetano, Susan Fainstein, Paul Kantor, Hank Savitch, Jeffrey Sellers	Gillian Hart, Jennifer Robinson

Figure 2. 'Traditional' comparative and relational comparative studies of cities: the foundations (Ward, 2010: p. 481 [original emphasis]).

According to Edwards & Holland (2013), the interview is a methodological tool most prominent in social science. Given the foundation of the comparative analysis in the field of social science, interviews provide a logical methodological tool for a research of this type. Interviews can take the form of structured, semi-structured to unstructured interviews, each characterized by a varying degree of flexibility and structure. Because of the interactional style of dialogue, it can be used to extract useful data much more thoroughly than in one-way structured interviews. Respondents from the BIZ-field can be approached how they perceive the production of BIZ-models and based on their response, it can be evaluated what questions should be asked next. The interview departs from a few starting points of conversation, after which both the researcher and the respondent will cooperate in construction knowledge. Through dialogic interaction, respondent can be made conscious on information of BIZ-procedures and put their knowledge in a particular situation or context. They can be made conscious of various links between BIZ-concepts of which they might not directly think of in case of a one-way interview.

Similarly, the researcher himself can be made conscious of particular concepts or links which could not be anticipated beforehand. As Edwards & Hollands (2013) point out, the interviewer is not the only learner during the interview. Semi-structured interviews create the opportunity to readjust the course of interaction during the interview. Although the BID-concept has been studied elaborately, the BIZ-model is a relatively new concept in the Netherlands and as mentioned in section 1.2.1, the Dutch concept raises questions of productions of the model within the Dutch political economic context. Consequently, it is very likely that lots of unexpected information comes up during the interviews, which could not be anticipated a priori. Respondents can provide information on BIZ-knowledge networks or

reasons why certain BIDs have emerged that might seem contradictory or different from what was anticipated. In these cases, it is very important that there is room to deviate from the structure of the interview in order to readjust the course of dialogue to deal with the newly gained information.

However, the semi-structured interview does not imply that the researcher should refrain from any sort of preparation and that he should go with the flow of the conversation. There should be a balance between 1. ensuring that the conversation is guided in such a way that it leads to relevant data generation and 2. not too much attention on asking the right questions in the right order.

3.3 Case studies

This section will focus on identifying the quantity and nature of usable cases. Case studies are defined by Stacks (2013) as 'a descriptive, qualitative research method that analyzes in great detail a person, an organization, or an event' (p. 98). In addition, Gerring (2006) states that a case is required to have identifiable boundaries and that the case object is primary to the case as a whole. This inclusion is at first glance in conflict with some of the principles of the relational comparative approach, since the latter refrains from preliminary identified geographical scales. This makes it troublesome to set case boundaries, since the developments of BIZ-models in one city simultaneously affect productions of BIZs in other cities. The inclusion of the relational approach (section 3.1.2) explains how BIZ-entities do not operate in solitude, as well-demarcated isolated units, but are constituted by events of different places. Consequently, these boundaries should be set by the respondents of the interviews: the outcome of the interviews will make clear what boundaries are set by the municipality, BIZ-participants and consultancies. As mentioned by Ong (section 2.2.1), administrative boundaries are constantly reassembled and rescaled contingently in order to adapt to new global flows. As a consequence, such boundaries cannot be predicted or identified a priori and should become clear by inquiry. It will be explained below how this research, for practical reasons, will take the municipality of Amsterdam as a single case study. However, given the problems posed by the relational approach, it will be explained under the header 'relational disclaimer' how these difficulties can be tackled.

There are multiple reasons to opt for a single case study. Specifically, it is suggested by Swanborn (1994: p. 326) that thanks to circumstances, the research achieved the unique opportunity to access a certain research group or situation that is otherwise restricted, what he calls the 'revelatory case' (p. 326). For this research, the municipality of Amsterdam agreed to an internship within its BIZ-team. This situation provides the opportunity to be embedded within the daily business of BIZ activities and allows access to invaluable insights regarding the relation between the municipality and private actors.

The internship was set up according to an evaluation the municipality of Amsterdam has performed in the first half of 2018. The municipality observed a sharp growth of the amount of BIZs in Amsterdam since it was installed as a permanent law in 2015. As of 2018, 62 BIZs are currently active within the municipalities boundaries. This raised several questions from the town council: what is the added value of BIZs for the city of Amsterdam, what should the relationship between the municipality and the private actors ideally look like, and what are

experiences of other cities in both the Netherlands and the rest of the world and how do those compare to the Amsterdam BIZs? The municipality requested research agency AnalyZus to perform this research. The internship provided the opportunity to both partake in this research, as well as giving time and space to work on the thesis within the active field of the BIZ.

As such, the city of Amsterdam provides what Swanborn (1994: p. 326) calls '[a] unique opportunity to access a particular group, situation or person that are otherwise restricted (the 'revelatory case')'. For this reason, Amsterdam has been selected as the single case study for this research. Additionally, since an exceptionally large share of Dutch BIZs is located in Amsterdam, the city functions as a favorable situation to perform the case study in.

Relational disclaimer

The research question seeks for forces that shape and reshape the Dutch BIZ-model. As such, it would be unwise to select specific cities as cases. Here, the value of the relational comparative approach becomes clear: it would be unwise to select a few municipalities, observe their differences and use this information to form a conclusion by comparison. This would be insufficient in looking for underlying forces. As has been elaborately discussed in section 3.1 and 3.2, cities and policies never develop in a discrete vacuum. They are the result of ongoing processes and actions which are of relational nature. Therefore, the single case study of the municipality of Amsterdam will be augmented with a relational disclaimer. The implication of this is that inquiry will not necessarily solely be retrieved from interviews performed in Amsterdam. It requires the researcher to look beyond both within and beyond the municipalities' boundaries in order to fully understand the forces that produce and reproduce BIZ-models in Amsterdam.

As such, the selection of sources of inquiry for this research should be developed gradually. Ideally, as a starting point a single interview would be conducted with someone who is active in the Amsterdam BIZ-scene and investigate what forces they are aware of that shape the way he regards the BIZ. From thereon, the research should follow the lines and create an ever expanding network until all driving forces of BIZ-model across different municipalities across the nation are mapped. However, this is very demanding effort and given the timeframe of the research and restricted resources, it might be best to start the inquiry with a couple of organizations which suggest to be key in the distribution of BIZ policies. From the produced network, it should be clear which of the forces - as identified in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) - actually exist and by what nature the involved agents and by which practices they spread the flows that ultimately shape and reshape the BIZ-model. So, the first selection of cases aim to discover the network of the relevant parties responsible of the BIZ-model creation - be it the municipality, consultant agencies, BIZ-boards or knowledge centrums - and how they interplay and communicate with each other in order to shape different BIZ-models.

It should be noted that such an approach does not solely focus on the interexchange of model experimentation among local BIZ participants. As elaborated on in section 2.2.2, policy models can be influenced by economic or political forces on the macro level. However, it would be insufficient to simply describe such forces as external factor, since this would also fail to interpret model deviations which are not clearly influenced by neoliberal

explanations. Accordingly, the interviews should also pay attention to underlying macro forces that influence and shape the decisions of BIZ-model creators. Only when a multiple respondents confirm that the development of the BIZ-model is influenced by neoliberal forces, should it be wise to include them in the conclusion.

4. Results

In section 1.2.2, the research question is transposed in two research questions. Brenner et al. (2009) demonstrate how policies are not developed evenly across space, which indicates that there is more to the production of policies than if they were to spread in a vacuum. Consequently, they note that there is a certain role for the local-specific institutional context in shaping the production and reproduction of policies. The first research question tries to uncover those forces by examining the follow research question:

1. What is the role of the local-specific context in shaping the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities?

Similarly, Brenner et al. (2009) argue against theories that the production of policies is entirely the result of ongoing experimentation. Regulatory experimentation and cross-jurisdictional policy transfer do not emerge in a contingent, unstructured disorder, but are processes which are continually governed by macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks. Consequently, the second research question looks for such external forces:

2. What is the role of external, neoliberal forces in shaping the production and reproduction of varying BIZ-models in Dutch cities?

These two research questions both tackle the dual conceptualization of variegated neoliberalism proposed by Brenner et al. (2009), in order to understand how BIZ-models are produced and continually reproduced in the Netherlands. Accordingly, the semi-structured interviews which were performed to examine these forces, are formulated correspondingly: they consisted on one hand of questions regarding the local-specific institutional context, on the other of questions referring to uncovering external forces. Subsequently, the results of the research are presented in a similar fashion. Section 4.1 refers to the first research question and will present the results of the role of local-specific institutional contexts, while section 4.2 presents the results of external forces. The results of the two different research questions will then be combined in chapter 5 (conclusions), where it is attempted to answer the main research question.

Although this research is constructed and presented in the English language, interviews were performed in Dutch. For stylistic reasons, this chapter will present the quotes in a translated fashion. An overview of the quotes in their original form can be found in Appendix A.

4.1 The role of local-specific contexts

This section sets out the role of local-specific contexts in shaping BIZ-models. The main source of data is retrieved from interviews performed with respondents who are currently active in BIZs in Amsterdam. However, interviews were performed with actors from other cities as well: given the relational disclaimer (section 3.3), it would be insufficient to solely take in account what is happening within the city boundaries of Amsterdam itself to explain the case of Amsterdam, since developments and experiences in other cities affect the

Amsterdam model as well. How developments in other cities influence each other is explained in section 4.2 and 5.2.

BIZ size

One of the most frequently aspect of BIZ variety is the size of the selected area that participates in the BIZ. In this section, it is explained what factors contribute to any particular BIZ size in the production of a BIZ-model. The section concludes with the implications of this variable for the research question.

Stad&Co, an organization that founded and guided a wide range of BIZs throughout the Netherlands, explain how the size of a BIZ is largely dependent to what extent the area is familiar with cooperating with one another. To illustrate, they mention that one of the reasons the city of Eindhoven has chosen to operate with one large BIZ for the inner city as a whole, was that there was already a 'advertisement tax' (reclamebelasting) present in the city, as well as an entrepreneur association (ondernemersvereniging), which was also operating on the scale of the inner city as a whole. This makes it impossible to simply copy-paste the model of a BIZ in one place to another city or area, or as Stad&Co puts it: *"the BIZ is not a trick. This can be quite frustrating, because when a municipality tells us: 'we would like you to perform what you did in that area' ... they do not realize a best practice is the result of a long period of building trust and cooperation in that area"*¹.

Another force on which the size of a BIZ is dependent is the expected reach of support from participants within the area. According to Stad&Co, everyone has a certain feeling for where the area to which they feel attached 'ends'. People are much less interested and feel much less responsibility for areas that lie beyond the boundaries of the area to which they feel attached. Given that the national BIZ-law demands that two-thirds of participants in the area have to vote for the BIZ, it is wise to limit the area to an area that speaks to the people's minds. These boundaries are often quite arbitrary and do not necessarily have to make sense from a strategic perspective: if the area ends at the end of the street in the minds of the entrepreneurs, they are very reluctant to share their funds with that people from beyond that area, even if it makes complete sense for an external manager that the area would prosper as a whole.

Stad&Co additionally explain how the BIZ is an area-focused approach. Every place in Amsterdam is of different nature, where each area or street consists of varying types of entrepreneurs, ambitions and budget. Additionally, the physical structure of an area also requires a particular type of approach: for example, squares accommodate an entirely different dynamic than long, narrow streets. For this reason, each BIZ model requires a certain level of customization. The required area-focused approach is a strong determinant in selecting the desired size of a BIZ. Haags Retailpunt also stress the improbability of establishing a BIZ for the entire inner cities, since each area involves a unique identity and atmosphere. Inner city management Roermond adds that it helps if the defined area speaks to the mind of the entrepreneurs. Physical demarcations strongly endorse such emotions. They illustrate this by mentioning the inner city of Roermond, which is circumvented by a inner city ring, which forms a solid demarcation in the mind of the entrepreneurs.

Stad&Co argue that is very important that before installing a BIZ in an area, it should be clear and logical what area should participate in the BIZ. It is very hard to scale the size of a BIZ up to cover a larger area, since there might be other BIZs that arose in neighboring areas. This hinders the possibility for the different BIZs to merge when each BIZ started at a different time, because then the BIZ also ends at different time which interferes with the creation of a single BIZ-plan for the area as a whole.

