

# Stakeholders' viewpoint on municipal intervention on vacancies on the retail market

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## Abstract

There is a considerable increase of vacancies on the retail market. This can lead to a decline of the liveability of the environment and blight in the area. There is a tension whether the government should intervene or the market needs to address retail vacancies. This case study in the Netherlands identifies the possible roles and instruments of municipalities to address such vacancies in inner cities. Q-methodology was used to identify viewpoints of the involved stakeholders. Two different viewpoints revealed in this study are in line with the tension that is identified in literature.

*Keywords: Retail market, vacancy, empty shops, Q-methodology*

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## 1. Introduction

In the years after the crisis, several countries in Europe, among which the Netherlands, witnessed an increase of vacancies on the retail market (Evers, 2011; Funk & Markert, 2008; Rhodes, 2014). According to Buitelaar (2014), a vacancy rate of 5% is necessary for a good flow on the retail market (Buitelaar, 2014), while currently, more than 10% of the total shopping surface in the Netherlands is empty (CBS, PBL, & Wageningen UR, 2016).

Empty shops have a negative influence on the surrounding shops, less people visit the area and it can lead to deterioration (Vermeulen, Teunlings, Marlet, & de Groot, 2016). The impact of vacancies is significant; it could evoke blight, an increasing level of crime, a decline in the confidence of the local retail market and a decreasing liveability (Berwyn, 2012; Teale, 2012-2013).

According to Huizinga and Ossokina (2014), however, the large amount of retail vacancies does not have to be problematic. In real estate markets fluctuation of vacancies are common because oversupply alternates with shortages: the pork cycle (Huizinga & Ossokina, 2014). In addition, Burt (2010) concluded that the retail market in Europe has been relatively stable and only small changes have taken place (Burt, 2010).

As fluctuations are common (Huizinga and Ossokina 2014) and only small changes on the retail market have been noticed over the past 20 years (Burt 2010), one could question if there are reasons for government intervention.

This government intervention on the retail market has received increasing attention and there are different findings when government intervention is needed (CPB, 2016; Evers, Tennekes, & van Dongen, 2015; Guy, 1998; Huizinga & Ossokina, 2014; Koster, Pasidis, & van Ommeren, 2016). According to Guy (1998), government intervention in retail change is based on three principles: (1) to improve the efficiency of the market, (2) to control negative externalities and (3) to protect or to subsidize for social reasons (Guy, 1998). Van der Krabben (2009) stated that Dutch retail planning policy has been primarily based on the second and the third principle. Evers et al. (2015), Centraal Planbureau (2016) and Huizinga et al. (2014) mainly elaborated on the second principle. Evers et al. (2015) discussed the possible task(s) for the government in the case that (a) the government wants to limit welfare losses, (b) degradation affects the surrounding area, (c) a special property is a missed chance for the neighbourhood, (d) degradation affects the surrounding area, (e) the owner does not want to collaborate to redevelop in the function that is wanted, and (f) the loss of a function brings other

stakeholders into trouble. Centraal Planbureau (2016) and Huizinga et al. (2014) stated that government intervention is only legitimate when there are external effects, for instance, if the shop would have a negative influence on neighbours (CPB, 2016). Centraal Planbureau (2016) referred to Vermeulen et al., (2016), who stated that a vacant shop could give neighbours a feeling of deterioration due to the shop its appearance and the decreasing number of visitors. This suggests that the government already needs to intervene when one shop becomes vacant.

Although government intervention on the retail market has been extensively discussed, previous studies have not elaborated on the specific role of the municipality. The role of the municipalities is of great importance, since spatial planning is decentralized in the Netherlands (van der Krabben, 2009). Decentralization means that many governmental tasks regarding spatial planning are exercised by municipalities. This study focuses on the potential role of municipalities in addressing vacancies on the retail market, and also considers the involved stakeholders.

Many stakeholders are involved in addressing retail vacancies, i.e., the national government, provinces, municipalities, the property owner, real estate investors, retailers, inhabitants, and visitors, and the municipality cannot address retail vacancies on its own; it needs the stakeholders to collaborate. Hence, the following research question is formulated: 'What are the views of stakeholders on the role of the municipality in addressing vacancies on the retail market in the inner city of Alkmaar and Haarlem?'

