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From Overlooked to Overrun: Exploring Sustainable Urban Tourism Development in Amsterdam Noord

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Master in Tourism Development and Culture
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree

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University of Malta

August, 2024

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Resumo

Esta dissertação explora o desenvolvimento do turismo urbano sustentável em Amsterdam Noord, um distrito que está a passar por uma transformação significativa, de uma área negligenciada para um centro vibrante. O estudo visa compreender a inter-relação entre o crescimento do turismo e a dinâmica comunitária, explorando os impactos do Novo Turismo Urbano (NUT) em fatores socioeconômicos, autenticidade cultural e nas comunidades locais. Utilizando a metodologia da Grounded Theory, incluindo pesquisa documental, entrevistas e observações, a investigação analisa os benefícios e desafios colocados pelo crescente afluxo de turistas. Os resultados revelam que, embora o turismo, como parte de uma estratégia de desenvolvimento mais ampla, tenha estimulado o crescimento econômico e a regeneração urbana, também exacerbou a gentrificação e as desigualdades sociais. O estudo enfatiza a necessidade de políticas de turismo equilibradas que priorizem o bem-estar comunitário e o desenvolvimento sustentável. As implicações teóricas da pesquisa destacam a complexidade de gerir o turismo urbano de forma a preservar o caráter único dos bairros locais. As implicações gerenciais sugerem estratégias para mitigar os impactos negativos, como o envolvimento da comunidade e estratégias de desenvolvimento flexíveis. A dissertação conclui com a importância de abordagens holísticas para o desenvolvimento urbano e recomendações para futuras pesquisas sobre práticas de turismo sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento de Turismo Sustentável, Amsterdam Noord, Novo Turismo Urbano, Transformação Urbana

JEL: Z32, R58

Abstract

This dissertation explores the sustainable urban tourism development in Amsterdam Noord, a district undergoing a significant transformation from an overlooked area to a vibrant hub. The study aims to understand the interplay between tourism growth and community dynamics, exploring the impacts of New Urban Tourism on socio-economic factors, cultural authenticity, and local communities. Using a Grounded Theory methodology, including desk research, interviews, and observations, the research investigates the benefits and challenges posed by the increasing tourist influx. The findings reveal that while tourism, as a part of a broader development strategy, has stimulated economic growth and urban regeneration, it has also exacerbated gentrification and social inequalities. The study emphasizes the need for balanced tourism policies that prioritize community well-being and sustainable development. The theoretical implications of the research highlight the complexity of managing urban tourism in a way that preserves the unique character of local neighbourhoods. Managerial implications suggest strategies for mitigating negative impacts, such as community engagement and flexible development strategies. The dissertation concludes with the importance of holistic approaches to urban development and recommendations for future research on sustainable tourism practices.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Development, Amsterdam Noord, New Urban Tourism, Urban Transformation
JEL: Z32, R58

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Glossary

Noord:	Amsterdam Noord
Noorderling:	Long-term resident of Amsterdam Noord
NUT:	New Urban Tourism

Introduction

“Als ik één ding heb geleerd over Noord, dan is het wel dat je er nooit iets generaliserends over kunt zeggen.” [If there is one thing I learned about Noord, it's that you can never say anything generalizing about it.] (Hutak, 2020, p. 46)

A sink drain, poor relation, the Siberia of Amsterdam, would not be caught dead there... For decennia, Amsterdam Noord (or Noord, for short) suffered from a bad reputation with nicknames to match. Once an overlooked and underdeveloped part of the city, Noord is now experiencing a dramatic transformation into a vibrant hub for tourism and urban development. This rapid change has sparked a dynamic interplay of economic opportunities and community challenges, making Noord a fascinating case study for sustainable urban tourism.