BIZ platform NL clarifies that larger BIZs are often more desirable, since it enables the participants to work with a larger budget and enhances the strength with which they can meddle with other stakeholders in the area. There are some particularly small BIZs operating in Amsterdam and The Hague. *“This makes it really hard to achieve anything. You know how much funds are available for these areas, which is not much. If the BIZ area were to grow (...), you would end up with a larger area and increased capacity. However, it is very hard to get every BIZ on the same line”*². Because of this, there should be a sound balance between selecting a large enough area to increase its power to really achieve something, while also maintaining sufficient support from its participants. The Utrecht ondernemersfonds mention that nearly all entrepreneurial funds in the Netherlands put aside an amount of money in a cross-area fund and expects more cities to follow.

Stad&Co are reluctant to press BIZs in areas which show little energy to start a BIZ. The BIZ can be an ambition of a few enthusiastic ambassadors, but often it becomes clear that the other entrepreneurs in an area have little to no interest in supporting a BIZ. When a lack of support becomes clear, Stad&Co give the advice to halt the establishment of the BIZ, since it would require too much time and effort with little to no benefits. They explain how at times, it is the municipality which asks them to establish a BIZ in an area: *“In that situation, we always start a conversation with the people within the area to determine if the BIZ is the right way to do it (...) The municipality can give instructions, but we start at the bottom”*³.

To conclude, BIZ size varies largely throughout the country. They vary from BIZs as small as 20-30 participants to over 2000 entrepreneurs and retail owners. The size of a BIZ strongly affects the sum of the available funds for area investment, since smaller BIZs translate to fewer contributors. Neoliberal theory would suggest that areas tend to look to enlarge their budgets as much as possible, in order to raise their competitive power. Similarly, consultant companies generally encourage BIZ initiators to maximize the participating area in order to make it viable to really achieve a change versa other areas in the city. However, it is apparent that there is a multitude of reasons why most BIZs choose to limit their area of operation. Consequently, this underlines the influence of multiple endogenous forces that counter the effect of neoliberal macro-structures.

Activities

This section focusses on the different forces behind the type of activities the BIZ decides to focus on. Respondents frequently mentioned how BIZs differentiate on different levels of activities. Additionally, experiences from the internship made clear how types of activities often served as a particular framework used to classify particular varieties of BIZ ambitions. On the most basic level, the BIZ is used to organize very basic affairs, such as financing Christmas lights or investing in better street cleaning. While these activities can indirectly

increase revenue, they are not designed with a greater strategic ambition in mind. This section concludes with the implication of this differentiation for the research question.

Stad&Co argue that often, there is too much focus on basic activities which leaves the BIZ with little to no money left to upscale their ambitions: *“Participants have never learned to regard the BIZ as an investment zone. Encouraging investments from others, co-financing to really make the most of the available budget than most BIZ-organizations would. Most literally spend their budget: festive lights, street manager, marketing, next year a mother’s day activity and that’s it (...) what ambitions did the BIZ fulfill? It is merely a replacement of costs.”*⁴. This seriously hampers the BIZ to upgrade its respective area to a higher ambition. Platform De Nieuwe Winkelstraat also experience that there is often too much attention for the physical appearance of a shopping area. They add that a low ambition level has consequences for the level of support in an area, since an entrepreneur is rarely interested in the BIZ on its own, but for economic gains. Stad&Co argue that a solid vision paired with a skillful board are crucial to really achieve change in an area. Some BIZs simply don’t manage to assemble a skillful board. Platform Binnenstadsmanagement comment that most BIZ stick to activities of a very basic level unless they are established with guidance of a professional.

The kind of activities different BIZ take on are of varying nature. The municipality of Rotterdam notice that BIZs in Rotterdam allocate much less budget to keeping the streets clean in compared to Amsterdam. They speculate that the necessity to invest in clean streets is much greater in Amsterdam: *“Maybe it is because Amsterdam deals with a lot more tourists, more garbage, small streets... it could be possible that streets are easier to clean here”*⁵. This indicates that BIZ-initiators design their plan so that activities first and foremost address basic needs. HISA confirm that the main issues a specific area face determine what kind of activities are taken up. Obviously, entrepreneurs are looking to increase their income, but if a street lacks attractability and safety, those issues are focused on first. Additionally, investing in a street’s livability and increasing income are often two sides of the same coin. Inner city management Roermond argue that BIZs overestimate the impact of online marketing and invest a too large portion of their available budget in those affairs. *“I understand it though, since if you never try something out, there will never be innovation (...) It is actually important to be apparent online (...) however if the basis of a shopping area is not sufficient (...) you will never sort good effects”*⁶.

Stad&Co explain that various BIZs show the ambition to cooperate with the municipality to together address the quality of public space. The BIZ then enables the participants to concentrate their power and consequently enhances their capacity of influencing public affairs. BIZ Platform NL notice that the capacity of BIZ-boards to think together with the authorities is a crucial asset. Additionally, both the business park management of Venlo and Roermond mention that business park BIZs take on activities that are not satisfactorily executed by municipal services. For instance, streets that do not receive any road salt on frosty days, this service is delivered using BIZ-budget.

This section presented the different activities BIZs take on. The variety BIZ activities typically represent the ambitions of a BIZ, as well as their capacity to formulate a vision and willingness to think strategically. Given the theoretical assumption of a neoliberal macro-structure which implies intercity competitiveness, further enhanced by the age of digitalization

which leads to new areas of competition, it would be expected that entrepreneurs and real estate owners would show a strong desire to increase the competitive capacities of their area as much as possible. This would require the BIZ to really treat their area as an investment zone, with each euro carefully considered if it would contribute to the preselected strategic, long-term ambition. However, it is clear that many BIZs are content if their activities address a basic improvement of the street's appearance, the organization of small-scale events or increasing the area's safety. While such activities can indirectly contribute to increasing revenue, they are not designed to strategically invest in the area. It is numerously mentioned by respondents that basic levels of activities vary greatly between different BIZs and mostly represent the desires and wishes that are intrinsic to the BIZ area. This suggests the existence of strong endogenous forces that counter the neoliberal macro-structures that would imply a less diversified set of activities amongst BIZ-areas.

Participants

This section focusses on the different participants that are active in the Dutch BIZs. While in the US BIDs are almost exclusively initiated and conducted by real estate owners, in the Netherlands the larger part of BIZs are installed by entrepreneurial agents. In a lot of cases, it appears to be difficult to persuade real estate owners to participate in a BIZ, which means there the budget available to a BIZ is virtually cut in half. Additionally, entrepreneurs often have different desires or ambitions for their commercial areas than real estate owners, meaning that different configurations of participants lead to deviations in BIZ-models.

Platform De Nieuwewinkelstraat are convinced that the success of a shopping area is dependent on three parties: the entrepreneurs, owners of real estate and the municipality. These three parties, which they call the Golden Triangle, should be responsible for the economic success of an area. The first step in coming to a successful BIZ is to stimulate cooperation between these parties. The success of a shopping area does not start solely at the entrepreneurs, but with the area's purchasing power: how many consumers visit the area, how can the BIZ attract those consumers and how can they be seduced to spend more time and money in the area. For this reason, it is important to involve real estate owners in the BIZ. This is often problematic: the municipality of Rotterdam explain that real estate owners are often hesitant to join a BIZ, since they often do not live in the area, city or even the country in which they own real estate. They rarely realize the benefits that a BIZ can have for them, most importantly value increase of their property. The municipality of Eindhoven recount how during the time the BIZ in Eindhoven was established, entrepreneurs demanded that real estate owners would also participate in the BIZ. The Town Council was excited about this expansion, since real estate owners could finally contribute to inner city developments. However, it proved to be a tough procedure to persuade real estate owners to contribute to the BIZ, since much property is owned by influential institutional investors who have had their marketing plans approved for many years in advance. They were finally persuaded to participate, since they were convinced of the added value of developing their property in Eindhoven.

The city of Utrecht decided to not establish many small BIZs in the city, but instead choose for a slightly different version, the so-called 'ondernemersfonds'. They explain how whole city is divided in 63 sectors, where every owner and user of non-residential property is charged with an assessment as a percentage of their property value. This model, which is based on

the 'Leids Model' is very similar to the BIZ-model, with the exception that the percentage of the assessment is the same for and applicable to the whole city. Consequently, every non-residential property owner and user is forced to pay the levy, while in cities operating with BIZ-models, the obligated levy only applies to areas that established a BIZ. Platform binnenstadsmanagement argue that the so-called 'Leidse Model' is more effective than a BIZ in certain situations, for example when a municipality has city-wide ambitions regarding city marketing, or in the case that large areas in a city show low degrees of organization and therefore are unable to establish a stable BIZ.

Stad&Co explain how different areas within cities consist of different entrepreneurs with a varying mindset, which has consequences for the success of a BIZ. In the city center and southern areas of Amsterdam, people show great pride in the areas their shops are located in. In other areas of the city, such as Nieuw-West, a lot of shops are owned by foreigners, who operate within their own partnerships. Their cultural background can also cause them to be reluctant to cooperate with the municipality.

In this section, various reasons are summed up for why different types of groups decide to participate in a BIZ. Although the inclusion of real estate owners is often considered key to a successful BIZ, they are often hesitant to partake in the shared levy. There is often a lack of structural and extensive level of cooperation between the entrepreneurs and real estate owners in Dutch commercial areas. This seems counterintuitive, since both parties would benefit equally from enhancing the competitive capacities of their area. Given the neoliberal environment that entrepreneurs and real estate owners are exposed to, shopping areas are increasingly competitive versus each other. Consequently, it can be assumed that entrepreneurs and real estate owners would merge their budgets and cooperatively invest in their commercial area. However, this is not happening in the larger part of Dutch BIZs. Reasons why real estate owners are not willing to participate in the BIZ differ per area and are endogenous to the mindset of the area. These cause the BIZ-models to take on different configurations, since BIZs that include real estate owners often entail different types of activities than BIZs that do not: real estate owners typically envision different ambitions in a street than entrepreneurs.

Role of the municipality

The municipality is an important force of variegation of BIZ-models. The mentality of the municipality towards BIZs differs between cities: some are eager to increase the amount of BIZs in their city, while others are somewhat indifferent on the matter. This mindset of the municipality has important consequences for the BIZ-model development, since cities with a positive attitude towards BIZs often create some sort of subsidy to encourage the installment of BIZs in their municipality. This subsidy is of great importance to BIZ-model development, since it is mostly used to offset the costs of an external consultant who guides the BIZ-initiation process.

Establishing a BIZ can be a very difficult, expensive and time-consuming process. It requires the initiators to develop a suiting BIZ-plan, cover a lot of complicated juridical procedures and convince other entrepreneurs and/or real estate owners to support their plans. This is a very demanding process for the initiators, which are mostly entrepreneurs that do not have much time available since they also have their own business to manage. Because of this,

many municipalities have chosen to support the BIZ-initiators. In Amsterdam, BIZ-initiators are granted a subsidy of €5.000,- which is often used to hire an external consultant with experience in establishing BIZs. This sum enables consultant companies like Stad&Co to help the establishment of BIZs and influence BIZ-models with their knowledge and experiences from other areas.

In The Hague, the organization for the support and establishment of BIZs has been outsourced to Haags Retailpunt, an independent organization for retail, real estate and investors. They support the BIZ and often give advice on demand, but do not try to influence the decisions of the BIZ-participants. They do, however, stimulate ambition and make suggestions based on formats and presenting examples of events and activities. The Hague also supports the establishment of BIZs, but do so a little different than in Amsterdam. In The Hague, each BIZ is granted a 'kwartiermaker' which guides the BIZ-initiators through the phase of forming a BIZ-plan and the initial procedures. The city of Rotterdam initially did not support the establishment of BIZs in the form of financial aid, although recently Rotterdam also introduced kwartiermakers after consulting The Hague. They explain how the municipality was initially a bit standoffish regarding BIZ, but after seeing BIZs prosper in Amsterdam and The Hague, they decided to stimulate the establishment of new BIZs. After importing the concept of kwartiermakers, Rotterdam experienced a sharp growth in the amount of BIZs in the city. Nevertheless, the municipality of Eindhoven explain that not every municipality has the monetary means to provide every initiator with a subsidy for the establishment of BIZs.

