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**Dutch cities: A possible trend towards
economic deconcentration and impacts on the
quality of life**

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Abstract

Dutch cities: A possible trend towards economic deconcentration and impacts on the quality of life

For decades a very fine-meshed retail structure has existed in the Netherlands. Dutch citizens can reach convenience shops easily and quickly. These shops are often established within walking distance. The reason for this fine-meshed shopping structure is the restrictive governmental policy concerning retail trade at the periphery: Only a few branches were allowed to be established at the urban fringe or at other peripheral locations. In 2004, the governmental policy changed: within the framework of more decentralisation the Dutch government now leaves the implementation of the retail location policy to the regional and local governments. It is now possible that more establishments at the periphery will be allowed and that shopping malls at greenfield sites will become reality.

This research analyses possible future developments concerning more retail trade at the periphery and possible impacts on the quality of life in cities. Interviewing policy makers, stakeholders of the retail trade and stakeholders of consumers the following topics were examined:

- a. What do the respondents think about the new governmental policy?
- b. Is there a trend towards more retail trade at peripheral locations?
- c. What kinds of effects could this have on the quality of life in cities?

Key words: economic deconcentration, retail trade, quality of life, periphery, city centre

Rapport in het kort

Nederlandse steden: een mogelijke trend richting economische deconcentratie en effecten op de kwaliteit van leven

De in 2004 door de Rijksoverheid geïntroduceerde Nota Ruimte zou kunnen leiden tot meer detailhandelsvestigingen op perifere locaties.

De Rijksoverheid besloot om in het kader van meer decentralisering het detailhandelsvestigingsbeleid aan lagere overheden over te laten. Daardoor zouden in Nederland zogenoemde weidewinkels realiteit kunnen worden en de decenniaoude fijnmazige detailhandelsstructuur zou in gevaar kunnen komen.

Onder de betrokken partijen (detailhandel, consumenten en beleidsmakers) leidde de invoering van het nieuwe beleid tot veel discussie over de toekomstige ruimtelijke ontwikkeling van detailhandelsvestigingen. Dit blijkt uit dit onderzoek. Er blijken zowel aannemelijke argumenten voor het ontstaan van meer vestigingen op perifere locaties te bestaan als ook argumenten die dit juist tegenspreken. Mogelijke effecten daarvan op de kwaliteit van leven in steden zijn net zo ambivalent.

Voor dit onderzoek werden vertegenwoordigers van beleidsmakers, consumenten en detailhandel geïnterviewd om meer zicht te krijgen op de volgende vragen:

- a. Hoe wordt tegen het nieuwe beleid aangekeken?
- b. Kan er een trend ontstaan tot meer detailhandel op perifere locaties?
- c. Wat kunnen de effecten zijn op de kwaliteit van leven in steden?

Trefwoorden: economische deconcentratie, detailhandel, kwaliteit van leven, periferie, binnenstad

Preface and acknowledgements

This research is the result of eight months research, carried out between December 2003 and July 2004 as part of my diploma thesis for my geography degree at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität Bonn (Germany).

It was conducted at the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), department *Spatial Analysis, Traffic and Transport* and the *Centre for Environmental Health Research*.

Dr. Irene van Kamp was my supervisor at the RIVM. My supervisor of the University of Bonn was Dr. Thomas Kistemann.

I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to write this thesis in a foreign country. Sponsored by the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) I was able to stay more than half a year in the Netherlands to carry out my research. I was lucky to come across such an interesting and very up to date topic. My whole stay in the Netherlands and at the RIVM was very beneficial for my research.

This research is inspired by the EU-project SELMA. The project caught my attention during my first internship at the RIVM in 2003. It awakened my interest because it alludes to several topics which interest me. Firstly, the project deals with urban spatial developments, thus touching the geographical field of urban geography. The analysis of economic activities and its spatial effects concerns the economic geography and my second major field of study, town planning. In addition it is related to quality of life, a concept that can also be linked to topics of medical geography and public health. Moreover, it gave me the opportunity to gain an insight into the functioning of an EU-project.

Focusing on retail trade (as one of the economic activities) an extraordinary development in residential areas can be considered: Residential areas of Dutch cities do not face a loss of facilities but show a high grade of supply. I found out that this results from a long tradition of restrictive governmental and urban planning policy concerning retail locations in cities. Attention was always paid to preventing a short supply of city residents and uncontrolled spatially disperse development. In the course of time the retail planning policy was slightly relaxed and there was a shift of retailing from the city centre to the outskirts. However, only strictly limited sorts of branches were allowed. Supermarkets were not affected. To date, the Dutch spatial planning and community policy have managed preventing an extensive loss of retail companies from the city centre to the outskirts. Greenfield locations remain unheard of. However, the trend of a restrictive planning policy is changing. Whilst other European countries are tightening their originally liberal peripheral retail policy, a complete reverse development can be observed in the Netherlands. This may affect the city residents' quality of life. Positive as well as negative impacts can be expected.

The aforementioned developments and aspects became the starting point for my research. I focused on future developments, exploring the trends towards processes of retail deconcentration in Dutch metropolitan areas and exploring possible impacts on peoples' quality of life.

I would like to thank the following people for their support and advice: Dr. Thomas Kistemann, Dr. Irene van Kamp, Leon Crommentuijn and the whole SELMA team. This research could not have been done without the participation of the respondents. I found the conversation really interesting and I am grateful that they took the time to talk to me. Last but not least I want to thank Marie Mc Ginley for checking my written English. A very special thanks to my family and to Bronne Pot for their help and support.

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Summary

Since the end of the World War II, the national government of the Netherlands has followed a very restrictive policy concerning peripheral retail establishments. Retailing at peripheral locations was allowed within strict limits and only for a certain number of branches. In accordance with Christaller's Central Place Theory, a very fine-meshed structure of shops was established. To date, Dutch city residents can reach convenience shops within walking distance. There is a strict separation of urban and rural areas and shopping malls at greenfield sites remain almost unheard of.

However, at the moment in the Netherlands a reverse development may take place within the framework of decentralisation. In the new Report on Physical Planning (Nota Ruimte) the restrictive policy on peripheral retailing is replaced by an integrative one. This means that the Dutch government leaves the implementation of the retail location policy to the regional and local governments. Although it is underlined that e.g. shops at the greenfield sites are not desirable it is now up to the regional and local policy makers to decide on their establishment. Whilst some fear American situations with completely empty city centres and a very fragmented landscape, others value this stance since it leaves more space for the free market economy.

In this diploma thesis examines the effects of economic deconcentration in the Netherlands on quality of life. An empirical research was carried out in order to shed some light on the possible effects of economic deconcentration in Dutch Cities. The main question of this research is: Do Dutch cities show a tendency towards processes of retail deconcentration? And are there possible impacts on the residents' quality of life?

First of all a literature study was conducted. The structure of locations and the spatial development of the retail trade are determined by three groups of players: the retail trade, consumers and policymakers. Since this research deals with a very complex future development that notably depends on political, sociological and economical changes and factors, a qualitative approach was chosen. Open interviews were conducted with experts from the three groups of players. In this way, an insight was gained into the expectations on future trends, enforcement of the new policy and expected changes to the city residents' quality of life. The central outcome of the research is that critics of the relaxation of the policy can be appeased. There is still much opposition to an increase of peripheral retail developments especially on the municipal and provincial level. The Dutch communities and provinces pay much attention to maintaining a restrictive enforcement in order to prevent movements from inner city to peripheral locations. On this account no drastic changes in the quality of life (e.g. a great loss of shopping facilities in the inner cities) are expected. However, experts caution against property developers who seem to be gaining more and more influence on spatial developments.

1. Introduction

1.1 Issue and scientific and social relevance

‘Having made bad experiences with a liberal policy many countries (among them Germany, France, Belgium and England) are tightening their retail location policy. They take the Netherlands as a good example. Therefore it is peculiar that now the Netherlands is relaxing its policy. From our neighbours’ point of view the Netherlands are about to make a historical mistake.’ (Evers, 2003)

‘A strong national government in the 21st century must not frenetically stick to concepts of regulation, which are 30 years old.’ (Noordanus, 2003)

These two opposite statements were made as a reaction to the liberalisation of the peripheral retail policy by the Dutch national government. They already give an idea of the explosiveness of the recent changes of the stance of the Dutch national government concerning the guidelines on peripheral retail trade.

In fact the Netherlands, as a very densely populated country, is very well-known for its planning ideas, which led to a strict separation of rural and urban areas. After the World War II, the national government continuously adhered to a restrictive peripheral retail policy. This resulted in a very special fine-meshed structure of shops, which guaranteed and still guarantees a good and close-by supply for the city residents. Establishments at greenfield sites remain unknown to date.

However, the restrictive governmental policy recently experienced a relaxation by the introduction of the Nota Ruimte (Report on Physical Planning) in 2004. This happens within a framework of a stronger orientation towards decentralisation: More responsibility is assigned from the national government to the Dutch provinces and municipalities. The consequences of this relaxed retail location policy are not yet clear. Also the way of the conversion of this relaxed framework on provincial- and community level is still not sure. But, contrary to former times, the establishment of shopping malls at the greenfield sites and a general augmentation of peripheral establishments now could become reality.

This consideration and the EU-project SELMA inspired the main research question of this research:

Do Dutch cities show a tendency towards processes of economic deconcentration? And are there possible impacts on the residents’ quality of life?

The second part of the research question results from the following considerations:

Geographical research seeks to understand the nature of the person-environment relationship. Urban geography as a sub-discipline attempts to explore urban spatial developments as well as the relationship between city residents and their life space. The concept of quality of life has become one important approach in this.

The aim of this research is finding out the background for the changing attitude of the national government concerning retail location policy, learning more about the conversion on

provincial and communal level and to gain an insight into what spatial changes and changes in the quality of life in cities could occur in the future.

The fundamental basis of this research is a literature study. Then the research question will be answered by employing qualitative research methods. Therefore expert interviews were conducted.

1.2 The EU-project SELMA as framework

SELMA is the acronym for ‘Spatial Deconcentration of Economic Land Use and Quality of Life in European Metropolitan Areas’. It is funded by the Key Action City of Tomorrow of the Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development programme of the European Commission. The SELMA programme was initialised in the fourth quarter of 2002 and is supposed to run until the end of the fourth quarter of 2005.

The exigency of such a programme arises from the fact that in recent decades urban growth processes have shown a trend towards deconcentrated land consumption. It is assumed that these processes impact on the quality of life of urban residents. Urban processes of deconcentration were and still are gaining more and more importance on the European Agenda. A large amount of investigations have been conducted. However they mainly deal with residential urban sprawl.

SELMA focuses on economic land use deconcentration. It looks at the way the dispersal of economic activities affect the inhabitants’ quality of life of urbanised areas and studies positive and negative impacts.

The hypothesis of the SELMA project is: Effects, based on non-residential urban sprawl, influence the quality of life of people in a more negative way than effects of residential urban sprawl. They provoke a spatial mismatch of, among other things, job opportunities, community cohesion and costs of infrastructure provision. (SELMA, 2001)

The primary goal of SELMA is to design urban planning and management strategies to ensure the maintenance of quality of life in European Metropolitan Areas and mid-sized cities facing non-residential deconcentration.

The RIVM is one of the participants of the SELMA project. Its main responsibility is the conceptualisation of the quality of life indicators. (SELMA, 2001)

1.3 Research questions

The above implementations and the assumptions of the SELMA project lead to the main question of this research:

Do Dutch cities show a tendency towards processes of economic deconcentration? And are there possible impacts on the residents’ quality of life?

In order to explore the main question, several other research questions first have to be answered. These sub-questions are divided into four groups.

1. Who influences the emergence of economic deconcentration processes and why is the Dutch urban development an exception?

These questions primarily serve the purpose of clarifying important terms. Moreover these questions are important to gain an insight into developments in the Netherlands up until now. By contrasting the Dutch development to other European countries, its unique position will be made clear.

2. What is meant by the concept of quality of life?

This question provides an approach to the concept of quality of life. The term ‘quality of life’ is defined.

3. What is the concern of economic deconcentration and how do economic deconcentration and quality of life correlate? This question explains why there is a link between deconcentration and quality of life. Moreover it enumerates possible impacts of economic deconcentration on quality of life.

4. How can future developments concerning retail deconcentration and its impacts on quality of life be appraised?

This question is the most important sub-question. In finding the answer to it, the main research question will be answered for the most part.

These four sub-questions help exploring the main research question and divide the research in logical sections. The following section provides the research methods, which were applied to answer the sub-question.

1.4 Research methods

1.4.1 Choice of research methods

The first three sub-questions will be answered by a literature study. In chapter two the central terms of this research are defined. For this research one aspect of investigation is chosen. The focus is only put on the deconcentration of the retail trade. Reasons for this narrowing down also are given in chapter two. Furthermore, this paper will present an overview of developments in the Netherlands as well as in two other European countries. The Dutch peripheral retail policy is judged as being special compared to the developments in other West European countries. Contrasting two European countries to the Netherlands emphasises the extraordinary urban spatial development of Dutch cities.

In chapter three the concept of quality of life is elucidated and adapted to this research. After giving a general introduction to the concept of quality of life, the approach of the SELMA concept is explained and adopted.

In chapter four the relation between economic (retail) deconcentration and quality of life is elucidated. This is important in order to show what kinds of impacts retail deconcentration could have, especially on the well-being of city residents. Chapter four answers research question three.

Research question four makes up the most important part of this research. Question four is answered by using empirical research methods.

Qualitative and quantitative research

According to Wessel (1996) the choice of the research method has to be based on appropriateness concerning the object of investigation. In empirical research two ways of data collection are possible: qualitative and quantitative ones. Wessel underlines that there is no a priori more suitable approach of empirical research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have a specific coverage and can be used complementary. The advantage of

qualitative over quantitative approaches is the possibility of exploring new, theoretically vaguely structured research areas. The open and flexible research process enables hitherto unknown cohesion of problems to be clarified and arrayed.

The answer to the main research question cannot be ‘measured’ by quantitative analysis, but strongly depends on ‘soft factors’, such as policy making, the consumer’s demand for goods, lifestyle. The future development concerning retail planning at peripheral locations in the Netherlands strongly depends on changes in the demands and needs in the three groups of players (described under 2.2). This means, the development does not respond to laws of nature, but is related to subjective interactions, subjective appraisal of the future supply and demand, sales psychology, demographic determinants as well as political measures. This is why a qualitative approach to this complex topic is reasonable. It enables an insight into political, economical and social conditions that influence the development of economical deconcentration processes and therefore also the peoples’ quality of life.

Respondents

Only people, who are familiar with this complex subject matter, can give answers to the main research question. These answers strongly depend on appraisals; i.e. subjective statements, which are made by people, who have a great knowledge of recent Dutch developments as well as the capability to connect and understand the many factors influencing retail deconcentration and possible quality of life impacts. This is why expert interviews were used as a methodological approach. Since there is hardly any literature on expert interviews, this research is modelled on the often-quoted articles of Meuser and Nagel (1991) and Mieg and Brunner (2001). In these expert interviews the whole person is not subject to the analysis, but rather the organisatory or institutional context. The respondent is just one ‘factor’ among many others (Meuser and Nagel, 1991). The motivation of an expert interview is a factual interest. Factual connections are explained and clarified in a constructive manner. The motivation of the interviewed person is a factual one (Mieg and Brunner, 2001). The answer to sub-question four is given in chapter five and six.

1.4.2 Sampling of the experts

Stakeholders from three groups of players were chosen: stakeholders of consumers, policymakers and of the retail trade. These three groups of players namely exert influence on the establishment of retail outlets. (For further explanations see 2.2). They are supplemented by two outside ‘independent’ experts, this means experts that do not belong to one of the three groups of players and therefore are supposed to have a more distant and comprehensive view on the problem.

Stakeholders of the consumers

The originally intention was to choose an equal number of stakeholders for each of the three groups. But in the group ‘consumer’ there was only one organisation (*Consumentenbond*) that was representative for the consumers. No other organisations exist either on provincial level or on municipal level representing the requirements and notions of consumers. Also the ‘*Alternatieve Consumentenbond*’ (Alternative Consumers’ Organisation) could not be considered because it mainly focuses on the quality of products and not on the spatial dimension of retailing.