Tourism is a key component of sustainable urban development (Farsari, 2023; Sharpley, 2023), driving economic growth and cultural exchange, but its unchecked expansion can lead to environmental degradation, community disruption, and cultural commodification (UNWTO, 2005; Zolfani et al., 2015). With a growing number of destinations facing negative consequences, including Amsterdam (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Gerritsma & Vork, 2017), tourists are venturing out of overcrowded city centres and towards off-the-beaten-track suburban areas in pursuit of authentic experiences. This phenomenon is called New Urban Tourism (NUT) (Maitland & Newman, 2014). While NUT can disperse visitors away from overcrowded tourist centres, stimulate urban regeneration and give a competitive advantage to previously marginalized areas (King et al., 2024), it also risks gentrification and socio-economic inequalities within communities (Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a). While tourists originally turn to NUT-areas for their authentic feel, as these areas gain popularity, they often lose their distinctive qualities, leading to homogenization (Maitland, 2019). With the number of threats that tourism poses to urban communities, residents may become ‘tourismphobic’ (Almeida-García et al., 2021; Koens et al., 2018), leading to conflicts and xenophobia, which is undesirable. Sustainable tourism development requires stakeholder collaboration, particularly with local communities as this offers them an active role in shaping and benefiting from tourism activities (Boley et al., 2014; Lee, 2013; UNWTO, 2005; Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a). However, the success of community involvement is debated, partly due to a lack of

resources impeding practical implementation (Sebele, 2010), and partly due to unintended negative impacts even in cases of ‘bottom-up’ development (Maitland, 2019).

This dissertation aims to understand the underlying processes that shape Amsterdam Noord’s tourism development, explore the socio-economic and community impacts of tourism development and to gain insight into the role of sustainable tourism in mitigating or exacerbating the negative effects. The research objectives are as follows:

1. To analyze the historical and current state of urban tourism development in Amsterdam Noord.
2. To explore the socioeconomic impacts of tourism development on the local community and its wellbeing.
3. To explore the strategies needed to make tourism more sustainable in Noord.
4. To develop a conceptual model that can be applied to other urban contexts.

While there is substantial research on urban destinations facing negative tourism impacts, particularly in relation to overcrowding and resident attitudes (e.g. Gerritsma & Vork (2017); Seraphin et al. (2018); Smith et al. (2019)), the nuanced interplay between rapid tourism development as a response to overcrowding in city centres and community dynamics in NUT destinations like Noord remains underexplored. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing sustainable tourism strategies that benefit both tourists and local communities. This dissertation aims to contribute to closing this research gap by answering the following research question: How does the growth of tourism in Amsterdam Noord impact the community’s socioeconomic wellbeing, and what strategies are needed to ensure sustainable tourism practices that mitigate negative effects while promoting long-term community wellbeing?

By employing a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this study aims to develop a conceptual model, offering a foundation for future research and practical applications in other urban contexts. The outcomes of this research can be used to inform policymakers and local tourism organizations on how to properly shape tourism development strategies that ensure the long-term viability of tourism destinations without compromising the interests and wellbeing of local communities.

The structure of this study is as follows: the next section reviews relevant literature on sustainable tourism, urban development, and community involvement, highlighting key concepts and frameworks. This is followed by the methodology section, outlining the research design, data collection methods, and analysis employed in this study. The subsequent section presents the results and discussion of the findings from the interviews and observations,

summarized in the conceptual model. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main insights, discusses implications for policy and practice, and suggests directions for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature review

Tourism plays a significant role in the development and transformation of urban areas, presenting both opportunities and challenges for host communities across environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions. This literature review will explore the role of sustainability in shaping the trajectory of urban tourism development and delve into the intricate dynamics of tourism impacts on communities. By examining existing research and theoretical frameworks, the review aims to elucidate the complexities of regenerative tourism, sustainable tourism and the imperative of community empowerment in fostering positive outcomes within tourism destinations. The literature review will contextualise the research topic and provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted effects of tourism on urban communities.

1.1 Sustainability in the tourism industry

The tourism industry has long been a crucial driver of economic development globally, providing employment opportunities, generating revenue, and fostering cross-cultural exchange (Bellato et al., 2022; UNWTO & SNV, 2010). Despite the severe setbacks caused by the pandemic, the industry has shown great resilience and is recovering to pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2023). Early studies on tourism impacts predominantly emphasized the economic aspects and the tourists' perspective, often relegating the consideration of environmental, sociocultural, and community impacts to a secondary role (if adequately considered at all) (Güzeller & Celiker, 2018). Over time, tourism began to be viewed as an integral component of sustainable development (Farsari, 2023; Sharpley, 2023). This shift in perspective is not confined to academia but reflects a broader trend within the tourism industry and society at large, where there is a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability (e.g. the rise of the triple bottom line approach, CSR, ESG). However, some research notes that economic indicators still prevail over sustainability indicators among many decision-makers (Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023).