Q-methodology was used to identify viewpoints of stakeholders on municipal intervention on retail vacancies. The viewpoints of 20 stakeholders on the retail market in Haarlem and Alkmaar were collected and analysed using Q-methodology. The study focuses on inner cities,

Table 1). We observe the tension, i.e. the different views on the role of the municipality and market in addressing retail vacancies, also noticeable in the different approaches. The market approach expects a very active role of market parties and a

since problems with retail vacancies mostly exist in inner cities. Inner cities in the Netherlands have an important role because of the central location, historic value, varies sectors and public facilities (Evers, Tennekes, & van Dongen, 2014). Alkmaar and Haarlem were the chosen locations for this case study. Their inner cities are comparable on several fields; historic inner city, located in a strong region (Evers et al., 2015), floor productivity and purchasing power binding force (I&O Research, 2011a, 2011b). The inner cities differ in the amount of vacancies, the vacancy rate of the inner city of Alkmaar is higher (20%) compared with Haarlem (15%) (I&O Research, 2017a, 2017b).

In section 2 the theory on the different roles of the municipality and their associated instruments are discussed. Views of the stakeholders on the retail market were explored using Q-methodology, and the use of this methodology will be discussed in section 3. Section 4 presents the results of the case study. The results are translated into two viewpoints on the role and instruments of municipalities in addressing retail vacancies. The article ends with the conclusions (section 5) and a discussion (section 6).

## 2. Theory on municipal intervention

Three theoretical roles of the government are used to identify the stakeholders' viewpoint on the role of the municipality. The roles are explained and used to identify the corresponding role of the municipality given the results of the analysis.

There is not one defined role of the government, nor is there a definition of the role of the municipality. The Dutch institution 'Scientific council for government policy' (in Dutch: Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid) (2012) has formulated three theoretical approaches for the government: market, government and society. For every approach a different role of the government is described (more facilitating role of the government, the government approach expects an important role of the government and a limited role of market parties. The three theoretical roles are used to analyse and interpret the results of the Q-methodology.

**Table 1** Market, government and society approach with corresponding roles of the government (Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2012)

Approach	Government's role
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Market approach	The government needs to formulate conditions under which the market can serve the public interest of the societal welfare. The market is able to realise efficient production and effective allocation of goods and services. The market sets the standard because in general the market is more efficient than central governance.
Government approach	The government determines the public interests and has the responsibility to secure the public interests. If the government does not serve these interests by themselves, they assign market parties to serve these interests.
Society approach	The role of the government is primarily supporting traditions of societal solidarity. Entrepreneurs do not focus on making as much money as possible, but they add value to society. Of consumers is expected that they base their decisions on traditions and societal solidarity.

If a role exists for municipalities in addressing vacancies on the retail market, it needs instruments for intervention. These instruments are indicated and categorized using four resources: nodality, authority, treasure and organisation (NATO) by Hood (1986). The municipal instruments to address retail vacancies were collected from the retail agenda, scientific articles and policy reports and categorized according to the NATO framework (Table 2). *Nodality* is the property of being in the middle of a social network. This would provide

the municipality a good overview and a lot of information (Hood, 1986). *Authority* is the ability of the government to command and prohibit, commend and permit (Hood, 1986). *Treasure* is the resource that the government can use to exchange (Hood, 1986); it is a money or money-related resource. *Organization* denotes the possession of a stock of land, buildings equipment, and individuals with whatever skills they may have (Hood, 1986).

**Table 2 Municipal instruments to address retail vacancies in NATO framework**

<b>Nodality</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Treasure</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Inform property owners about the possibilities to concentrate the shopping area	Facilitate retailers who improve the attractiveness of the shopping area together	Financial support to improve the public space	Public private partnership to realise goals for public and commercial functions of the inner city
Provide education and a knowledge platform to attract visitors to the inner city	Change the zoning of shops to a living function	Financial support to transform a shop in a different function	Municipal retail policy
Promote the inner city	Change the zoning of shops to restaurant/bar	Property owners with an empty shop should be fined	Improve the accessibility of the shopping area for visitors.
	Change the zoning plan of empty shops in adjoining streets	Municipal purchase of empty shops to decrease the shopping surface.	
	Combinations of zonings/functions should be allowed		