Inner city management Roermond mention a huge variance in the amount of cofinancing from the municipality in BIZ-budgets. In some cities, like Weert, the municipality financed inner management completely. They argue this is an unwise policy, since it encourages criticism and does not encourage responsibility from private stakeholders. Contrary, other cities abstain from cofinancing the BIZ at all and adopt a laissez-faire attitude in which they completely trust on the entrepreneur in investing in their respective area.

There are varying reasons for the fact that municipalities are so eager to increase the amount of BIZs in the city. The municipality of Eindhoven mention that municipalities are very delighted that there is finally a single point of contact to get in touch with entrepreneurs and ideally, real estate owners in a specific area. The reverse is also true; the BIZ now also has a fortified collective to bargain with the municipality: *"The BIZ board does not functions solely as budget administrator, but increasingly as interests advocator of its constituency"*⁷. Both Stad&Co and HISA indicate that the municipality is at times the initiator of a BIZ. Municipalities mainly ask for the establishment of BIZs for strategic reasons, while BIZs that are set up by private parties look for activities of a much more pragmatic nature. Platform binnenstadsmanagement remark the importance of incorporating the municipality in the BIZ-process for its capacity of considering a more strategic level as well as having a clearer insight in an area's ambitions. Additionally, BIZ-procedures can be completed much easier and faster if the municipality is an active stakeholder in the BIZ. Furthermore, the BIZ-model is an excellent method to extract public funds for city development. Lastly, both Stad&Co and Platform binnenstadsmanagement note how frequently, the municipality has developed a 'centrumvisie' and hopes to achieve it together with BIZ-funds. *"That is certainly a possibility, but then it has to be an extraordinary good plan"*⁸.

In the city of Venlo, the municipality influences the BIZ-model to a much greater extent than in Amsterdam. For example, they demand that 70% of the budget should be spent on SHV. The municipality also demands a strong accountability and exerts strict control. For this reason, the BIZ in Venlo is extra cautious they do not adopt too many public services, since this is not legally allowed. They additionally inform that once they are the party that delivers services traditionally delivered by the government, they then also become responsible for the consequences. For instance, if the BIZ becomes responsible for scattering road salt, they are also accountable for accidents occurring due to negligence. The municipality of Roermond once granted the BIZ to organize green maintenance, but this resulted in a failure: *“it was a drama (...) a lot of opposition of civil servants, lots of time waiting for money, huge amounts of paperwork”*⁹. As a consequence, it has been reverted.

Platform BIZ NL notice how there is an increasing amount of BIZs that turned dormant, not spending their collected budget. *“It should be the role of politics to confront BIZs of their responsibility, on the plan for which the money is collected”*¹⁰.

In this section, various reasons are mentioned why municipalities are increasingly enthusiastic to increase the amount of BIZs in their city. Different aspect of the BIZ-model match the increasingly neoliberal structure of the Dutch society, namely investing in public spaces using private funds and enhancing the competitive capacity of commercial areas against distant cities. Most of the largest Dutch cities have currently embraced the BIZ-model and encourage areas to install a BIZ, through subsidies or active promotion. Yet, not every city is evenly convinced of the positive effect of the BIZ-model, or are indifferent towards it. This has consequences for the configuration of the BIZ-model, since the subsidy allows initiators to hire the expertise of a consultant. Respondents commented multiple times on the effect of external expertise, particularly on strategical content.

4.2 External forces

This section presents the results of the interviews, covering the answers of the respondents regarding the external forces which shape BIZ-models. While section 4.1 seeks for forces from within cities themselves in explaining the production and reproduction of BIZ-models, this section discusses to what extent and how BIZ-model respond to external agency and neoliberal structures. As explained in section 3.3.2, this research is conducted as a single-case study with the addition of a relational disclaimer. As such, the research took the case of Amsterdam as a starting point of inquiry and consecutively moved to different Dutch municipalities and organizations which appeared to be of influence in shaping the Amsterdam BIZ-model.

This section covers and presentation and discussion of the results, as mentioned by respondents during the interviews. Whereas section 4.1 covered the variables that showed endogenous forces that led to variance within BIZ-models, here the forces are discussed that cause convergence within BIZ-model productions.

Economic forces

This section presents economic forces that were mentioned by respondents, as well as their impact on converging BIZ-model productions. Due to shifts in macro-spatial neoliberal institutes as well as the evolved shopping landscape, commercial areas are increasingly exposed to forces of competition. Such forces pressure entrepreneurs and real estate owners to cooperate and design BIZ-plans to prepare their areas for the future. This section concludes with a discussion of how these forces lead to increased convergence regarding the production of BIZ-models.

Platform De Nieuwe Winkelstraat explain how it was already predicted in 2005 that shopping areas and its entrepreneurs would get in trouble. New shopping areas were built in bulk, since there was no real competitiveness from the internet yet, the economic recession was yet to unfold and property value was easily earned back. The result is that different shopping areas across the Netherlands are competing heavily to maximize the amount of customers they can attract. The Platform think this is not the right way to solve this issue: *“Dutch municipalities are required to cooperate in enhancing their ‘hoofddetailhandelsstructuur’ (general retail structure) and figure out which shopping areas are worth investing in by the entrepreneurs, real estate owners and the municipality. In other words, the moment you set having a BIZ as a goal on its own, you completely forget the main exercise”*¹¹. Municipalities should position the BIZ within the planning framework. Areas with an operating BIZ help in attracting money and involvement, but these are not internal attributes of a BIZ: these arise from a certain challenge and urgency. Haags Retailpunt state that the shopping landscape has changed to such an extent that entrepreneurs cannot survive on their own.

Platform De Nieuwe Winkelstraat set out three main visions regarding BIZ-models in the Netherlands:

1. The need for money and using the BIZ to acquire these funds;
2. Acknowledgement that BIZ is also a component on fortifying retail structure.
3. The third vision is explained by picturing that each shopping area rests on a pyramid containing three layers. The pyramid's fundament consists of three components: level of organization and involvement from entrepreneurs; real estate owners and their capability to flexibly work according to market developments; and the municipality and its respective policy on economic affairs and spatial planning. The lower level of the pyramid represents managing the cooperation between the aforementioned three components; as well as a physical aspect: ensuring a strong shopping profile combined with low vacancy levels and a compact inner city structure. This requires shopping areas to invent an identity, which ultimately demands regional alignment: not every neighboring city can sell itself as a historical shopping district, since cities would compete too much internally which is harmful in the long run. The top of the pyramid covers digitalization, which translates to ‘de nieuwe winkelstraat’ (the modern shopping street). In this age of digitalization and e-commerce, entrepreneurs are required to keep consumers interested in shopping in their area.

To sum up, the BIZ can be used in order to raise funds and fortifying the retail structure, but also to fulfill the third vision, preparing inner cities for their battle against e-shopping. Inner city management Roermond similarly notice how consumers are increasingly making use of newest technologies. Platform De Nieuwe Winkelstraat argue that too rarely he sees shopping areas realize that the BIZ-model can be established for such ends. Inner city management Roermond remark that it is true that BIZ funds are invested heavily in physical

appearance of shopping streets, however they acknowledge an important force behind such investments: *“if they would not do so, they attract even less people to the city. They will say: ‘I will not go to that city for it is boring, it has not even installed proper Christmas lights”* ¹².

Stad&Co similarly underline that any BIZ should invest in the future: *“It’s an investment zone, not a method of check balance”* ¹³. For this reason, each area should form an agreement with its respective municipality on public interests. Both municipal and entrepreneurial investments in an area should not be two different independent sums, but should be fused into a single combined ambition. Stad&Co claim that BIZs are often a mere addition to municipal investments rather than a combined effort. In order to develop a BIZ to use it for activities like the third vision mentioned by Platform De Nieuwe Winkelstraat, municipalities are required to think integrally with entrepreneurs and real estate owners: not only on a finance level, but simultaneously on levels of spatial planning and specific functions of different shopping areas.

Stad&Co argue that economic perspective is the most important reason for people to participate in a BIZ: *“If I were to invest 1 euro in it, I want to have a return of 2 euro’s. At least, it should feel like that”* ¹⁴. However, they also note how BIZ-models often lack a quantification of goals. *“Activities are often vaguely described, like: ‘we will invest in public space’. I immediately believe them when the state they have done so, but goals are not written like: ‘we want to attract 10% more customers from Russia”* ¹⁵. On the other hand, they mention that BIZ-initiators cannot expect to realize massive change in their area, since it mostly consists of small levies ranging from €150 to €1000. The municipality of Rotterdam affirm the potential impact of the BIZ-model in an area should not be overestimated. Additionally, Stad&Co claim that BIZ effects are hardly quantifiable at all, since economic growth reports are very dependent on conjuncture and countless other variables. Furthermore, Haags retailpunt state that quantified goals are not really that important, since according to her, the nature of the BIZ is more a process rather than an end measurement. Stad&Co comments that sales increase should never be the main reason for entrepreneurs to start a BIZ: *“Entrepreneurs basically have a societal responsibility to invest in their shopping area”* ¹⁶.

Stad&Co explain how BIZs should constantly monitor their investments and adapt regularly to new developments. After a period of five years, a wide range of technological and urban developments will have emerged, which provides a new context demanding different investments. Ondernemersfonds Utrecht illustrate how to railway station of downtown Utrecht thoroughly examined the area and, considering market explorations, considered its position amongst competing areas. This examination formed the basis upon which developments for the coming few years were decided.

As of 2018, Amsterdam accommodates over 60 BIZs, which is a much larger amount than in other Dutch cities. The municipality of Rotterdam point out that it is easier for Amsterdam to establish new BIZs because of the city’s successfulness in terms of tourists and available funds. *“Rotterdam and Utrecht entrepreneurs have to work much harder, especially over the last few years (...) If you have to watch every penny, you will not vote for a BIZ in your area (...) It is true Amsterdam accommodate a lot of BIZs, however they are mostly situated in prosperous areas”* ¹⁷.

Real estate owners increasingly feel inclined to invest in the areas their properties are located in. Ondernemersfonds Utrecht notice how real estate owners more and more sit together with entrepreneurs and the municipality to invest in the city. *“Nevertheless, there is not some sort of hive-mind of: ‘we have to collectively prepare this area for the future’; some parties just think it is cool what is happening at the Zuid-As and do not even realize anymore what they are trying to solve with that”*¹⁸. Likewise, Platform binnenstadsmanagement notice how foreign real estate owners, notably in Sweden, Germany and the US, show a much stronger responsibility to invest in public space. This is a cultural difference which appears to be quite absent in the Netherlands. In areas that are not properly functioning, entrepreneurs are likely to move to another area. Contrarily, real estate owners are bound to their area and stay inactive. They are not involved, while they could benefit greatly from increased cooperation and investments in an area. However, Platform Binnenstadsmanagement notice a small tendency of improvement, since the financial crisis helped in underlining its urgency. Yet, there is still a huge discrepancy compared to their foreign counterparts. Moreover, involvement from the real estate sector helps in shaking up BIZ-discussions, since real estate owners are more inclined to focus on long term investments, while entrepreneurs are more likely to invest on short term timeframes.

This section presented the various economic reasons that agents in commercial areas increasingly opt for a BIZ. Neoliberal influences and processes of digitalization have thoroughly changed the Dutch shopping landscape, so that businesses are increasingly struggling to compete not only against other shopping districts, but simultaneously against the digital shopping environment. These forces pressure adjacent individual entrepreneurs to cooperate, since they can no longer survive on their own. Entrepreneurs and real estate owners are urged to improve the physical quality of their shopping area in order to match, if not surpass, the quality of both neighboring, distant and digital shopping environments. Such neoliberal forces of increasing private competitiveness constrain BIZ-models to develop activities that deviate from the mean, since only the larger BIZs have the budget capacities to develop strategic activities beyond basic physical investments. It is apparent that macro-spatial forces of neoliberal institutes have a convergent impact on the production of BIZ-models, since they BIZ-participants cannot design their BIZ-plan to deviate too much from the standard: that would cause the BIZ to fall behind other areas that do decide to invest in standard activities.