Stakeholders of the retail trade

Concerning the stakeholders of the retail trade three respondents were chosen. One respondent represents the small- and medium-sized enterprises (*Midden- en Kleinbedrijf Nederland*). The logical consequence would have been also to choose a stakeholder of the large-scale retail trade. But it was not possible to find suitable experts. Instead, a stakeholder of the *Raad Nederlandse Detailhandel* (RND) was chosen. The RND is the central co-ordinating organisation of the retail trade employers. In doing so the interests of the large-scale retailers were also represented. The third respondent of the retail trade works for the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Utrecht.

Policymakers

The Dutch administrative system has three levels: the national government, the 12 provinces and the municipalities. The chosen respondents were: One stakeholder of the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment, one stakeholder of the province of Utrecht and one stakeholder of the municipality of Utrecht.

The perception of the respondent of the national government was needed in order to find out why the government stuck to this restrictive peripheral retail policy for such a long time and why this stance now is about to change. The stakeholders of the province and municipality were important respondents since the institutions, which they represent, have to handle the national guidelines. Moreover since the new more liberal policy leaves the implementation to these local authorities it is necessary to get to know about their way of adopting the new guidelines on the local level.

'Independent' outside experts

There was a certain danger that the answers of the stakeholders of the three groups of players strongly were influenced by the interests of the organisations the stakeholders are working for. This is why two outside independent experts supplement the three groups of players. The last supplementing group is chosen in order to get a view of the problem which is not influenced by the interest of one group of players, which has been represented.

The experts had to fulfil two demands. First of all they had to have in-depth knowledge about processes of peripheral retail development as well as the political backgrounds and spatial implementations in the Netherlands. Second, they had to be familiar with the term and concept of quality of life. A face-to-face interview situation was chosen rather than phone or postal interviews.

Table 1. List with organisations/institutions of the interviewed experts

<i>Group of experts</i>	<i>Organisation / institute</i>
Stakeholder retail trade	- Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Raad Nederlandse Detailhandel - Small- and Medium-Sized Business of the Netherlands
Stakeholder consumers	- Consumers' Association
Stakeholder policymakers	- Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment - Province of Utrecht - Community of Utrecht
Outside independent experts	- University of Utrecht - The Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research

1.4.3 Types of interview, interview situation and analysis

Expert interviews are mostly conducted using an open interview guide (Meuser and Nagel, 1991; Mieg and Brunner, 2001). In an interview guide questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of the interview are listed. Moreover the guide allows the interviewer to explore and probe a particular subject within the provided topics (Patton, 2002). The advantage of the interview guide is that the researcher has already decided in advance how best to use the limited time of the respondent. Since the topics are delimited in advance the guide provides a possibility of interviewing a number of people in a more systematic and comprehensive way (Patton, 2002). Meuser and Nagel (1991) underline that the guide guarantees the openness of the course of the interview because the researcher had made himself familiar with the topics he wants to discuss.

The interview guide that was developed compiles two topics. The first group of questions refer to the Dutch peripheral retail policy and to the quality of life in the cities in the past (before the introduction of the Nota Ruimte). The second group of questions deals with the changes of the national peripheral retail policy and future impacts on the quality of life in Dutch cities. During the interviews enough space was left for further comments and supplements.

1.4.4 Analysis

The nine respondents were assigned to four groups (stakeholders of the retail trade, stakeholders of the consumers, stakeholders of policymakers and one group of 'independent' experts). In each interview the same interview guide was used. The only exception was the interview with a stakeholder of the national government. Two questions of this interview guide differed. The recorded interviews were transcribed literally in order not to lose any information. Analysis was done question by question.

2. Economic Deconcentration

This chapter deals with the first research question: ‘Who influences the emergence of economic deconcentration processes and why is the Dutch urban development an exception?’ In order to answer this question the term ‘economic deconcentration’ has to be defined first. Section 2.1 provides a definition and the reasons for only focussing on retailing as one dimension of economic activity. In addition, several terms strongly related to economic deconcentration will be defined. The following section (2.2) explains what kinds of players exert influence on the establishment of retailing.

Processes of retail deconcentration did not take place in a uniform manner across European countries. Davies (1995) observes that Belgium, France, Germany and the UK were the vanguard of change.

In the literature the extraordinary role of the Netherlands is often emphasised: In the *Utrecht Monitor Kernwinkelapparaat* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2001) it is emphasised: ‘Because of a protective governmental policy concerning the retail trade the Dutch city centre still shapes the top of the hierarchy of supply. This is contrary to other countries where there is no similar policy and the shops in the city centre lost against the cheaper and better reachable locations at the urban fringe.’

Davies (1995) states: ‘The Netherlands [...], at the forefront of planning in general at this time, provided the role models in restrictive planning policies that others sought to follow’.

And Gorter et al (2003) maintain that ‘this trend [a shift from central urban locations of shopping facilities to extra-urban locations] which has become a prominent one in North America, is also increasingly observed in several European countries (e.g. France and Germany). But the Netherlands has always had a discouraging policy for out-of-town shopping malls’.

This is why developments in several European countries are contrasted with the developments in the Netherlands. Apart from studying the urban economic deconcentration processes in the Netherlands (2.5), Great Britain (2.4) and Germany (2.3) are taken as an example.

In section 2.7, the developments in planning policy and spatial implications in the three countries are contrasted. In doing so, a better understanding of the exceptional stance of the Dutch national government concerning peripheral retailing policy can be gained.

2.1 Definition of ‘economic deconcentration’ and of further applied terms

There are numerous definitions of economic deconcentration. Often the term is used synonymously with ‘non-residential urban sprawl’ (SELMA, 2001). In the Anglophone literature the term ‘decentralisation’ is used to describe the same phenomenon (Davies, 1995). As this research is inspired by and partly embedded in the SELMA project, the use of the term ‘economic deconcentration’ as well as its definition is used in this paper.

'Economic land use deconcentration is taken to mean here the movement of economic activities (industry, retail, services) from the centre to the urban fringe or the relative decline of employment in the centre versus the periphery.

The latter can result not just from movement from the centre to the fringe but from in-situ growths in the urban perimeter or in-movement to the fringe area from outside the region.' (SELMA, 2001)

SELMA focuses on the three economic activities. The author of this research thinks that it is not easy to reasonably and integratively measure the deconcentration of the three sectors. Each sector follows different development processes and depends on sector-specific circumstances such as legal regulations, different groups of influencing players and special spatial needs. The examination of the three sectors at the same time (without splitting them up) runs the risk of losing important information.

On this account this research only focuses on retail trade as one of the three economic activities. In addition to the aforesaid reasons the retail trade has a very special position in the three sectors: It is the most outstanding traditional function of the city centres. Changes in the retail system inevitably affect the whole urban system as well (DV, 1998). Moreover, the retail trade in the Netherlands exemplifies well how the spatial planning has influenced and shaped the space. In addition, the retail trade has an important share in the Dutch economy: In 2003, approximately 76 billion Euros were spent on the retail trade (financenetwerk, 2004) 10 % of the working population works in the retail branch (MDW-Werkgroep, 2000). Moreover, adequate supply and access to goods seem one important influencing factor on a city resident's quality of life. This means the link between retail deconcentration and quality of life impacts can easily and traceably be established.

Based on the aforesaid definition of 'economic deconcentration' the term 'retail deconcentration' now can be defined as follows:

'Retail deconcentration is the movement of retail activity from the city centre to the urban fringe or the periphery.'

Some more terms have to be considered in connection with the term 'retail deconcentration'. They are closely related to the term and used very often both in this research and in the literature and should therefore be defined as well. But since the literature often has different connotations to the same word a short overview of the meaning and usage categories is given. The SELMA definition of economic deconcentration uses the terms 'urban fringe' and 'periphery' in order to describe the destination of the moving facilities. According to Hite (1998) 'urban fringe' can be defined as:

'the frontier in space where the returns to land from traditional and customary land urban uses are roughly equal to the returns from traditional and customary rural land uses'.

He adds that in theory such a frontier should always exist, although its exact location on the ground may not be easily fixed.

The word 'periphery' covers, according to Brückner (1998):

'all areas or locations inside localities that are not situated inside an existing or intended shopping area or in a directly abutting area'.

Jürgens (1995) in contrast uses the term in order to describe the outer area of the town. Gorter et al. (2003) use the word 'periphery' synonymously to the term 'out-of-town', as well. The Dutch policy on peripheral retail establishments uses the term 'peripheral' in order to describe

‘a zone outside a centre. A shop is considered as peripheral when it does not lie within a shopping area or shopping centre.’ (Van der Toorn Vrijthoff et al., 1998)

Pangels (1996) takes the term as being synonymous with greenfield locations. The term greenfield site or greenfield location is also closely linked to the discussion of retail deconcentration processes. According to Jürgens (1995) locations at the greenfield are locations in the area between cities. The MDV working group (2000) defines a greenfield location as a location in a rural area.

From the aforesaid implementations it is now clear that there are many ways of defining these terms that are closely linked to the processes of economic (retail) deconcentration. However, they have one main analogy: All terms consistently can be used to describe locations that lie outside of the ‘traditional’ town and shopping centre.

In the Anglophone literature the term ‘out-of-town’ or ‘off-centre’ retailing is also applied. The term out-of town seems to be consistent with the way Jürgens understands the terms periphery and greenfield locations: both of them describe locations that lie ‘outside the gates of the towns’ (Jürgens, 1995).

In this research the name ‘peripheral’ shall mainly be used in order to describe locations that do not lie in conventional and traditional town areas (mostly the town centre). ‘Peripheral’, in the sense it is used here, covers locations both at the outskirts and at inter-municipal (greenfield locations) sites.

Finally the term ‘retail’ has to be defined. Retail means:

‘All commercial sale of goods and services to the final consumer exclusive disposal, which is meant to be consumed on site. Retailing does not comprise the catering industry and the pure commercial provision of services like banks or employment agencies.’ (Gemeente Utrecht, 2000)

It is obvious that if it is talked about peripheral retailing one mostly has to deal with large-scale retail establishments. Small shops or single shops, which are established at the periphery, namely do not pose a threat to existent shopping areas. So when peripheral retail establishments are written and talked about, it has to be borne in mind that only shops or shopping malls of a bigger size are meant. This explains why the policy on large-scale retail establishments automatically influences the establishments at the periphery.

2.2 Who influences the emergence of retail deconcentration?

The retail trade as one domain of economic activity shapes the system of centres and settlements by the choice of location and the resulting pattern of location. Moreover, it influences the flow of traffic and the patterns of demand. Three groups of players determine the structures of locations and the spatial development of the retail trade and therefore of course on the peripheral retail trade: First, retail companies exert influence by favouring sites, suitable for their own needs. Secondly, consumers exert influence on the retail by their specific spatial patterns of demand and thirdly, policy makers by their choice of the application of instruments of spatial design. Each change within one group has an impact on the system of locations. (Kulke, 1997)

2.2.1 Retail trade

The first group of players, the retail trade, has experienced extensive changes in the past decades. Considering West European countries a concentration of companies took place, especially in Central European countries. Independent shopkeepers (the owner handles all operational tasks such as purchasing, selling, bookkeeping, personal management) were supplanted by subsidiaries and other types of mergers and co-operations. In total the number of retail companies has declined, whereas the average sales floor has continued to grow. (Kulke, 1997) In addition to concentration, large retail enterprises expanded beyond national borders, conquering new markets abroad. The Swedish furnishing company IKEA and the German discounter ALDI can be cited as good examples. After a saturation of the national markets, they exported their shopping formulae to other European countries, there succeeding because of the previously unknown concepts.

In the course of globalisation and economic liberalisation, new trade concepts emerged in the 1970s. Often these concepts, e.g. peripheral shopping malls, were inspired by developments in North America, a subcontinent with completely different views, structures of settlement and land-use. (Kulke, 1997)

2.2.2 Consumers

These developments are strongly linked to changes, which took place within the other groups of players. On the part of the consumers, significant shifts in demography have taken place, which have influenced the pattern of demand. The proportion of people over 65 is increasing whereas the birth rate is decreasing. The household structure is tending to more but smaller households: In Europe one in three households contains only one person. Growing female participation in the formal labour force generates demands for time-saving products and forms of retail provision that are suited to use outside working hours. In addition the increase in affluence leads to lower expenses on food and augmented the demand for non-food shops. The shopping habits have also changed, as a result of higher mobility. As nearly every household now owns a car, more distant locations can easily be reached. (Dawson, 1995; Kulke, 1997) Apart from higher mobility, the consumer's lifestyle changed with a greater awareness of other cultures. More foreign holidays and international coverage on TV expose the consumer to other lifestyles and create needs for product variety reflecting these different cultures. (Dawson, 1995)

2.2.3 Policy makers

Policy makers as the third group of the three players exert influence on the establishments of peripheral outlets by giving special guidelines, restrictions or agreements. They have to fulfil two conflicting main goals. First they have to support the economic dynamic of free competition and to ensure sector growth and change. Secondly, they have to take care of maintaining the shopping function of the inner city and to aspire to sustainable and well-regulated settlement development. (DV, 1998; Gorter et al., 2003) In other words, on the one hand deregulation is needed for the retail sector in order to remain competitive at national and international level and to ensure flexibility in business strategies and the combining of goods. On the other hand, regulation is necessary to avoid the economic (and possible social) collapse of the city centre. (Gorter et al., 2003; DV, 1998) One of the dilemmas provoked by these two opposing attempts emerges from the establishments of large retail stores at

peripheral locations. (DV, 1998) These large retail establishments emerged because of the aforesaid surge in size which demanded new sites. In Europe, the first large stores and shopping centres were built at greenfield areas due to a more relaxed retail planning policy in the 1970s. They can be seen as a reaction to the demand which arose from aforesaid changes in the three groups of players. (Davies, 1995)

Thus, the establishment of retail outlets depends strongly on the interaction between the three groups of players. Changes and developments in one of the groups among other things has influence on the composition of the space.

2.3 Peripheral retail policy and its impacts on retail deconcentration in Germany

When the development of peripheral locations in Germany is studied one has to be aware of the fact that this country faced a special historical development as a result of the reunification. Because of this, further implementations are responsive to the different conditions and developments, treating the Old Federal States of Germany separately from the New Federal States. The situation after the reunification will only be described for the New Federal States.

The most important law at the national level for urban development is the Building Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. It was adopted in 1986, resulting from the integration of the *Bundesbaugesetz* (1960) and the *Städtebauförderungsgesetz* of the year 1971. In 1962 the *Baunutzungsverordnung* was enacted, based on the *Baugesetzbuch* (at that time still *Bundesbaugesetz*). It is the most important act for the establishment of large retail establishment.

2.3.1 West Germany

In West Germany the model for the retail trade was taken from the late nineteenth century. Medium-sized shops that sold small items, specialist retail outlet chains and smaller department stores prevailed (Vielberth, 1995).

Large retail establishments at greenfield sites emerged for the first time in the early seventies. They consisted mainly of self-service department stores (food and non-food goods, more than 3000 m² sales floor) and of consumer markets (food, 1000 m² sales floor).

The first version of the *Baunutzungsverordnung* of the year 1962 did not contain a special regulation on large retail establishments. However, because of the aforesaid developments a new clause was added. In 1982 any further locations of shopping centres and consumer markets had to be displayed as special areas if they were supposed to be built outside centre zones.¹ (DV, 1998) This considerably reduced the rate of growth between 1982 and 1992. However, potential for further growth remained. In spite of administrative restrictions the number of outlets rose from 1323 in 1980 to 1973 in 1993 (Vielberth, 1995). According to

¹ Centre zones (*Kerngebiete*) in terms of the *Baunutzungsverordnung* indicate the central business district. This is the main location of business concerns and public and private administrations.

Vielberth (1995), this expansion was mainly due to large retail groups that could afford experts and lawyers who could manage the complicated and long process of authorisation.

About ten years later, the maximum floor space was reduced to 1200 m². This corresponds to a maximum sales floor of 700 m²³. These implications are fixed in §11III *Baunutzungsverordnung*. This is the most important prescription of peripheral retail establishments. Urban impacts that have to be audited are:

- harmful impacts on the environment
- impacts on the infrastructure equipment
- impacts on traffic
- impacts on the supply of the population
- impacts on the development of central supply areas of the community or of other communities
- impacts on the view of a place or on the natural scenery
- impacts on the ecosystem

This enumeration is not exhaustive, but can be supplemented in individual cases for example if impacts on the labour market can be expected.