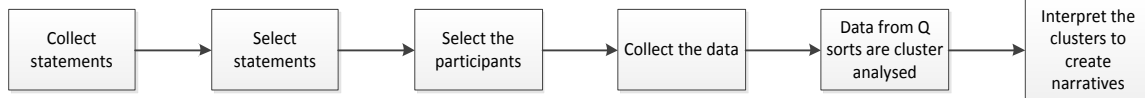
### 3. Method

To study the tension between the role of the municipality and the market in addressing retail vacancies as observed in literature, Q-methodology was used. With Q-methodology viewpoints of the different stakeholders on

addressing retail vacancies are studied. These viewpoints could also provide insights into the probable roles for municipalities in addressing vacancies on the retail market, and, if municipalities have a role, how they should address such vacancies. Q-methodology was used

as it bridges the gap between quantitative and qualitative research because it combines the strengths of both (Brown, 1980).

The Q-methodology consists of six steps, which are summarised in Figure 1 and elaborated below. In conducting the Q-methodology the guidelines of Watts and Stenner (2012) were followed.



**Figure 1** Flowchart of the steps of the Q-methodology. Based on Watts and Stenner (2012) and Minkman et al. (2016).

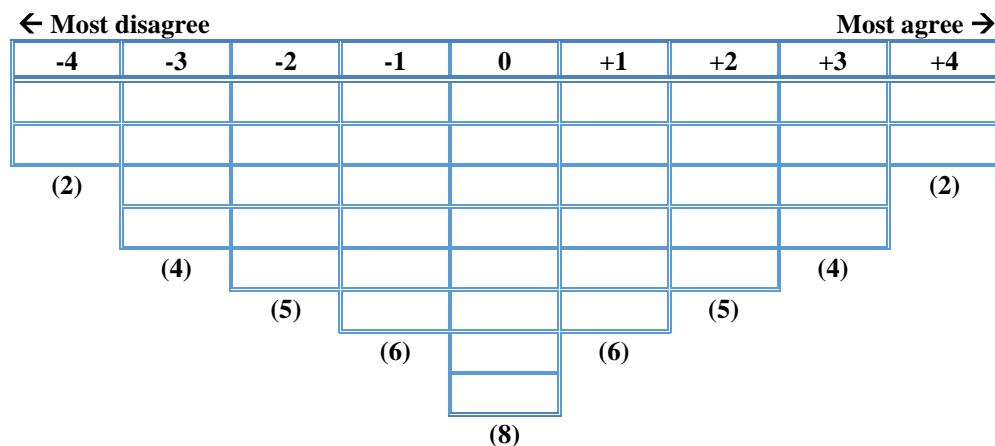
The first step is to collect statements. In an attempt to reflect the entire range of opinions, the statements were collected from newspapers, policy documents and scientific articles: (CPB, 2016; Droogh Trommelen en Partners, 2011; Gemeente Haarlem, 2016; Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, 2016; Platform 31, Detailhandel Nederland, & Stedennetwerk G32, 2014). One-hundred statements were defined, focused on the potential role of the municipality and its possible instruments for addressing retail vacancies.

The second step is to select the statements used during the interviews, the so called Q-set. From the collection of statements, a sample of 42 statements was selected. The set of statements was evaluated in a group meeting. During this meeting, the Q-set was tested with participants without prior knowledge to check for inconsistencies and the comprehensiveness of the statements. The representativeness of the Q-set was checked with a control question during the interview. Participants were asked whether they

missed any aspect of the issue they believed was relevant.

The third step is the selection of the participants; defining the P-set. Twenty participants were selected from the stakeholders. They should cover a wide variety of perspectives on vacancies on the retail market. Hence, they consisted of employees from different levels of the government, advisors of the government, property owners, real estate investors, retailers and local citizens.

The fourth step is the data collection. Each participant was asked to perform a Q-sort. In the Q-sort, every participant ranks cards with statements (the Q-set) onto the fixed distribution, which is displayed in Figure 2. The participant models his or her point of view by ordering the statements along a distribution. The extremes of the distribution have a factor score of +4 for “most agree” and -4 for “most disagree”, with 0 indicating indifference. During and after ordering the statements the participants were interviewed to ascertain the reasoning behind their specific ordering.