Governmental forces

This section explores the forces of convergence caused by governmental entities. Municipalities have a powerful capacity to decide the eventual configuration of BIZ-models, since they can stimulate and influence its production in the form of subsidies, information exchange and the municipalities’ planning development plans. As discussed in section 4.1, although different municipal contextual settings and mindsets have the capacity to alter BIZ-plans and produce deviations from the mean, at the same time they are simultaneously subject to macro-spatial forces that lead to convergence of BIZ-models.

Stad&Co experience that municipalities increasingly favor the BIZ-model over other types of entrepreneurial cooperation organizations. An important force behind this preference is that municipalities shun falling behind neighboring municipalities. The municipality of Rotterdam affirm that politicians regularly feel like Rotterdam should up the amount of BIZ in the city, for

they observe the great quantity of BIZs in Amsterdam. Yet, they mention that city councils are not fully aware of the success and potential of the BIZ-model and consequently reluctant to increase available funds for municipal BIZ ambitions. They explain how recently, the municipality of Rotterdam sent a delegation to Haags Retailpunt to gather information on BIZ practices. Rotterdam originally had a quite impartial attitude towards BIZ, however once they became aware of stories of success about BIZs in Amsterdam and The Hague, the municipality of Rotterdam desired to attract more BIZs in its city as well and reached out to The Hague for expertise. Likewise, business park management Venlo is often invited by other municipalities to share expertise on BIZ, for example: Weert, Maastricht and Gilze-Rijen. Contrarily, the municipality of Rotterdam reflects that contact with other cities is insufficient, due to lack of time and initiative: *“Everyone is focused on their area, their own city”*¹⁹.

While Dutch cities learn from each other, they similarly are open to innovations from other countries. Stad&Co explain how American BIDs operate on much larger budgets and how this is the result from a different contextual setting. In the US, taxes are lower than they are in the Netherlands, but as a consequence, American inhabitants are expected to invest in their shopping area to a greater extent themselves. Dutch entrepreneurs expect the Dutch government to provide a particular base level and is at most prepared to upgrade the attraction of their street. This setting limits BIZs in upgrading operational budget, since it would require thorough changes of the Dutch tax system. Ondernemersfonds Utrecht notice a withdrawal from municipal funds, while at the same time recognizing a growth of what entrepreneurs expect from their environment. There is a great tension building up from these two trends. Platform binnenstadsmanagement explain that the development of the BIZ-model was accelerated when the Dutch government displayed a withdrawal of resources.

BIZ Platform NL are convinced Dutch BIZs will not completely develop themselves into their American counterparts. The US is organized completely different, based on market-conform reasoning. Additionally, the Dutch government exerts much more control. Accordingly, if the Dutch BIZ-model would develop further, it will be based mostly on public-private partnerships. Both entrepreneurs and governments can profit from this, but it requires an active BIZ that is really keen to make such impact. Moreover, municipalities that cooperate in forming a BIZ-plan generate increased support. For this reason, they are convinced that governments are ought to inform entrepreneurs on BIZ and raise enthusiasm for the BIZ-models, since the majority of entrepreneurs are not fully aware of its benefits, or have not even heard of the BIZ-model.

To conclude, Dutch BIZ-models are subject to forces of convergence due to the municipality they are located in. Many municipalities choose to actively encourage increasing amounts of BIZs in their city and for this reason supply them with information or guidelines on developing a BIZ-plan. This information is partially shaped by forces of convergence, mostly due to information exchange between cities. Municipalities are aware of distant cities' successes and are open to learn from them. They actively exchange information with each other and are proud to present best-practices. This has consequences for the attitude of the municipality versus the BIZ-model and alters the way they envision and ideal-type BIZ. However, it was mentioned multiple times that these forces are rather weak and that such information sharing practices occur somewhat infrequently. There is also little evidence to

support that municipalities that explore BIZ-model developments in other cities actually lead to changes on how a city handles BIZs.

Epistemic communities of experts

While the former section focused on municipal forces of convergence, this section explores how epistemic communities operating in the BIZ-field figure as knowledge networks and how they facilitate the transfer of experience and innovation on BIZ-model production.

Many platforms and organizations operating in the field of BIZ regularly meet to exchange information, experiences or new innovations. The consultancy firm of Stad&Co indicates intensive contact with InRetail, Platform 31, ShoppingTomorrow and HvA. InRetail is active in bringing knowledge together by cooperating with real estate advisors, professionals and experts. In this way, they form a knowledge network and organize meetings. This knowledge is then bundled and made ready to use for policy creators and entrepreneurial organizations. For instance, these parties recently worked together to write a book on inner city cooperation, BIDs and BIZs. In this light, BIZ Platform NL tell how the Dutch BIZ Platform aims to be the knowledge center for Dutch BIZs. They illustrate how some BIZs are developed further than other areas, which provides knowledge applicable to other areas.

Another important knowledge hub on inner city management is Retailplatform Brabant. Inner city management Roermond explain how traditionally, the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (Kamer van Koophandel, KvK) invested huge amounts of energy and subsidies in initiating city center management initiatives. In 2014 however, the KvK had to withdraw their resources due to budget cuts and reorganization issues. This resulted in the loss of a vast network of inner city management experts congregated by the KvK, which regularly met to exchange information and new developments. With the withdrawal of KvK, Brabant inner city managers decided to establish their own network for knowledge exchange.

There is a varying range of ways knowledge on BIZ and other entrepreneurial funds disperses across space. Ondernemersfonds Utrecht illustrate how Kjeld Vosjan traveled all across the Netherlands to explain the Utrecht ondernemersfonds model. Furthermore, when questioned why such a large quantity of Roermond and Venlo BIZs are situated in business parks, it is considered by both that it might be a coincidental occurrence, yet they pondered it could be because of regional interpersonal communication.

Stad&Co underline that since the BIZ-model is quite new, it is a model that is still under organic development. They illustrate this by explaining how the original experimental BIZ-law was focused heavily on the physical appearance of public space. However, agents operating in the BIZ-field in togetherness provided feedback on the experimental law. Taking the feedback into account, when the law was transformed into a permanent law, the model provided much more options for promotional activities. Business park management Roermond comment that the BIZ permanent law is consciously constructed loosely, which enables each BIZ to be free to address needs that suits their area best.

HISA assert that cross-fertilization of knowledge and expertise is crucial to a fruitful development of BIZ-models. *"I think it is important to not exclusively operate in Utrecht, but in Amsterdam as well"* ²⁰. They are convinced that experiences in one city help in (re-

)shaping BIZ-models in other cities as well. In this light, inner city management Roermond explain how the railway station areas of downtown Utrecht decided to bundle their forces and how they consider the Amsterdam Zuid-As as an exemplary best practice. For similar reasons, HISA explain that although the majority of Amsterdam BIZs are established under guidance of Stad&Co, it is crucial for healthy BIZ-model development that other parties operate in Amsterdam as well.

Various respondents indicate cooperating with students in order to enhance knowledge on inner city management. The municipality of Eindhoven acknowledge the value of student expertise and regularly encourages projects like field labs in order to experiment with various innovative ideas. HvA (Amsterdam graduate school) is one institution that is frequently mentioned as a source of inquiry. The municipality of Rotterdam illustrate how a group of student councils, the Young Advisory Group, recently performed an evaluation of BIZ-models in the Randstad and presented its results to the municipality of Rotterdam. The outcomes of this research encouraged Rotterdam to reach out to The Hague to congregate new knowledge.

Stad&Co add that BIZs learn a lot from each other and are keen to copy best practices, even though stories of success or not always based on factual results. Ondernemersfonds Utrecht mention that they actively promotes best-practices in the ondernemersfonds' newsletter. Nevertheless, Stad&Co explain how stories of success are more likely to be shared by BIZ-participants than failures, which skews the perception of successful BIZs. Furthermore, Haags Retailpunt comment that practices which are successful in one city are not automatically applicable to other cities. Business park management Roermond similarly note how providing other municipalities of BIZ-expertise can be limited at times, since for each city the relationship between the government and private actors is different. Inner city management Roermond similarly explains that entrepreneurial skills vary and differ in level across different municipalities and areas. BIZ Platform NL conclude that in the future, multiple variants of BIZ-models will most likely emerge.

In contrast to municipal forces, networks of epistemic communities, such as consultant companies and knowledge centers, appear to have a much greater converging impact on the production of BIZ-models. In particular, the fact that experts on BIZ-model production are often active in different areas or cities, leads to increased similarities between different BIZs. Experiences and stories of success in one area travel to other spaces and influence how the configuration of a BIZ-model. Additionally, knowledge from different companies and networks are collected and bundled, and consecutively spread to different areas. All these processes have an incredible impact on how the ideal BIZ-model should look like and have a great convergent impact on its productions.

5. Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusion, in which the research question is addressed in order to achieve the research objective. An implication of the results will be discussed in chapter 6: discussion.

This chapter opens with section 5.1, which reintroduces the main research question in order to explain what exactly this conclusion is trying to achieve. Section 5.2 is comprised of two components, each addressing the results of both sub questions. This chapter concludes in section 5.3, which addresses the main research question.

5.1 Opening conclusion

In chapter 1, it is described how Anglo-Saxon BIDs emerged in a political-economical context of austerity and subsequent demand to raise local funds for commercial area development. Since the BIZ-model has recently found its way to the Netherlands, it raises questions if they are established for similar reasons. Additionally, there is a great variance of BIZ-models in the Netherlands, even within the same city. It was concluded gaining insights in the forces behind the production and reproduction of Dutch BIZ-models would enhance knowledge on the subject and might serve to fully achieve its potential. From this exercise, the main research question of this thesis emerged:

'What forces shape the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities?'

In order to break down this research question, theory on policy production has been explored to understand how neoliberal policies are produced. The theoretical framework supporting this issue was found in Brenner et al. (2009), which provide a dual conceptualization of variegation. In this framework, it is maintained how policy transfer is both subject to forces found within local specific contexts on one hand, while on the other these productions are governed by macro spatial neoliberal institutional frameworks. Although both these conceptualizations are opposite to one another, they are both indispensable in uncovering the forces behind policy production. Subsequently, the research question was transposed in two sub questions, each addressing one of the conceptualizations.

5.2 Conclusion per sub question

5.2.1 The role of local-specific contexts

The first conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207) refers to the uneven development of neoliberalization. With this conception they address theories of institutional convergence. Academics of this school either anticipate a process of convergence leading to a global

neoliberal monoculture, or reduce capitalism to a bipolar rendition of either the Keynesian coordinated economy or the Anglo-Saxon liberal economy. Such approaches uphold a 'static, methodological national and uniformly territorialist taxonomies of the VoC [varieties of capitalism, ed.] approach' (p. 188). Contrary to this, Brenner et al. (2009) make different observations: rather, the extent of neoliberal forces are to be conceived as spatially heterogeneous and temporally discontinuous. There appears to be a multitude of different regulatory frameworks, contending the varieties of capitalism approach of converging neoliberal practices.

This first conceptualization of policy transfer forms the basic assumption of the first sub question: '*What is the role of the local-specific institutional context in shaping the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities?*'. These preeminent local-specific contexts explain the emergence of uneven developed neoliberalist policies. Section 4.1 presents the results which were inquired when confronting various respondents operating in the BIZ field of expertise about the effect of such local-specific institutional contexts in the production and reproduction of BIZ-models.

The neoliberal BIZ, product of convergence

The first sub-question refers to the conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009) that counters forces of convergence caused by macro-spatial neoliberal frameworks. Starting from theories of convergence, it would be expected that every BIZ would more or less correspond to a particular ideal-type, a specific configuration of variables that would fit best in a neoliberal economic and political context. Such a BIZ would be of a large size, so it can gather a vast sum to invest in its environment, promotion and events. Additionally, its activities would consist of strategical, long-term investments that contribute to a pre-researched and well-defined ambition. Furthermore, entrepreneurs and real estate owners all invest equally in a commercial area, share a common vision and spend their resources accordingly. Lastly, the municipality in which the BIZ is located has a solid grasp on the area's unique capacities and the potential of the BIZ-model, and is willing to co-invest accordingly.