Beyond the allocation of large retail establishments the communities have even more decision-making powers. They can condition restrictions of use, restrict the special area to a certain branch of trade or make concrete agreements on the assortment (Vielberth, 1995).

2.3.2 East Germany

The retail network in East Germany cannot be studied without taking into account the extraordinary social and historical context. Very small companies, constructional obsolescence and deficient infrastructure equipment characterised the retail trade of the German Democratic Republic. A low level of motorisation and long labour time necessitated a high density of shops of convenience goods, which could be reached within a 8 to 15 minute walk. However a surplus of convenience goods in shops went hand in hand with a lack of so-called industrial goods (textiles, fashion, shoes).

Apart from the many small shops the so-called *Großobjekte* of retail trade existed ranging from 400 m² until 2500 m². However the number was very low. Moreover, they were integrated in the urban body (Jürgens, 1995).

After the reunification, investors from West Germany aimed at opening up new markets in the east. As the town planning system temporarily was in abeyance, interim arrangements rendered planning possible in much bigger dimensions than in West Germany. (Jürgens, 1995; Guy, 1998a) These interim arrangements, statutory in the building law, enabled East German towns and communities to take simplifying planning measures in order to cope with the necessary and extensive urbanistic tasks. (Jürgens, 1995) The permissibility for building projects could, unlike the guidelines in West Germany, already be asserted by articles of the community. A lot of parties accounted for an ad hoc improvement of the East German supply situation. Against the background of these developments large peripheral retail establishments were able to emerge, which would never have come into existence in West Germany, unless after an extensive audit. Examples are the Saalepark and the Sachsenpark in

² Floor space means the total area of a building, including all rooms on all storeys.

³ In the retail trade the sum of all parts of the floor space that are accessible to the customers.

the Leipzig/Halle area with up to 100000 m² sales floor. Between 1990 and 1997, more than 200 large retail establishments emerged (all establishments with more than 800 m²) (Jürgens 1995). The inner cities did not attract the investors because of ambiguous ownership structures, ailing building fabrics and missing municipal planning directives. The most favourable location for the new large-scale retail establishments were greenfield sites (Guy 1998a).

Serious consequences remained for the town centres. In West Germany the towns could oppose 'living' cities that had had the chance to develop after the World War II to the establishing of large peripheral retail facilities. The East German town centres in contrast were from the outset confronted with fierce competition. The insufficient development status was inhibited for some years after the reunification and posed a severe problem for the town centres. Three years after the reunification, the *Länder* had produced their regional development plans and the municipalities their local land-use plans. The proportion of successful applications for peripheral developments decreased. The East German town centres still have to take action to become more attractive. (Guy, 1998a)

2.4 Peripheral retail policy and its impacts on retail deconcentration in Great Britain

After the World War II in Great Britain, a hierarchic retail system was established, such as in Germany and in the Netherlands. The main aim of retail planning was to maintain the status quo in retailing. This restrictive planning policy changed at the end of the 1970s, when some supermarket companies became very powerful and began to break through the planning restriction of the local authorities. The first peripheral establishments emerged. (Davies, 1995)

2.4.1 A 'race for space'

In the 80s a virtual rejection of retail planning took place. The Thatcher Government aimed at creating an enterprise culture by 'freeing-up industry from the shackles of planning' (Davies, 1995). The policy of deregulation and of the free market development led to an abrupt rise of the land prices in the city centres and increased the demand for cheaper ground at the periphery. This piled the pressure on local planning authorities so that they granted retail establishment at areas that originally were not destined for them according to development plans. (DV, 1997) The policy changes and other developments in the retail sector led to a transformation of the whole retail geography of the country: Apart from free-standing superstores and retail warehouses, four major outlying regional shopping centres were opened, which were as big as the biggest shopping centres in the USA (Davies, 1995). In the literature this period of spreading large retail establishments is called the 'race for space' period. (Guy, 1998b; Howard, 1995)

This relatively *laissez-faire* retail planning policy was applied until the early 1990s. Then several incidents allowed the Great Britain government to change its policy to a more interventionist stance. First of all there was growing awareness of the negative effects of out-of-town shopping centres on the traditional shopping areas. Moreover, there was a new policy to reduce the use of private vehicles. (Guy, 1998a)

2.4.2 The ‘caring 90s’

In 1988 a new Policy Planning Guidance Note (PPG 6) ‘Planning Policy Guidance Nr. 6: Town Centres and Retail Development’ was issued. It decided that the government would not identify locations for retail development and that major retail developments had no place at greenfield sites and were not generally acceptable in open countryside. Moreover, it assigned the acceptance of major development outside urban areas if it resulted in relict land reclamation, or if city centres did not provide sufficient facilities. It added that large food stores met a large customer demand and that large retail warehouses would relieve pressure on town centres (Howard, 1995).

However, there was much confusion and uncertainty about this PPG 6: It could be interpreted as encouraging large-scale peripheral developments but at the same time limiting them (Howard, 1995). Due to the lack of unambiguous guidelines and to the fact that a surge of development was underway or already planned, it has had little influence on the pattern of retailing (Guy, 1998a). Between 1983 and 1994, the proportion of large retail establishments at greenfield of the total sales floor grew from 8.5 % to 22 % (DV, 1997).

The 1990s have been described as the ‘caring 90s’, a different, more contained and less consumer-orientated period compared to the previous decade. In 1992 the Conservative Government was re-elected but its policies differed from the policies before. In 1993 the PPG 6 was replaced by a different PPG in which the government tightened the peripheral development. It contains the government’s purpose to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centre and to ensure the availability of a wide range of shopping opportunities for everyone. The previous focus on encouraging competition shifted to the benefits of clustering retail development aiming at facilitating comparison and competition. Moreover, it gave strong emphasis to sustainable development, expressed anxiety about the increasing private vehicle movements and encouraged the location of shopping facilities where they could be reached by a range of means of public transport. In practice this meant the location in or next to existing city centres (Howard, 1995). The local authorities were asked to take into account the revitalisation of the town centre retail structures, the reduction of the volume of traffic and ecological damage when making their development plans (DV, 199*).

With regard to food superstores, the success rate (taking into account both appeals and callings) decreased from over 50 per cent during the 1980s down to under 30 per cent in the years after 1993 (Guy, 1998a).

First the establishment of large retail stores at peripheral locations continued. This led to another revision of the PPG in 1996. This revision stipulates that a ranking order of favoured locations has to be determined. Locations in the town centre take priority over edge-of-centre locations. Locations outside of these areas (i.e. at the periphery) may only be approved if they have good transport connections and if sites in the precedence areas are not available or economically unsound. The local authorities have to account for the decrease in congestion in their development plans when they allocate areas (DV, 1998).

2.5 Peripheral retail policy and its impacts on the retail deconcentration in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a small and densely populated country and therefore has to use its space economically. This is one of the reasons being named to legitimise a strict spatial planning policy at national level. Planners from abroad jealously regard the Dutch planning ideas and the strict separation between rural and urban areas. The retail trade is a particularly good example of the influence of planning on space (Evers, 2003).

2.5.1 Retail policy after World War II...

After World War II, the Dutch retail policy aimed first at establishing and second strengthening and maintaining a functional-hierarchic shop system. The planning principle at that time was inspired by Christaller's Central Place Theory. The main aim of this policy was to ensure the supply of convenience goods (especially food) at walking distance from the consumers' place of residence. For non-daily goods the consumer had to go to a centre of higher order.

In general three to four levels of facilities existed, depending on the size of the town. The *stadscentrum* (town centre) at highest level has the largest surface as well as the most specialised range of goods with a relative small range of daily goods and a higher proportion of special products. Levels below the *stadscentrum* are the *stadsdeelcentra* (centres of a quarter), the *wijkwinkelcentra* (centres of a district) and the *buurtwinkelcentra* (shopping centre at neighbourhood level). At the beginning of the early seventies, large-scale retail settlements started developing outside the 'traditional' shopping areas (Boekema et al., 2000). The reason for this development was the increasing consumers' mobility enabling the consumers to reach locations along motorways and on the outskirts. Both the government and individuals reacted with severe criticism. They feared among other things increasing environmental pollution due to a higher volume of traffic, a 'social' selection and discrimination (only people who could afford a car could reach the locations, people who could not afford a car could be at a disadvantage) and an environmental blight (Kok, 1995).

In 1973 the government introduced the *Perifere Detailhandelsvestiging-beleid* (PDV = policy of peripheral retailing establishments) in order to protect the existing system of shops. This protective policy aimed at inhibiting the settlement of retail at the periphery. Exceptions were flammable and explosive goods as well as goods, which take up a lot of space (cars, boats, caravans) and building materials. This policy inhibited the dynamics in the retail sector: The market economy hardly had a chance to manifest itself. Instead 'dynamic' was considered as scaling-up and the development of new shopping formulae (Boekema et al., 2000).

From 1984 on, the protective policy changed to a 'selective protective' PDV-policy. It permitted large-scale enterprises, that verifiably did not fit spatially into the existing shopping areas, to settle at peripheral locations. Apart from the goods named above large-scale furniture trade and building materials were allowed. Still the policy was restrictive in order not to affect the already existing structure of supply.

In 1993 the government introduced the *Geconcentreerd grootschalige Detailhandelsvestiging-beleid* (GDV= concentrated large-scale retail establishments) as a supplement to the PDV-

policy. Solitaire large-scale retail businesses were allowed outside existing shopping areas at designated locations at 13 city nodes. The national government no longer limited the branches, but the communities were responsible for introducing further limitations. The only condition was a minimum gross floor space of 1500 m² (Boekema et al., 2000).

However, in practice there was no space at the GDV-locations given to branches with convenience goods. This strict retail planning excluded among other things supermarkets from peripheral sites (Davelaar et al., 2001; Boekema et al., 2000).

Apart from the PDV/GDV-policy the so-called ABC-policy had been introduced in the VINEX⁴, a location policy for all kinds of companies and services. It had been introduced against the background of the assumption that each company and facility provokes a specific way of mobility. The specific profile of the mobility of a company or facility can be assessed based on the way of mobility. This profile results in an appropriate place of business: A-location means a location in the centre that easily can be reached by public transport. B-locations can be reached reasonably by car and public transport and C-locations, situated along motorways, can only be reached by car (Borchert, 1995). The aim of this new location policy was to offer a good place to each company and each shop or facility. The definition of a 'good' place was no longer given by the national government but could be interpreted by the communities and provinces (VROM, 2001).

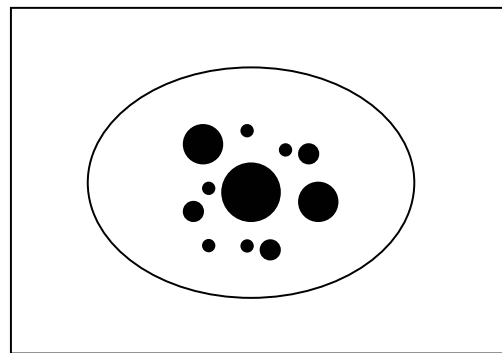
According to the Fifth Report on Physical Planning one third of the new establishments between 1991 and 1996 were settled at the 'right' location. In comparison to this the PDV/GDV-policy seemed to be more successful: Still no shopping centres had been built at greenfield locations (Davelaar et al., 2001).

2.5.2 ...and its spatial implications

After World War II, the structure of retail was predominantly established by national government policy. This functional-hierarchic concept had a high influence over the physical environment. Three-quarters of the present housing stock in the Netherlands derives from the second half of the 20th century and therefore was constructed using Christaller's model. (Kok, 1995) There was hardly any space for dynamic developments. Inspired by the Theory of Central Place the retail could be classified into a four-level system (see Figure 1).

Then the PDV-policy was introduced, ten years later supplemented by the GDV-policy. In this way, space was offered to large-scale retail establishments. This space was limited to specific branches. Nearly every community in the Netherlands has at least one PDV-location. The GDV-policy led to the establishment of three shopping centres: 'Alexandrium' in Rotterdam, 'MegaStores' in The Hague and the 'ArenA Boulevard' in Amsterdam. In each case, stringent arrangements concerning the branches protected the already existing retail structure. Establishments at greenfield sites remain unknown (Evers, 2003).

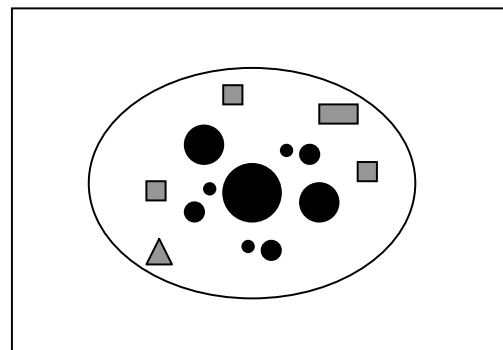
⁴ VINEX is an acronym for the 'Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening Extra', that was published in 1993. In this programme, plans for new urban expansion have been drawn up for many locations in The Netherlands. VINEX-locations are locations designated by the local government, which is intended to help the cities win back population groups with great purchasing power. (www.vrom.nl Dossier VINEX)



- Main shopping centre, *stadsdeelcentra*, *wijkwinkelcentra*, *buurtwinkelcentra* (illustrated from big to small)
- Community border

Figure 1. Concentrated retail structure (Boekema et al., 2000)

Allowing dynamics in the retail sector, the national government enabled processes of free market economy that led to a slightly changed retail structure (Figure 2).



- Main shopping centre, *stadsdeelcentra*, *wijkwinkelcentra*, *buurtwinkelcentra* (illustrated from big to small)
- community border
- PDV-location
- ▲ GDV-location

Figure 2. Retail structure after introduction of the PDV-/GDV-policy (Boekema et al., 2000)

However, the three different location policies only supplemented the original functional-hierarchic system of shops. The system of shops itself remained intact (Boekema et al., 2000).

In the Utrecht Monitor Kernwinkelapparaat (Gemeente Utrecht, 2001) the developments are submitted:

‘It was inevitable that there were some shifts in the functional pattern of the city centre in the course of the time (for example decrease of living and working function, stronger stress on the function as a cultural and entertainment district. In the Netherlands as well, some shops left the inner city to establish at the urban fringe (including large furniture houses), but the impacts have not been disastrous. Partly it is because of compensating actions such as urban development [...]. The planning policy in particular has to be mentioned, that limited the possibilities of retail establishments at peripheral sites.’

These two figures above underline that although some retail outlets were established at the urban fringe, the original system of shops was hardly affected. Some retail branches were allowed to be established at peripheral sites. But we have to bear in mind that the branches were strictly limited. The original system of shops (especially convenience shops) remained untouched as already mentioned.

2.6 Recent changes: the Nota Ruimte and its previous history

In 1988 the *Vierde Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening* (Forth Report on Physical Planning) was set up, still favouring a restrictive peripheral retail policy. However, in the late 90s it became evident that this report did not comply with the changing economic developments.

In 2000, the PDV/GDV-policy was analysed within the framework of the operation *Marktwerking Dereguleren en Wetgevingskwaliteit* (MDV, deregulation of the market economy and quality of legislation) by the MDV-working-group. The key question was whether there was still space for decentralisation and more market economy. In this analysis the MDV working group criticised the inarticulateness of the PDV/GDV policy.

According to them, there was no clear difference between the PDV- and the GDV-policy. Moreover the question was asked why the GDV-locations were limited to only 13 city nodes and how the responsibilities are distributed to the different authorities. The PDV/GDV-policy was not considered as suitable to withstand developments in the retail trade, and this inhibited dynamics of the retail sector. (MDV-werkgroep, 2000)

The analysis came to the conclusion that the PDV/GDV-policy was redundant and that retail trade developments could be better regulated at a lower level.⁵

This recommendation was included in the concept of the *Vijfde Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening* (Fifth Report on Physical Planning) (Evers, 2003). The Fifth Report on Physical Planning is characterised by a more liberal national governmental policy concerning peripheral retail establishments. However, it was the responsibility of the municipalities to handle these relaxed guidelines.