**Figure 2** The Q-sort, representing a fixed distribution to rank the Q-set. Statements are categorized under +4 for most agree and -4 most disagree. The numbers below every row determines the number of statements that needs to be placed in that category.

The fifth step is the factor analysis of the Q-sorts, as collected in the previous step. Factor analysis was used to identify patterns in the arrangements of cards in participants Q-sorts. This resulted in a small number of factors that represented the underlying similarities. The Q-sorts were analysed using the software package PQMETHOD, as recommended by Watts and Stenner (2012). The factors were checked for their compliance with the Horst's method, Scree test and Significant Factor Loading. After extraction of the factors, factor rotation was performed according to the Varimax procedure to optimise the factors (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Factors itself are not affected, but rotation allows maximising the loading of one factor, while decreasing the loading on another factor.

The sixth step is the interpretation of the factors. In this step, the factors were translated into the different viewpoints on the role of the municipality in addressing retail vacancies.

#### 4. Results

The 20 Q-sorts were analysed. A two factor solution emerged, which explained 40% of the

variance and accounted for 13 of the 20 Q-sorts given Table 3. A study variance of 100% would mean that the full range of meaning of all participants is explained with this factor. There are four 'null' cases (Q-sorts which do not load significantly on any of the factors) and three cofounded sorts (Q-sorts that load significantly on both factors). From the two factors are two viewpoints derived: A and B. The factor arrays are presented in Appendix I, it shows how an individual would rank the statements if that person was representing that factor 100%.

In the subsection which follows, the factor loading per factor are presented. Subsequently in subsection 4.1 and 4.2 each factor is presented and translated into viewpoints, using factor scores and statements. We refer to statements with the corresponding factor score using (21: +2) which stands for statement 21 with a factor score of +2. The (dis-)association of factors with the NATO framework and roles of the government are also included. Finally, the rotated factor loadings with the corresponding participants are used to reflect on the viewpoint.

**Table 3 Rotated factor loadings. Loadings that are marked bold are significant, with a p-value < 0,01. Defining sorts (sorts which are significant on only one factor) are identified by X.**

Q sort	Factor A	Factor B
1	0,05	<b>X0,83</b>
2	<b>X0,63</b>	0,39
3	<b>X0,50</b>	0,32
4	<b>X0,72</b>	0,26
5	<b>X0,45</b>	0,11
6	0,39	0,06
7	<b>X0,67</b>	0,21
8	0,27	0,18
9	<b>X0,81</b>	0,07
10	0,27	<b>X0,54</b>

11	0,07	<b>X0,40</b>
12	0,33	0,22
13	<b>X0,61</b>	0,35
14	0,24	<b>X0,43</b>
15	<b>X0,57</b>	0,39
16	<b>0,61</b>	<b>0,50</b>
17	<b>0,63</b>	<b>0,56</b>
18	0,23	<b>X0,65</b>
19	<b>0,42</b>	<b>0,48</b>
20	0,37	0,10
Variance explained	24%	16%

Table 3 shows the rotated factor loadings of factor A and B. The Q-sorts in the top left area are the Q-sorts loading significant on factor A and the Q-sorts in the bottom right area are the Q-sorts loading significant on factor B. The null cases are shown in the bottom left of the figure, the cofounded sorts on the top right. The Q-sorts with a factor loading close to the significance level of 0,40 are not included in the factor analysis.

Nevertheless, they are included in the interpretation of the viewpoint, since there is no strict rule concerning the significance level. By including these Q-sorts a more in-depth reflection of those stakeholders is done. The participants have different factor loadings on the specific factor. This provides insight into the extent in which participants agree on that factor, the higher

the loading the more participants agree on that factor.

We make a distinction between the high loading > 0,60, middle loading 0,40-0,60 and low loading < 0,40. For factor A in Figure 3 with the highest loading > 0,60 are four government institutions and three advisors, four concerning Haarlem, two concerning Alkmaar and one participant concerning both Haarlem and Alkmaar. Between 0,40 and 0,60 are three market parties and one advisor. Participants with the lowest loading < 0,40, an inhabitant and government institution

have a factor loading close to the significance level of 0,40, but not yet.