The rapid and often unchecked expansion of tourism can lead to significant negative effects such as environmental degradation, disruption of local communities, and the commodification of cultural heritage (UNWTO, 2005; Zolfani et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant in the context of Western cities, where the rapid development of tourism infrastructure and the influx of visitors have strained local resources and led to the gentrification of historic neighbourhoods. Gentrification refers to the transformation of working-class neighbourhoods due to an influx of middle-class residents, leading to improved amenities and increased attractiveness but also causing social exclusion and displacement of the original community (van der Land et al., 2012). Well-documented examples of this include Venice (Seraphin et al., 2018), Barcelona (Goodwin, 2021) and Amsterdam (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Gerritsma & Vork, 2017). The term ‘overtourism’ is generally used to describe these negative tourism impacts, though there is some discourse about the term being overly simplistic and overused to explain broader, systemic issues (Koens et al., 2018). Recognizing these challenges, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged as a framework to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the preservation of natural resources and the well-being of host communities (Butler, 1999). The interdisciplinary nature of tourism allows for direct and indirect benefits across various sectors within a community and society at large (Roxas et al., 2020). As a resource-dependent industry, tourism must recognize its responsibility to the environment and the communities it serves (Zolfani et al., 2015). In this context, sustainability becomes paramount, as the benefits can only be reaped if the industry continues to exist (Lee & Xue, 2020; Sharpley, 2023). According to UNWTO (2005), sustainable tourism "takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities", underscoring the necessity of informed participation, strong political leadership, and continuous monitoring of tourism impacts (UNWTO, 2024). Taking a holistic perspective is crucial, recognizing that economic gains must align with the long-term well-being of both the industry and the host community. Numerous researchers have underscored the potential positive outcomes of embracing sustainable tourism practices, including increased tourism destination loyalty (Lee & Xue, 2020), equitable economic benefits, preservation of natural and built heritage, and the protection of residents' quality of life (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006).

Interestingly, most definitions of sustainable tourism focus on *sustaining* the situation as it is. To illustrate, Sharpley (2023) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that does not degrade the global ecosystem”. Defining sustainable tourism solely in terms of ecosystem preservation is overly simplistic, as it is inherently interdisciplinary, spanning economic, environmental,

cultural, and societal considerations. Consequently, more attention has been given recently to viewing tourism from a regeneration perspective (CBI, 2022; The New York Times, 2020). Regenerative tourism is a more novel approach that not only serves to reduce harm but actively restores and regenerates the social, cultural, and environmental systems impacted by tourism (Bellato et al., 2023; CBI, 2022). From the tourist perspective, the goal is to not just avoid harm but to create a net-positive impact (CBI, 2022). This approach emphasizes the need to harmonize the varied interests of key stakeholders, including tourists, policymakers, (tourism) entrepreneurs, knowledge centres, and the natural environment, enhancing the overall well-being of the host community (Bellato et al., 2022, 2023). While this is an optimistic premise, the current literature concerning regenerative tourism is limited to mainly its definition and conceptual models. Thus, one might suggest that the efficacy of regenerative tourism remains speculative as its emergence in literature and media is relatively recent, resulting in a lack of empirical evidence regarding its practical application. Yet, as highlighted by Butler (1999), the definition of ‘sustainable tourism’ in general is often vague and ambiguous. Any small-scale tourism enterprise may call itself sustainable, despite a lack of a clear definition or indicators to assess and monitor its actual level of sustainability. This has long been known to pose challenges in the tourism industry (Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023). Systemic change is incredibly complex, especially regarding the tourism industry, which is inherently interconnected with many other aspects of society (Koens et al., 2021). Consequently, it becomes imperative to understand how tourism can impact the systems and communities in which it operates, to establish measurable criteria for evaluating these impacts and eventually enacting positive, sustainable change.

