SOCIAL NETWORK CITY

From Urban Public Places to 'Hybrid Ecologies'.

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UU | CHRISTIAN LICOPPE
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Collaborating Universities:

- *Delft University of Technology,* Maurits de Hoog
- *Utrecht University*, Martin Dijst and Bas Spierings
- *University of Amsterdam*, Willem Salet and Sako Musterd
- *Erasmus University Rotterdam*, Geert Teisman and Lasse Gerrits
- *VU University Amsterdam*, Henri de Groot, Peter Nijkamp and Erik Verhoef
- *Leiden University, The Hague campus* Jouke de Vries
- *Leiden University,* Leo Lucassen

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Text:

Inge Hartkoorn, David Dooghe, Paul Gerretsen

Pictures:

Fred Ernst p3, 12/ Jon Snyder p9/ ffring.com p11

Presentation:

Christian Licoppe

Contact:

David Dooghe
Programma@deltametropool.nl
0031 10 20 41 599

Deltametropolis Association is a broad public organisation that focuses on shaping sustainable development in Randstad Holland. The association brings together businesses, public interest groups, research institutions and governments. Deltametropolis Association enables and works towards creating a socially supported design of the Randstad metropolitan area, focused on welfare, prosperity and strengthening its international competitiveness.

Deltametropolis Association offers a platform for discussion: it creates the space to develop new ideas and critically discuss Randstad Holland outside the usual frameworks. It is a laboratory for prioritising innovative issues and for promoting the debate on the future of Randstad Holland. In this way, the association aims to promote new ideas on the development of Randstad Holland and to help apply these in everyday practice.

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The International Perspectives

Deltametropolis Association, in collaboration with the universities of Randstad Holland, has initiated several projects with the central theme: the Metropolitan Functions. In this programme, Deltametropolis Association researches how facilities and urban environments can help define the metropolitan atmosphere of Randstad Holland.

The International Perspectives (tIP) forms part of this programme on metropolitan functions. tIP is a public series of events which reflects on how facilities or activities transform an urban area into a metropolis. In this series, Deltametropolis Associations explores the importance of an international perspective when (re)developing facilities and urban environments in Randstad Holland. It consist of a series of 7 public lectures with inspirational international speakers, and 7 private expert meetings. The tIP results will lead to a final debate and a publication in the spring of 2012.

The series take place from September 2011 to March 2012. Each of the 7 lectures will take place on a Thursday evening, starting at 19.30. Every university in Randstad Holland will host a tIP, each focussing on a specific theme. These themes are: Cultural Clusters, Social Network City, Flagship Developments, Self Organising City, Knowledge Clusters, International Organisations and Attractive City.

In each of the 7 lectures an international speaker will present how facilities or activities that are important for the development of a city or urban area. Following the lecture, reprensentatives from the hosting University will give a reflection, applying its content to the Dutch context.

An expert meeting with selected academic, entrepreneurial and governmental guests will take place on the Friday following the lecture. The expert meeting will take a more in-depth look at the theme of the lecture, applying it to the case study. The guest speaker will then reflect on the research presented by the hosting university.

This is the report of the second lecture and expert meeting Social Network city held at the Utrecht University on October 13 and 14, 2011. The theme for this lecture was Social Network City and the guest speaker was Christian Licoppe.

www.theInternationalPerspectives.nl

Introduction

Paul Gerretsen

This lecture and expert meeting, initiated by the Deltametropolis Association, is the second in a series of seven that focuses on the essence of metropolitan urbanity, and more specifically on what produces it. Although we already know of several factors that contribute to creating such an area, the Deltametropolis Association believes that some elements are still missing.

As one of the most internationally oriented countries in Europe, the Netherlands, with its large economy and high concentration of international corporations, lacks what most competing economies have: a big metropolis at its core. Although the Netherlands does have Randstad Holland, it currently functions more as a 'metropolis in denial'. Clearly, Randstad Holland needs more… but what?

In order to answer this, the Deltametropolis Association has teamed up with all six Universities in Randstad Holland to gain an international perspective on different urban themes. In the next six months, each University will host a lecture in which an international guest speaker will present a theme and go into debate with those in the Dutch research-context. This will be coupled with an expert meeting on a specific case study for selected guests the next day. Using this approach, we hope to achieve a truly international perspective on what metropolitan activities and functions should be improved or introduced, so that Randstad Holland becomes that what it aspires to be: a metropolis in its own right.

This lecture and expertmeeting was held at the Utrecht University (UU) on the 13th and 14th of October,2011. The lecture was hosted by Martin Dijst., Professor of Urban Developments and Mobility (UU). The guest speaker was Mr. Christian Licoppe, Head of the Social Science Department and Professor of Sociology at Telecom ParisTech. Christian Licoppe has been researching the influence and potentials of locative media and games on 'real' urban environments. From a sociological standpoint, he has looked at the technological side of urban space, combining 'real' versus virtual worlds and seeing whether this combination offers a new way of social interaction. He argues that these new forms of social media can produce new environments of interaction, where urban public places can transform into 'hybrid ecologies'.

As our guest speaker, we asked him to reflect on whether the virtual world can help stimulate face-to-face social interaction in urban spaces.

How can this type of technology influence the way we meet each other in Randstad Holland, and in other urban settings which do not provide large enough densities to generate automatic face-to-face contact? And what are the potentials that new technologies can create for the way in which we use our (inner) cities?"

In the expert meeting Martin Dijst, Jesse Weltevreden and Ton Rietbergen presented their research on the influence of New Media on the use of public space.

MARTIN DIJST

CHRISTIAN LICOPPE

Lecture

From Urban Public Places to 'Hybrid Ecology'.

Christian Licoppe

Having come from a sociological background, Christian Licoppe's focus on locative media does not examine the phenomena from a communication technology perspective, but from that of the software in urbanity. His research looks at the interplay of face-to-face behaviour versus the behavioural patterns when locative media is involved. Locative media is an emergent phenomenon in urban planning, so this lecture merely gives hints of the possibilities, developments and influences it can have on interaction in city spaces.

Locative media can be defined as media in which people interact with some kind of locative awareness. In other words, locative media always involves some configurative media in which people disclose their location, whether this is through deliberate check-ins (such as on Foursquare, Facebook Place and

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Gowalla) or through the technology itself providing some degree of positional awareness. In this way, there are 2 different configurations of positional awareness:

1 Technology based, where the technology provides continuous tracking of location through GPS technology, e.g: LOOPS and Google Latitude. This is where players are aware of each others position and where there is continuous tracking of technology that makes the location available.