However, the theoretical ideal-type BIZ is a product of an imaginary neoliberal vacuum. Data from interviews with respondents has frequently demonstrated how BIZs have numerous reasons why they cannot correspond to such an ideal-type. Various endogenous, local-specific forces have an impact on an area's capacities, making it implausible to construct a BIZ-model that would totally respect a neoliberal framework. Additionally, economic reasoning of revenue increase is not the sole reasons that groups choose to erect a BIZ in their area.

Towards a framework of BIZ-model variegation

Section 4.1 provides an overview of most frequently mentioned variables by which BIZ-model productions differ from the neoliberal ideal type. It is clear that BIZ-models are strongly mediated by the area which they are based in. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the first conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009) holds up in the situation of BIZ-model production. The models do not develop evenly across space, but are variegated by different preeminent local-specific contexts through which they are mediated. This also illustrated by the various respondents that explain how best-practices of BIZ-models cannot be simply

copy-pasted in different areas. Various endogenous forces, such as the minds of local BIZ-participants, physical appearance and specific area's most urgent needs, differ across space. The result of these endogenous forces is a large variance between different Dutch BIZ-models, most notably in terms of size, sorts of activities and types of participating actors.

Given these variables, it is possible to formulate different types of BIZs, each different in the amount of impact they have on the environment they are located in. The different variables of each type do not necessarily have to coexist: for instance, there are selections of small-scale BIZs that participate in activities that serve a thoroughly examined ambitions, similarly, there are examples of large BIZs that only execute activities that lack a powerful impact. However, generally speaking the following types of BIZ-models can be deduced:

Type 1 - Low impact

- Size: BIZs of the first type are generally smaller BIZs. In the case study of Amsterdam, BIZs as small as 20 entrepreneurs can be found. These BIZs are mostly limited in size due feelings of inclusion and exclusion. People feel attached to their direct environment and are unwilling to invest in areas that are not part of their imaginary demarcation. People of different areas similarly have different mentalities and ambitions, which makes it hard to formulate a single BIZ-plan. However, these choices have consequences for the level of impact a BIZ has on its environment, since BIZs with small amount of participants have to operate on a smaller budget.
- Activities: BIZs of the first type do not invest in long-term strategic investments, but choose to spend their budget on physical improvements (such as cleaner streets, festive lights and improved safety), some area promotion (through social media) as well as some small-scale events (market fairs or Sinterklaas-festivities). These activities can also contain city services that are not satisfactorily executed by the municipality. Such investments are not intended to attract long-term investments, nor do they address a well-defined ambition and vision. They are mostly executed to simply improve the pleasantness of an area. Additionally, entrepreneurs mostly lack the proper knowledge and expertise to choose a fitting ambition and design their BIZ-model to respond to such an ambition. Therefore, unless they are aided by an external expert, they can be unaware of missing potential of the added value of the BIZ-model. Finally, the impact of activities can be limited by lack of proper willpower to invest resources (time, budget and energy) in the respective area.
- Participants: Typically, BIZs of the first type are both initiated and operated by entrepreneurs. Real estate owners have multiple reasons for being hesitant to contribute to the BIZ-levy: first, there is a mismatch between the ambitions of the entrepreneurs and of the real estate owner, creating a tension that makes it hard to unify their budgets into a single BIZ-plan; second, real estate owners are often uncertain of the potential added value of a BIZ in their area; and third, many properties are owned by large, (inter-)nationally operating real estate investors and are subject to board who decide where money is spent, leaving little room to set aside money to invest in the BIZ. The exclusion of real estate owners in a BIZ can be problematic, since it basically means the available budget is cut in half. This seriously hampers the capacity of a BIZ to upscale the ambitions and therefore limits its potential impact.

- Role of the municipality: Lack of municipal support can seriously hinder the level of impact a BIZ can achieve. BIZs are often reliant of municipal subsidies in order to hire external expertise, which is crucial to the design of a BIZ-model. External experts can help the BIZ in examining its potential and develop a corresponding ambition, which they can achieve by choosing adequate strategical activities. Additionally, there can be a mismatch between the cities' vision of commercial areas and what the BIZ-participants hope to achieve with it. In this case, the potential impact of the BIZ type 1 is reduced for the tension between the different parties.

Type 2 – Medium to high impact

- Size: BIZs of the second type can be found in spaces with a larger area of shared emotions of inclusion, making it easier to gather a large amount of participants. They can also be the product of long periods of finding common grounds between at first sight conflicting interests. It requires a lot more time and energy to create a large BIZ, however the result is a much larger budget to operate on. This has a positive effect on the level of impact a BIZ can have on its area.
- Activities: In order to realize a large impact on the area, the available budget has to be spend on the right activities. This is achieved by a prior investigation to the area's identity, capacities and potential impact. External consultants are often hired to help in finding the right vision and ambition. Subsequently, the budget is spend not strategic activities that are focused on achieving long-term goals. Such activities consist of promotional efforts that target specific desired groups, creating a desired identity, attracting investments from external parties and spatial development in cooperation with governmental entities.
- Participants: In order to achieve an higher impact on the area, a BIZ needs to consist of both entrepreneurs and real estate owners. The success of an area does not solely start with the entrepreneurs: in order to really upgrade an area's purchasing power, it requires a thorough cooperation between every agent that is operating in that area. In BIZs of the second type, entrepreneurs and real estate owners are unified in a single BIZ: not only in collective funds, but also in terms of shared ambitions and common interests.
- Role of the municipality: With BIZs of the second type, the municipality is aware of the potential of the BIZ-model and is willing to help an area achieve such potential through the BIZ. Governments support the production of a BIZ-plan by granting a subsidy, which allows the participants to hire an external consultant. Additionally, such funds allow the initiators of the BIZ to invest in a proper preparation of the BIZ-plan, for example looking for common grounds amongst participants and selecting the right ambitions and activities.

Type 3 – Neighborhood to city-wide impact

- Size: While the size of BIZs of the first and second type are limited to a single or a collection of neighboring streets, BIZs of the third type encompass whole neighborhoods or even complete inner cities. Cities that operate with the Leidse Model, although it technically differs from a BIZ, even include the municipality as a whole into a single investment zone. Although BIZs of the third type manage to generate very large sums to invest in their area, it requires long processes of negotiation and research, which takes a tremendous amount of time, budget, energy and coordination.

- Activities: Since BIZs of the third type comprise a very large area, the available budget has to be allocated somewhat evenly across the different areas. This means that some activities that are executed in one place do not take place in others, since it might fit particular areas better. Additionally, in order to achieve long-term strategic goals, it may be required to make sacrifices: to increase the capacity of the area as a whole, it might be required to give priority to certain parts of the BIZ that appear to have the most potential. This might mean that certain areas receive a smaller share of the total budget, in order to invest more in spaces that would benefit the most. The idea is that investing in particular spaces will raise the competitive capacity of the area as a whole, so that all areas will benefit in the long run. This is an important reason why BIZs of the third type are rare in the Netherlands: they require enormous amounts of trust and willingness to invest in long term strategic activities.
- Participants: Since BIZs of the third type consist of very large areas, their presence of the BIZ in that area is more defined. These levels of size and impact can only be achieved when every type of participant in the area is active in the BIZ, meaning both entrepreneurs and real estate owners cooperatively invest in the area. Furthermore, in the case of the Leidse Model, municipal properties are additionally included as levy-payers. This means that they also cooperate in investing in the area. The larger the amount of people in an area that is involved in a BIZ, the higher its potential to make a true impact on the area.
- Role of the municipality: BIZs of the third type generate large amounts of budget and therefore have increased capacity to impact their area of operation. This requires high levels of coordination, which is hard to achieve with single groups of entrepreneurs or even powerful real estate owners. In most cases, it requires extensive municipal involvement in the initiative process of the BIZ. The municipality can serve as a negotiating medium between different groups that operate in the area, or, in the case of the Leids Model, demonstrate the political willpower to obligate every single commercial actor in the city to participate in the BIZ.

Type 4 – Absence or failure to install a BIZ

- Size: The size of a BIZ can often be a reason why a BIZ is failed to be installed in an area. In some cases, the amount of entrepreneurs that want to initiate a BIZ is simply too small to successfully produce a BIZ. In such cases, the municipality can even advise against the start-up process of a BIZ, since they can tell from experience that it is often wasted energy. They are better off by just creating a common pool of funds, instead of putting up with the time-consuming bureaucratic procedures that are involved with the BIZ-model. Contrarily, BIZs can also fail to be installed when the selected size is too large. A larger area also means that there are more people that will be forced to pay the BIZ-levy, which can become problematic if the interests or ambitions vary too much amongst them and it turns out to be too hard to find common grounds. This is countering neoliberalist forces of convergence, since those would call for large-sized BIZs in order to raise competitive capacities.
- Activities: One reason a BIZ fails to be installed in an area, is when the selected activities do not speak to the minds of the voting public. For instance, the activities might not match the identity of the area and consequently the constituency does not want to pay a levy. In the case of the neoliberal BIZ ideal-type, the BIZ is focused on long-term strategic investments that increase the economic capacity of the area. However,

constituents of an area may not be in favor of such activities and would rather limit to small-scale, basic activities of physical improvement or events.

- Participants: BIZs can fail if one party is reluctant to cooperate in the BIZ. Examples are cases where entrepreneurs are eager to erect a BIZ in the area, yet only want to push it if real estate owners also participate in paying the levy. However, when they decide on creating a combined BIZ (a BIZ that consists of both entrepreneurs and real estate owners), the BIZ-poll will fail if one of the two parties votes against the BIZ in too large amounts.
- Role of the municipality: Not every city is equally aware or convinced of the potential added value of the BIZ-model. Additionally, municipalities can lack funds to properly support parties that wish to initiate a BIZ. Furthermore, the spatial planning visions of the municipality can differ greatly from the ambitions of the BIZ-initiators. Consequently, although the BIZ-model suits perfectly in neoliberal context, there can be various endogenous municipal forces that hinder the construction of a BIZ in a particular area.

In this section, a framework was presented that attempted to differentiate between types of BIZs. These types were based on endogenous variables that vary from what could be expected from a theoretical neoliberal ideal-type BIZ, or even prevent the installment of a BIZ at all. Section 5.2.2 will discuss the existence of certain commonalities between BIZs, caused by macro-spatial neoliberal forces that cause a certain convergence between the different varieties of BIZ-models.

5.2.2 External forces

The second conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009: p. 207) refers to the neoliberalization of uneven development. With this conception, they address governmentality approaches. Academics of this school disregard the varieties of capitalism analytic of neoliberalization as a national regime structure. According to them, policy production is regarded as a more randomized, fluid circulation of experiments, devoid of structuralist explanations. Neoliberalization is understood as an accumulation of context-specific, unique projects and experimentation of unstructured contingency. Contrary to this, Brenner et al. (2009) observe 'macrospatial frameworks and interspatial circulatory systems in which local regulatory projects unfolds' (p. 202).

This second conceptualization forms the basic assumption of the second sub question: '*What is the role of external forces in shaping the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in Dutch cities?*'. These external forces explain why policy experimentation does not emerge in a contingent, unstructured order. The presence of neoliberal commonalities between different BIZ-models throughout different cities confirm the existence of macrospatial neoliberal institutional frameworks, which continually govern the production and reproduction of BIZ policy models. Additionally, Dobbin et al. (2008) set out four main forces which drive policy production: coercion, competition, learning and emulation (section 2.2.3). In the following sections, these forces will be used to framework the data that was inquired from interviews with respondents, in order to structure the findings and examine what particular instances of neoliberalism cause convergence amongst BIZ-models.

Forces of coercion

There was little to no evidence in coercion the production of BIZ-models. Since the BIZ-model is designed to be the product of the private agents operating in that area, it would be strange to encounter forces of coercion in this light. There are particular instances in which the municipality is the main initiator of the BIZ, for strategical reasons, however these were never forced upon them and are always on a voluntary basis.