1.2 New Urban Tourism and community impacts

With many popular tourist destinations facing overtourism-related issues such as congestion, commodification, and touristification, NUT emerges as an alternative approach to mass-tourism (Maitland & Newman, 2014). NUT entails tourism becoming an integral part of the urban environment, with tourists increasingly behaving like residents, utilizing local infrastructures, seeking ‘off-the-beaten-track’ and ‘authentic’ destinations (King et al., 2024; Koens et al., 2021). Tourists are thus turning away from the touristic city centres, and instead, visiting former working-class neighbourhoods that have little touristic offer besides the quotidian, ‘everyday life’ of the locals (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht, 2015). As a result of this shift,

along with other societal shifts such as the rise of (international) mobility of students, digital nomadism and other forms of temporary mobility, the de-differentiation between tourism and leisure has garnered attention in the literature (Hannam, 2009; Novy & Colomb, 2019). Maitland (2019) further argues that the shifting views on what a tourist is, complicate the idea of the authentic or 'real city' that can be 'discovered' by visitors. In this perspective, tourists will venture increasingly outward into the suburbs, in search of off-the-beaten-track destinations. NUT is particularly prevalent in previously unfashionable or marginalized urban neighbourhoods: places that have a 'raw edge' yet are also trendy and upcoming, such as Kreuzberg, Berlin, and Brooklyn, New York City (King et al., 2024). It should be noted that NUT is not merely a demand-led trend, as the local government and DMOs play a role in the placemaking and marketing process as well. The appeal of NUT is clear, allowing destinations to disperse visitors away from the primary tourist attractions, in pursuit of competitive advantage (King et al., 2024), while fuelling urban regeneration in dilapidated neighbourhoods (Stors, 2022; Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a).

There are notable benefits to tourism development for urban communities. The improvement of recreation facilities, increased demand for cultural events, and the preservation of heritage and traditions can contribute positively to the fabric of local communities. Furthermore, tourism has the potential to instil a sense of increased community pride and value, fostering cultural exchanges and the sharing of cultural knowledge (Joo et al., 2019). Moreover, tourism has the potential to bring substantial economic benefits to urban areas, often serving as a catalyst for job creation, boosting tax revenue for local governments, and fuelling investment in infrastructure projects (UNWTO, 2021; Vongvisitsin et al., 2024b; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). Nevertheless, the traditional evaluation of tourism's economic impacts tends to prioritize national or macroeconomic perspectives, often sidelining the effects on local communities. While tourism does lead to increased spending, economic leakage frequently hampers its benefits to these communities (Hall & Lew, 2009). Additionally, the distribution of these economic gains is not always equitable, potentially exacerbating socio-economic disparities within a community (Nguyen & Funck, 2019; UNWTO & SNV, 2010). Increased tourist activities can furthermore drive up the cost of living, affecting housing, transportation, and the prices of goods and services, eventually displacing the original residents in the process of gentrification (Atkinson, 2004; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). This is usually accompanied by a changing leisure offer that is better suited to the new residents, while the original resident may not be able to afford participating anymore and feel unwelcome in their changing neighbourhood, leading to social exclusion (Atkinson, 2004). The changing

neighbourhood – now trendy – becomes more attractive to New Urban Tourists, which further exacerbates the process of gentrification and income inequality within the community (Hall & Lew, 2009; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). Even without physical displacement, transformations in the physical environment, social structures and government interventions can cause a loss of sense of belonging amongst residents (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). Moreover, tourism-driven development can lead to urban communities becoming an object of consumption, commodification and commercialization (Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a). While tourists originally turn to NUT-areas for their authentic feel, as these places become increasingly popular amongst tourists, they tend to lose their distinctive qualities, and end up ‘touristified’ and homogenized (Maitland, 2019).