2 Proximity based, where short-range connectivity of mobile terminals (e.g. Bluetooth, wifi) allow for exchanges. Examples include MobiLuck and Dragon Quest IX. In these technologies, the precise location of users is not clear, however exchanges through the terminals are only made possible when players get within a certain range for the terminals to recognise each other.

In all these cases, the location of the users is made available as a notification to the user centre, which contributes to the increase of awareness of location. The question is thus: what are the consequences of this increased awareness of location on urbanity? Obviously this is a social media based issue, as only those who participate apply, but even so: how can the increased awareness of location in this form help develop urban places?

Hybrid Ecologies

This awareness of location in locative media is made possible through the creation of 'hybrid ecologies'. A hybrid ecology can be defined as "a new class of digital ecology that merges multiple environments - the physical and virtual - together". But it is important to note that simply combining the virtual and physical world does not automatically pro-

duce a hybrid ecology. For example, receiving a call when you are commuting. Hybrid ecologies entail a subtler coupling in which what you do at both levels is related to some kind of locational awareness or place-based coupling. It requires feedback or a reference to location on a digital exchange. So, in the previous example, if it included a reference to a place in time, then it would be an example of hybrid ecology as a spatial reflexivity is created. Thus, in short, a hybrid ecology manages and incorporates the interplay between a digital positional awareness of space in relation to a real, physical experience of place. In literature, this has been termed a 'sinful situation', as it incorporates a layered participation frame coupled with a positional reference, which gives rise to new formats of encounter. This technology is now changing our experience of proximity and shaping new forms of co-presence.

Researching games

Christian Licoppe's research is primarily based on location aware games. In his fieldwork, he looked at a location-aware game in Japan and examined a proximity game in Japan and France, based on a short-range wifi connection (Bluetooth). During the lecture however,he stressed that games should not be at the forefront of his story. He looks at games because they are predominantly developed and played in cities (so they lie at the forefront of urban playful spaces) and because they already exist. Due to the latter, they already provide information on interaction patterns in public places and these patterns can be examined to provide a deeper analysis of

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the habitual and connective order of hybrid ecologies in public places. The research thus primarily looks at the generic features of the interaction order as games are increasingly playing a bigger role in urban spaces -one can speak of a gamification trend in public places.

Theoretical encounters in hybrid ecologies

From a sociological standpoint, the metropolis can be defined as a place of strangers: it is a place where crowds of passerby's are thrown together and where the operational definition of urbanity is combined with crowds of people. In the metropolis, strangers mostly meet in traffic encounters embedded in a mobility practice, for example in everyday commuting practices. These encounters between strangers in cities is what this lecture focused on: how locative media can change the experiences of the city.

The main properties that the classical model of co-present interaction in public places is based on is the tension between how this is organised: e.g. the importance of proximity in its organisation. For locative media interaction to take place, people need to get close enough to be available and open to the interaction, however, this is thwarted with the right to be left alone and to preserve ones own 'negative face' (own space). This tension has contributed to a minimalistic form of interaction in urban spaces: traditional urban planning has taken on an urbanity, in which all participants are treated as equals, but where social exchanges are merely quick gazes and no more, to avoid any further involvement. The co-present city in current urban planning is thus seen as a locus of crowds, where fluxes of anonymous mobile bodies are

thrown together irrespective of their cultural and social particulars. And this is the definition in which public systems currently manage crowds. However, does such a system also work for public places in which crowds are connected? I.e. crowds that are not just mobile moving bodies, but also people connected to each other through digital networks?

Any kind of interaction in a digital communication network is based on a system of communication where mutual accessibility is linked to a networked addressed system. Participants are not recognised through their proximity, but through their personalised digital identifiers, e.g. their IP addresses, Bluetooth numbers, name tags, Internet alias, game character names etc. These operate on singular identifiers, and when interaction takes place between participants (e.g. a caller phones a recipient of the call), then the relationship becomes a singular relational pair, not a singular entity. This form of relationship is not seen as equivalent and distinguishable: the caller and recipient are not equal, but form a pair. For this reason, individual behavioural patterns can be identified as a singular mobility, even though it contains larger numbers than the term suggests.

The management of the two modes of traffic encounters raises important questions however. A great tension lies in the way in which the information is shared, i.e. how this exchange is made in public places. Proximity-based services, like Bluetooth, can offer opportunities, but can also go against cultural regimes or traditions, as seen with Mobiluck in Saudi Arabia. Here some forms of commu-

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nication are forbidden (i.e. unrelated male-female interaction) and Bluetooth has offered a co-present strategy to circumvent these constraints. Interaction can be much more subtle, leading to interaction with strangers through Bluetooth devices hidden under clothing ('Bluetooth burquas') and this has been seen as a radical way to bridge tradition for young generations. However, this is also controversial and has lead to increasing governmental dejection as it is seen as breaking away from cultural traditions. In the last few weeks, Saudi Arabia has even introduced a fatwa against the use of Bluetooth, so the relationship between co-present and digital communication can be highly controversial.

Another structural tension between co-present interaction and digital communication is in the requirements for proximity-based services, like Bluetooth. These services lie within two regimes of co-presence and interaction: although you can communicate from a distance, there is a maximum range in which it can work –i.e. 10-20m from each other. In practice, this relatively close distance implies that there is a possibility in identifying other participants. The anonymity of participation is therefore under threat. Although this does not have to be a problem- (it can be fun trying to figure out whom you are playing a game with), it can also create a barrier in a setting where devices are widespread. This interaction dilemma is an important one when considering hybrid ecologies: it is not just any type of encounter, but a complex relationship. And it also raises important behavioural questions with proximity-based games: what roles do participants take on when they play these games? Does

the fact that people can be identified lead to a setting where possibilities are created for actual face-to-face encounters? Should people try to identify each other? Or should participants only focus on the games and not interact physically?

Dragon Quest IX, a user-particular proximity game

Christian Licoppe's research looks at how people manage these forms of encounters in specific proximity-aware services and games: what they do and what can be learnt from such games? He particularly focused on interaction behaviour when playing the game Dragon Quest IX, which was played on the Nintendo DS game terminal in both Japan and France. By studying the way this game is played, Licoppe made a comparative study into the ways in which people manage digital encounters in both Japan and France.