Forces of competition

Economic perspective is a more important reason for people to participate in a BIZ. Due to competition from the internet and the economic recession, shopping areas across the Netherlands are competing heavily to maximize the amount of customers. The shopping landscape has changed to an extent that entrepreneurs cannot survive on their own and have to cooperate in order to collectively invest in their shopping area. The BIZ-model has the capability to raise funds for fortifying the retail structure, or even in preparing shopping areas to challenge new digital shopping landscapes. However, since most BIZ funds consist of marginal levies, its potential impact should not be overestimated. Furthermore, most BIZs limit their investments to very basic physical improvements and small-scale promotional activities. In this manner, even though the BIZ-model has the capacity to make thorough long-term investments in order to be able to compete within the evolved shopping landscape, most BIZs invest in short-term direct improvements. Although this hinders the potential impact of the BIZ-model, BIZ participants feel inclined to take up on these basic activities, since if they would abstain from doing so, they would fall behind other areas and cities that actually invest in those basic activities.

Here, neoliberal forces of competition are pronounced in their converging effect. Shopping areas have increasingly observed fewer visitors and are consequently progressively competitive with other shopping areas. Since a BIZ provides an area with funds and cooperative power to differentiate itself from other areas, commercial areas find themselves forced to establish a BIZ, in order to survive in the current retail climate. These BIZ funds are used on activities which are commonly found in BIZ. The most commonly addressed issues are public safety, festive lights, street cleaning, small-scale promotional activities and single events. However, these activities are expensive and since most BIZs operate on a relatively small budget, provide little room to upscale to more strategical and long-term investments.

Forces of learning

BIZs have to constantly monitor their activities and adapt regularly to new developments. Every few years, a wide range of technological and urban developments emerge, which provides a new context demanding a different allocation of resources. A thorough market exploration helps in considering an area's position versa its competitors. Nevertheless, not every BIZ-participant invests in the BIZ because of economic gains. Some are just in awe of what is happening in distant areas and try to copy these successes. Additionally, not every party is convinced of economic gains that can be achieved with the BIZ-model. Especially real estate owners are still somewhat reluctant to invest in their direct environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that forces of learning amongst BIZ-participants are not particularly strong. It is true that there are examples of BIZs that try to copy each other's successes and actively look for best practices, however most BIZs either formulate a plan

that suits their own area best, or are informed by an external experts that was hired to help in designing the BIZ-plan.

Similarly, governmental entities show ambition to learn from other each other. Respondents provided different instances of inter-urban networks in which they actively share knowledge, innovations and experiences. In chapter 4, there were different examples in which municipalities copied each other's best practices, notably how Rotterdam copied the design of the 'kwartiermaker' from The Hague. However, the translation of municipality learning exercises into actual altered BIZ-models appears rather small. Municipalities are not commonly actively involved into the BIZ-model production, which is mostly executed by the BIZ-initiators themselves or by help of external expertise. Municipalities can host information session or set up guidelines to indirectly stimulate particular forms of BIZ-model productions, but do not exercise strong forces that lead to large forms of convergence amongst BIZ-models.

Forces of emulation

The most influential force of convergence appears to be of emulation, which is described by Dobbin et al. (2008) as a process in which 'epistemic communities of experts may act as missionaries facilitating the transfer of policy ideas' (p. 353). Since the BIZ-model is a relatively young phenomenon in the Netherlands, it is subjected heavily to organic development. The BIZ law is consciously constructed loosely, enabling each BIZ to be free to address needs that suits their area best. Yet, BIZ-models do not emerge out of a vacuum. There are often many parties involved in the construction of a newly initiated BIZ, which brings together the different expertises, knowledge and experiences these parties gained when they were operating on different project across space. Since a large variance of BIZ-experts of different backgrounds are involved in the establishment of different BIZs, there exists a great amount of cross-fertilization of knowledge and expertise. Consequently, experiences in one city have a hand in (re-)shaping BIZ-models in different cities as well. These parties frequently meet and have established a wide range of knowledge networks. This knowledge is then bundled and made ready to use for policy creators, civil servants and various kinds of BIZ initiators. Some agents even go as far as traveling throughout the country in order to explain their ways of operation to cities across space. Additionally, BIZ-experts visit other areas or cities and even travel abroad to look for counsel or share knowledge and experiences on BIZ practices. There are also indications that knowledge on BIZ-models travels across space through regional interpersonal communication. This can partly be explained by the observation that many knowledge networks are operate on a regional level. In addition to professional BIZ-experts, the BIZ-model is influenced by academic resources as well. Respondents frequently mentioned commonly working together with students from various universities and schools in order to enhance their knowledge of the BIZ-model and to perform experimental projects. However, it should be noted that knowledge exchange of BIZ-models is likely to be heavily subjected to bias. Stories of success are much more likely to be exchanged then failures, which is likely to skew people's perception of the potential of the BIZ-model.

The knowledge that these experts gather and share is of great influence in BIZ-model production. Most BIZ-initiators consist of a handful of entrepreneurs with very little expertise and know-how to design an adequate BIZ-plan, since they lack a proper understanding of

area management. For this reason, they can hire an external consultant who is vastly more experienced in such matters. These experts are not operating in 1 single BIZ, but are often coming from a company that has established and managed several private investments zones, both within in the same city as well as in other Dutch places. For this reason, experiences and stories of success from one place travel to another place. Although every space is unique and each single BIZ-model requires alterations to fit the new context, there are strong forces of convergence apparent that are both consciously and unconsciously exercised by these groups of experts.

Implications for neoliberal theory

The result from these external forces show that BIZ-models do not completely emerge in a contingent, random manner, but are governed by various neoliberal forces which structure the way these models are developed. Forces of emulation and competition appeared to be the most influential in their converging effect on BIZ-model production, whereas forces of learning were less pronounced and forces of coercion even appeared to be absent. The way in which these policy ideas are spread are similar to how Ward (2006) explains it, since he argues that policy creation is not an accident, but rather a reflection of diffusion channels and networks that facilitate particular sorts of policies. Consequently, neoliberal policies do not bull-dozer across space in an organized, coercive manner, but are highly subject to geographical processes. Neoliberal forces spread deliberately through networks of epistemic communities of experts and are not forced upon its subjects. Even with forces of competition, BIZ-participants still have large degrees of freedom in deciding what activities and strategies they want to take on to increase their competitive capacities. Wards' inclusion of relationality (2010) in his works provides further explanations for the highly geographical nature of policy exchange, since urban spaces function as hubs through which neoliberal flows are both constituted and mediated. This research made clear that developments in BIZ-models require urban spaces as places of experimentation and that these models are not the product of pre-calculated optimized neoliberal configurations.

Additionally, it is apparent that neoliberal forces of convergence exert much less influence of the production of BIZ-models. Respondents commented numerously on the small size of BIZ-models, lack of strategic activities and weak involvement of real estate owners. This contrasts largely from what could be expected from a theoretical BIZ that would correspond best to neoliberal principles. Within BIZ-models, there appears to be large amounts of variances. The BIZ-model is mostly only indirectly used for revenue-enhancing reasoning and most BIZ-participants are content with basic improvements of their direct environment, as well as the organization of small-scale events and promotional activities. Regarding the dual conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009) of variegated neoliberalism, it can be concluded that the influence of local-specific endogenous forces appears to be much larger than neoliberal forces of convergence. The amount of BIZs that is able or even willing to achieve a large size, activities that involve strategic long-term investments and that are able to include real estate owners, is limited.

5.3 Final conclusion

The final section of the conclusion responds to the main research question by interconnecting the two sub questions which were dealt with in section 5.2. In chapter 1 and

section 5.1, it is explained how forces behind the production and reproduction of BIZ-models in the Netherlands can be described with a dual conceptualization of policy production, one which simultaneously assumes external forces while taking in account the local-specific context.

The research applied a single case study methodology in order to uncover the forces behind Dutch BIZ-model production. It was argued in section 3.3.2 how BIZs located in the city of Amsterdam would serve as an example of how BIZ-models are manipulated by various forces. The respondents operating in the field of BIZ specified an extensive array of varying local specific-forces through which BIZ-models are strongly mediated. This is an important reason why BIZ-models do not develop evenly across space. Endogenous forces, such as the mindset of local BIZ-participants, physical appearance and specific needs of different areas are vastly uneven across space. Forces of this kind explain why BIZ-models exhibit a wide range of variegation in terms of size, activities, ambitions and participants.

Contrarily, various external forces were observed which indicate how BIZ-models are strongly subject to forces which transcend endogenous processes. BIZ-models do not emerge in a wildly randomized contingent order, completely differentiated for every single area or city, but are subject to structuralist interpretations. As elaborated in section 5.2, various diffusive mechanisms channel policy transfer between various agents operating in different settings, areas and cities. This enables a particular level of emulation between different BIZ-models, which are influenced by various epistemics of different parties from different companies and municipalities, exchanging knowledge during cooperative processes. Similarly, BIZ-models learn from best-practices portrayed by distant BIZs. Additionally, it was discussed how economic forces subject BIZ-models to a certain level of neoliberalization, grounded in the progressively competitive position of shopping areas versa their counterparts both within the same city and those in distant municipalities. These external forces demonstrate a particular level of structure to the production of BIZ-models.

Answering the main research question is an attempt to combine the two different types forces represented by the two sub questions. The fundamental argument behind the dual conceptualization of Brenner et al. (2009) indicates that policies are not solely the production of contextual settings nor external forces, but are simultaneously mediated by both. In other words, although both types of forces seem opposing at first, they are two sides of the same coin. The result is the production of BIZ-models which are established for competitive reasoning and designed by experts that share a common pool of knowledge; while simultaneously showing significant alterations in size, activities, participants and a differing role of the municipality that act as a counter force against the neoliberal forces of convergence. It is apparent that BIZs of the first category (section 5.2.1) are less subject to neoliberal forces than BIZs with higher levels of impact. Local-specific endogenous forces, such as unwillingness to cooperate with neighboring streets or refraining from strategical long-term investments, appear to be sufficiently strong there that they deviate from the theoretical neoliberal ideal-type BIZ.

Each of these BIZ-types provide room for different capacities and possibilities, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter. In this chapter, it was attempted to answer the sub questions and the main research question. This chapter is based on the results presented in

chapter 4. However, the resulting answers open doors to various interpretations and implications. These will be discussed in chapter 6.

6. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the results and consequent conclusions as presented in chapter 4 and 5. The chapter will open with section 6.1, which discusses the validity of this research. It will explain how this research was conducted and how the process and methodology are expected to deliver valid results. The chapter will then move on to section 6.2, which covers a discussion of research results. This sections reviews the results and conclusions of the research and links it to the research question. Section 6.2.1 discusses to what extent the results correspond to the preliminary research questions, as well as a consideration in how far the results were to be expected. Section 6.2.2 then moves on to a consideration of new valuable new insights of the given results to the current debate and developments of the research topic. The chapter concludes with section 6.3, which takes up on the discussion of the results and argues in what ways they serve to form recommendations for future research.

6.1 Validity

This section serves to show how the research methods and process represent correct information and consequently if it is subject to particular form of systematical errors, or bias. Systematical errors hinder the validity of claimed results and therefore should be considered carefully prior to the discussion of research results and related implications.

Concerning the validity of chosen concepts which were used to form the research questions, an important aspect must be addressed. The concepts which form the backbone of the research are derived from academic literature heavily rooted in a predominantly neoliberalist perspective. The main reason for this approach is that international literature on BIDs argue that the emergence of BIDs can be explained as a product of neoliberal forces of privatization and fragmentation, amongst others. Didier et al. (2013) provide an overview of key approaches used for analyzing the BID model, which they claim 'are heavily rooted in the debate on "neoliberal urbanization", where BIDs appear emblematic of the multi-faceted process of national and local institutional change, as generated by the adoption of neoliberal principles and practices at the urban scale' (p. 122). While neoliberal approaches certainly appear to provide a sound explanation of the emergence of the BID-model, its neoliberalist classification should not be taken for granted. As mentioned in section 2.1, there are various authors (e.g. Rankin & Delaney, 2011) who challenge using neoliberal explanations for every BID event or procedure. To increase the validity of the research, although the general concepts and research questions are extracted from neoliberal literature, the neoliberal nature of the results is never taken for granted and interviews were conducted very open and loosely structured, in order to provide room for stories and ideas of different ideological strands. Empirical inquiry determined how stories on Dutch BIDs should be conceived, with the neoliberal notions as set out in the theoretical framework serving as a general structure for how the results can be organized.