With the number of potential threats that tourism poses to urban communities, residents may become opposed to tourism development, or ‘tourismphobic’ (Almeida-García et al., 2021; Koens et al., 2018). Tourismphobia can lead to conflicts between residents and tourists, public protests and xenophobia (Almeida-García et al., 2021; Gerritsma & Vork, 2017). This is not a new phenomenon, seeing as England has dealt with resident-tourist conflicts since the rise of seaside-tourism in the mid-nineteenth century, and the New York Times reported about similar issues in Spain in the 1970s (Novy & Colomb, 2019). Some research has highlighted the role of the media and its negative impact on resident attitudes towards tourism. Media allows the growing discontent of residents to become more visible, as well as giving voice to the complaints of grassroots organizations regarding negative tourism impacts such as cost of living and mobility (Koens et al., 2018; Milano et al., 2024). As summarized by Novy & Colomb (2019), tourism has become a focal point for mobilization and activism due to its overall growth, its expansion into previously “untouched” neighbourhoods, its evolving forms, and a lack of sufficient governance or regulation – or governance that primarily serves a narrow range of actors. While tourism can exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities, it is important to consider that it is often one component of broader urban development strategies and policies that favour residents with greater social and/or economic capital (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Thus, tourism-related issues should always be examined within a broader context of urban development and socioeconomic issues (Novy & Colomb, 2019). An example of this is the SMARTDEST project, an EU-funded research project that organized various city labs across Europe to research exactly these issues within the context of urban tourism development and policymaking (Servillo et al., 2024; SMARTDEST, n.d.).

The opposition to tourism development is understandable but, of course, not desirable from a sustainability perspective. There is a consensus that sustainable tourism development requires stakeholder collaboration, particularly with the local community as this offers them an active role in shaping and benefiting from tourism activities (Boley et al., 2014; Lee, 2013; UNWTO, 2005; Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a). Specifically in the case of NUT, where the host community shares its place with tourists, the role of community participation in tourism cannot be denied. Understanding the residents' perspective can minimize the potential negative impacts of tourism development and maximize its benefits, leading to community development and greater support for tourism. While the theoretical benefits sound promising, it must be noted that not all research agrees on the success of community involvement in tourism. Practical challenges often impede implementation of resident participation. For example, grassroots initiatives often lack economic and social capital needed for sustainable development (Sebele, 2010). This is especially evident in mature mass-tourism destinations grappling with longstanding issues of overtourism and resident negativity toward tourism (Martínez-García et al., 2017). Furthermore, Maitland (2019) noted that in London, even in cases where the tourism development was 'bottom-up', there was an acceleration of gentrification and homogenization in the urban communities. This highlights the need for the integration of sustainable tourism in policymaking and long-term destination strategies, to avoid unintended negative impacts on the community.

There are various studies and theories that investigate resident support and attitude towards tourism development, the most common of which is Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Stylidis et al., 2014). SET explains that for residents to maintain a positive attitude towards tourism, the perceived benefits must outweigh the perceived costs. Butler (1999) reinforces this perspective, emphasizing that residents must perceive both the short-term and long-term effects of sustainable tourism policies; otherwise, there is a risk they may ignore or subvert them. However, the application of this theory faces limitations as residents may not uniformly perceive costs and benefits, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding. For example, residents employed in the tourism sector can clearly see the personal economic benefits from tourism, but that those not employed in tourism have a harder time seeing how they might benefit (Boley et al., 2014). Another framework that underscores the importance of perceived costs and benefits is the Level of Acceptable Change framework (Koens et al., 2018). Several other models, such as Irridex (Doxey, 1975), Tourism Area Lifecycle (Butler, 1980), Tourism Impact Attitude Scale (Lankford & Howard, 1994), Tourism Impact Scale (Ap & Crompton, 1998), and the more recent Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005) have

been developed to explain the complex relationship between tourism development and host community attitudes. These models delve into the interconnectedness of various stakeholders and variables, offering a more comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics at play, and thus help create more sustainable and inclusive strategies for development.

It has been suggested that community attachment (Lee, 2013) and resident empowerment positively impact residents' support for tourism (Boley et al., 2014). This includes social, political and psychological empowerment. Uslu et al (2020) reports similar findings, specifically highlighting the importance of including the local community in the tourism planning process to boost empowerment and attitudes towards tourism. The SMARTDEST project incorporated bottom-up "co-design" with the respective local communities in City Labs, which proved to be successful for the development of inclusive policymaking (Servillo et al., 2024). As mentioned, a top-down approach is often met with disdain from the community, while grassroots initiatives often fail due to a lack of resources. Some research has highlighted the need for a hybrid "bottom-linked" approach, where community-led initiatives are supported through top-down policies, although this approach still raises questions of inclusivity and equity (Hoekstra & Dahlvik, 2018). This aligns with the concept of "social innovation" which consists of new forms of collaboration to provide sustainable solutions to societal challenges (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2016; Wirth et al., 2023).