In the first part of the concept Fifth Report on Physical Planning, location policy of peripheral and large-scale settlements of retail (PDV/GDV-policy) and of businesses and facilities were replaced by one integrative location policy. The establishment of large-scale retail trade was no longer limited to the 13 city nodes, but each municipality was free to decide itself. The regulations on the limitative enumeration of branches and on the minimum shopping floor ceased to apply. (MDV-werkgroep, 2000)

This integrative location policy was aimed at developing suitable prospects of establishment for businesses and facilities. Therefore the communities had to identify 'red contours' by the year 2005. The settlement of urban functions was forbidden beyond these contours, in order to prevent development of greenfield locations and geographically spread building developments of businesses in the open space. Although the national government was still

⁵ It should be mentioned that the research was done with reference to the influential surveys of the McKinsey group. It criticised (from an economic and not spatial point of view) the fact that both the Netherlands and the whole of Europe trails the USA in respect to available shopping floor space per inhabitant. Moreover the advisers regretted the absence of shopping malls and shopping complexes at Greenfield locations.

against establishments in the periphery, and against intense land-use, it left the policy to the municipalities (Evers, 2003).

Whilst the concept was worked on during the whole national government of the cabinet Kok II (1998-2002), and went through the procedure of enactment, it was never passed.

The new cabinet of premier Balkenende did subsequently decide to pass it, but in 2002 the Fifth Report on Physical Planning fell with the crisis in the cabinet.

During all this time of discussion the Fourth Report on Physical Planning was still in force.

Following the fall of the Fifth report on Physical Planning in 2002, work commenced on a new Nota. In April 2004, the Nota Ruimte was enacted in the Council of Ministers. Further planning is in place to allow enactment by the Lower House in November 2004 and the Nota Ruimte will then have to be enacted by the Upper Chamber of the Dutch parliament.

At the time this research was completed, the process of legislation was still ongoing. By talking to members of the Netherlands Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment it was informed of the future of the policy concerning peripheral retail establishments. The modifications that were already made under the Kok government will be retained.

It should be noted that whilst writing this research the Nota Ruimte was not completely accepted. By interviewing the respondents it can be assumed that the Nota Ruimte will be accepted by a majority at the end of the year 2004.

The primary objective of the Nota Ruimte is the creation of space for the space-requiring functions on the limited surface of the Netherlands. The Nota Ruimte merely sketches the outlines of the policy. The cabinet decided to decentralise everything that can be decentralised. This means, the decentralised governments such as the provinces and the communities get more freedom to choose their own approach. (Dossier Nota Ruimte, 2004)

The ABC-policy and the PDV-/GDV-policy are replaced by an integrative location policy. The aim of this new location policy is to offer a good place to each company, in order to support the workforce of the cities and villages. The national government emphasises that there is no 'standard recipe' in order to determine what a 'good' place is, but that some basis rules have to be considered.

These criteria are:

- pre-existing and new companies and facilities that do not fit close of in residential quarters from security or noise points of view or because they require a higher volume of traffic have to be offered space at special territories
- offering space to new companies and facilities with high flows of goods and / or traffic on locations with a good traffic connection (VROM, 2004).

Both before and after the announcement of the Nota Ruimte there was considerable public discussion about the consequences for the Dutch spatial development.

Whilst some (inter alia Evers, 2003) think that the Netherlands runs the risk of creating a situation where 'everybody grabs what is to grab before the neighbour municipality or rival [retailer] does', others (Noordanus, 2003) argue for a more relaxed retail planning policy, pointing out that the liberalisation of the retail planning policy is just a logical response to a changing attitude of selection of the consumer.

2.7 Conclusions and perspectives

The previous section first defined the most important terms that are related to the topic of this research. (The term ‘quality of life’ will be defined in chapter three.)

It was elucidated that three players influence the emergence and the spatial distribution and establishment of retail outlets. Policy makers have the strongest influence since they set up the guidelines for retail establishments. These guidelines again determine the scopes for these kinds of establishments.

Further the different developments were described concerning peripheral retail policy in Great Britain, Germany and in the Netherlands. The developments in Great Britain and West Germany are characteristic of Western European countries. After World War II, Great Britain stuck at first to a restrictive retail planning policy, but in the 1980s made a volte-face, then giving more space to peripheral developments. The liberal policy concerning peripheral retail establishments was tightened in the course of time, when negative impacts on the town centres became clear.

The national government of (West)Germany first also led a liberal peripheral retail policy. But this policy was also tightened in the 1980s. It has been stuck to till this day.

In contrast to Great Britain and Germany, the Netherlands did not relax its policy in the course of time but adhered rigidly to its restrictive stance, preventing establishments at greenfield sites. Although some large retail establishments were allowed at designated peripheral locations in the 1980s, strict requirements were protecting the city centre retail trade. Locations at the greenfield remain unknown.

These different peripheral retail policies led to a specific retail structure in the three compared countries. For an overview see Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of the retail structure (MDV-Werkgroep, 2000)

	<i>The Netherlands</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>
Main shopping area	- wide offer - multifunctional	- wide offer - multifunctional	- wide offer - multifunctional
Peripheral offer	<u>Scattered offer</u> <u>PDV-Cluster</u> - Branches restricted according to the ABC policy <u>GDV</u> - Large scale stores - No limitations of branches - Only at 13 city nodes <u>Regional shopping centres at the periphery</u> Do not exist	<u>Scattered offer</u> <u>PDV-Cluster</u> - Locations with a branch limit do not exist <u>Consumer markets / self service ware houses</u> - No branch limitation - Mainly hypermarkets, DIY, furniture, clothes, sport, white goods <u>Regional shopping centres at the periphery</u> Analogous offer as in the main shopping area	<u>Scattered offer</u> <u>PDV-Cluster</u> - Locations with a branch limit do not exist <u>Retail parks</u> - No branch limitation - Mainly hyper-markets, DIY, furniture, clothes <u>Regional shopping centres at the periphery</u> Analogous offer as in the main shopping area
Supporting centres	Supply at district / neighbourhood level	Supply at district / neighbourhood level	Supply at district / neighbourhood level
General profile	Fine-meshed network	Coarse meshed network	Coarse meshed network

By introducing the Nota Ruimte in 2004, the Dutch national government abolished the former PDV-/GDV-policy and ABC-policy and leaves the implementation of the peripheral retail

policy to the provinces and communities. Albeit that it is underlined that large-scale outlets at greenfield sites are undesirable, it now could be possible that some provinces and communities allow and encourage these kinds of establishments. Moreover there could be the establishment of supermarkets and other branches at the periphery since the branches are not subject to limitations any more.

The development in East Germany has shown how quickly the private sector can react to a relaxation in planning control. Because of a loophole in the law after the reunification the establishment of large peripheral shopping malls became possible. Although this development could be stopped about three years after the reunification, it clarifies how easily a missing or unclear legal regulation can lead to settlements of large shopping establishments. Although the development in East Germany can be seen as a deterrent example, it has to be borne in mind that a very special development has taken place due to the unique historical, social and planning background: The centres of East German cities could not develop after World War II and therefore could not subtend an attractive shopping area to the peripheral establishments. Moreover, the consumers had a very big backlog demand after the reunification since especially luxury goods and clothes had been scarce goods under socialism. So also the pattern of demand cannot easily be assigned to other countries.

Still, the developments in the New Federal States of Germany can be seen as severe warning. Table 3 numerates the stances of the three national governments in the course of the time.

Table 3. The national governments' stances concerning peripheral retailing

	<i>1960s</i>	<i>1970s</i>	<i>1980s</i>	<i>1990s</i>	<i>2000</i>
The Netherlands	Restrictive	Very restrictive	Very restrictive	Restrictive	Moderate
Germany	Restrictive	Moderate	Restrictive	Restrictive	Restrictive
GB	Very restrictive	Restrictive	Very liberal	Moderate	Restrictive

It is a moot question to what kind of developments a relaxation of the retail planning policy in the Netherlands could lead to and what kinds of implications emerge concerning the peoples' quality of life. Analysing this problem is the further aim of the following chapters.

3. The concept of quality of life

Measuring possible impacts of economic deconcentration on the quality of life is one of the core objectives of the SELMA project and therefore as well of this research. Moreover, studying the quality of life in life spaces is one important field of geographical research, since geography deals with understanding the nature of the person-environment relationship. In the sub-discipline urban geography, quality of life research elucidates both the degree of congruence or dissonance between city residents and their urban surroundings and the degree to which a city satisfies the physical and psychological needs and wants of its citizens (Pacione, 2003a; 2003b).

The following chapter provides a general introduction to the concept of quality of life. In order to approach this concept, the term 'quality of life' has to be defined (3.1). Then its application in geography is elucidated (3.2). In section 3.3 the approach SELMA uses is described. Moreover the application to this research is explained.

3.1 Origin of the quality of life concept and definitions

The concept of quality of life is rather new. In the late 50s the debate of the increasing social costs of economic growth and the controversy about public destitution led to a more critical view of affluent societies (Bulmahn, 2000). People became aware of what Pacione (2003b) calls the 'paradox of affluence', which is the fact that the growth of material wealth of a society does not necessarily provoke a higher quality of life of individuals. The health of a nation and the wellbeing of its citizens cannot be measured by only focussing on the gross national product, but strongly relate to other important factors such as social, political and environmental issues. (Pacione, 2003b)

Literature offers many definitions in order to describe quality of life (Van Kamp et al., 2003). Terms such as liveability, environmental quality, quality of place are sometimes used synonymously for quality of life, but as often are used incompatibly. In some literature they provide meta-concepts whereas in others the concepts are independent from each other.

Since the SELMA project uses the definition provided by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) this definition is taken over for this research. The RIVM (2000) states:

'Quality of life is the factual material and immaterial equipment of life and its perception characterised by health, living environment, legality, equity, work, etc.'

To date, researchers have not succeeded in compiling a consistent framework, which combines the existing concepts. Mitchell et al. (2000) states that 'there is no agreement yet on quality of life, in terminology or in construction methods or the criteria that comprise quality of life'. So it is indispensable to consider that the term 'quality of life' bears its meaning from the specific contexts in which it is used by different researchers.

3.2 Approaching the concept of quality of life

SELMA uses the Pacione's model for its quality of life research. Pacione (2003a) developed a five-dimensional model for quality of life research based on a combination of approaches that explore different components of quality of life within various socio-spatial contexts (Figure 3).

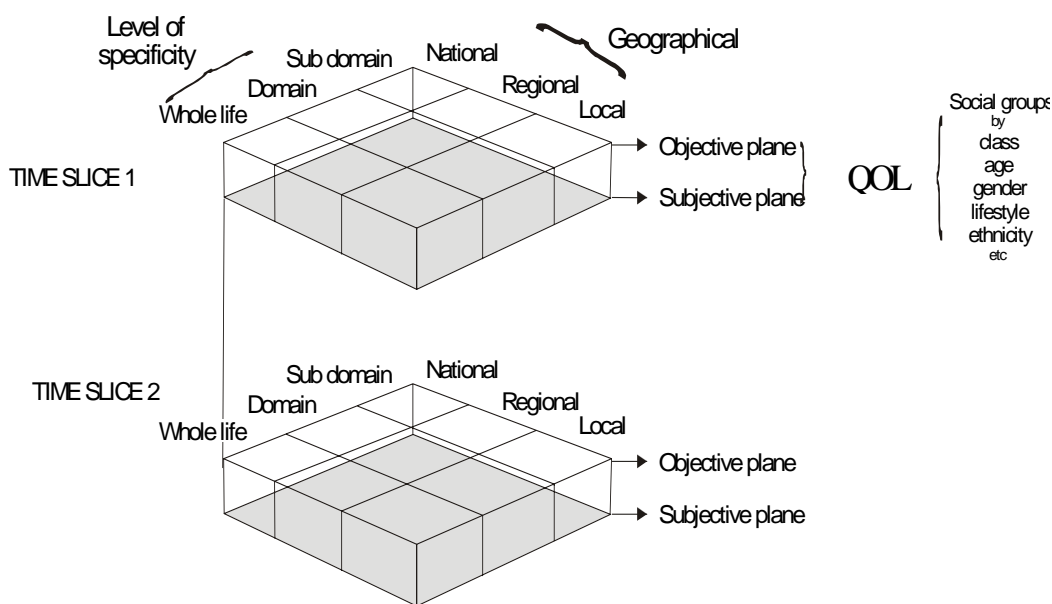


Figure 3. A five-dimensional framework for quality of life research (Pacione, 2003a)

The level of specificity refers to which domains of quality of life are the subject of investigation, ranging from a whole life view to individual domains (e.g. the size of rooms in a dwelling unit). The main geographical contribution is the introduction of a spatial dimension in order to aim at augmenting previous two-dimensional considerations of social conditions against time. Moreover, societies can be assessed with different geographical scales (ranging from individuals to an international scale).

The third dimension refers to the used indicator type. As explained below, two different, but coherent indicator types can measure quality of life: objective and subjective ones.

Distinguishing between these two indicator types requires some more attention: There is general consensus in literature concerning these two quality of life indicator types. Most authors underline that both objective and subjective indicators are appropriate to measure quality of life (Pacione 2003a; Cummins, 2000; Szalai, 1980). The objective indicator type deals with variables describing the environment in which people live and work. This can address issues such as levels of health care provision, housing, crime, education and leisure facilities. This objective position is based on observable circumstances of living, which can be measured by outsiders using scientific and/or moral standards. Possible judgements are 'optimum' or 'minimum' standards. The theoretical basis is the existence of 'basic needs'. Satisfying them determines the well-being. In general, basic needs can be fulfilled by political measures. Using objective measures is useful when we have to deal with standards, which are regulated by law and therefore enforceable. (Zapf, 1984) This objectified political

approach (Scandinavian etatism) has its origin in social democratic welfare states such as Sweden. Quality of life was seen as the optimal equipment of material resources by the welfare state. Moreover, this point of view draws attention to the fact that perceiving quality of life is dependent on the culturally relative context. It is obvious that people living in a newly industrialising country define quality of life in a different way, to people living in a western country (Bulmahn, 2000).

The subjective indicator type sheds light on the ways in which people perceive and evaluate the conditions around them. This individualistic and subjectified view of quality of life (Anglo-Saxon individualism) was developed in liberal welfare states such as the USA. Reaching an individual level of happiness was seen as both cause and aim of human activities. The individual can make judgements about how an individual manages, approaching this aim by himself (Bulmahn, 2000).

There is no doubt that approaching quality of life has to consider both objective and subjective conditions. Szalai (1980) states: 'It is the interaction of the objective and the subjective that determines the quality of human life; or as an old adage states in less high-faluting terms: *feeling* miserable about life can make life as miserable as *being* miserable in life.' Szalai states further that 'a person's existential state, well-being, satisfaction with life is determined on the one hand by exogenous ('objective') facts and factors of his life and on the other hand by the endogenous ('subjective') perception and assessments he has of these facts and factors, of life and of himself'. In general, a combination of objective and subjective indicators is preferable (RIVM, 2000; Cummins, 2000).

It is difficult to draw to universally agreed conclusions about the coherence between objective and subjective features. Literature shows that the relation between objective and subjective indicators (e.g. between social state and satisfaction of life or between income and satisfaction of income) is less significant than expected, by assuming rational action and judgement. Good conditions of life can go along with perceived bad quality of life (dilemma of discontent). Bad conditions still can be judged in a positive way (paradox of contentment) (Zapf, 1984).

Zapf (1984) combines the objective dimensions of quality of life with the dimensions of subjective well being in a two-by-two-table Dichotomising only in the two categories 'good' and 'bad' he distinguishes four types of quality of life (Table 4).

Table 4. The four dimensions of quality of life (adapted from Zapf, 1984)

Objective living conditions	Subjective well being	
	good	bad
Good	Wellbeing	Dissonance
Bad	Adaptation	Deprivation

The typical target group of social policy are the 'deprived' who live both in a bad objective and a bad subjective position, whereas people in a good objective and subjective position (well being) do not need much state support. Special attention should be paid to the two inconsistent groups. 'Dissonants' have the potential to cause protest and change. 'Adapted' people often represent a reality of palsy and social retraction. One important task of quality of life research is to discover these kinds of patterns of constellation of objective life conditions and subjective well being (Zapf, 1984).

However, most research has focused on either objective or subjective measures (but without ignoring the opposite position) whereas only a few studies try to combine both indicator types in one single investigation (Pacione, 2003a).

The fourth dimension of Pacione's model is employed to measure quality of life at different points in time. Considering this dimension is useful in order to monitor the effectiveness of policies, which aim at enhancing conditions for particular people and places. The last dimension deals with social groups and reflects the socio-spatial structure of the city (Pacione, 2003a).

The combination of the different dimensions indicates the way of looking at quality of life within specific contexts. The model has great value for structuring the quality of life indicators within specific contexts (Van Kamp et al., 2004).

