Tourism growth vs. Local challenges
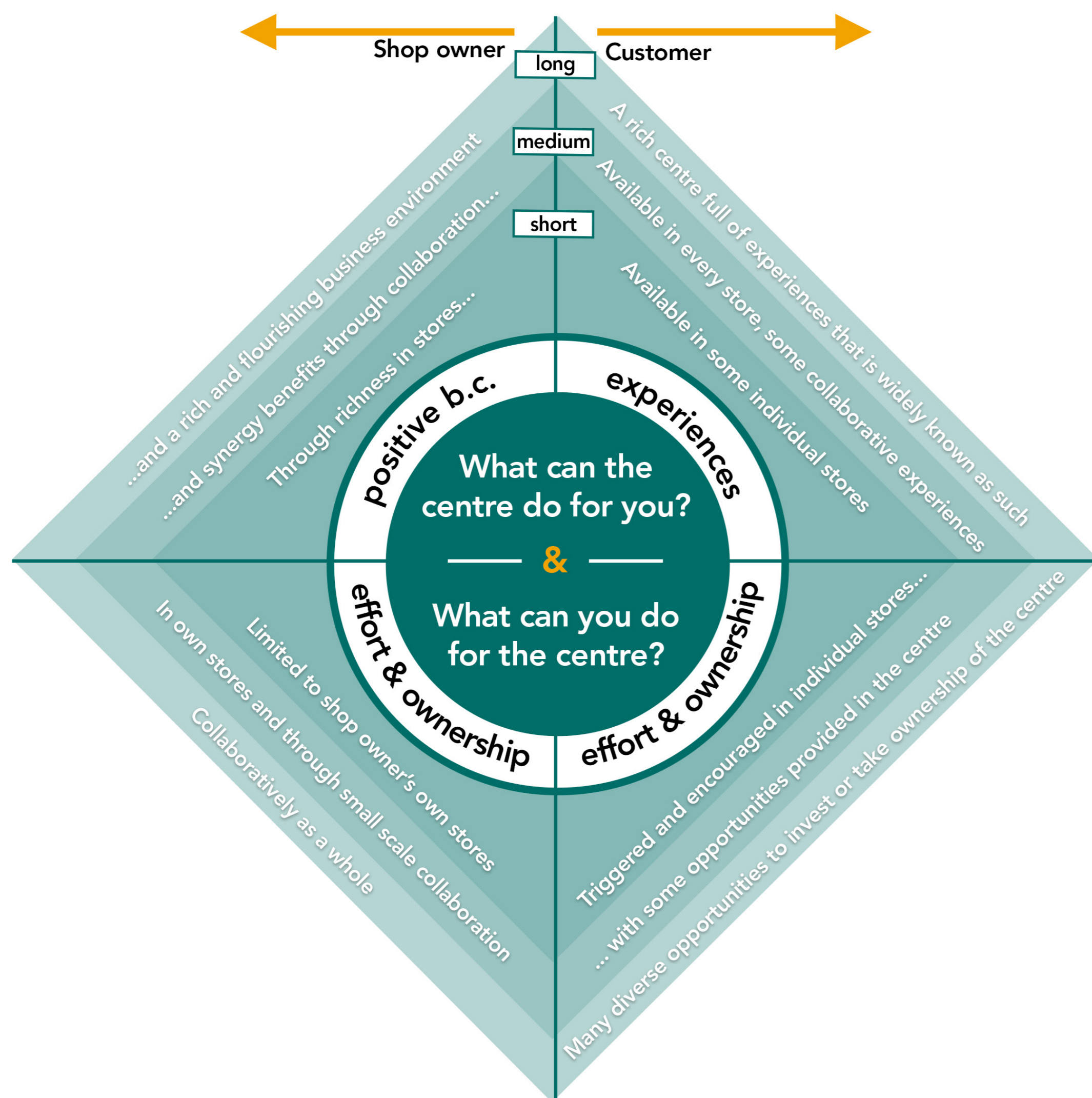
A system design approach for building resilience against the pressure of tourism in the Keukenhof region