In conclusion, tourism's role in urban development is a double-edged sword, presenting both opportunities and challenges for host communities. Sustainable and regenerative tourism frameworks offer pathways to maximize benefits while minimizing harms, yet their success hinges on genuine community empowerment and stakeholder collaboration. NUT exemplifies a shift towards integrating tourism within local urban environments, fostering a sense of shared space between residents and visitors. However, the influx of tourists into previously unfashionable neighbourhoods can lead to gentrification, commodification, and social inequality, underscoring the need for careful management and community involvement in tourism planning. As urban tourism evolves in a destination, it is imperative to adopt balanced, inclusive approaches that prioritize the well-being of both residents and visitors.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods used to conduct the research. This study utilizes Grounded Theory (GT) as its principal methodology to explore sustainable tourism development in Amsterdam Noord. The choice of GT is deliberate as it facilitates the development of theory-based explanations that emerge directly from the data, rather than relying on pre-existing theories or hypotheses that may constrain the research. This methodology ensures that the resulting theory is firmly rooted in the empirical data collected during the research process (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). GT's inductive approach allows for the discovery of novel insights and processes, essential for a comprehensive understanding of the complex social dynamics inherent in sustainable tourism (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, GT aligns seamlessly with the research objectives at hand, providing a structured yet adaptable framework to capture the nuanced realities of the study area.

2.1 Study area: Amsterdam Noord

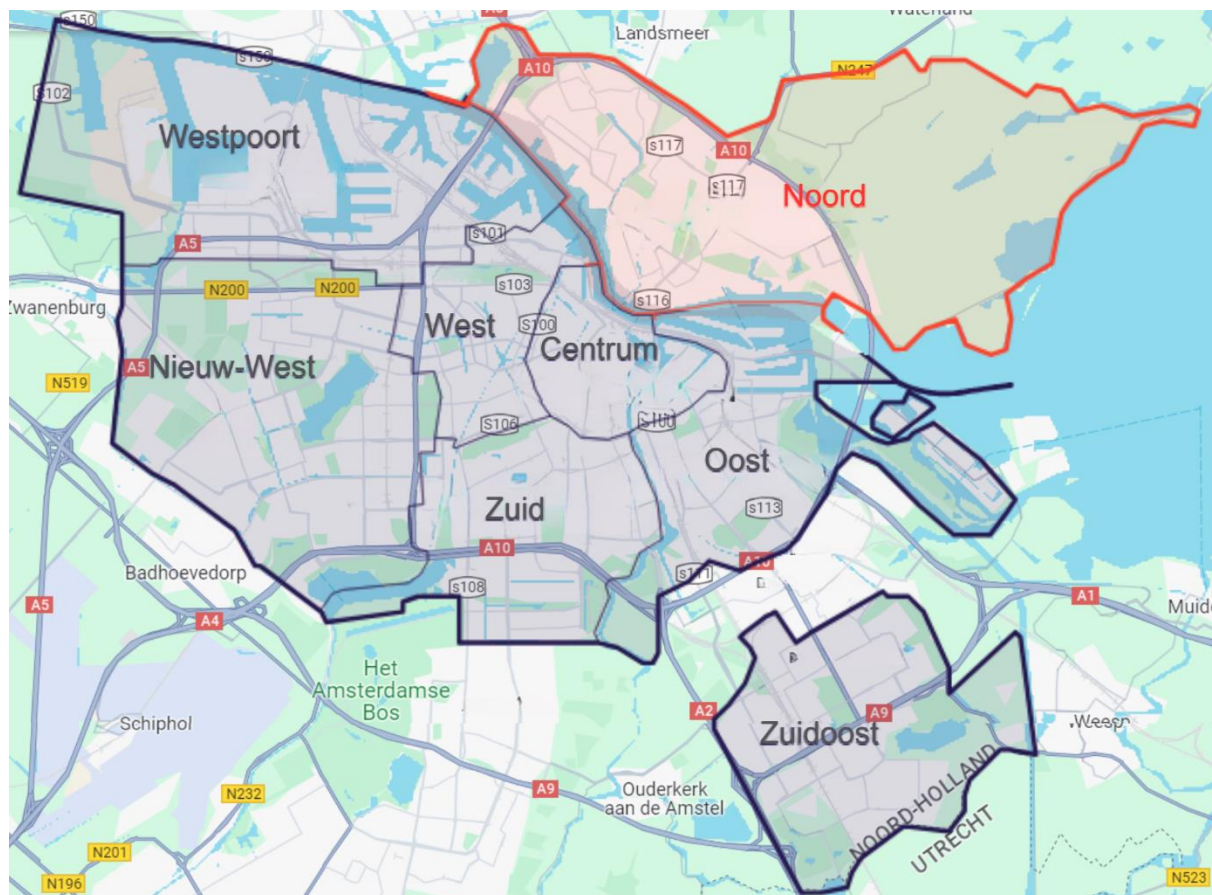
Amsterdam Noord was chosen as a case study for the research due to its proximity to Amsterdam's city centre, a well-known destination facing overtourism, highlighting the need for sustainable tourism practices and system. Additionally, Amsterdam Noord has undergone significant transformations in recent years, evolving from an industrial area to a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood. This context provides a rich setting for studying urban development, regeneration, and sustainable tourism.