3.3 SELMA's approach to quality of life and its application to this research

As said above, the SELMA project adopts the quality of life definition provided by the RIVM. According to SELMA, the quality of life concept is a container concept that integrates many different dimensions. The core domains are economic, social/cultural and physical aspects. This means SELMA gives prime attention to the integration of economic, social and environmental issues. Moreover, it tries to select only those indicators of the quality of life that are directly influenced by spatial deconcentration of economic land use in metropolitan areas (Van Kamp et al., 2004).

As also said above, the choice of quality of life indicators in the SELMA project is inspired by the Pacione's model. SELMA adapts the model in order to structure quality of life aspects that are studied. Table 5 shows how this is applied:

Table 5. Adaptation of the Pacione model for the SELMA project (Van Kamp et al., 2004)

<i>DIMENSIONS</i>	<i>CHOSEN ASPECTS / FEATURES</i>
Domain	- Socio-economic - Environmental
Scale	- Metropolitan area - Zones within the metropolitan area - Small scale differentiation
Time-frame	- Situation in 1990 (1980) - Situation in 2000 - Small scale differentiation
Indicator type	- SELMA restricts itself to objective indicators
Social groups	- Residents - Employees

In order to make quality of life measurable SELMA has chosen several indicators. These indicators result from theoretical consideration and from considerations of availability.

As can be seen in Table 6, SELMA restricts itself to objective indicators. The advantage of studying only objective indicators is to be able to work a larger amount of data. Time and financial constraints also play an important role. The disadvantage of choosing only objective indicator types is that although gathering the public quality of life (that means the

circumstances of life) of a certain group of people, the private quality of life (the personal perceptions) of individuals belonging to a specific group is neglected.

Table 6. Choice of indicators related to non-residential deconcentration for SELMA (Van Kamp et al., 2004)

<i>Indicator type</i>	<i>Measured by</i>
General/contextual indicators	- Population density - Incoming and outgoing population - Gross regional product
Transport	- Modal split - Motorization rate - Congestion
Environment	- Air quality - Number of toxic hazards
Land-use	- Ration of built-up area to a total area in each ring - Portion of total area in each municipality that is open space with recreational or amenity value
Commuting	- Average daily travel time - Average commute distance to work
Residential/dwellings	- Average house price - Number of historic and cultural heritage sites - Dwelling density
Accessibility	- Percentage of residences within 1 km radius of the following (in each zone an employing centre, an outdoor recreational facility or open space, major shopping facility, cultural or leisure centre)
Fiscal well-being	- Portion of total budgets that is self generated for settlement - Business taxes
Social cohesion	- Annual homicides per thousand inhabitants

Studying only objective indicators runs the risk of not comprehending the real situation adequately. This is why in this research it was tried to gain as many subjective perceptions as possible. The author of this research was aware of the fact that representatives of the group of consumers, policymakers and retail trade are questioned in the expert interviews and not consumers and retailers directly. Although these representatives give their subjective point of view they often talk about the perception on a collective level. This means it concerns rather an indirect and not a pure subjective gathering of quality of life. But since they know well about wants and interests of the group of people that they represent, this approach is justifiable.

The SELMA list of indicators is taken as an informative basis but is not directly presented to the respondents. The aim is not to influence their answers but rather to gain an insight into their perception of important partitions of quality of life. By leaving it up to them to mention specific indicators of quality of life it becomes clear what is of special importance to them (and the group they are representing). The objective is to discover previously unknown aspects, rather than to measure fixed factors.

Concerning the dimension 'social groups', SELMA chose to study quality of life among residents and employees. This classification implies several difficulties, because most residents are also employed in the city.

For this research the group of residents was mentioned in the interviews without splitting them up. The author of this research was fully aware of the heterogeneity of this group, but want to leave it to the respondents to do further classifications. By this, they were not influenced in advance, but their independent classification points to which subgroups they expect impacts. Further possible classifications were 'non-mobile' residents, families or elderly people.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter briefly introduced aspects of the concept of quality of life. It became apparent that no consistent framework exists, which combines the many existing single concepts. This is why it is important to consider carefully the concept in the context in which it is used. The SELMA project clearly indicates in which way it uses the concept of quality of life. This approach of the SELMA project is the starting point for this research. In this research the quality of life definition used by SELMA is taken over. However, the way quality of life aspects are structured in this research differs from the structure that is used by the SELMA project. As explained in section 3.3 it is focused on (indirect) subjective quality of life aspects whilst SELMA restricts itself to objective quality of life indicators. Based on the explanations given in section 3.3, for this research the scheme used by Pacione can be filled in as follows:

Table 7. Adaptation of the Pacione model to this research

<i>DIMENSION</i>	<i>CHOSEN ASPECTS / FEATURES</i>
Domain	- To be interpreted by the respondents (e.g. socio-economic and environmental)
Scale	- National - Provincial - Municipal
Time-frame	- Situation during restrictive national policy - Situation after introduction of the Nota Ruimte
Indicator type	- (Indirect) subjective
Social groups	- Residents

In chapter two the processes of economic (retail) deconcentration were presented. After having illustrated also the concept of quality of life in this chapter, the following question is raised now: Where is the connection between economic (retail) deconcentration and quality of life? An answer to this question will be given in chapter four.

4. The relation between quality of life and economic (retail) deconcentration

When the peripheral shopping mall 'CentrO' in Oberhausen (Germany) was opened the Newspaper DIE ZEIT (1996) commented: 'Homicide of the City: Oberhausen has a new shopping mall.' In Great Britain the term 'urban food desert' emerged in order to describe town areas that had lost convenience shops in favour of peripheral locations (Evers, 2003; Guy, 1998a).

It is obvious that processes and developments in the urban surrounding also effect the people who are living in these areas. Using these two aforesaid examples one easily could be in favour of only focusing on the negative impacts on the city residents' quality of life by the economic deconcentration process: After all it cannot be in the interest of the city residents to live in a 'dead' city centre. And living in an area without the possibility of buying food certainly also decreases the quality of life there. But it is not that simple. The link between economic (retail) deconcentration and quality of life is characterised by a high complexity.

4.1 Economic deconcentration and quality of life

According to SELMA (2001) economic deconcentration has serious impacts foremost on employment. SELMA expects implications on efficiency and equity.

On the one hand, economic deconcentration can be considered as a response to free choice and needs in the market. Established economic activity at the outskirts could create new jobs that otherwise would not be produced in the dense and expensive inner cities of metropolitan areas. A rational and efficient allocation of resources and therefore a higher quality of life could be the result. On the other hand, economic deconcentration could lead to un-priced externalities such as congestion, reduced accessibility for non-car owners, and polarisation of communities where residents were less mobile than their jobs. When negative effects predominate the patterns of development, the viability of inner cities can be undermined. The decline of the inner cities can in turn harm the suburban residents' quality of life as well. According to SELMA (2001), the reasons for neglecting the topic of economic deconcentration could lie in the fact that its quality of life effects are less obvious than those connected with residential deconcentration. Under the simplified assumption that an urban area is comprised of a central city and an urban fringe, SELMA posits the following relationships between deconcentration and quality of life (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Quality of life impacts by type of deconcentration (SELMA, 2001)

Type of deconcentration

		residential	economic
<u>Quality of life impacts on:</u>	residents: city centre	-	- / +
	residents: urban fringe	+	- / +

As shown in Figure 4 the impacts of residential deconcentration seem relatively straightforward: On the one hand, deconcentrating residences generate negative quality of life effects (economic, social, cultural and environmental) for inner city residents. On the other hand, they provoke positive effects for suburbanites (greater private land, accessibility to amenities). The deconcentration of economic activities is supposed to create much more indefinite impacts.

4.2 Retail deconcentration and quality of life

Focussing on retail deconcentration possible impacts are discussed in the literature. Disadvantages can remain for the town centres. Peripheral establishments can lead to absorption of buying power and the town centre can be weakened. This in turn can lead to a shortcoming of supply for the people that are living in the town centre. The basic function of the town centre is endangered since a wide retail supply lacks in urban life and for the urban multi-functionality. This again influences the residents' quality of life since they are least effected in their choice of products. In the worst case they have massive problems in ensuring their own supply. Moreover the aesthetical feeling could be impaired by the degraded city centres. And living in an unattractive environment that makes them feel uncomfortable could also affect peoples' quality of life (Gorter et al., 2003; Guy, 1998a).

Gorter et al (2003) state that there is a danger that the quality of life in general would deteriorate, if consumers become dissatisfied with the conditions of the retail sector in the city centres and therefore chose other better places. The deterioration could occur due to rising criminality, vacant shopping buildings and slums.

If the purchase power is absorbed to the periphery, some shop owners of the inner city might have problems selling their products. In the worst case they could find themselves facing such a great loss of opportunities to sell their products that they have to close down the whole shop.

In addition to this, peripheral establishments can affect the environment. The construction work leads to extensive sealing. The noise and exhaust fumes exposure increases because of higher use of vehicles to reach the peripheral locations. The landscape is dissected by the establishments themselves and also by the service roads. The residents' health could be threatened by the increasing emission of exhaust fumes and the increasing noise pollution. But environmental impacts can also be regarded from a positive point of view. The peripheral establishments could lead to a shift of the traffic flow: Instead of a surge into the city centres, people are leaving the centre to do their shopping outside the city. This again relieves the inner city areas and therefore leads to a decrease of noise and air pollution. Cleaner and quieter city centres benefit the health of the residents and therefore influence their quality of life in a positive way.

Guy (1998a) names also benefits from large peripheral retail establishments to consumers. A broader variability of goods is available. Changes of the personal lifestyle were complemented by the spread of peripheral establishments: Full-time 'housewives' with access to a car and commuters returning from work, profit from a wide convenient offer of goods. The long opening hours benefit double jobholders, who cannot shop during working

hours. Moreover, there has been an increase in family involvement in shopping especially in leisure-oriented establishments. And peripheral establishments could generate employment for suburban residents.

DV (1998) and Kulke (1997) name further advantages: Cheaper land prices have to be paid for the peripheral locations. This also benefits the consumers since the goods can be offered cheaper. Consumers (at least consumers who own a car) profit by having better access since peripheral stores usually offer sufficient car parks at no charge. Moreover, peripheral retail stores offer a wide range of goods consolidated and the shops under one roof guarantee a 'dry' and 'warm' shopping atmosphere.

4.3 Conclusion

Aforesaid implementations underline that it is extremely difficult to judge the exact impacts of retail deconcentration on quality of life. The link between economic deconcentration and quality of life is characterised by a high ambivalence. Although it has become clear that there indeed is a relation between retail deconcentration and quality of life in cities, the question remains: Will there be positive or will there be negative effects? And which effects will prevail?

Nearly each effect that results from retail deconcentration processes entails twofold consequences. For example, there is the danger that peripheral retail establishments take so much purchase power out of the pre-existent shopping areas, that the shop owners have to close their shops and probably go bankrupt. This certainly has a negative impact on their own as well as their families' quality of life, since they have to manage with less money and they have to cope with psychological consequences of bankruptcy. On the other hand the peripheral retail establishments create new jobs. This again could improve the quality of life of people who found employment there.

This example also shows that it has to be paid much attention to another question. The question that arises is: Quality of life for whom? The 'city residents', mentioned in the research question certainly cannot be seen as a homogenous group but have to be further divided into sub-groups. Different classifications are possible: The heterogeneous group of 'city residents' could further be split up into the sub-categories 'family', 'elderly people', 'car-owners' and so on. For each group different and specific impacts on quality of life emerge.

Still in this research no classification of the 'city residents' was made in advance. In the expert interviews only 'city residents' were mentioned. This is not because the author was not conscious of this problem, however the author did not want to influence the experts but rather leave a further classification to them.

This chapter showed that there is a correlation, which again is characterised by an ambiguity. Therefore, this correlation has been made subject to this research. What does this mean for the situation in the Netherlands? Chapter five and six attempt to answer to this question.

5. Perceptions: Peripheral retail policy and quality of life in the past

Central to this chapter and the following chapter is the research question four: How can future developments concerning retail deconcentration and its impacts on quality of life be appraised?'

This chapter and chapter 6 provide the outcome of the qualitative research. For this research expert interviews were conducted using an interview guide with open questions.

This is why the questions for the experts are divided into two groups. The first group of questions refers to the peripheral retail policy and the quality of life in the past. It is dealt with in this chapter. The intention of this chapter is to get a solid basis in order to prepare the following chapter. Only if we know about the experts stances concerning the strict peripheral retail policy and its impacts on quality of life in the cities, can we judge recent and future changes properly.

5.1 Appraisal of the restrictive peripheral retail policy

The question is: How do the respondents judge the restrictive policy? The general objective of this question was to find out about the respondents' stances about this former policy. Gaining an insight into their appraisal makes it easier to contrast the new more liberal governmental policy.

The stakeholder of the national government was asked a slightly different question. In order to find out about the reasons why the national government implemented and maintained this policy he was asked: Why has the national government adhered to this restrictive policy for such a long time? The stakeholders of the province and the community of Utrecht were asked the same questions as the rest of the respondents, since they do not have much influence on the national policy but rather were asked to administrate the guidelines.

5.1.1 Perspective of the consumers

From the consumers' point of view the restrictive policy had both advantages and disadvantages, in which the negative aspects prevail.

Albeit that, an attractive city centre is considered to be important for a shopping public, it is underlined that the restrictive governmental policy cemented an urban shopping system whose shops were difficult to be reached by car. The consumer had no alternative to the locations in the city centre and therefore was limited in his free choice.

'It is not a question of whether people like a greenfield establishment but rather whether they like the city centre.'

5.1.2 Perspective of the retail trade

The attitude of the stakeholders of the retail trade varies from 'twofold' to 'positive'. All respondents agree on the positive effects that the restrictive policy had on the supply of the

city residents. Because of this policy a very fine-meshed structure of shops had been created and could be maintained to date.

Two respondents underline that a difference has to be made between the different branches and sizes of the businesses before making reliable statements. For the pre-established shops the restrictive national governmental policy meant protection. But for branches that needed more space and therefore preferred peripheral locations, the restriction was often a hindrance. There are different opinions concerning the clarity of the restrictive policy: One respondent is convinced that this policy used to be very clear without ambiguity. According to him the policy definitely stated concerning peripheral retail establishments: 'It has to be like that'.⁶ On the other hand, some argue that there was no clarity at all. The intention of the PDV-policy was to allow only special branches at peripheral locations. But since the definitions of the branches were not clear, this often led to lawsuits. According to the respondent many companies tried to evade the guidelines. Moreover in the course of the time different new shopping formulae emerged which made it more and more difficult to assign them to one special branch. This again made it difficult to reason why for example a furniture business was allowed to establish at the periphery but not an enterprise, which apart from other things also sold furniture.

5.1.3 Perspective of the policymakers

The stakeholder of the national government gives two reasons why the national government adhered to this restrictive policy for such a long time. First of all there were spatial considerations: By introducing the PDV-/GDV-policy the emerging trend to establish at peripheral locations should be stopped in the 70s.

Moreover there was an economic reason. Regulation was needed in order not to threaten the pre-existing hierarchy of shops. By introducing the PDV-/GDV-policy only a limited number of branches got the chance to establish at the periphery which prevented an uncontrollable movement of retail trade from the inner cities to rural areas.

But the respondent also names disadvantages. The policy was very 'state controlled'. This did not give enough space to regional or local developments and therefore inhibited the market. Instead, the national government directed things whose results in fact turn down on communal

'The question finally was, whether the PDV-/GDV-policy still worked and was appropriate after that many years.'

level. Moreover, the definitions of terms such as 'peripheral' or 'large-scale' were ambiguous and became obsolete in the course of the time. More and more retail trade established at peripheral location which actually was not allowed by definition.

All in all the respondent judges the PDV-/GDV-policy as successful although it remains doubtful if it still was working properly and if it was used correctly.

The province of Utrecht did not have any own retail trade policy in the past but took over the national governmental policy line. With these policies the communities set to work. The respondent further says that this policy used to work well. Only in a few cases of conflicts between two communities was the province asked for its opinion.

The stakeholder of the community points out that the community agreed with this restrictive governmental policy. The objectives of the policy clearly were favoured. But the respondent also sees some disadvantages. One weakness lay in an absence of clarity concerning the

⁶ On request of one of the respondents, Mr. Sluiskes, his statements are clearly marked.

enforcement. Since the Dutch communities interpreted the policy in a different way a lot of matters were taken to the courts. The scope of interpretation also led to different spatial realisations and therefore also to spatial disparities.