Factor B in Figure 3 with the highest loading > 0,60 are two market parties, one concerning Haarlem and one concerning Alkmaar. Between 0,40 and 0,60 are one government institutions, two market parties, two advisors and one inhabitant. Participants with the lowest loading < 0,40 are two government institutions and one market party have a factor loading close to the significance level of 0,40.

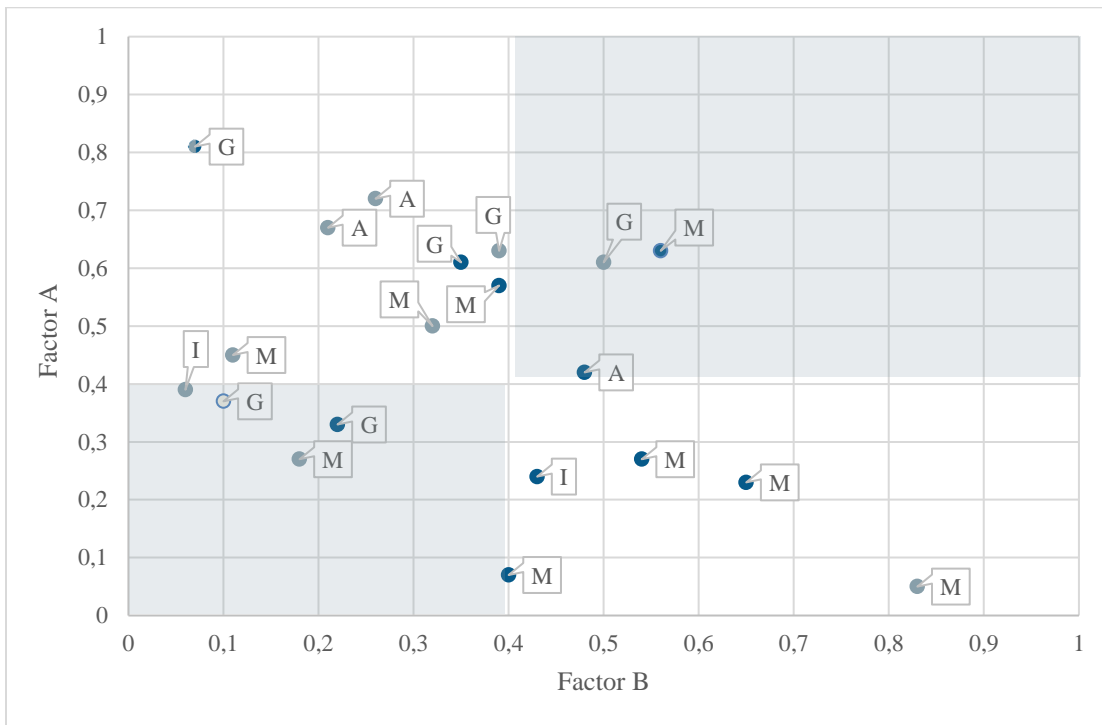


Figure 3 Rotated factor loadings of participants loading on the Y-axis on factor A and on the X-axis on factor B. The grey area in the bottom left are the non-significant loading participants, the grey area top right shows the cofounded participants.

	Haarlem	A	Advisor
	Alkmaar	G	Government
	Haarlem & Alkmaar	I	Inhabitant
	Netherlands	M	Market party

#### 4.1 Viewpoint A ‘Step up municipality’

Factor A explains 24% of the study variance and is represented by 11 significantly loading Q-sorts. 6 of them are interviewed for Alkmaar, 4 of them

for Haarlem. 4 of them work for the government and 6 of them are market parties.

Participants with viewpoint A think that doing nothing is not an option for the municipality (21: +2). Which means that they agree on a role for the municipality. The municipality should not address retail vacancies alone, other parties need to help (17: +4). The parties that the municipality need to help are in any case property owners and retailers. Participants with this viewpoint strongly disagree on the following statements: 'Of property owners with a vacant property you cannot expect them to address vacancies' (34: -3). 'In an inner city with many vacant shops you cannot expect an active role of the remained retailers' (38: -4). Overall there is a little preference for market mechanism over government measures (36: +1). Additionally, participants with this viewpoint disagree with 'the market cannot solve the vacancies on the retail

market itself' (33: -2), which means that the market may be able to solve the situation itself.