Amsterdam is a well-known tourist destination, attracting over 20 million visitors since recovering from the pandemic, making it the most popular tourist destination in the Netherlands for foreign tourists (Luther, 2023). However, mass-tourism brings several issues to the city centre, including overcrowding, disrespectful behaviour by tourists, pollution, and gentrification. The city has been combating overtourism through various measures, such as anti-marketing campaigns and a moratorium on new hotel construction (Wagemakers, 2024). Additionally, Amsterdam aims to alleviate the city centre and distribute visitors more evenly across the city by developing new urban cores. Amsterdam's urban vision for 2050 identifies three key districts for development: Zuid Oost, Nieuw-West, and Noord (van den Beuken & Vos, 2021). The vision emphasizes development according to their unique characteristics,

focusing on culture, knowledge, and innovation as drivers of development. These cores should not be seen as isolated islands, but rather as part of a system, meaning that happens in the city centre of Amsterdam will impact the other areas as well and vice versa.

Amsterdam Noord, located on the north side of Amsterdam and separated by the IJ River (figure 2.1), is the largest city part in terms of area, mainly due to the Waterland neighbourhood (Witschge & van Zelm, 2020). Known colloquially as the “Siberia of Amsterdam,” it has long been overlooked by both tourists and residents due to its location and longstanding socioeconomic issues (van Gelder, 2022). Amsterdam Noord is accessible to the rest of the city primarily by free ferry from the NDSM wharf, as well as two car tunnels. The addition of the Noord-Zuidlijn (metro) in 2018 significantly improved connectivity, although public transport remains a challenge for residents with lower socioeconomic status. The municipality has announced plans to add more ferries from 2025 to further improve connectivity (Hielkema, 2024).

Figure 2.1: Map of the various city parts of Amsterdam.



The area that is now Amsterdam Noord was originally used as a gallows field. Eventually Noord became an important industrial area for Amsterdam, with various industries

relocating their factories from the city centre across the IJ River (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024b). Major companies, including petrochemical giants like Shell and boat manufacturers such as NDSM, set up operations here. Residential areas were built to house workers, forming close-knit communities with a strong sense of identity (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). During the Second World War, the area suffered greatly due to targeted bombings of the factories, which primarily impacted the surrounding neighbourhoods and their residents (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024b). In the latter half of the 20th century, most factories moved away, leading to job losses and abandoned buildings (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). Their former sites have since been repurposed into residential areas, offices, and creative hubs, contributing to a boom in residents (Witschge & van Zelm, 2020). In the 1990s, Noord saw an influx of foreign labour migrants, which increased its cultural diversity but also led to social tensions and a stigma that persists today (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). The prevailing sentiment has long been that Noord is “not part of the city [Amsterdam]” and “you would not want to be caught dead” in Noord (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). Noord continues to face socioeconomic, liveability, and safety issues, including poverty, health deficiencies, and unemployment. These long-standing issues have fostered mistrust amongst long-term residents (Noorderlingen) towards local government and public bodies (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). Income inequality within Noord has increased, with the highest-income neighbourhoods experiencing the most significant economic growth (Booi et al., 2023). Additionally, Noord has the highest percentage of low-educated people and the lowest percentage of high-educated people in Amsterdam. The area also has a relatively high percentage of illiterate or low-literate people, partly due to the higher level of first-generation migrants (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024a; Team Aanpak Noord, 2024).