The idea of Dragon Quest IX is that game information can be spread through proximity: when two participants get close together, information related to game is exchanged between them, effectively creating random encounters between complete strangers playing the same game. Proximity, in other words, is changed into a game. In Japan, they have a word for this: sure-chigai tsuushin (literally meaning: two people, coming close together, crossing paths, and moving away). When a player walks or stands in a public place, she/he will receive a notification of how many other active players are also in the area. The game thus creates incentives for random encounters and congregation within public places, completely transforming our

awareness of proximity. It makes proximity, which was once inconspicuous something that can now be perceived. In doing so, it allows for the objectification of these encounters, therefore making it applicable to city planning and urban strategies.

Reshaping Mobilities in Japan

Games such as Dragon Quest IX have built a whole new kind of geography: a geography of encounters. And the layering complexity of the game is especially multifaceted in Japan, as the population consists of heavy users of the Internet. This means that often even more interaction forums are being used whilst playing the game, for example: connecting to each other through mobile Internet and blogs, alongside the game, so that more layers of interaction are combined within the hybrid ecology. In Japan, Dragon Quest IX was issued in 2009 and it became an immediate commercial success. Due to Japan's high Internet use, this translated into a high density and frequency of random encounters, with some people experiencing between 10-12 random encounters daily. The system itself can handle up to 3 random encounters before becoming saturated, so people also constantly have to refresh the system in order to make new encounters. With figures of 10-12 daily encounters, this shows that the players frequently used the game. People also interpret the game as an opportunity and means to make random encounters.

In Tokyo, Licoppe researched player behaviour in two main urban places: Akihabara, a popular electronic and technological district, and Shizuoka, where the study was carried out in a commercial mall and

station. Due to the different characteristics of the settings, the behavioural observations were very different. In Akihabara, a busy, 24-hour permanent place, the streets are very busy: players can therefore expect to meet other potential players in the area. It is a setting where you do not know in advance where the players will be and the player mobility paths are generally scattered around the area. Due to this, it has a high frequency of digital interaction, but very limited co-present interaction. The player relationships stay distant: people do not talk, or even look at one another: they avoid any kind of co-present interaction, and simply focus on the digital game communication between them. What happens on their screens and on the street are thus completely separated: passerby's, as well as fellow players are ignored. A reason given for this behaviour is that in Japan, people believe that one needs to be very brave to talk to strangers in urban public places. Because the game calls for digital interaction between unknown players, this is thus a risky scenario and it is best to try to avoid any other form of 'real' contact. The study in Akihabara illustrated that hybrid ecologies can exist in specific public places where there is close proximity, but with minimal attention to others.

In Shizuoka, the setting - and therefore the story - was different. Unlike Akihabara, Shizuoka has a much lower density of players and events. In order to still play the game, ensure random encounters but maintain anonymity, regular planned meetings were organised at chosen busy commercial centres and mobility nodes. Through other mediums, such as mobile Internet, players would regularly communicate their prospective locations

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with each other, in order to form a congregation within the crowds, and to get close enough to exchange data. Because these places have lots of traffic from both players and non-players, players remain largely anonymous, though the potential of being recognised as a player is present. These forms of interaction, known as 'timid encounters', allow for players to present themselves if they wish, but also to remain anonymous. Digital communication, as well as the potential for co-present communication is thus present.
Notably, the type of co-present communication is not face-to-face interaction, but more side-to-side interaction. Players do not face each other, but look at their screens while standing alongside each other to play the game. In this way, they can still opt-out of being recognised if they want. This form of timid encounter closely resembles the behaviour seen in elicit sex encounters in the 1960's-70's, where people would get close enough to potentially be a 'player', but where it could also remain unclear whether they are merely a passerby or open to the encounter. The study in Shizuoka is very emblematic of how the layering of participation frames (in this case: mobile Internet), can be used in hybrid ecologies to accomplish new forms of encounter.

Dragon Quest IX in France

The French version of Dragon Quest IX was issued in the summer of 2010. Unlike Tokyo however, France has a much lower rate of mobile Internet use, effectively meaning that there was a much lower density of players and that players were only connected through their terminals or through direct interaction. In order to still play the game, however, people relied on planned gatherings to

DRAGON QUEST IX IN JAPAN

form the random encounters. In 2010, there were several gatherings. These were held in public parks and gardens, not in commercial malls and stations like in Tokyo. The reason for this was deliberate: organisers believed that it was better to separate the location from institutional places in order to prevent possible contamination of commercial interest. This did raise some questions about the ownership of public places and regulations however, as Parisian regulations state that public gardens can have no more than 6 people congregating at once, whilst the gatherings sometimes had over 150 players. Players were therefore often told to find another place to gather at.

But, in general, and in contrast to the Tokyo examples, the Parisian settings were located away from traditional mobility fluxes, effectively separating the game practices from its urban setting. In practice, this meant that the gatherings consisted of dense segregations of players, with passerby's in the far background. The ambiguity of the game was therefore limited: the divide between players and non-players was much more evident: a clear case of being either in or out. Due to this different structure, a boundary was created with non-players, and players engaged much more easily through both digital and co-present interaction. The mobility pattern the players took on was either a slow walk (whilst staring at their screens), or sitting in small groups interacting both digitally and directly through face-to-face contact. In this way, the game also became more about identifying players.

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A comparison

Although it would be easy to give the significant differences between Japan and France a cultural explanation, it is also far too easy, and we should be cautious. After all, in both places, the norm is to not address strangers in public places. The main difference between the way in which the game was played in Tokyo and Paris thus lies in the way that people made exceptions to the rule. In Paris, this was easier to do as the events were specially organised and players were bundled together in small areas. The 'stranger' status therefore created less of a barrier to social interaction, as the 'stranger' was almost certainly a 'fellow player'. In Tokyo, the guarantee of being a player or non-player was much less evident, making the 'stranger' versus 'fellow player' relationship much more ambiguous.

Lessons

The research has shown that multiple types of encounter are possible in hybrid ecologies. Digital encounters can take on many different forms in proximity-aware games and these can potentially change behavioural and mobility practices in urban public places. Location clearly has a great influence on the behavioural patterns when it comes to these games, as seen in both the Japan and France cases. The potential of these games can therefore really give us a new understanding of urban surroundings and its use.

DRAGON QUEST IX IN FRANCE

Reactions

In the future, more research needs to be carried out to see what further potentials lie in proximity-based games. Unlike other games, these are designed to favour and value random encounters. With the options of layering and the plurality of these structures, new participation frames can be offered to put forward new forms of connectivity and organisation in urban society.