The instruments that viewpoint A agrees on are categorized in the NATO framework and shown in Table 4. It can be stated that the participants agree with many instruments, 1 out of 14 instruments. Most of the instruments they agree with are nodality and authority instruments, nevertheless all categories are represented. Most of the authority instruments concern the zoning plan, of which we conclude that the participants consider this as an important instrument. Only one treasure instrument is included; financial support to improve the public space. And only one organization instrument is included, the municipal retail policy. This instrument is considered most important by the participants.

**Table 4 Instruments viewpoint A, categorized according to the NATO-framework by Hood (1986). The numbers in the table indicate the factor scores.**

<b>Nodality</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Treasure</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Inform property owners about the possibilities to concentrate the shopping area +2	Facilitate retailers who improve the attractiveness of the shopping area together +3	Financial support to improve the public space +2	Municipal retail policy +4
Provide education and a knowledge platform to attract visitors to the inner city +2	Change the zoning of shops to living function +1		
Promote the inner city +1	Change the zoning of shops to restaurant/bar +1		
	Change the zoning plan of empty shops in adjoining streets +3		
	Combinations of zonings/functions should be allowed +2		

Based on both the statements concerning the role of the municipality and the instruments, we conclude that the government approach (Table 1) is best applicable on viewpoint 'Step up municipality'. The municipality should address retail vacancies and determines the public interest. Determination of the public interest is done with many authority instruments, by deciding which shops are changed to houses or restaurants. By

implementing a municipal retail policy, which should be done with the help of other parties, the municipality also determines the public interest.

Reflecting on the stakeholders of this viewpoint, the stakeholders with the highest loading are government institutions and advisors. Among those stakeholders are both Haarlem and Alkmaar present. Participants with a middle loading are

market parties and one advisor, Haarlem and Alkmaar are equal. Participants with the lowest loading are an inhabitant and government institution. We conclude that there is not a large distinction between Alkmaar and Haarlem for this opinion. It is clear that advisors and government institutions strongly agree with this viewpoint more than market parties. Governments and advisors may see a larger role for municipalities than market parties.

#### 4.2 Viewpoint B 'The market takes the lead'

Factor B explains 16% of the study variance. 8 participants load significantly. 2 of them are interviewed for Alkmaar and 6 of them for Haarlem. 1 works for the government, 4 of them are market parties, 2 advisors and 1 inhabitant. Participants with viewpoint B strongly agree that the initiative for addressing retail vacancies needs to come from the market (22: +4). The role for

retailers and property owners is confirmed. Participants with this viewpoint strongly disagree on the following statements: 'Of property owners with a vacant property you cannot expect them to address vacancies' (34: -3). 'With many vacant shops you cannot expect an active role of the remained retailers' (38: -3).

Additionally, participants with this viewpoint consider doing nothing not as an option for the municipality (21:+1). Which means that the participants agree, not very convincing, on a certain role for the municipality.

The municipal instruments that the participants agree on are categorized in the NATO framework and shown in Table 5. Only five instruments are agreed with. All categories are represented, but none of the categories stands out.

**Table 5 Instruments viewpoint B, categorized according to the NATO-framework by Hood (1986). The numbers in the table indicate the factor scores.**

<b>Nodality</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Treasure</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Promote the inner city +1	Change the zoning of shops to living function +1  Combinations of zonings/functions should be allowed +2	Financial support to improve the public space +2	Improve the accessibility of the shopping area for visitors. +2

Based on both statements concerning the role of the municipality and the instruments, we conclude that the market approach (see Table 1) is best applicable on viewpoint 'The market takes the lead'. The participants agree that the market needs to address retail vacancies. The market approach prescribes that the market is efficient in providing a good balance between supply and demand, the government comes in when there are external effects. This in line with the limited role for municipalities that the participants of viewpoint B 'The market takes the lead' agree on. The treasure instrument 'financial support to improve the public space' is one that addresses external effects, because vacant shops can have a negative influence on the quality of the surrounding area. The authority instrument "combinations of functions should be allowed" provides less rules and therefore more possibilities for the market.