5.1.4 Perspective of the independent experts

Within the group of independent experts there is no consistent opinion. One respondent judges the restrictive stance of the national government as good but at the same time he underlines that he is not very sure about the policy's effectiveness. According to him, the first wave of deconcentration emerged in 1968 to 1970 before the restrictive policy was introduced. The wave of deconcentration was over by the time the PDV-policy was passed. He gives several reasons for the stop of the movement of some companies to the periphery. First of all good places already had quickly been occupied. Moreover the place was limited because of the general limited space in the Netherlands. The second reason for the stop was the whole economic situation of the country. When it worsened with the economic activity, there were less capital investments and therefore also less demands for peripheral locations. The respondent underlines that it took too long before the PDV-policy was finally introduced. A positive aspect of this policy was that the fine-meshed shopping structure was able to be maintained in the city centres and therefore benefited the communities.

According to the other respondent it is difficult to judge the policy either as good or bad. Certainly it led to particular intended and unintended outcomes. The intended outcome was the maintenance of the hierarchic and fine-meshed retail structure with a lot of shops that could be reached without covering long distances. Moreover the landscape remained unaffected. As an unintended side effect the respondent names the benefit for the owners of real estates in the cities. Because of these restrictions, the companies could not easily establish at the periphery. So the owners of the real estates could ask high rents.

5.1.5 Resume

Concerning the PDV/GDV-policy the respondents have different points of view. The positive aspects of the former peripheral retail policy were the prevention of a dissection of the landscape by an uncontrolled spread of large-scale outlets. The fine-meshed hierarchy of shops which arose from this benefited the supply of the city residents.

There is deep disagreement on the clarity of this policy. Whilst some respondents judge it as very clear, others complain about the ambiguous guidelines. Moreover it was emphasized that it benefited only some exclusive branches whilst others could not develop properly.

5.2 Impacts on quality of life

In this research it was decided deliberately not to enumerate any quality of life indicators in the interviews in order not to influence the experts' perceptions. Instead the author wanted the experts to come up with quality of life indicators themselves. By this, an insight could be gained in what the experts what they understand about quality of life and what kinds of aspects they judge essential.

For the same reason the author did not divide the group of 'city residents' in further sub-groups. Possible sub-groups could have been: families, elderly people, yuppies or

mobile/non-mobile residents. In the interviews the author always referred to the ‘city residents’ in general. Again, the author wanted to leave it to the experts to make further classifications.

5.2.1 Perspective of the consumers

Two opposite aspects are named in order to describe impacts on the city residents’ quality of life. On the one hand the quality of life was influenced in a positive way: The city residents’ surroundings is attractive, the value of the houses ascends and shops can easily and quickly be reached. On the other hand, a problem occurs because of the many shops that regularly are open on Sunday, e.g. in Amsterdam the shops in the inner city are open every Sunday, which leads to many visitors to the centre.

‘The city residents do not want the shops open on Sundays anymore, since they cannot relax being flooded by shopping people.’

Moreover the quality of life is influenced in a negative way since there is no choice of where to do the shopping. Having no other possibilities (e.g. at peripheral locations) than locations at the city centre where they are forced to pay higher prices and they are limited in the brand choice. Moreover they are forced to pay higher parking fees in the city centres. Especially families suffer because it is difficult to go with a buggy into shops, busses and trams.

5.2.2 Perspective of the retail trade

Concerning the quality of life under the restrictive governmental policy a twofold image arises. There is consensus that the restrictive policy helped to protect the fine-meshed shopping structure in the cities. The city residents could reach convenience shops within walking distance. Especially for non-mobile residents this meant a good possibility to accommodate themselves properly.

As a negative impact on the city residents’ quality of life one respondent mentions the limited choice a consumer had, since there were no cheaper supermarkets out of town.

5.2.3 Perspective of the policy makers

There is general consensus among the respondents that the restrictive retail location policy had a positive influence on the quality of life. The fine-meshed retail hierarchy guaranteed a very good possibility of supply to the city residents, especially to elderly people.

One respondent acknowledges that there were also disadvantages. There was the danger of being too conservative, which led to an over-protection of the existing shopkeepers. Because there was no competition the existing shopkeepers did not feel impelled to make any efforts to modernise their offer. This again led to a limitation of choice for the city residents. However, the respondent also underlines that he believes that these kinds of effects did not appear very often. Another disadvantage is that it was difficult to reach the shopping facilities in inner cities by car. This is unfavourable for consumers who want to do their shopping by car.

5.2.4 Perspective of the independent experts

There is general consensus among the respondents that the restrictive governmental policy benefited the already existing shopping structure in the cities especially in the city centres.

According to the respondents the brisk and dazzling cities benefits in turn the quality of life of the city residents. Since there was more retail in the cities the city residents were able to ensure their own supply. Especially non-mobile residents profited from the close by shops. However, one respondent stresses that the supply only was sufficient under the assumption that there where high quality shops.

The restrictions prevented the Netherlands from establishments at the greenfield which both experts judge as positive.

But there were also negative impacts on the quality of life. Since more and more people own a car and use it to go to the city centre the traffic and therefore the exhaust fumes are increasing. This could have a negative impact on the air quality.

5.2.5 Resume

The following section provides an insight into how the experts judge the impacts of the former peripheral retail policy on the residents' quality of life.

There is very broad consensus about the positive effects: The fine-meshed structure of shopping facilities enabled the residents to a supply within walking distance. Especially less mobile people benefited.

This fine-meshed structure of shops keeps the city centres alive and makes it very attractive. Although this influenced the quality of life in a positive way, the experts also mention negative impacts: Particularly the high attractiveness of the city centres resulted in a big stream of visitors. This does not only disturb the ease and privacy of the people living close to the city centre but also causes a lot of traffic and exhaust fumes. The sites in the city centres are difficult to reach by car. Car parks are very expensive. But also the use of public transport does not solve the problem: Families often have problems to manage getting into busses and trams with buggies.

Moreover the strict maintenance of the hierarchic structure of shops inhibited some domains of the free market economy: There were not many alternative cheaper shopping facilities to the shops in the city. Since there was a lack of competition, the consumers had to pay higher prices while at the same time having a limited choice.

5.3 Conclusions: Strict peripheral retail policy and impacts on quality of life

The experts' judgement of the former peripheral retail policy of the Dutch government is characterised by a high ambiguity. Even within one group of players there is no homogeneity.

The PDV-/GDV-policy

The intention of this PDV-/GDV policy was to maintain a good supply of the city residents by giving the possibility to some branches, which offered space-intensive goods, to chose a location at the periphery at the same time.

It becomes apparent, that one homogenous retail trade does not exist. I has to be differed between the retail trade in the pre-existing shopping centres, which mostly consist of small and medium-sized businesses, and branches that need more space to sell their goods. Small- and medium-sized businesses, that usually are located in the city centres, certainly were favoured by the PDV-/GDV-policy. However, the retail branches that offered space-

consuming goods, which were not designed to a peripheral location per definition, were discriminated against.

Albeit that one respondent lauds the high clearness of this policy, there are many counterparts that affirm the opposite. After closer consideration there indeed seems to be not very much clarity: It is obvious that the retail trade will undergo some changes in the course of time. New branches and new products emerge as well as new shopping formulae. Since the PDV-policy was not changed or adapted to social and business changes, these guidelines from 1973 were still applied although they actually were catering to specific shopping formulae. The argument of one respondent of the retail trade that the PDV-/GVD-policy in the course of time has become inapplicable in order to handle and to judge new shopping formulae seems obvious. Also another argument that the improper PDV-policy led to several lawsuits sounds logical: Some newly emerged retail formulae that actually required more space but were not destined per definition to a PDV-site, were unsatisfied, felt discriminated against and tried to improve their situation by taking legal action.

Another reason for judging the policy as outdated was the fact that though the effects turned down on municipal level the municipalities hardly had any possibility of interfering. Thereby it is absolutely conceivable, that there were communities where a peripheral shopping mall could have become a success. By giving the guidelines from above, all municipalities were under the control of the rules without taking 'individual' differences and needs into account. The peripheral retail policy could be an obstruction for certain local developments.

Table 8. Judgements on the strict governmental peripheral retail policy

<i>Positive aspects</i>	<i>Negative aspects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of an attractive city centre - Guarantee of the city residents' supply - High clarity of the guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cementation of a static shopping system - Inhibition to some retail branches that needed more space - Ambiguity of the guidelines - Too state-controlled

Quality of life

There is broad consensus about the positive aspects of this strict peripheral retail policy: All respondents underline that thanks to it a very fine-meshed structure of shops could be established and maintained. This was reflected in the quality of life of the city residents: A fine-meshed structure of shops was named as the biggest advantage of the strict policy. The shopping hierarchy in the cities guaranteed and still guarantees a high grade of supply. Especially less mobile people were favoured since they could and still can reach convenience shops within walking distance. Owners of houses in the city centres profited also, because they could ask for higher rents.

However, the high attractiveness of the city centre also turned out to also have some negative quality of life impacts: Since the centres are so attractive and since nearly each bigger city at least has one Sunday per month when the shops are open (the shops in Amsterdam and The Hague are even open each Sunday) a large proportion of the public 'floods' the shopping areas. Of course one can argue that the quality of life of the shopping public increases since it has the opportunity to go shopping outside regular shopping hours, but there is also the argument that the quality of life of the people living in the centres is affected in a negative way. The shopping public disturbs the ease in the inner cities. In addition to this, the air quality in the inner cities decreases because a lot of visitors come by car. As a result, the health of the city residents could be at risk. Already in this case there are two different groups

of city residents (residents in the city centre and residents at the urban fringe) whose perceptions of the quality of life-needs are clashing. It is difficult, maybe even impossible, to decide whose interests are more important.

Further quality of life impacts of the PDV-/GDV-policy arise indirectly. There was the risk that the pre-existing shopping structure and shopping formulae were cemented without any space for renewal and new impulses. This again limited the choice of goods. Moreover the goods were expensive, since there were not many cheaper alternatives. Apart from high product prices, high parking fees have to be paid in the city centre.

Table 9 lists the quality of life impacts of the peripheral retail policy, as named by the respondents. It has to be emphasized that this table only reflects what, and not how often something was mentioned by the experts.

Table 9. Quality of life impacts for the city residents under the restrictive peripheral retail policy

<i>Positive quality of life impacts</i>	<i>Negative quality of life impacts</i>
- High grade of supply (good reachability of shops)	- No ease (city is too crowded)
- High income by renting	- Less choice (cementation of shopping structure)
- Attractive space of living	- Higher expenses on parking fees
	- No cheaper shopping alternatives
	- Bad air quality in the centres

It is striking that the negative impacts outnumber the positive ones: Three positive impacts face five negative ones. At a first glance one could tend to conclude that the negative quality of life impacts prevail under the PDV-/GDV-policy. However, a weighting of the aspects certainly could deliver other results. After all, it is possible that the few named positive aspects are of a higher importance to the benefit of the city residents' quality of life.

It can be assumed that a 'good reachability of shopping facilities' was seen as an important positive effect of the peripheral retail policy since each expert named this aspects, exceeding even all negative ones which only were named by a few experts.

Concerning the quality of life aspects more answers would have been cogitable than the aspects named by the experts. SELMA (Table 6) already gave an idea how many different aspects can play role in the economic deconcentration – quality of life discussion. The experts, in contrast, predominantly associated quality of life with the above named eight aspects, although quality of life is determined by many more aspects.

Another peculiarity is that the experts hardly split up the group of the city residents in further sub-groups. Only the sub-groups: families, non-mobile persons are named. Though it is pointed out by this that the group of 'city residents' is not a homogenous one.

To conclude this chapter it can be submitted that, although there was general agreement on the restrictive stance of the Dutch government concerning peripheral retailing, the PDV-/GDV-policy, it also was considered as outdated. It became apparent that it was time for changes. It is a moot point if the introduction of the Nota Ruimte can live up to these expectations. Chapter six will among other things shed light on this question.

6. Perceptions: Peripheral retail policy and quality of life after introduction of the Nota Ruimte

Chapter five created the basis for this chapter. Chapter six will elucidate the perceptions and expectations of the experts on the future developments after the introduction of the more liberal national policy on peripheral retailing.

It will answer sub-question four: ‘How can future developments concerning retail deconcentration and its impacts on quality of life be appraised?’ Both chapter five and six answer the main research question.

6.1 Appraisal of the new governmental policy concerning peripheral retailing

It was important to get an impression about the general perception of the experts of the more liberal governmental policy. In this way, these answers can easily be compared to the answers under 5.1. It has to be pointed out that the respondent of the national government was not asked this question. Logically it is unnecessary to ask him for his appraisal of a policy that he helped to put in place.

6.1.1 Perspective of the consumers

The respondent clearly judges the more liberal governmental policy as better compared to the restrictive one. It is now up to the communities to determine the retail location policy and by this to adapt it to its individual requirements.

6.1.2 Perspective of the retail trade

All respondents used the term ‘distrustful’ in order to describe their attitude toward the more liberal stance of the national government concerning peripheral retail locations.

One respondent points out that he expects that the adjustment to the new policy will be difficult. Although he judges the PDV-/GDV-policy as too inarticulate, he admits that at least everybody was used to the enforcement. A positive aspect of the new policy is the increasing clarity. Contrary to this position is the opinion of another respondent.⁷ According to him, the Nota Ruimte is not clear at all, because this new integrative policy applies to all kinds of companies and facilities instead of classifying them into categories. Moreover terms such as ‘visitor intensity’ and ‘visitor extensive’ are not defined in a clear way. The respondent claims that a clause should be added in the Nota Ruimte, that underlines that greenfield establishments are not permissible. At the same time the respondent underlines that ‘the Nota Ruimte does not mean a liberalisation of the policy, but a decentralisation [...] This means that the primacy of the policy now lies in the hands of the communities.’⁸

⁷ Mr. Sluiskes

⁸ Mr. Sluiskes

6.1.3 Perspective of the policymakers

The reasons of the government to relax the governmental stance on peripheral retailing are already named under 5.1.3.

The province was already responsive to the attempts of the national governance to relax the retail location policy some years ago. In 2003 the province of Utrecht edited the *Provinciale Visie Detailhandel* (Provincial view on retail trade). This view was introduced in order to enable the province of Utrecht to bring trans-local retail developments into agreement with each other. The main objective of the *Provinciale visie detailhandel* is: ‘Formulating a view and a framework of verification for the evaluation of plans that have trans-local impacts.’ (Provincie Utrecht, 2003)

In this *Visie* the restrictive peripheral retail policy is taken over. But it also leaves some space for new developments. It is obvious that by this the province accepted the restrictive policy and defeated the liberal one.

The stakeholder of the community of Utrecht expects that the trans-local co-ordination has to increase as one of the reactions on the new policy. Two or more communities will have to negotiate if there are any plans for retail establishments close to the community border. The respondent regrets that there are no longer governmental frameworks on which the negotiations can be based. These frameworks now have to be arranged at provincial level.

*‘The national government should not forbid everything but it should not allow everything either.
It would be fine to have some framework on special domains.’*

6.1.4 Perspective of the independent experts

One respondent says that he judges the policy as preposterous and insentient. He thinks that there was no necessity since the restrictive policy was quite acceptable. Moreover the new policy is contrary to the common trend of West European countries to tighten the laws concerning peripheral retail establishments. But he admits that it fits into the trend of the Dutch national government to decentralise the competence.

The other respondent is convinced that the new policy places too much faith in the local authorities. The retail development continuously asks for more and more space, which actually requests a central regulation. The liberal national policy makes it more difficult to solve provincial or community border problems.

He adds that the policy benefits the markets development more than the town and country planning. But there could also be a positive aspect, since more space could become available in the city centres if some establishments were to move to the periphery.

6.1.5 Resume

Apart from one respondent, who is sympathetic to the peripheral retail politic, the other experts’ appraisals are restrained. The experts use terms such as ‘distrustful’, ‘preposterous’ and ‘insentient’. They criticise the inarticulateness, the lack of guidelines and that this trend is in contrast to the trends in Europe to tighten the peripheral retail policy.