▶ Tourim growth vs. retail revenue

The amount of tourists visiting the Dutch flower bulb region is growing every year. The Keukenhof, one of the biggest tourist attractors in the region, already welcomed 1.5 million visitors in the eight week during flowering season in 2019, which is almost twice the visitor count of 10 years ago. Because of this growth, the local population's day-to-day businesses become increasingly disrupted. One of the places in the region's society where is experienced most is the shopping area of Lisse, which experiences reduced revenue due to congestion from touristic traffic.

▶ Strategy: resilience through symbiosis

In order to make the centre of Lisse more resilient against the pressure of tourism and other threats that were found, I proposed a solution strategy where binding is created through a symbiotic relationship between 'the centre' and its stakeholders. In this strategy, the whole of 'the centre' provides experiences to customers and a positive business climate to shop owners. Conversely, the customers and shop owners need to invest and take ownership of the centre. This creates a richness in collaboratively made experiences that bind the whole of the centre together, making current threats insignificant while providing positive spill over effects for both the customers and local entrepreneurs. This strategy comes with short, medium and long term goals for implementation (see figure on the left).

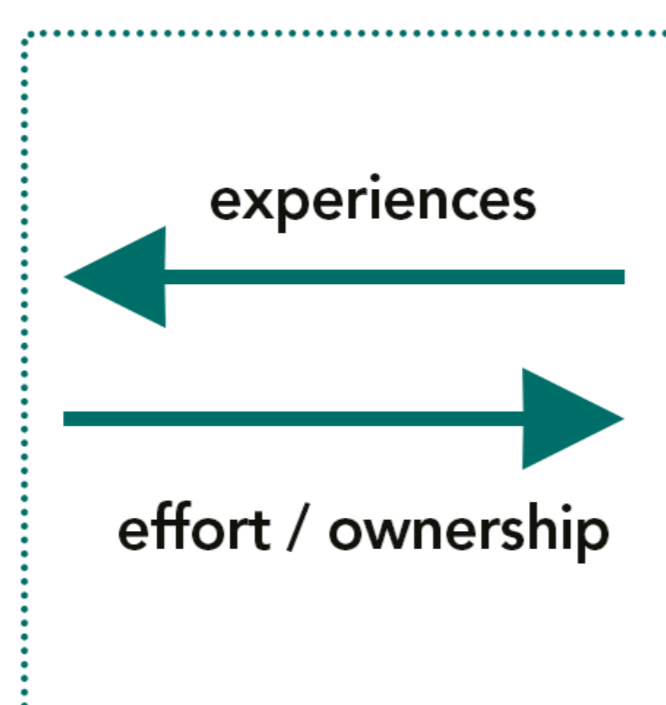## ▶ System design; a holistic approach

Holism

In a social system, such as a regional society, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Therefore, it is not only important to know which stakeholders are part of the social system, but also how they connect and interact with each other to achieve a certain purpose. It is this interaction that makes society behave as it does.