In the Netherlands, WordFud (http://wordfud.flashgamesplayer.com) and City Games (www.citygames.nl), an open-access game in which two teams try to find each other via their mobile phone, have really kicked off as popular proximity-aware games. However, there is more potential. On a commercial scale, for example, the Heineken company has tapped into the market by creating a bottle opener that runs on a wifi connection. This enables the opener to keep track of how many Heineken beer bottles are opened, and creates an incentive for customers by offering deals and free beer once a certain amount of bottles are opened. This demonstrates how the market can use these new methods of interaction as a means to create extra value for brands and places.

These new ways of using social media and proximity-aware games should be further explored to see what potentials they hold for future developments. Social media and location-aware application can drastically change our shopping behaviour, for instance, or the way in which we generally behaviour in public places.

Research should focus on what role these new media forms can play in cities and what

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the repercussions will be on the future social order. Will new media have any implications for integration issues, for example? Can it be used as an instrument to facilitate fiscal mobilities? And can these new ways of interaction also present problems? WordFud, for example, had some negative associations with pub owners, as they complain many customers come to their pubs, but just sit there and play the game, as opposed to buying drinks.

New media may also have negative implications in terms of social behaviour. With the possibilities of having potential encounters and to be in contact with people who are also not present, can this lead to the destimulation of interaction with strangers in public places? This is a valid point for future research, as our behavioural patterns are influenced by these new opportunities and development. The big question thus is: Does social media stimulate interaction or increase alienation in public places?

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Expert meeting

Social media and the future of shopping

The International Perspectives (tIP) expert meeting forms the second part of the tIP series and aims to put the lecture from the previous day into practice through a select group of experts in the field. This article reflects on the second tIP expert meeting held on the 14th of October, in association with the University of Utrecht (UU).

The expert meeting follows the lecture given by Christian Licoppe the day before on social media, 'hybrid ecologies' and the role that proximity-based social media can play in stimulating interaction in urban public places. This expert meeting looked more specifically at the role of social media in shopping: the consequences of e-shopping on in-store shopping were examined in order to discover its effects on the development and meaning of the inner city.

Set up expert meeting

1. Presentations;
- Prof. Dr. Martin Dijst (UU) on Consumer Behaviour and E-Shopping.
- Dr. Jesse Weltevreden (HvA) on the Influence of Social Media on Retail
- Dr. Ton van Rietbergen (URU) on the Implications of E-Shopping on the Inner City.
2. Initial responses: Christian Licoppe and Expert team.
3. Subgroup discussion.
4. Group Reflection.
5. Conclusions.

tIP 02|07 Expert team:

Joost de Baaij – Researcher in Acquisition & Concepts, ASR Real Estate
Martin Dijst – Professor of Urban Development and Mobility, University of Utrecht
David Dooghe – Project Leader, Deltametropolis Association
Paul Gerretsen – Director, Deltametropolis Association
Inge Hartkoorn – Reporter/coordinator, Deltametropolis Association and Stipo
Toine Hooft – Assistant Director, Office for Urban Planning Ltd (Amsterdam)
Rik Janssen – Marketing Executive, Multi Vastgoed
Arjan Kuilman – Partner, TCN Property Projects
Christian Licoppe – Professor of Sociology, Telecom ParisTech
Ruud Mannaart – Policy Advisor, Chamber of Commerce, The Hague
Ton van Rietbergen – Assistant Professor, Urban and Regional Research Centre Utrecht (URU)
Annemiek Rijckenberg – Senior Advisor Urban Development
Margriet Schepman – Senior Policy Officer, The Association of Dutch Property Developers (NEPROM)
Bas Spierings – Assistant Professor, Urban and Regional Research Centre Utrecht (URU)
Loes Verhaart – Urban Developer, Municipality of The Hague
Michiel Verlaak – Project Developer Commercial Real Estate, Blauwhoed Ltd
Jesse Weltevreden – Professor of E-Business, University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam

Presentation #1: Consumer Behaviour and E-Shopping

Professor Martin Dijst has been examining the effects of Information Technologies on behavioural patterns and whether e-shopping can be considered a friend or foe for the inner-city environment. The trend of online shopping has been increasing over the past few years and the concept has recently received much interest in the research field. According to a recent study, 60% of Dutch consumers prefer to do their shopping from home, whether this is online, through a catalogue or the telephone. The main reason given for this relatively new trend is that people see it as an easier way to shop: it avoids restricting business hours, travel time and the busy crowds experienced during in-store shopping. At the same time, however, people still enjoy going to the inner city and visiting the downtown areas. So, although one would imagine that online shopping would push people away from coming into the cities, the inner city still has a pull factor.

E-shopping in the Netherlands: the figures

Between 2001-2008, the Netherlands experienced the 5th biggest growth in distance-selling per head in Europe, after Norway, the UK, Germany and France respectively. In terms of online consumer expenditure, this translates into an increase of 11% in the Netherlands alone, resulting in a €8,2 billion online turnover in 2010. The biggest online markets are: package holidays (€2.15bn), flights and hotels (€1.36bn), telecommunications (€920mil) and clothing (€555mil). In terms of online sales characteristics, consumers tend to be highly educated males, between the ages 26-35, who have a relatively high income. This is similar for online searches, though the age group tends to be younger, between 25-35 years old. In both online sales and searches, the consumer tends to be 'urban', though in terms of sales, the difference between urban and suburban is negligible.

Future trends

As an activity, shopping has changed tremendously in the last few years. While it was previously limited to specific times and locations, it can now happen anytime and anywhere. This type of fragmentation has been termed 'temporal fragmentation'. Alongside these changes, shopping is also experiencing 'spatial fragmentation', i.e. people can now search for product information online, then visit the shop located in the city; test the product and then decide whether to buy the product on location, or online. Contemporary shopping thus comprises a combination of temporal and spatial fragmentation, where shopping can be done anywhere, at anytime and for all things, the ' triple A' so to speak. The added opportunities that this combination offers, has in turn led to a reconfiguration of activities, where more activities are being combined. Shopping and working, for example, is made possible through advancements in IT, which has increased the popularity of new working methods such as flexi-work. These new trends have also caused the revaluation of activities and places: for the store, a shopping trip is no longer just about selling a product, but also about offering the customer something extra: whether it be a unique atmosphere or building, a distinctive interior or an added experience, such as live music in a music store for example. The revaluation of shopping is about offering an added value: something extra, usually linked to leisure, in order to attract customers to shops.