Reflecting on the stakeholders of this viewpoint, the stakeholders with the highest factor loadings are two market parties, one for Alkmaar and the other for Haarlem. Participants with a middle loading are a government institution, two market parties, two advisors and one inhabitant. Haarlem is overrepresented in this group. Participants with the lowest loading are two government institutions and one market party Haarlem is overrepresented again. Since this viewpoint is mostly represented by market parties we conclude that market parties see a smaller role for the municipality. But since Haarlem is overrepresented, Haarlem is experienced as a very attractive and healthy inner city, a smaller role of the municipality could be explained by the fact that Haarlem is experienced as a very attractive and healthy inner city. There may be less external effects and therefore a limited role of the government needed.



## 5. Conclusion

The research question of this study is the following 'What are the views of stakeholders on the role of the municipality in addressing vacancies on the retail market in the inner city of Alkmaar and Haarlem?'. The following main conclusions are found based on the Q-methodology.

Two different viewpoints are found concerning the role of the municipality and the instruments it should use: A 'Step up municipality' and B 'The market takes the lead'. Participants with viewpoint A prefer a government approach, with an important role for the municipality and intervention with many instruments. Nodality and authority instruments (such as the provision of information and changes of the zoning plan) are preferred. Viewpoint B has a market approach, with an active role of market parties and only a limited role for the municipality. They prefer market mechanism over government intervention. The few instruments of the municipality that are preferred are preconditions like the quality of the public space or the accessibility of the inner city. The two viewpoints confirm the tension between market mechanism and government intervention. The tension found in literature, is confirmed in practice.

Viewpoint A consist of both stakeholders concerning Alkmaar and Haarlem. Comparing the viewpoints, viewpoint B consists of more stakeholders of Haarlem then Alkmaar. Viewpoint B agrees on the market approach, a limited role of the municipality could be explained by the fact that Haarlem is experienced as a very attractive and healthy inner city, and therefore municipal intervention is not considered necessary..

For addressing retail vacancies joint action is needed. Both viewpoints agree on a role for property owners and retailers. And both viewpoints agree on a certain role for the municipality, however limited for viewpoint B. Irrespective of the inner city (Alkmaar or Haarlem) or the stakeholder group, everyone agrees on a role for property owners and retailers. This should be taken into account when a municipality wants to address retail vacancies,

that property owners and retailers should be actively involved.

Regarding the instruments used to address retail vacancies, three recommendations for future research are done. First, this study showed that the amount of vacant shops influences the expectations of the role of the municipality. Future studies should clarify the turning point in which the municipality intervenes. Second, future studies should include instruments used in other countries, or think of new ideas for instruments. Third, future research should try to collect data that makes it possible to compare the use of instruments over a certain period of time. This type of research may further enhance our understanding about the effects of the instruments on the retail market

## 6. Discussion

The viewpoints identified in this study are expected to be representative of stakeholders of the retail market in Alkmaar and Haarlem. Of many stakeholders, only 1 or 2 representatives are interviewed, if the study would be repeated with more 3 or more representatives additional viewpoints may be found.

The identified tension between market mechanism and government intervention is confirmed with the results of the Q-methodology. The Q-methodology intends to be representative for inner cities in the Netherlands, which are comparable in size of population and inner city. It is suggested that a generalisation to other countries cannot be justified, because of large differences in spatial planning. Spatial planning policy in the Netherlands was always focused on preserving the existing retail structure and protective with respect to peripheral retail development (van der Krabben, 2009). This resulted in a different retail structure, comparing with other countries were out of town centres is the rule rather than the exception. however, the Q-methodology is useful in other inner cities as it provides insight in the expected role of the municipality. For future research the Q-methodology can be used to gain insight into the tension between market mechanism and government intervention in different places.