Additionally, it is argued in chapter 3 how interviews should be conducted semi-structured in order to provide space for supplementary information by interview respondents. Since the BIZ-model is a relatively new phenomenon in the Netherlands and academic literature is quite divided through what lens the BID-model should be conceived, it is an important

practice to grant respondents the opportunity to interpret the BIZ-model in an unrestricted conversation. Similarly, the research was conducted without selecting exact respondents or case demarcations in mind. Given the relational methodological approach, it would be unwise to forcefully demarcate case boundaries or select respondents a priori, since network connections are hard to predict beforehand. For this reason, new respondents were selected based on previous data collection from earlier interviews. It is argued in chapter 3 how the municipality of Amsterdam would serve best as a prime case study in order to study the Dutch BIZ-model, with the addition of developments of BIZ-models outside of Amsterdam which affect interurban developments as well. Additionally, since Dutch academic research on BIZ-models is fairly insufficient, developing a very structured interview would limit potential additional information which might have been overlooked.

The research method mentioned above also has implications for the repeatability of the research. In other words, if the research was to be conducted again by another researcher, it would show similar results. Here, it has to be noted that another researcher would perhaps chose to interview different respondents and therefore might end up with altered results. However, since stories provided by different respondents throughout the country show a large degree of similarity, the likelihood that another set of respondents would result in a largely different conclusion diminishes.

Furthermore, although the prime case study of the research was the municipality of Amsterdam, various respondents operating in the BIZ-field exceeded the municipal boundaries of Amsterdam and therefore the results are based on experiences from all over the country. This aspect adds to the possibility of generalizing the results to increase knowledge of the BIZ-model, with the conclusions applying for the Netherlands as a whole.

Finally, the internship conducted with the BIZ-team of the municipality of Amsterdam provided an excellent opportunity to experience the daily practice of BIZ-model developments in real time. It aided in increasing the validity of this research, since dry theoretical matter derived from academic resources could be put to the test by experiences in the practical field. First, it enabled increased access to key figures of the BIZ-process which made it possible to unravel the network behind the production of BIZ-models. This greatly helped in deciding on the correct interview respondents to get the research as complete as possible. Second, it provided an opportunity to directly and elaborately consult with people operating in the BIZ-field, which led to a discussion of both the contents, results and methodology of the research, both before and during the research period.

6.2 Discussion of research results

This chapter covers a discussion the research results presented in chapter 4 and subsequent conclusions assembled in chapter 5. Section 6.2.1 provides an explanation of these results, were it is reviewed to what extent the results could be expected given the research questions, the methodological approach and the theoretical framework of this research. Section 6.2.2 builds on the previous discussion to explore new insights provided by this research.

6.2.1 Explanation of results

An explanation of the results can be partially be found in theory that describes the emergence of BID-like models as a new regionalist phenomena. Cities are subject to an institutional shift with increasing local competitiveness, higher economic uncertainty and major budget cuts from the state. Consequently, both power and responsibility of cities have experienced a relative increase compared to a few decades ago. It was mentioned by various respondents how the bulk of the BIZ-budgets is first and foremost spent to address basic needs. Given the different institutional and physical configuration of each different city, they all have unique and different needs. While some areas regard their street cleaning and maintenance as inadequate, others are not content with the appearance of their street and try to upgrade it through physical improvements, such as festive lights and flower patches. This is an important factor in explaining the variance of the Dutch BIZ-models and therefore confirms the role of the local-specific context. In chapter 4, it is shown how BIZ-models vary largely in terms of size, activities, participants et cetera. These deviances from the theoretical neoliberal ideal-type can be explained by the different physical, economic and social configuration of each street or area a BIZ is operating in.

It is discussed in chapter 2 how Ward (2006) argues that policy creation is strongly mediated by actions and strategies. Such strategies were very apparent given the conversations with the research respondents. Both municipal and private parties agree on the powerful influence of consultant companies in shaping BIZ-models. Since BIZ-participants are mostly small entrepreneurial actors with little to no experience of city management, the majority of BIZ-participants call for the expertise of external consultants in order to formulate their BIZ-plan. The inclusion of expertise from external actors allows for a strong cross-fertilization of information, knowledge and experiences which has a powerful effect on the shape of BIZ-model production. This stresses the geographical nature of the policy production process. The experiences with BIZs in one city are taken up by other places, each with a differing cultural and political context. Ward (2006) argues that BIDs reflect the strong diffusion channels and distribution channels of policy and knowledge. The research of this thesis made clear that such networks of knowledge exchange are evident in the Netherlands. Not only do consultant companies that operate on different BIZ areas in different cities learn from experiences in once city, additionally different consultant companies actively exchange knowledge with each other. For instance, congresses and similar events are regularly held in order to share stories and experiences, technological improvements and discuss new information. Brenner & Theodore (2002a) stress the importance of these networks, for instance how actors rely of their particular network to continue innovation in their field.

It is not surprising that the amount of BIDs of in the Netherlands is sharply rising. The BIZ law was merely an experiment in 2011, yet in 2018 the city of Amsterdam alone contains over 60 BIZs. Additionally, it was made clear that the municipality of Rotterdam is increasing both funds and effort in establishing more BIZ-areas in their city. It is explained in chapter 2 by Ward (2006) and Eick (2008) that small-scale, private entities can govern public space much more efficiently and swifter than traditional models of local governance can, since they are less bound to bureaucratic procedures and civil service rules. The BIZ model similarly replaces the interference of a large, powerful government influence in the city and replace it by an ideology of small, compact and local networks for governing city centers. The role of the government consequently shifts from a top-down policy enforcer to one of a regulator of

space and establishing local partnerships with BIZs. The role of the government does not decrease, but is rather executed differently.

6.2.2 New insights

Hoyt (2003a) argues that it is essential to pay attention to the privatization of public services, since they typically create 'space based inequalities in service delivery' (p. 21). BIZs emerge from a private interest foundation, which creates extra funds to invest for their area. That means that streets and areas that fail to erect a BIZ miss the opportunity to raise funds for their area. There are other ways for entrepreneurs to attract extra funds, yet they rest on a voluntary basis and generally generate less funds than BIZs can. This can prove to be problematic, since discrepancies between streets with and without a BIZ can emerge. In the USA, this is already a known problem, where crime rates have dropped due to security efforts by BIZ funds, yet the crime rates have sprawled over to streets which lack the capability to raise such funds. This research made clear that the model of the ondernemersfonds partially solves this problem, since it eliminates the need to establish a BIZ in the area. Every single entrepreneur and non-residential property owner is obligated to pay the levy in a city with an ondernemersfonds, which grants every street and area an equal opportunity to invest in their area.

Another insight of this research is that the vast majority of Dutch BIZs are still operating on a relatively low budget and/or spend most of their budget on activities of a basic level, consisting of physical improvements or small-scale promotional activities. However, due to economic recession and the growth of competition from internet shopping, the shopping landscape has altered. For this reason, it gets increasingly harder for entrepreneurs and shop owners to survive on their own, a force behind the recent installment of the BIZ law. They are required to work together in collectively preparing their shopping area for current and future developments. Although the BIZ-law provides an opportunity to fortify the retail structure and in preparing shopping areas for digital shopping landscapes, such complex and long term investments are rarely addressed. In order to make the most out of the opportunities that the BIZ-model can provide, BIZ areas should consider upgrading their activities. However, BIZ-area initiators are constantly very careful in setting the BIZ-levy too high, since it would make participants vote against the establishment of a BIZ in their area. Furthermore, BIZ-initiators often lack the knowledge or experience, or simply do not realize the need to upgrade their activities. Lastly, BIZ-areas purposely invest in activities of basic levels, since if they would refrain from doing so, they would fall behind areas that would actually invest in activities of this type.

6.3 Conclusion of the discussion

Now that the results of chapter 4 and the conclusions of chapter 5 have been discussed and key new insights have been elaborated on, this section will focus on recommendations for future research. During the designing process of this research, a lot of theoretical and real life literature and information had been collected, which inevitably led to certain questions. This research attempted to address and answer these questions. However, the resulting information serves as a bridge to new, unaddressed or unanswered research topics. This section provides recommendations for future research, based on issues that came up during this research.

6.3.1 Policy recommendations

These recommendations are addressed to people that design and regulate, produce and reproduce BIZ-models, such as municipal entities, consultant groups of experts and BIZ-initiators. This section limits itself to policy recommendations; for academic recommendations for future research, refer to section 6.3.2.

In chapter 5.2.1, a framework was proposed through which BIZ-types can be categorized, based on apparent variances in key variables: size, activities, participants and role of the municipality. These different types all have unique opportunities and capacities, but have to be considered carefully in order to achieve them. It is important to first examine what type of BIZ is dealt with and what are the particular reasons it deviates from the theoretical neoliberal ideal type.

- Type 1 BIZs which show a low impact on their environment, generally consist of small-sized areas, tend to stick to basic activities, are most commonly the product of entrepreneurs and can be the result of low municipal involvement. It is dependent on the specific BIZ if there is room or desire to upgrade its impact. For instance, Type 1 BIZs are generally small sized due to lack of a common ambition with neighboring streets. It has to be carefully considered what the possibilities are to create a collective ambition, since simply upscaling the BIZ size without proper research and processes of negotiation is likely to fail. Even if it makes perfect sense from a rational perspective to merge certain areas into a large, single BIZ, if it does not speak to the image of the participants, it will not stick. It has to consist of a story that shows how both areas can equally profit from cooperating. This will not happen overnight and may require processes of building trust, such as in the form of cooperatively organized events or participating in a collective project. In other cases, it is advised to examine possibilities to include real estate owners in the BIZ. They are generally more hesitant to join the BIZ, but since they are operating in the same area as the entrepreneurs, it is easier to look for a common ambition. The inclusion of real estate owners opens a lot of possibilities for a BIZ, not only for its doubles the available budget, but a considerable impact in the commercial area requires an active involvement of every local actor. Lastly, it should be carefully considered if there is an internal ambition to upscale the impact of the BIZ. If the participants lack proper energy and are content with a basic set of activities on a low budget, it might be a waste of time to invest in that BIZ-model. Instead, this energy is better invested in areas that show the ambition to upscale their ambitions, but fail to do so.
- Type 2 BIZs exercise larger impact over their area of operation, commonly because they are of large size, more strategically considered activities, include both entrepreneurs and real estate owners, as well as a more active involvement of the municipality. BIZs of the second type are typically the product of higher levels of ambition and energy in an area combined with the knowledge and expertise to make strategic decisions. Therefore, BIZs of the second type are viable and precious entities that open meaningful possibilities for urban spaces. It would be recommendable for municipalities to work together closely with these areas, since they offer the unique possibility to invest private funds in public space. Municipalities are advised to thoroughly investigate their economic capacities versus neighboring cities, and sit together with the BIZ-board to strategically develop the area's capacities. Each city and each area offers unique capacities and possibilities,

however they require citywide and regional tuning. Municipalities are much more capable to coordinate such strategies and can offer additional budgets, in order to cooperatively invest in the commercial area and create solid public-private investment zones that are prepared to face the challenges of the shopping environment of the present and the future.

- BIZ of the third type are of exceptionally large size have a neighborhood or city-wide impact and therefore operate on large budgets. This makes them a very present actor in the city and grants them certain political leverage. Regarding this situation, it is very important to closely monitor the activities of the third type of BIZ to investigate if they are in line with the municipalities' ambitions. Additionally, given their large available funds consisting of private money, the BIZ can be a viable asset to include in city planning making processes. Since the BIZ is so large, their board represents a particularly large constituency, which makes it feasible to include the desires of the entrepreneurs and real estate owners into the planning making decisions. In turn, the municipality can ask for a share of the BIZ budget to invest in city developments, since they are deliberately aligned to suit the BIZ's interests.
- The 4th selected category, commercial areas in which a BIZ is absent or fail to establish one, are not necessarily areas that would not be suitable to host a BIZ in. In section 5.2.1, various reasons were presented for the absence of a BIZ. These are not reasons that are per definition impossible to overcome. However, since the private agents fail or lack ambition to erect a BIZ, it requires external input to produce one. Although it can be possible to convince entrepreneurs to establish a BIZ, it has to be carefully considered if the BIZ would be the wisest option in an area. Some areas thrive better on contributions of voluntary basis, where the mandatory levy of a BIZ can trigger negative emotions amongst participants. Additionally, commercial areas can contain entrepreneurs of cultural and social characteristics that are by nature more hesitant to cooperate with municipal entities, or are even reluctant to cooperate with neighboring shops and companies. In these cases, it might not be viable to invest resources in the production of a BIZ.