As shopping becomes more fragmented and interwoven between different combinations of work, private life and leisure, the 'triple A' environment will increasingly become a concept to embrace. Whether this is positive or negative is open for discussion, however, it is clear that leisure is becoming an essential part of the modern in-store shopping experience. With the revaluation of urban space, leisure as 'added value' has become so indispensable, that it often is the primary reason for

visiting the inner city.

Besides the importance of leisure, sensescapes may play a bigger role in the future in terms of attracting people to the inner city. Studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between sensory information (e.g. smelling, hearing, seeing) and the individual, emotional experience of place. Our sensory experiences may therefore become more relevant in shaping our cities in the future, as it can be a way of attracting people to the inner city.

Lastly, the potential of ICT and location-awareness on Smartphones (through GPS and Bluetooth) should not be overlooked. New technologies offer copious possibilities for the future, for example by creating temporal consumer communities, which offer people credit points to visit downtown areas. Likewise, consumers can also be offered specific offers through Bluetooth when they walk past specific stores (e.g. temporary discounts at a coffee shop when a person walk past it). Another possibility could be in offering applications, which navigate people through preferred routes or sensescapes in a city. In short, the potential of new technologies should be further exploited as a means to offer added value to places: to attract people to the inner city areas and to ensure they relate the shops to the rest of the urban area.

The question of whether e-shopping is a friend or foe can thus simply be answered like this: it is a foe if you simply see it as people no longer visiting shops. However: E-shopping can be a lucrative potential friend, by means of exploring the potentials of social media and exploiting the increased value it can create for the inner cities of the future.

Presentation #2: The Influence of Social Media on Retail

Together with the Amsterdam University of Applied Science, Professor Jesse Weltevreden has carried out a large-scale study on the effect of social media on retail. This study examined 5600 online, click-and-mortar and store-only retailers in the Netherlands, and the results have been published in *'Social Media in de detailhandel. Een onderzoek naar het gebruik van social media sites door (web)winkels en consumenten in Nederland' (2011).*

This presentation looks at how retailers have adopted social media (primarily for sales generation), the extent to which the uses have been successful and what consumers think. It is important, however, to keep in mind that with all its hype, social media is merely one of the sales and customer channels available to retailers: it is not the Holy Grail! Social media is an emergent channel, however, so retailers are currently experimenting and trying to figure out how they can use it for different purposes.

The way in which retailers use social media can best be explained by looking at the Purchasing Decision Model. This model consist of 5 phases that consumers go through when they purchase a good and the way in which retailers try to influence these by using social media. These uses may not always be successful, but they highlight some methods that retailers are currently trying out.

Phase 1: 'Need Identification': In this initial phase, retailers can use social media in various ways. They can present limited special offers to trigger consumers to buy certain items (e.g. currently primarily used on Twitter and Facebook) or offer daily discount codes (e.g. through sites such as www.line.nl). Other methods include social advertising (as mainly seen on Facebook) and giving special offers for followers (e.g. Hyves has created a special community of people interested in its brand and sends them special offers, which they are more likely to use than non-followers). All these deals are a way of creating impulse buying for the consumer.

Phase 2 & 3: 'Search and Select': As more consumers use social media sites in their search processes, retailers can monitor and respond to questions to generate sales. Some applications on sites such as Twitter and Facebook allow consumers to search through

selected products of other retailers within the social media site, so that the consumer does not have to specially visit the official site. Location-based social media, such as Foursquare, is also used to stimulate sales, as it generates traffic to stores by offering the consumer discounts or offers via the mobile phone.

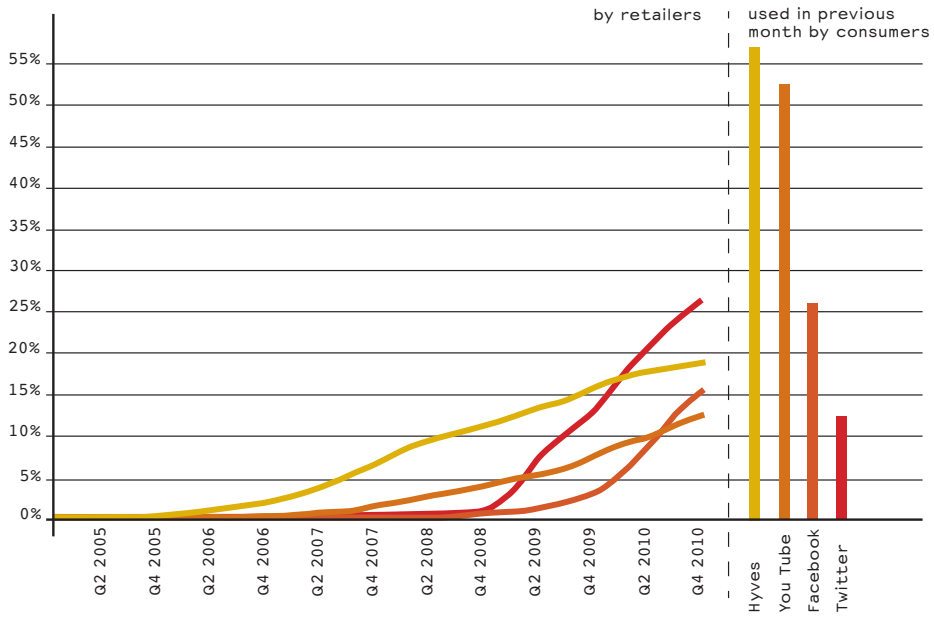
Phase 4: 'Purchase': Some retailers have integrated a web shop within a social media account. Sites such as Facebook allow for this, enabling the customer to buy products from the web shop on Facebook, so that they do not have to leave Facebook in order to search for the product elsewhere.

Phase 5: 'Aftersales': Through promotion and information exchange, retailers can also generate added sales and advertisement for future customers. Sites such as www.bol.com enable happy customers to write reviews and promote products to friends and followers. In this way, bol.com can generate potential sales from a wider network. Other sites, such as the DIY Praxis store, have developed fora for consumer care, where questions and answers can be exchanged about purchased products, to ensure customers are satisfied and that products purchased from the site will receive positive reviews. More specifically, some retailers have also created webcare teams within social media sites, such as Twitter, which engage with customers online to deal with questions and (negative) sentiments of online activities.