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### Appendix Q-sample and Factor Scores

The factor arrays are presented, it shows how an individual would rank the statements if that person was representing that factor 100%. Reading the table by column reveals the comparative ranking of statements which characterize a particular factor (Watts & Stenner, 2005). For example reading down column A, we can see that factor A ranked statement 1 at -1 (i.e. this factor thinks the municipality should not get shopping surface out of the market), statement 2 at +1, and so on. Reading this table by row reveals the comparative ranking of a particular statement across factors. For example reading along row 1, we can see that statement 1 was ranked at -1 by factor A and at -3 by factor B, and so on.

Statement number and wording		Factor arrays	
		A	B
1	The municipality needs to get shopping surface out of the market.	-1	-3
2	Shopping in the inner city is a public good.	+1	+3
3	Retailers should contribute together financially in a fund to make the public space more attractive.	+3	-1
4	The municipality should collaborate as much as possible with the initiatives of retailers.	0	+2
5	The municipality should collaborate as much as possible with the initiatives of property owners.	0	0
6	Municipalities should make space for renewed entrepreneurship.	+3	+3
7	The municipality needs to promote her own inner city as a shopping city	+1	+1
8	Combinations of functions should be allowed. An example is an interior shop where you can drink a cup of coffee.	+2	+3
9	By changing the zoning plan from a shop function to culture vacant properties are addressed in a good way.	0	-1
10	By changing the zoning plan from a shop function to a living function vacant properties are addressed in a good way.	+1	+1
11	By changing the zoning plan from a shop function to a restaurant/bar function vacant properties are addressed in a good way.	+1	-1
12	A strict distinction of the zoning plan (living, restaurant, bar, retail) in the inner city needs to be dropped	0	-2
13	Temporary vacancies can be addressed with pop-up stores. A pop-up store is a temporary store that appears as fast as it disappears.	+1	+1
14	If we want to address retail vacancies, the best option is to improve the parking supply.	-1	0
15	It is important that the municipality provides subsidies to address vacancies.	-2	-1
16	Municipalities take the initiative to bring parties together to develop a future-oriented retail policy	+4	0
17	The municipality cannot address vacancies on the retail market alone, other parties need to help.	+4	+2
18	The municipality needs to facilitate concentration of shops as much as possible.	+3	-2
19	The municipality is not capable in addressing vacancies on the retail market.	-2	-2
20	Concentration of the shopping area is the only solution for addressing vacancies on the retail market.	-3	0
21	Doing nothing is not an option for municipalities.	+2	+1
22	The initiative for addressing vacancies on the retail market needs to come from the market.	0	+4
23	The municipality should make the public space of the shopping area attractive.	+2	+2
24	The municipality should inform property owners about the possibilities for concentration of the shopping area.	+2	-1
25	The municipality needs to provide education and share knowledge for retailers and property owners to attract visitors to the inner city.	+2	0
26	The municipality should improve the accessibility of the inner city to attract more visitors.	0	+2

27	High streets (streets with mixed functions; shops, houses, etc.) with many vacant shops need to have a different function (zone).	+3	0
28	Addressing vacancies on the retail market is not a task the municipality should fulfil.	-3	-2
29	Property owners with a vacant shop for 6 months or longer should be fined.	-3	-2
30	Property owners should receive financial support by changing the function of the property.	-2	-4
31	Retailers are not capable in preventing a decrease of the liveability of the inner city.	-2	+1
32	Retailers have a risk, a chance for profits, but also a chance for losses. When retailers have losses they should not be compensated by the government.	-1	+1
33	In the inner city the market can solve the vacancies on the retail market.	-2	-1
34	You cannot expect property owners to address vacancies on the retail market, when the property owner with a vacant property earns nothing on their investment	-3	-3
35	The government cannot escape from spending money to address vacancies on the retail market.	0	-3
36	I prefer market mechanism over government measures to reduce the number of vacant shops.	+1	+3
37	Long term renting contracts (5 years or longer) between property owners and retailers have to make place for more flexible contracts.	0	+4
38	In an inner city with many vacant shops you cannot expect an active role of the remained retailers.	-4	-3
39	Retailers and the municipality should address vacancies together in a Public Private Partnership.	-1	0
40	The municipality needs to buy empty shops to give it a new function	-4	-4
41	New shops that do not fit the zoning plan should not be allowed	-1	0
42	Property owners should exchange parcels in a smart way to make developments in urban areas possible.	-1	+2