The challenge is that this interconnectedness is hidden behind *unknown unknowns*; i.e. as a designer you do not know what you do not know from this latent part of a society. System thinking is an analysing method that helps to explore and map this interconnectedness while uncovering the unknown unknowns. These findings can later be used in the ideation and design phase; resulting in system design.
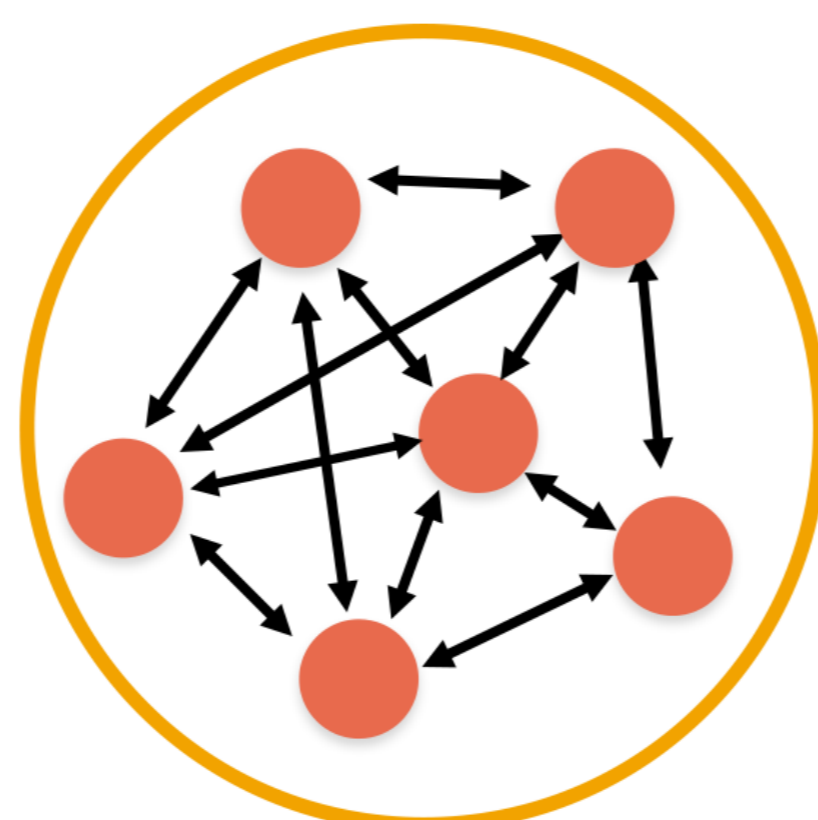
Uncovering the unknown unknowns

In order to discover the interconnected relationships that reside in the whole which stakeholders referred to as 'the centre' of Lisse, in-depth research was needed that enabled to look at 'the centre' from different perspectives. For this, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research was used; i.a. 6 semi structured interviews with shop owners and a survey among regional customers (N=477). The results showed that the pressure of tourism was only part of what threatens 'the centre' of Lisse, for the influence of web shops, city centres and vacancies also threaten the future of the regional shopping area. Together, these threats caused for degradation of 'the centre'.
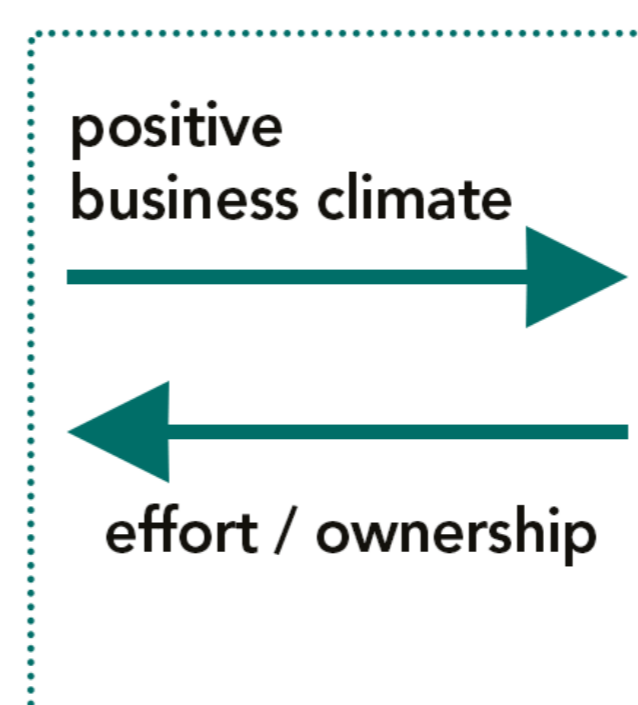

Customers — 'The centre' — Shop owners
experiences / effort / ownership — Binding — positive business climate / effort / ownership — Binding

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Tourism growth vs. local challenges - *A system design approach for resilience against the pressure of tourismin the Keukenhof region*
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