Retail adoption of different social media

Due to the large data sets obtained, the study reflects a relatively accurate portrayal of the current (2010) use of social media sites by retailers. The study revealed that Twitter is presently the most popular social media site amongst retailers. The main reason for this is that it is fairly easy to set up compared

ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



Source: Weltevreden et al. (2011)

to other channels. Hyves is closely followed by Twitter, which used to be first, but is declining in use as it offers fewer possibilities for reaching customers. Facebook, currently on 3rd place, is rapidly increasing in importance however, and will most likely overtake Hyves in the future. Webblogs and fora are the least used channels, as these are not interesting for all retailers and are aimed at more specific groups.

The consumer experience reveals a whole different story however. Unlike with retailers, Twitter is the least used social media site by consumers, whilst Hyves, YouTube and Facebook are the most popular. There is thus an obvious mismatch between the way in which retailers are using social media sites, and the sites that their potential customers are using. Retailers are therefore clearly not in line with their target audience.

Alongside the majority of retailers using the wrong types of social media, there is also a relatively low adoption of social media sites. By and large, click-and-mortar and web-only retailers have a higher social media adoption rate (half of all retailers) than store-only shops, and the latter also use fewer types of social media than the former (if any form of social media is used in the first place). This difference applies to almost all size-classes and clearly shows that store-only shops are lacking behind their competition. This is primarily due to lack of experience in using the new media and illustrates the threat to the future existence of the city centre, as store-only shops are very present and important for the energy and life of the inner city.

Presentation #3: The Implications of E-Shopping on the Inner City

Assistant Professor Ton van Rietbergen has approached social media from a more philosophical standpoint, based on his research on mobility and globalisation. Social media, in his view, has recently been built-up as a whole new way of life, though it can also merely be seen a new way to sell products. It is a fact that Internet offers retailer new distributions channels to reach customers, however, in terms of productivity, the effects are unclear. The vast variety in social media sites all entail different conceptions, with different ways of operating, different objectives and different audiences. Whilst people previously communicated through a single distribution channel (e.g. e-mail), people now communicate through numerous channels, resulting in the potential loss of messages and clear communication.

Human behaviour fundamentally is based on doing things together: humans, after all, are social beings. This may explain why, in times where everyone is complaining about having no free time, social media is so popular: there is an inherent need to be part of the group, and to follow others. By examining the effect of the Internet on the contemporary shopping experience, van Rietbergen poses the question: Is the Internet radically reshaping the world of shopping? Or is it simply an additional distribution channel?

Shopping trends

Recent trends in shopping have showed that shop visitations are dramatically declining. In the past 10 years, there has been a 35% decrease in shop visitations, whilst office spaces are increasingly expanding. Although the reasons for this trend are still being examined, the current hypothesis is that shopping is still popular, however the approach has changed. Consumers are now better informed and tend to shop online, as well as in-store. The Internet has changed behavioural patterns in the sense that people now hop from one site to another, instead of from one (physical) shop to another. Unlike other suggestions which imply that the inner city is at risk, this theory believes it is the edges, surrounding streets and secondary shopping areas that are most vulnerable to running empty.

The fact remains that only 3.3% of all purchases are made through the Internet however, and this is due to our changing shopping behaviour. This change (and thus

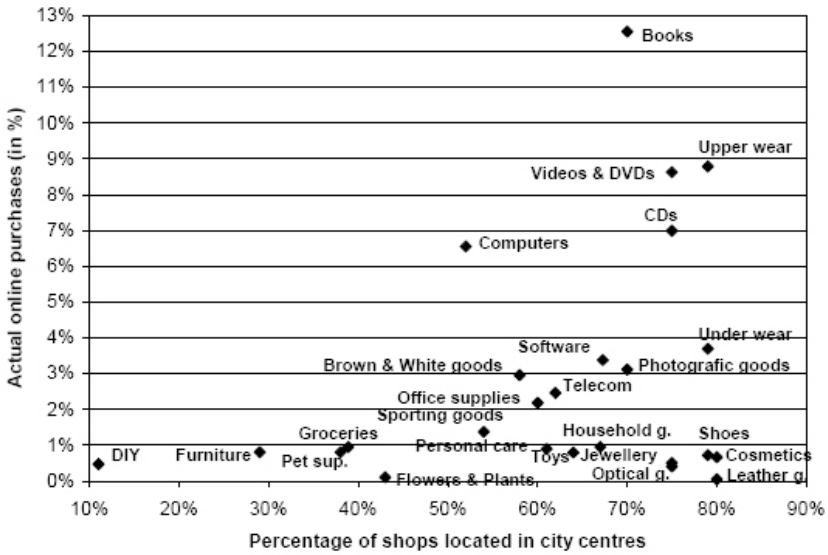
the 'busyness' levels in cities) lies foremost in the fact that people no longer walk around searching for products, but now target shops directly, having done the background research online. This new shopping trend has some adverse consequences on urban areas, especially for certain retailers and central locations. Many (successful) companies, such as the Fame Record Store on the Kalverstraat in Amsterdam, are relocating due to the high rents of their central locations. Although the company has an annual turnover of €12ml, it was not enough to keep the company profitable at such a central location. The rents were simply too high, forcing the company to relocate. If a company of such magnitude can no longer pay these rents, then the future of the city is in dilemma. According to Professor Cor Molenaar, current vacancy levels lie at 2ml m2 and this is expected to quadruple by 2015: a very worrying prediction.

A manifestation of new shopping behaviour is that people increasingly search for products online, compare prices, test the product in a physical store, and subsequently buy the product online. This makes it almost impossible for in-store retailers to compete and changes the whole shopping context. This also means that certain shops (selling mainly products that cannot be 'tested': books, videos, upper-wear, CD's, DVD's etc), will almost certainly disappear in the future. This will not automatically lead to serious vacancies, however, as these will probably be replaced by shops selling more 'successful' products (e.g. clothing chains), but it may lead to a more monotonous city: one dominated by the same type of goods.