The above list mentions various recommendations based on the type of BIZ, which can be deduced from variances in particular endogenous variables. Additionally, external neoliberal forces of competition and emulation were similarly mentioned to influence BIZs, in their case causing convergence in BIZ-models rather than variegation. Competition appeared to contribute largely to how a BIZ-model is produced. Entrepreneurs and real estate owners increasingly find themselves at pressure to cooperate with each other in order to survive the current shopping landscape, with increased competition from other shopping districts as well as digital shopping landscapes. Agents that assist in guiding BIZ processes, such as municipalities and external consultants, are recommended to aid the participants in creating a BIZ-model that fits their economic capabilities and chances the best. BIZ-initiators tend to resort to basic activities such as street cleaning, small-scale promotional activities and basic events, while these activities might not be the most effective for enhancing their competitive capacities. They should be advised, based on a thorough market examination prior to deciding what strategic activities should be developed.

Additionally, it was concluded that BIZs are heavily influenced by forces of emulation. Communities of experts are highly influential on BIZ-model productions: external experts are often hired to assist in designing the BIZ-model, since they fill the gap of city management

skills that BIZ-initiators often lack. Therefore, it is highly recommended that BIZ-participants and municipalities continually monitor new developments and best-practices that are shared through knowledge networks. Since there are many endogenous variables that decide what type of BIZ fits any particular area best, it is advisable to be aware of dominant practices. Stories of success are more likely to be shared than those of failure, however not every model of best-practice is applicable to any area. It is important that an area is properly researched and defined prior to the development of the BIZ-model, since each space has a unique collection of identities, capacities and ambitions. In the end, the BIZ-model should be the product of its constituency: a BIZ-model can be designed beautifully according to dominant stories of success, but if it does not match with the identity and desires of the area, it is not likely to succeed.

6.3.2 Recommendations for future research

In section 5.2.1, a framework was developed to categorize different types of BIZs, based on their level of impact of the commercial area they are operating in. The different types could be explained by the ways they differed from what could be expected from a theoretical, neoliberal BIZ ideal-type. From data derived from interviews with respondents, four main variables were inquired that explain how and why these endogenous forces produced BIZ-models that countered models of convergence. For future research, it is recommendable to empirically research these different BIZ types. Qualitative data from interviews exposed different types of variables and empirical data can make clear which variables appear most often together and under what circumstances. There is great value in an enhanced understanding of these variables, since within lays the most capacity to upscale the impact that BIZs can have on their environments. As has been thoroughly discussed throughout this thesis, the potential capacity of the BIZ-model is often limited due to endogenous forces that hinder a neoliberal unfolding of the Dutch BIZ-model to match its Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Empirical study of these variables opens the possibility to study in greater detail under what specific circumstances, neoliberal instances are mediated by particular endogenous local configurations.

A second recommendation for future research involves the upscaling of impact of BIZ-models. In this thesis, it is argued that various endogenous, local-specific forces (terms of size, activities, participants and role of the municipality) limit the capacity of the bulk of Dutch BIZs to really achieve a lasting impact on the commercial area they are operating in. In order to enhance the possibilities that the BIZ-model can achieve, it requires larger BIZs that are more concerned about long-term strategic investments and include a close cooperation between entrepreneurs and municipal entities. A thorough research in the endogenous variables that limit an increase in the impact of BIZ-models, would assist in an enhanced understanding of how these obstacles can be overcome.

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Appendix

A. Quote translations

This section of the appendix is dedicated to presenting the original quotes as told by the respondents during the research interviews. Although the thesis is written in English, the interviews were performed on Dutch respondents and therefore performed in their respective language. The quotes are numbered in ascending order, each quote number mentioned in the thesis text like this ^N, linked to its respective number in the following list:

1. *The BIZ is not a trick. This can be quite frustrating, because when a municipality tells us: 'we would like you to perform what you did in that area' ... they do not realize a best practice is the result of a long period of building trust and cooperation in that area.*

Want dat is dus in de zin van 'de BIZ is geen trucje' – ik kan die dus niet zomaar copy-pasten. Dat is voor veel mensen soms frustrerend, want als de gemeente ons belt met: we willen eigenlijk wat je daar deed – en de best practice ligt dus aan een lange voorinvestering van samenwerken.

2. *This makes it really hard to achieve anything. You know how much funds are available for these areas, which is not much. If the BIZ area were to grow (...), you would end up with a larger area and increased capacity. However, it is very hard to get every BIZ on the same line.*

Daar kun je natuurlijk heel weinig organiseren. Dan weet je ongeveer ook hoeveel geld daar in omgaat. Dat is natuurlijk niet veel. Als je het gebied groter maakt (...) dan krijg je een veel groter gebied en meer capaciteit, maar krijg die BIZen dan nog maar op één lijn.

3. *In that situation, we always start a conversation with the people within the area to determine if the BIZ is the right way to do it (...) The municipality can give instructions, but we start at the bottom.*

Dat is weer een andere insteek. Want dan gaan we met die ondernemers in gesprek (...) Dan komt de opdracht wel van de gemeente, maar dan starten we gewoon onderop.

4. *Participants have never learned to regard the BIZ as an investment zone. Encouraging investments from others, co-financing to really make the most of the available budget than most BIZ-organizations would. Most literally spend their budget: festive lights, street manager, marketing, next year a mother's day activity and that's it (...) what ambitions did the BIZ fulfill? It is merely a replacement of costs.*

Daarnaast hebben mensen nooit geleerd om het echt te zien als een investeringszone. Investerings van anderen uitlokken, co-financiëren. Dan kun je ervoor zorgen dat je meer uit je budget haalt dan veel BIZ-verenigingen doen. Die geven gewoonlijk letterlijk hun begroting uit: sfeerverlichting, straatmanager, marketing, volgend jaar een moederdagactiviteit en that's it (...) En wat heb je dan laten zien als BIZ? Dan heb je alleen maar laten zien dat je je kosten ergens anders hebt ondergebracht.

5. *Maybe it is because Amsterdam deals with a lot more tourists, more garbage, small streets... it could be possible that streets are easier to clean here.*

Dat komt misschien omdat Amsterdam... ja weet ik veel. Misschien toeristen, hoop rommel, smalle straten... kan wezen hoor, dat hier wat makkelijker is om dat allemaal op te gaan ruimen.

6. *"I understand it though, since if you never try something out, there will never be innovation (...) It is actually important to be apparent online (...) however if the basis of a shopping area is not sufficient (...) you will never sort good effects.*

Aan de andere kant, ik realiseer me ook, als je nooit iets probeert dan vindt er ook nooit innovatie plaats (...) je moet gewoon online vindbaar en zichtbaar zijn (...) Daar blijkt wel duidelijk uit: als je de basis niet op orde hebt (...) het publiek loopt er niet warm voor.

7. *The BIZ board does not functions solely as budget administrator, but increasingly as interests advocator of its constituency.*

Je ziet ook steeds vaker dat het bestuur van de BIZ zich steeds vaker opstelt als een soort van belangenbehartiger van de achterban. Dus niet zozeer als fondsbeheerder, maar ook belangenbehartiger.

8. *That is certainly a possibility, but then it has to be an extraordinary good plan.*

Dat kan, maar dan moet het plan verdomd goed zijn.

9. *It was a drama (...) a lot of opposition of civil servants, lots of time waiting for money, huge amounts of paperwork.*

Nou, dat was een drama (...) Tegenwerking vanuit de ambtenaren, dwarsliggen, financiën, heel land op goed moeten wachten van de gemeente, papieren rompslomp.

10. *It should be the role of politics to confront BIZs of their responsibility, on the plan for which the money is collected.*

Ik denk dat de rol van de politiek ook kan zijn om die BIZen weer eens even op te schudden, op hun verantwoordelijkheid aan te spreken, want ze innen natuurlijk ook het geld en daar is een plan voor geschreven.

11. *Dutch municipalities are required to cooperate in enhancing their 'hoofddetailhandelsstructuur' (general retail structure) and figure out which shopping areas are worth investing in by the entrepreneurs, real estate owners and the municipality. In other words, the moment you set having a BIZ as a goal on its own, you completely forget the main exercise.*

Dus de echte opgave die Nederland heft in al die 12 provincies en die 280 gemeenten is te zorgen dat je allemaal één stip op de horizon hebt en te kijken, waar die BIZ ook komt: wat

is de hoofd detailhandelsstructuur. Want de hoofd detailhandelsstructuur, die bepaalt natuurlijk of een winkelgebied de plek is om wel of niet te investeren, door die ondernemers, de eigenaren en de gemeente. Dus met andere woorden, als jij een BIZ als doel op zich hebt, dan vergeet je heel die opgave.

12. *"If they would not do so, they attract even less people to the city. They will say: 'I will not go to that city for it is boring, it has not even installed proper Christmas lights'".*

Aan de andere kant realiseer ik me ook: helemaal weglaten, dat zou ook oerdom zijn, want dan keert de consument al helemaal z'n rug toe en zeggen ze: ja die stad, die is saai, die hebben nog niet eens fatsoenlijke kerstverlichting.

13. *It's an investment zone, not a method of check balance.*

Het is een bedrijven investeringszone en niet een bedrijven-kostendekkend plaatje.

14. *If I were to invest 1 euro in it, I want to have a return of 2 euro's. At least, it should feel like that.*

Dat was mijn euro waard, want daar krijg je twee voor terug, althans voor het gevoel.

15. *Activities are often vaguely described, like: 'we will invest in public space'. I immediately believe them when the state they have done so, but goals are not written like: 'we want to attract 10% more customers from Russia.*

Dat is niet smart geformuleerd, laat ik het zo zeggen: we gaan investeren in de openbare ruimte en we gaan zorgen dat er een mooi evenement is. Dat hebben ze ook allemaal gerealiseerd, dat geloof ik gelijk, maar er staat nergens: we zorgen ervoor dat de klanten uit Rusland, ik noem maar wat, met 10% zijn verhoogd.

16. *Entrepreneurs basically have a societal responsibility to invest in their shopping area.*

(...) ik vind het ook bijna een soort van maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid om als ondernemer in je winkelstraat te investeren.

17. *"Rotterdam and Utrecht entrepreneurs have to work much harder, especially over the last few years (...) If you have to watch every penny, you will not vote for a BIZ in your area (...) It is true Amsterdam accommodate a lot of BIZs, however they are mostly situated in prosperous areas".*

Ik woon zelf in Utrecht, ik zie ook wel het verschil met Rotterdam. Het is veel ploeteren, de laatste jaren is het heel moeilijk geweest (...) Hier, als je ieder dubbeltje moet omkeren, dan je niet voor een BIZ stemmen (...) Het kaartje van Amsterdam waar al die BIZen zitten, die zitten vooral onder het IJ (...) die BIZen neigen zich te concentreren op plekken waar het toch al goed gaat.

18. *Nevertheless, there is not some sort of hive-mind of: 'we have to collectively prepare this area for the future'; some parties just think it is cool what is happening at the Zuid-As and do not even realize anymore what they are trying to solve with that.*

Maar het is natuurlijk niet zo dat er een soort van hive-mind is van: 'we' moeten dit gebied als geheel gaan ontwikkelen en klaarstomen voor de toekomst. Ik denk dat er best wat partijen bij zijn die zeggen: wat ze op de Zuid-As hebben georganiseerd is eigenlijk best cool en ik zou dat ook wel willen. Misschien niet eens meer weten wat ze daar dan mee op gaan lossen.

19. *Everyone is focused on their area, their own city*

(...) behalve dan dat iedereen druk is en gefocust is op zijn eigen kleine gebiedje, zijn eigen stadje.

20. *I think it is important to not exclusively operate in Utrecht, but in Amsterdam as well.*

Ik vind het ook belangrijk dat we niet alleen in Utrecht maar ook in Amsterdam actief zijn.