6.2 Will there be a trend towards more establishments at peripheral locations?

This is the most crucial question of the interviews with the experts. In section 2.2 it was pointed out that the Netherlands led a very restrictive peripheral retail policy before the introduction of the Nota Ruimte. Since the Nota Ruimte was announced there has been strong criticism among the public. Among other things, there was a fear that the Netherlands could suddenly undergo a similar development as for example the USA and that a large number of peripheral shopping malls might be built suddenly, interfering with the pre-existing shopping structure and endangering the quality of life of the residents.

The intention of this question was to get a better understanding of future developments in the Netherlands. Does one indeed have to fear that the Dutch cities could lose a large number of retail facilities? Or is this fear exaggerated?

6.2.1 Perspective of the consumers

The respondent acknowledges that there indeed could be a trend. He assumes that more outlets at peripheral locations will occur because of the financial and spatial benefit for companies. Moreover the demand of the consumers will also lead to more supermarkets at peripheral locations. The respondent underlines: 'Economic laws are awfully simple: If there is a demand there will be a supply.' According to him this also means that some shops will still remain close to the places of residence in the inner city since there is still and also will be a demand.

6.2.2 Perspective of the retail trade

All three respondents expect that there will be a trend towards more peripheral retail establishments. There are several reasons given in order to confirm this estimation. The initiators for more retail establishments at the periphery will not be found among the retail trade, but among the property developers. 'There are property developers who only want to build without having any further interest in what will further happen to their projects. A danger is that the communities are losing their head by the proposals of the property developer.'⁹ According to the respondents there is a chance that communities will be persuaded into favouring large-scale retail establishments by naming the creation of jobs and by confirming the advantages of these establishments by studies underlining that there is no harm to the pre-existing shopping areas.

In contrast, one respondent sees the initiators among the communities. Since it is now up to each community to determine its own peripheral retail policy, there is the danger that if one single community comes up with plans for peripheral establishments the other adjoining communities feel impelled to follow suit in order to prevent a loss of purchasing power.

However, each respondent also believes that the trend will not emerge completely undamped. Although the national government says in the Nota Ruimte that the communities are responsible for their own retail trade policy, the provinces still have to check and to approve

⁹ Mr. Sluiskes

the communal plans. So the policy on provincial level could act as restraints. Moreover it is pointed out that the density of shops in the Netherlands already is very high. It is difficult for those who want to invest in shopping centres to find a niche between the pre-existing shopping areas: 'There is no market any more.'

According to one respondent¹⁰ it also depends on the way in which the position of the city centres is kept. 'If you want to keep attractive the city centres you can only give new functions a place if they are attainable within short distance. The challenge for the Netherlands is the reinforcement of the inner cities on condition of accessibility. This is what we have to do: Reinforce the inner city and make them reachable.'

6.2.3 Perspective of the policy makers

From the perspective of the national government there will be no trend towards more establishments at peripheral locations. The respondent does not think that the provinces and

'Peripheral retail establishments will become a definite issue of Dutch retail trade. This does not have to be necessarily grave as long as sort of a balance emerges.'

communities suddenly feel a stronger need to do so. If they favour large-scale establishments they want them close to their own urban area. Moreover the respondent thinks that the market already has been arranged and that the Dutch distribution area already is closed.

The respondent of the province thinks that there will be at least more discussion about peripheral establishments. Especially supermarkets will try to occupy new locations.

The stakeholder of the community expects on the one hand more peripheral establishments. But on the other hand he is convinced that there also will be a countermovement: A peripheral retail establishment does not automatically guarantee success.

6.2.4 Perspective of the independent experts

One respondent argues that it depends on the Dutch communities if there will be more retailing at peripheral locations. The urban government and the whole Dutch planning system could act as a restraint. Since there is always a lot of discussion about new projects, this often leads to a reduced version of the original plans. The respondent further says that there indeed could be a market for peripheral establishments. It depends on the demand of the Dutch market. The Netherlands has as much m² of sales floor per inhabitant as Germany and Great Britain. Under the assumption that the sales floor per inhabitant cannot be augmented, a shift could take place. This means that the purchasing power could be absorbed from the already existing shopping areas towards peripheral locations. But the respondent underlines, that it is difficult to predict the future. It is also possible that the Netherlands could undergo a similar development as the USA. The USA have three to four times more m² sales floor per inhabitant. Choosing the USA as a model means that the need for retailing in the Netherlands still could be augmented, which could lead to a supplementation by the peripheral location to the already existing retail instead of a shift.

The second respondent opposes this opinion. He doubts that the Netherlands have the need for more peripheral retailing. As evidence he cites the introduction of the GDV-locations.

¹⁰ Mr. Sluiskes

After the possibility had been given to establish large-scale retailing at 13 city nodes, only three GDV-establishments were carried out. This shows that there was no real need for e.g. large shopping malls in a lot of Dutch cities.

He also underlines, similar to the other expert, that the communities are very unresponsive. However, the situation turns out to be different if just the food sector is studied. The Dutch supermarket chains have been investing in the inner cities. So they are not really interested in peripheral locations. But there could be an ingress of foreign investors. These investors are likely to tend to use free space at the periphery and therefore could become a threat to the supermarket in the inner cities. This automatically would lead to a damage of the fine-meshed shopping hierarchy.

6.2.5 Resume

Apart from two respondents all respondents expect a trend towards more retail deconcentration. Different parties are supposed to be interested in establishments at the periphery and the resulting positive effects from this. Initiators are seen among the consumers, the communities, the retail trade or among property developers. But on the other hand, the respondents name several mechanisms which oppose a sudden and completely uncontrolled movement of retailers outside the city centres.

6.3 Possible impacts on the quality of life of city residents

After having reached an answer to how the experts judge the future developments concerning peripheral retail establishments this question links these possible future developments to quality of life impacts.

6.3.1 Perspective of the consumers

A diminished quality of life is expected if the city residents have to cover more distances in order to shop. Positive effects are having a cheaper alternative to buy goods and that there is less traffic within the cities.

6.3.2 Perspective of the retail trade

Assuming that more and more peripheral retailing will emerge, all respondents expect impacts on existing shopping areas. The purchasing power could be absorbed by the periphery, which could lead to a vacancy in the existing shopping centres. Then people who live close to these 'traditional' shopping centres are not able to do their shopping properly. Moreover the residents have to cover longer distances in order to shop.¹¹ This also leads to a higher volume of traffic and therefore also to higher environmental impacts by the exhaust fumes as well as a decrease in road traffic accidents.

But considering the air quality only in the inner city, the flow of traffic towards the periphery could also have positive effects. Since the flow of traffic goes out of the city, the people who live in the centres are less affected by exhaust fumes.

¹¹ Mr. Sluiskes

6.3.3 Perspective of the policymakers

Since the respondent of the national government does not expect a trend to more peripheral retail establishments, he does not expect impacts in the quality of life of city residents either.

The respondent of the province acknowledges that isolated shifts could take place and that some shopping centre could face difficulties. But at the same time the respondent wonders if this really influences the quality of life. In general the respondent does not expect impacts since the province will keep on leading a restrictive policy by adopting the former restrictive governmental policy.

The stakeholder of the community of Utrecht also fears that there could be impacts on existing shopping areas. But he also names positive effects. The supply of goods could be extended and the peripheral shopping establishments offer a better accessibility to the consumer.

6.3.4 Perspective of the independent experts

Assuming that many shops will move from the inner city to the periphery, the respondents expect some people to suffer from disadvantages. One respondent adds that effects of peripheral retail establishments will depend on the size of the city. Bigger cities are more affected than smaller ones.

The other respondent names an influencing factor on quality of life, which is not directly related to peripheral retail developments but which still could interfere with the city residents' quality of life. According to him the security of the inner city decreases. People run the risk of being robbed. Peripheral shopping malls could be an alternative since they can be guarded easier than inner cities. This means if the quality of life of city residents is influenced by a decreasing perception of security, a growing demand for more secure shopping locations could develop e.g. at peripheral locations.

6.3.5 Resume

Assuming that more shops at the periphery will emerge, different quality of life impacts are expected.

There could be bad impacts on the city centres. The pre-existing shopping areas might not be able to withhold the new competition at the periphery. Possible closing down of shops could decrease the quality of life in the city centres. The residents would not be able to do their shopping properly. Moreover the exhaust fumes could increase since peripheral retail locations usually can only be reached by car. In addition to this, longer distances would have to be covered, also increasing the traffic.

The positive impacts which were named by the experts are as follows: less traffic in the city centres, better accessibility and higher security of the peripheral shopping areas.

6.4 Conclusions: Peripheral retail policy, a possible trend to more peripheral retail establishments and possible impacts on the quality of life after introduction of the Nota Ruimte

The new governmental peripheral retail policy

Before asking the experts about their appraisal concerning a possible trend towards more retail establishments at the periphery, it was important to gain a general insight into how they judge the new governmental policy. The question is: 'What do you think of the changed governmental peripheral retail policy?'

The general reserve of the respondents is striking. Except one respondent, who appreciated that the new peripheral retail policy offers more freedom of decision to the communities, all respondents use words such as 'distrustful', 'preposterous' and 'insentient' in order to judge the changes of the national stance.

However, there is no homogeneity at all in this criticism. Within the group of the retail trade clashing opinions as regards the clarity of the guidelines in the Nota Ruimte emerge. It is difficult to balance these opposing stances and to judge their accuracy. The implementation of the governmental policy now lies in the hands of the local governments. It now possible that each province, possibly even each community could set up its own peripheral retail policy, strongly differing from that of the neighbour-province or -community. It is up to the provinces or communities to care for the highest possible clarity. But even if each province/community has set up very clear guidelines (which thus augment the comprehensibility) the policies of the different provinces and communities could differ that much among each other, that statewide one could face so many different policies that there is less clarity in general. In this case the enterprises would have to take into account the provincial/communal differences.

One respondent underlines, that the introduction of the Nota Ruimte is needless, because the PDV-/GDV-policy worked very well. Furthermore, it is feared that the retail trade succeeds in asserting its own interests, requiring more and more space at the periphery. There definitely could be some truth in this fear. As shown in the chapter before, some retail branches that offer space-intensive goods, felt aggrieved by the PDV-policy. They now finally could have the opportunity and allowance to establish at larger sites at the periphery. But this only applies to some branches. As also stated above, the 'retail trade' is not a homogenous unit but consists of several formulae and branches with different needs and preferences. So we can also assume that only some branches will try to leave the city centre in order to establish at peripheral sites. Not every branch is interested in and suited for peripheral sites. So the impact certainly turned out to be quite moderate. And who is to say that some retail branches changing their location only entail bad impacts on the city centres? After all –and this argument is given by the same respondent- the retail shops which relocate make room for other, new shops in centres, which even can enrich the shopping structure.

What is really outstanding is the attitude of the province: Already in 2003 it reacted to the obvious changes of the national governmental policy by introducing the *Provinciale Visie Detailhandel*. Anticipatory the former restrictive stance of the national government concerning peripheral retail policy is adopted to provincial level. This means that at least in

the province of Utrecht no sudden deconcentration of retail establishments will take place. The *Provinciale Visie Detailhandel* definitely prevents the province of Utrecht from an uncontrolled emerging of peripheral retail establishments. However, we have to be aware that The Netherlands has 12 provinces, each of them being free to chose their own peripheral retail policy. This fact also concerns the stakeholder of the province of Utrecht: He expects that the communication between neighbour communities has to increase if retail establishments are planned close to the community borders. This sounds logical. Though a province can protect its own territory against uncontrolled retail deconcentration by introducing a strict peripheral retail policy, the coverage of course stops at the provincial borders. If the neighbour province has a more liberal stance concerning establishments at the periphery, possible establishments also influence other provinces. For example a shopping mall close to the province borders could absorb the buying power also from cities that lead a strict peripheral retailing policy intending to protect the pre-existing shopping areas. So, indeed, the intra-provincial communication has to be increased.

Table 10. Judgement of the peripheral retail policy after introduction of the Nota Ruimte

<i>Positive aspects</i>	<i>Negative aspects</i>
- Higher clarity	- Less clarity
- Possibility to adapt it to individual needs of a province / community	- Too much benefit for the retail trade

All in all the experts' stances are characterised by a general insecurity and scepticism. It seems everybody keeps waiting suspiciously on how the different authorities will implement the guidelines of the Nota Ruimte.

A trend towards retail deconcentration

The question of if there will be a trend towards retail deconcentration is a crucial one and helps to answer the main research question.

Two of the nine respondents are convinced that there won't be a trend towards more peripheral retail establishments at all. Both doubt that the Netherlands have either a need or enough free space for more retail establishments. To substantiate this assumption the reaction to the introduction of the GDV-policy are cited. The GDV-policy was introduced in 1993. It allowed the establishment of large-scale retail outlets outside existing shopping centres at 13 city nodes. The branches were no longer limited by the national government but the communities were responsible for introducing further limitations. Indeed, by introducing this policy, no sudden trend emerged to make full use of these 13 possible retail locations. Instead, a GDV-location was established only in three cities.

This means the first opportunity to construct shopping malls at the periphery did not initiate a very deep interest among the communities. If there had been attempts, there still were enough counterpoises, which knew how to obviate it.

All other respondents do expect a trend towards more peripheral retail establishments. However, it has to be pointed out that each respondent immediately adds reasons why this trend will not take place completely uncontrolled. No respondent fears a sudden, drastic shift of retail traders out of the city centres. On the one hand the consumers' demand could lead towards more peripheral retail establishments; on the other hand a lot of consumers are still interested in having some shopping facilities close by. This will make sure that enough shops remain in the city centres.

Apart from the consumers, other initiators for peripheral retail establishments are were mentioned. Property developers are supposed to heavily influence the communities, trying to persuade them to construct shopping malls at greenfield sites. Indeed property developers seem to have much influence on communities as the example of the NL.C (= Nederlands Centrum) proofs. This retail and leisure centre is planned close to motorway junction. The initiator is the project developer MAB.

One respondent sees the initiators rather among the communities. There is the danger that if one community comes up with plans for a peripheral shopping mall a chain reaction could be activated among the surrounding communities. In the worst case each Dutch community wants to construct its own peripheral shopping mall.

There certainly is some truth in the respondent's argumentation. If one community decides to construct a peripheral shopping mall, other surrounding communities have to fear that this shopping mall absorbs the purchase power from its own centres. So they could feel forced to take action, maybe by constructing a shopping mall as well.

But just the same respondent gives reasons why there is still opposition to these kinds of developments. The Nota Ruimte leaves the implementation to the provinces and communities. The provinces as the middle level of administration give guidelines to the communities. Communal plans have to be tested against the provincial guidelines. This means the policy on provincial level can act as a restraint.

This argumentation is plausible when we take the province Utrecht as an example. With the introduction of the *Provinciale Visie detailhandel* the province formulates among other things a restrictive peripheral retail policy. This means that the communities in this province cannot easily go for peripheral retail establishments but have to bring into agreement such plans with the provincial frameworks.

Nationwide, however, difficulties could emerge since it is not clear yet what kinds of stances the several other provinces will favour. It remains to be seen how they decide.

Possibly there will not be a shift, but a supplementation of the pre-existing shopping areas by new peripheral sites.

At first glance the Dutch market seems to be saturated. Per inhabitant there are 1.3 m² sales floor available. This corresponds to figures in Germany and Great Britain. But if we take the USA as a model, a different situation emerges. In the USA the average sales floor per inhabitant is three to four times higher. Assuming that the Dutch market can still be expanded, the existing shopping areas would be not affected but supplemented by peripheral establishments.

In total it can be ascertained, that most of the experts estimate that there will be a trend towards more establishments at the periphery with the introduction of the Nota Ruimte. But at the same time they think that there will be mechanisms, which oppose these trends and prevent an uncontrolled retail depletion of the city centres.

Impacts on quality of life

We already learnt in chapter four that there is a link between retail deconcentration and the city residents' quality of life. We now turn to answering the question of how the experts appraise possible impacts if there is indeed a trend towards more retail deconcentration.

Nearly all respondents come up with one central quality of life impact. In case that moving retail facilities absorb the purchase power from the pre-existing centres a resulting vacancy could be the result. Then, the residents lose possibilities to ensure their supply. Longer distances have to be covered to get to alternative facilities.