The city and the future

It is important to keep in mind that the Internet is really being used as an information source. Although people are still keen on shopping, the Internet now plays a much big-

ONLINE PURCHASES PER PRODUCT AND SHARE IN INNER-CITY



Source: Adapted from Weltevreden & Van Rietbergen, 2004

ger role in the way in which it is carried out. A comparison of various cities in the Netherlands has illustrated that cities with a strong, historical heart are more likely to survive than those that do not. Cities such as Amsterdam, Utrecht and Veenendaal are therefore less likely to experience problems than cities such as Almere, which does not have a traditional centre. Social media may be a way to integrate (or emphasise) atmosphere and culture in a city, but only as an extra source of information, albeit van Rietbergen. The companies that are currently really thriving are those that have taken on an Internet mindset. Companies such as bol.com, the largest Internet shop in the Netherlands, is incredibly successful (€520ml turnover annually) and is constantly extending its product line. Their motto rests on the idea that shopping is always fun, but even more fun from your own home. Their success is also based on the fact that it runs from warehouses, and these can grow limitlessly so to speak. According to them, future shopping trends will take on a similar form: shops will become warehouses and only the megastores and 'experience shops' will survive.

In conclusion, van Rietbergen emphasised that web presence is essential. Customers now use the Internet so heavily, that shops can no longer afford to lag behind. This portrays a bleak future for the traditional store, where the city centre will increasingly take on monotone, 'festive' retailing and only those centres with a true historical centre will survive (at least more easily). Social media may be a way to encourage and incorporate more peer to peer interaction, but this will only be successful if it is arranged well. The Internet does, after all, have the potential to change status symbols and this can potentially be used to counteract some of these trends.

Reflections

Following the three presentations, the group was asked for their initial responses. Christiaan Licoppe suggested that the adoption of more location aware devices or applications could offer many opportunities for cities in the future. He suggested that these should be perceived from a positive angle, to see how these new forms of media can enrich the in-store experience of customers. Location awareness can lead to new mobilities, and thus it may be good for future shops to be aware of these potentials in their store design. Locative media can boost the experience of places: it can bring value to the local experience of being in a store by enriching products, through offering additional information, discounts or added-value for example.

Additionally, by 'going social', social media offers a platform for information exchange and sharing things with others. Customers can share comments or see what products are being bought, for example, and this can create a type of online community and awareness of the location itself. Lastly, Christiaan Licoppe pointed out that there is also much potential in social media games. Retailers can incorporate game elements into their strategies, whereby people compete or work together to achieve a certain goal, and this can make retail space more attractive for consumers.

Other suggestions included that the retailers located out-of-town should not be forgotten. It has been shown that if the convenience threshold is low enough (i.e. if it has good parking and takes relatively little time and energy to reach), out-of-town retail centres can be very successful. This is unlikely to change in the future, as long as the threshold remains low.

The problem within Dutch central government, however, is that there has been little emphasis on the planning aspects. This needs to change, but how can this be achieved? As there is a realistic danger that the future city will become monotonous and that smaller shops will die out. This is where

the Internet also plays a role, as smaller shops generally face most of the competition from larger companies that can afford big media departments in order to be present everywhere and on all media channels. It is not simply a case of being able to afford the channels, however: social media, from a marketing perspective, is available to all: it gives everyone a voice. Social media therefore is accessible to smaller companies, but the problem lies in the understanding and know-how of how to use these channels to maximise their potential. The smaller retailers that are successful tend to be those that know how to use the social media channels to their advantage: to share what makes them unique and original to customers. In general, the concept needs to be well thought-out and creative, and having a big media department on your side generally gives a huge advantage to those that do not. The playing field may therefore be similar, but there is a big difference whether you are a smaller or larger company.

Trends have also shown that the smaller shops that do tend to survive are those that own their property (as opposed to those that rent). Once a shop has an original concept, it is more vulnerable to being bought-up by larger retailers and owning the property can reduce this likelihood. Overall, however, the future of the Dutch inner city seems to be made up of big chains and megastores. This may also be due to a generalised cultural pattern. In Portugal and Spain, for example, people tend to go to out-of-town shopping centres and make a retail and entertainment experience out of it: whole families go to these centres and spend the whole day at that location, combining both shopping and leisure. In the Netherlands, this is not the case. Retail is most concentrated in the city centre and executed in a more fragmented manner.

The group agreed that new marketing methods, combined with social media, are becoming increasingly important. Methods whereby corporations market concepts and ideas on a world-scale via the Internet, can be used by sub-management teams in specific countries to convert ideas into more country-specific adaptations. In this way, global concepts can become more country-specific within the same company, by having branch marketing teams and media experts within each country where the idea is shared. The idea thus becomes local and authentic to that society and place. This does, however, require that the retailer is relatively large and international.

Rik Janssen (Marketing Excutive) shared a recent successful shopping marketing scheme, carried out by Multi Vastgoed. This scheme was introduced in Spijkenisse, where the municipality and the 250 retailers were brought together to discuss a joint-marketing plan for the opening of a mall in Spijkenisse. The idea was embraced by all parties involved and a slogan was set up for the opening week: 'Spijkenisse op stelten' ('Spijkenisse on stilts', implying the opening would kick-start with a bang). The scheme involved a combination of a loyalty card, which was powered by a Facebook fan page and website. Multi Corporations operated as the mall manager and the loyalty card (by the name of the Spijkenisse 'Spijker voordeel kaart') was distributed to everyone in the catchment area (i.e. 75,000 people). The scheme was also promoted on Facebook, through a website and all participating retailers were asked to come up with one unique deal to offer customers.

This campaign proved to be very successful: in the week of the opening, sales were very high. Once the campaign was over, however, sales dropped dramatically. The scheme therefore only worked as a one-off campaign and in order to have had a more sustainable, long-term sales effect, more management is needed.

The Spijkenisse campaign highlighted a very successful scheme, however, the group believed this was also quite a unique case. By and large, it is very hard to organise such events in city centres as it involved many parties, all with different demands and intentions, and above all: it is very difficult to sus-

tain commitment in these projects. Although there is often interest in working together, by the time a project becomes a possible reality, much commitment has already disappeared or parties have lost interest. This free rider mentality makes it very difficult to set up collaborative retail schemes and loses sight of the actual end goal: to sell products. The main challenge therefore, is in getting and retaining commitment.

The future of social media in retail seems promising, however. Social media enables creative and innovative ways to promote, advertise and sell products and gives retailers an extra channel to promote what makes them unique. Retailers should be aware of their target market, however. The flows of society should be looked at: customer participation in mobility flows should be examined and facilitated, so that retailers can combine the current trends with what can happen in the future. Customers are more aware of their wants and needs and therefore more inclined to make their own decisions these days, so retailers should follow their expectations.

Questions that should be looked at in the future are:

- How can new retail be stimulated to become sustainable and long lasting? What new forms should be created in order to avoid future vacancies?
- What can you offer customers to facilitate in-store visitations and purchases?
- How can (smaller) shops use social media to warrant their survival?

With these reflections in mind, the group was then split into three sub-groups to look at the future of shopping in the Netherlands. The groups discussed how Dutch inner cities will develop in the future and how social media will be organised and influence the current trends. The reports back reflected surprising similar beliefs:

Group 1

In the coming years, there will be an upward shift from a place-based society to a person-based society. Consumers will therefore be more individualised, with fragmented shopping habits and different needs and wants. Due to constantly being offered more choices in terms of products and services, consumers will rely more on the opinions of friends and role models when choosing to make a purchase. The social places (temporary and fluid) where people leave comments on products, services or specific places will become more important to find specific person-based information.

For the inner cities, it is important to create and offer different shopping experiences. This applies to both large and smaller shops, and also includes combinations with other amenities, such as cultural events, cafes, restaurants and housing. A part of the inner city shopping experience is to see other people and to be intrigued by what is happing.

Social media tells the visitor the story of the city, with all its different experiences connected to specific places in the city. By reading the comments left by people about these places, the visitor can see what has happened, as well as receiving up-to-date information about the place. Social Media guides the consumer, according to their preferences, to shops that have offers and discounts targeted at his/her interest. Likewise, social media can inform the inhabitants of a places where they can meet friends or likeminded people.

For social media to work, it is important the information is person-based and easy to access. As part of the city marketing, the municipality of The Hague is interested in further exploring the opportunity of creating a person-based social media platform. In cooperation with shops and cultural institutions, this type of experience oriented, person-based social media platform could be organised. In

partnership with the retail developers, the different place experiences in the city can be strengthened by the development of specific shops spaces and the mixture with other functions, such as cultural institutions and housing.

Group 2

There was a wide discussion on the changing dynamics of retail in the future, especially in terms of customer behaviour. As people now shop differently and use more and different channels to do so, the classical patterns of shopping have changed. The Internet is one of the reasons for this, but it is not the only reason. The group believed that the Internet is not a friend or foe as such, but more something that is just present. It is thus not so much a choice, but more a natural part of the contemporary shopping experience. With this in mind, the attractiveness of the inner city remains what it is presently, standing alongside the dynamics of the retail industry.

In terms of the future of the retailer, shops will most likely remain similar to what is happening at the moment. The inner city will continue to exist with mixed types of shops and the offer of mixed functions, such as retail, working and travelling, will remain important. Although small shops will still exist, they will continue struggling to contend with larger competitors. In this sense, the hierarchy of retail in the Netherlands is steepening. On the other hand, the Internet and social media can be helpful for retailers in this position. It can be used in a way to market the city centre or to promote certain areas, through the clustering of different elements, city marketing or free Internet offers within the city centre range for example. Although the Internet can be helpful, it won't be more than that.

In terms of real estate and marketing, it will also become increasingly important to think about the way a city looks. The visual aspects of a city should therefore not be underestimated, as this is what attracts visitors and makes people want to visit. The availability of amenities and services, such as parking and accessibility, also play an important role. Retailers should also think about more creative ways to make use of their social media sites. One example is the Bijenkorf, which currently uses its profits from its web shop to pay for the rents of its actual stores.

The future for the city centre is thus optimistic: it will survive, but retail competition will also continue. Smaller companies will be faced with tough competition and the need to increase the effectivity of social media is crucial for smaller companies to survive. Those that are truly unique and offer added value (whether it is a service, customer care, discounts etc.) will survive, whilst those in the middle may not. If this happens, however, it does not automatically mean the vitality of a city centre is lost: merely the dynamics change.

Group 3

With the current trends, it is clear that visitor numbers are decreasing, whilst vacancies and new shops are on the increase. In order to counteract this trend, more should be invested in the catering industry and in mixed-use. The catering industry attracts many people to the city centre and will probably continue to do so. For this reason, we should look for innovative ways in which we can combine catering or mixed-use areas with social media applications, to attract even more people to the city centres. The broad focus should be on leisure and the experience of shopping in the city. Social media can be a way to facilitate this, by offering deals and discounts for example, but also by trying to counteract the negative connotations people have with real-life shopping.

Shopping should become as easy and unproblematic as possible. One suggestion was to enable customers to scan all their purchased products through a barcode reader, which will then automatically send your purchased items to your home address. This will free the customer from having to carry heavy bags around the city all day and negate one of the features of in-store shopping that most consumers dislike.

The future of the inner city will most likely also focus on investing in more temporary use and flagship stores. These can offer short-term exciting deals and can be very effective for the impulsive customer. These strategies should focus primarily on ideas that are innovative, creative and new, and above all: cheap.

This group also shared the first group's idea of an application to offer routes through the city. More specifically, the application could offer a city shopping guide, which will contain a whole programme catering to he customers interests and preferences. The retail industry and city centres should base their strategies on increasing the enjoyment of shopping and attracting people to the city. Social media can be used as a way to facilitate this process and to make the whole shopping experience as pleasant and effortless as possible. Incentives that currently exist include Hema's pick-up scheme, whereby customers who have purchased a good can come pick up their product for free at a nearby Hema store. If the customer chooses to have it home delivered instead, then this will be done at an additional cost, creating a financial incentive to come into the city centre. Like the Bijenkorf, the Hema has also been using its online turnover to pay for the rents of its actual stores and it has also been investing in flagship stores, effectively reaching its customers through three separate channels: in-store, Internet and flagshipshops.

Agenda

In the coming years, there will be an upward shift from a place-based society to a person-based society. Consumers will therefore be more individualised, with fragmented shopping habits and different needs and wants.
Therefore, to attract people to the city centre, the inner city should offer the consumer a real shopping experience combined with leisure activities.
Using the expert meetings as a basis, the following agenda is proposed to futher develop the attractiveness of the inner cities:

1. New forms of partnership should be created, particularly in inner city areas where there is dispersed ownership and size differences. Municipalities should look at ways in which they can help stimulate future development, by forming new collaborative partnerships with shopowners, developers and investers.

2. These new partnerships should focus on trying to find innovative ways for retailers to use social media and locative media and all its potentials in the inner city

3. As the survival of many stores lies in mixed-use, this should become the focus of urban policies and strategies. Municipalities should therefore try to engage in stimulating these types of collaborative processes.

TH

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