But more alternatives emerge and enable the consumers to buy cheaper goods. The exhaust fumes of a general higher volume of traffic expect negative health impacts. Moreover the road safety decreases, since more cars are en route. But the flow of traffic from the city centres to the periphery results in positive effects for the quality of life. The city centres are less charged by the exhaust fumes, since less people rush to the pre-existing shopping centres. One of the experts come up with a completely different aspect, which on the one hand is not directly connected with economic deconcentration, but on the other hand could influence this. In his eyes the city centres are about to become less safe. Especially in the evening hours one cannot wander in the centres without feeling unsafe. There is the risk of robberies. Indeed, if there is less security in the city centres, lockable and monitored shopping centres could be a good alternative. On the other hand it certainly is impossible to guarantee full security even if a good security system is installed.

The respondents again name a few aspects of quality of life impacts when they give their appraisal. The decreasing reachability is a central one. Again further sub-classifications of the group of the city residents are hardly made.

Table 11. Possible quality of life impacts for the residents after introduction of the Nota Ruimte

<i>Positive quality of life impacts</i>	<i>Negative quality of life impacts</i>
- Cheaper alternatives to the 'traditional' shopping areas	- Proper supply with goods is endangered (longer distances have to be covered)
- Better air quality in the city centres	- Health impacts by higher volume of traffic
	- Less road safety

Aforesaid elucidated statements give an insight into the experts' appraisals of future trends towards retail deconcentration and possible impacts on quality of life in the cities.

Several things can be stated: The new policy, which is introduced with the Nota Ruimte is regarded suspiciously. There is a lot of insecurity regarding how the different local governments will implement the national guidelines.

Everybody seems to wait and see how the provinces and communities will handle the new governmental frameworks. On the other hand it is clear that none of the experts expects sudden and disastrous movements from retail trade to peripheral sites. Thus the impacts on quality of life turn out to be limited.

7. Conclusions, recommendations and reflection

In the precedent chapters the special development in the Netherlands was emphasised, comparing this to the development of two West European countries. Moreover the process of retail deconcentration was elucidated. The introduction of the Nota Ruimte with a changed governmental stance concerning peripheral retailing caused several reactions among the public and among the parties concerned. Peoples' reactions range from enthusiasm, arguing that the former policy had inhibited the market economy, and complete rejections because of a fear for bad impacts on the city centres and the people living there. But one thing these reactions have in common: insecurity and suspicion about what might change in the future.

The aim of this research is to give an answer to the main research question:

'Do Dutch cities show a tendency towards processes of economic deconcentration? And are there possible impacts on the residents' quality of life?'

Answering this means creating an order in the perceptions, fears and appraisals of the experts. This will be done in section 7.1. On the basis of these findings recommendations are made in section 7.2. A research should not be done without evaluating some special points of attention. This will be done in section 7.3.

7.1 Answering the main research question

The answer to the main research question was prepared by asking the first three research questions (see section 1.3). They create a fundamental background to the necessity of this research and elucidated important terms and concepts.

Conclusions of the first three research questions can be submitted as follows:

Three different players exert influence on the spatial pattern of retail establishments: consumers, the retail trade and policy makers. In the Netherlands a unique development took place due to a very restrictive peripheral retail policy of the national government. This prevented a loss of retail facilities in favour of peripheral sites. It allowed a very fine-meshed hierarchy of shopping facilities to be established and maintained, guaranteeing a high grade of supply to the city residents.

The restrictive stance of the national government concerning peripheral retailing and the resulting fine-meshed hierarchy of shops are extraordinary compared to the developments in other West European countries.

Other West European countries relaxed their peripheral retail policy in the 70s and 80s. But after negative impacts on the city centre and the quality of life the national governments tightened their policy. Recently they lead a restrictive peripheral retail policy.

With the introduction of the Nota Ruimte the Dutch national government abolished the former peripheral retail policy in the framework of a general deconcentration of competence. The conversion of the policy is now up to the provincial and local governments. Although it is underlined that greenfield establishments are not wished, there is some fear with the public that now an uncontrolled movement of the retail trade out of the towns could take place. The

original fine-meshed structure could be affected and also peoples' quality of life. As there are changes in the retail structure, the fine-meshed structure of shops could be endangered.

Answering research question three (chapter four) showed that there is a correlation between retail deconcentration and quality of life of the city residents. However, from the studied literature it neither was clear whether this correlation is negative or positive.

The fourth research question was a crucial one. It was answered by empirical research. Therefore interviews with experts were conducted. The experts were asked to give their appraisals on future developments concerning retail deconcentration. By considering the experts' appraisals, the answer to the main research question was obtained. Concerning the first and second part of the main question the following conclusions can be drawn:

Economic deconcentration

After the introduction of the Nota Ruimte some changes are expected to take place. Several reasons for the emergence of a trend towards retail deconcentration can be named. Enterprises that used to feel aggrieved by the PDV-/GDV-policy now finally could get the possibility to move to cheaper locations that at the same time offer much more space. Consumers are supposed to support this trend since they benefit from cheaper prices and a bigger range of offer. Considering the developments of the *buurtwinkelcentra* has already proved the influence of the consumers. Because the consumer preferred supermarkets to small single convenience shops, the small shops disappeared and were supplemented by bigger supermarkets. As also shown above, consumers profit by larger peripheral establishments. So it can be assumed that they will support the establishments of peripheral retail outlets.

Communities could see new possibilities to create jobs by building large peripheral shopping malls. Moreover property developers are supposed to encourage the establishment of large-scale retail outlets. According to the experts property developers can easily afford land at the periphery. Then they try to convince the communities of the benefits of a peripheral shopping mall. It is very striking that by this a new player gets the chance to also exert influence on the spatial distribution of retail establishments. Before the introduction of the Nota Ruimte the property developers also existed, but their influence was limited because of the strict peripheral retail policy. By the introduction of the Nora Ruimte they get the chance to use the influence to convince a community of the advantages of a shopping mall at the greenfield site. A fourth player thus supplements the originally three players.

The development in the New Federal states of Germany has shown what kinds of deconcentration processes can emerge when there is no legal control. But a transfer to the Dutch situation certainly cannot be done that simply. In the Nota Ruimte the Dutch national government abolishes the former PDV-/GDV-policy. To some this may sound as a total and unlimited release of peripheral shopping malls resulting in a sudden run for sites at the greenfield. Of course a slight distrust is comprehensible. After all the Netherlands stuck for a long time to a very strict governmental peripheral retail policy. And it is also an indicator for a good working democracy that everybody reflects and discusses new governmental clauses. However, these misgivings are harum-scarum and not really well reflected. The Nota Ruimte does not abolish the PDV-/GDV-policy in order to favour shopping malls at greenfield sites but leaves the setting up of the peripheral retail policy to the provinces and communities. This

accommodates a general trend towards decentralisation of governmental authorities. Decentralisation means that more responsibility is placed in the provincial and local governments. This again means that it is now the turn of the provinces and communities to set up guidelines. In doing so they can decide themselves what kind of policy is suitable for individual provincial needs. It was elucidated above that the guidelines set up by policy makers could act as restraint or encouragement for spatial developments. So the Dutch policy makers at lower levels turn out to be the crucial factor for further developments concerning peripheral retail establishments. The province is a strong intermediate government that set up guidelines that have to be adhered to by the communities. This is one of the most important mechanisms that oppose a completely uncontrolled trend towards retail deconcentration. Another mechanism that opposes to an uncontrolled trend is that the Dutch market already is distributed. The Netherlands is a small country with a very high density of people. This means that there is not very much space left to establish new retail outlets. Moreover not every branch is suited to establish outside the pre-existing shopping areas. There definitely will be branches that want to keep their outlets in the city centres. As also learnt above the 'retail trade' is no homogeneous group, but consists of several branches with different needs. So it is very likely that the retailers in the pre-existing shopping centres will oppose to peripheral retail establishments.

Furthermore the Dutch city centres in general are very attractive, and therefore are able to compete against possible peripheral retail establishments.

Summing this up: there will be a trend towards more retail deconcentration but it is exaggerated to fear disastrous impacts for the pre-existing shopping centres, because there are still some mechanisms that prevent uncontrolled establishments at the periphery.

Quality of life

The second part of the main research question was about possible impacts on the city residents' quality of life. It is difficult to give a clear answer to this question. The group of the 'city residents' is a heterogeneous one. There are sub-groups such as non-mobile people who are in danger of losing some aspects of their quality of life. Others such as families that own a car could benefit. However, it was not the aim of this research to study the needs of different groups of residents. On the contrary the research can give an insight and impression of possible quality of life impacts. We learnt above that there is a link between economic (retail) deconcentration and quality of life. Consequentially, since changes concerning retail deconcentration are expected, effects on the residents' quality of life can also be expected.

The results of the empirical research both show positive and negative impacts. Nearly all experts name the same negative impact: People could face difficulties to do their shopping properly when the fine-meshed shopping hierarchy disappears. They will have to cover longer distances to do their shopping. Moreover establishments at the periphery entail a higher volume of traffic. This means more exhaust fumes, which again could affect the peoples' health, charge the air.

On the other hand peripheral shopping facilities usually offer cheaper products, having a bigger choice at the same time, which benefits the consumers and increases their quality of life. The air quality in the centres could increase since there is a flow of traffic out of town. Moreover the residents that live in the city centres could get more quietness if they are less 'flooded' by people on *koopzondagen* (Sundays when the shops are open).

However, it is striking that nearly each negative aspect can be opposed to a positive one. E.g. the health of people in the city centres could be less charged since the flow of traffic goes out of town. But considering the air quality in general we can assume a higher pollution since the use of cars augments in order to reach peripheral shopping facilities.

Summing this up: chapter four already showed that there is a high ambiguity when we consider the impacts of retail deconcentration on the residents' quality of life. Analogue to the findings of the literature study are the findings of this qualitative research. Both positive and negative impacts can be expected if there is a trend towards more retail deconcentration.

7.2 Recommendations

As elucidated above, retail deconcentration can result in negative impacts both for the pre-existing shopping centres and the city residents' quality of life. On the other hand there are also positive aspects of peripheral retail establishments. It is important to handle the changed governmental guidelines carefully and to try to find solutions, which neither do damage nor inhibit the positive aspects. A happy medium would be fine i.e. creating some space for the development of the market economy without doing too much damage to the pre-existing shopping areas.

As also elucidated above, the provinces are asked to set up their own peripheral retail guidelines. The Netherlands has 12 provinces. Possibly each province will set up its own specific policy. It could happen that one province which favours a restrictive stance is surrounded by provinces that encourage peripheral retail malls. This becomes a problem if one of the peripheral retail malls is constructed close to the provincial borders as this still affects the retail structure of the province with the restrictive policy.

In order to prevent this, the provinces have to establish a very good consultative structure concerning their plans for setting up their own peripheral retail policy. It has to be discussed carefully what kinds of impacts a certain stance of one province has on the neighbouring provinces. In all cases the provinces should set up strong and unambiguous guidelines for peripheral retail establishments. The experiences with the PDV-/GDV-policy can be taken into account. This can avoid possible similar mistakes.

A good structure of communication is also important on communal level. Stakeholders of the retail trade and stakeholders of the different groups of the city residents (e.g. organisations which speak for elderly people) have to be brought together with policy makers. In doing so different needs and requests can be discussed and harmonised. Moreover the possibly strong influence of property developers can be guarded.

Another important topic to the cities is their difficult reachability. Since city centres often are difficult to be reached by car, peripheral well-reachable shopping malls indeed could pose a threat. Concerning quality of life it is striking that the respondents emphasise the importance of the reachability of shopping facilities. The respondents name the fine-meshed structure of shops as one of the central positive results of the restrictive governmental stance concerning peripheral retail trade.

On the other hand there is the fear that the city residents' quality of life will decrease if retail facilities close-by disappear. But when these estimations are compared to surveys which were done among city residents in connection with the 'Woning Behoeft Onderzoek' (VROM, 2003) a different image emerges. People judge the presence of shopping facilities as important aspect of their environment. But they judge e.g. noise pollution and a feeling of insecurity as important, sometimes even as more important.

Hence the final recommendation is to do further research, e.g. by using questionnaires. By this the quality of life impacts should be weighted e.g. by using scales in a questionnaire.

The changes that are introduced by the Nota Ruimte should not only be regarded as threat. It also offers a chance since now an individual adoption to provincial needs can be realised

7.3 Reflections

Two topics are of importance to reflect briefly upon. These are the inspirational frameworks, taken from the EU-project SELMA and the set-up of the empirical part of this research.

The research was inspired by the project SELMA. Several aspects have to be discussed critically.

SELMA studies economic deconcentration. This means, the three economic activities retail trade, services and industry are studied together. There is a danger that characteristic developments and mechanisms of the sectors are not taken into account properly. It can be assumed that the deconcentration of the different economic activities takes places differently and independently. This is why the author chose only to study the sector retail trade. SELMA criticises that there is hardly any literature on economic deconcentration. Maybe regarding deconcentration sector by sector could be a solution. At least concerning retail deconcentration there definitely is no lack of adequate literature.

Concerning the approach to quality of life in cities SELMA bases its research on objective indicators. It is understandable that the project is bound to time constraints. But in my eyes asking people directly about their perception of the quality of life in connection with possible deconcentration effects results in a more realistic image on their needs. Hence the author decided to gain an insight by asking stakeholders of different groups of players. As regards to quality of life indicator types my research did not use completely subjective ones either. Instead of asking consumers or retail traders directly, I asked stakeholders. There is a danger that they judge the impacts on the residents' quality of life incorrectly. As explained in sections 1.4 the careful selection of the experts should guarantee trustful and fundamental answers.

There was the danger that the respondents which belong to one of the three players (named in section 2.2) are too much influenced by the interests of this player and therefore give very partial answers. Therefore also independent outside experts were interviewed. However, this did not result in different answers since the groups of players turned out to be not homogeneous but gave varied answers.

It has to be born in mind that the interviews are based on one representative of the organisations / institutions. This limits the validation of the findings. Because, for example, rather personal and maybe misleading answers have been given to the open questions. Therefore all interviews have been done face-to-face to prevent this. And the interview guide

was a broad scheme, but in practice many more questions have been asked for further insights and for checking.

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www.vrom.nl: Dossier Nota Ruimte

www.vrom.nl: Dossier VINEX

Annex I List of respondents

Consumers

Stakeholder of the Consumers' Association (Cosumentenbond)

Interview: 6 May 2004, The Hague

Retail trade

Stakeholder of the Chamber of commerce and industry (Kamer van Koophandel Utrecht)

Interview: 28 May 2004, Utrecht

Stakeholder of the Small- and Medium-Sized Business of The Netherlands (Midden- en Kleinbedrijf Nederland)

Interview: 27 May 2004, Bilthoven

Stakeholder of the Raad Nederlandse Detailhandel (central co-ordinating organisation of retail employers)

Interview: 24 May 2004, Leidschendam

Policymakers

Stakeholder of the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment (DG Ruimte, Directie Regionaal Beleid)

Interview: 12 May 2004, Bilthoven

Stakeholder of the Province of Utrecht

Interview: 10 June 2004, Utrecht

City of Utrecht (Gemeente Utrecht, Afdeling economische zaken)

Interview: 1 June 2004, Utrecht

Independent experts

Stakeholder of the University of Utrecht

Interview: 17 May 2004, Utrecht

Stakeholder of the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research (Ruimtelijk Planbureau)

Interview: 26 April 2004, The Hague

Annex II Interview guide

1. Peripheral retail policy and quality of life in the past

- *question for the stakeholder of the national government:* Why did the Dutch national government stick that long to a restrictive peripheral retail policy?
- *question for all other respondents:* From the perspective of the consumers / retail trade / province / community: How did you judge the restrictive governmental policy concerning peripheral retail establishments?
 - Was it good or bad that the government stuck that long to this policy?
 - Were you for or against this policy?
- What did the resultant fine-meshed structure of shopping facilities mean for the city residents' quality of life?
- Taking the city of Utrecht as an example: Has this policy had impacts on the spatial division of the city?
 - Were special developments inhibited or encouraged?

2. Peripheral retail policy and quality of life after introduction of the Nota Ruimte

- Do you think that there will be a trend towards more establishments at peripheral locations?
 - Do you expect that peripheral retailing will increase?
 - Will another spatial pattern follow?
 - Will this be a welcome or an undesired development?
 - Is there any need for more peripheral retail establishments?
- *question for the stakeholder of the national government:* Why did the national government change its stance concerning the peripheral retail policy?
- *question for all other respondents:* How do you judge the new governmental policy?
- What are possible impacts on quality of life if the peripheral retailing increases?
- Taking the city of Utrecht as an example again: Do you expect changes in this city? Is the city of Utrecht interested in establishments at peripheral locations?