Recent urban development efforts have aimed to combat these socioeconomic issues. The city adopted a pro-gentrification strategy (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019), focusing on privatizing social housing and developing cultural and commercial activities to attract new middle-class residents. This policy focusing on ‘the creative city’ stems from the notion that culture and creativity are potential catalysts for innovation and increasing social capital (Florida, 2004; van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). Other policies were aimed at promoting social cohesion and increasing the liveability of aforementioned vulnerable neighbourhoods. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of creative facilities tripled, particularly concentrated along the Western IJ-bank, which now hosts the majority of these facilities. Additionally, the number of hospitality businesses has doubled, and there has been a significant increase in

available hotel beds (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024a). As a result, Noord is now marketed as a trendy, upcoming “creative playground” (I Amsterdam, 2024) and even international publications have taken notice of Noord. The New York Times wrote about the “once unfashionable” Noord District (Teffer, 2012) and Lonely Planet named Noord “Amsterdam’s coolest neighbourhood” (Bissell, 2018). This transformation has led to a considerable increase in residents in a relatively short time between 2010 and 2020. In 2019, Noord was the fastest-growing neighbourhood in Amsterdam in terms of both resident numbers and new constructions. As of the latest available statistics, Noord has 108.792 residents (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024a) and it is estimated that this number will increase to nearly 160.000 by 2050. This growth is partly due to migrations and partly due to an excess of births (Witschge & van Zelm, 2020). Additionally, real estate in Noord is relatively affordable and more spacious than in other areas of Amsterdam, making it an attractive place to live. Noord is still on the lower end of the spectrum with a price per square metre that is only higher than Nieuw-West and Zuidoost. Notably, these are the other two areas that Amsterdam has nominated as new urban development cores. Between 2014 and 2019, the average price per square metre has increased by 64%. Although this may seem like a significant rise in a short period, housing costs have increased at a similar rate across other parts of Amsterdam. Historically, Amsterdam Noord had a disproportionately large share of social housing compared to the city average, with a very small share of private rental and real estate. Over the past decade, these proportions have shifted considerably due to a deliberate change in policy by the city to diversify the housing market in Noord, as previously mentioned. A 2017 report indicated that, as a result of this diversification, Noord is attracting more high-income households—40% of households earn over twice the average salary, compared to 29% in the rest of Amsterdam—and a higher percentage of residents with native or Western backgrounds over the previously prevalent non-Western migrants (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017). It is important to note that this data only includes households that have recently moved.

While these developments have led to economic growth and urban development, this also leaves Noord vulnerable to gentrification and subsequent displacement of original residents. Despite policies aimed at mixing private and social housing and promoting social cohesion, indirect displacement remains a concern: the commercial offering in the neighbourhood changes, adapted to fit the needs of the new residents with higher social capital, possibly leading to a loss of sense of belonging amongst long-term residents (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). Statistics indicate that new residents of Noord are increasingly coming from other parts of Amsterdam or outside the city, while long-time residents are moving out at higher

rates (Witschge & van Zelm, 2020). Community initiatives like *Verdedig Noord* [Defend Noord] and *Red Amsterdam Noord* [Save Amsterdam Noord] have voiced concerns about the changing dynamics and socioeconomic issues. Additionally, news articles and opinion pieces in various outlets have highlighted how rapidly Noord is gentrifying (e.g. (AT5, 2021; Kok, 2020; Sevil, 2023). Despite this, it is important to recognize that some residents view the urban transformation positively and want to put an end to the stereotype of ‘old’ versus ‘new’ Noorderlingen (e.g. (Mirck, 2022; van Leeuwen, 2020). The issue remains complex and nuanced, and the debate over the impact of the changes occurring in Noord continues. The diverse perspectives within the community reflect the broader challenges of balancing urban regeneration and social equity, underscoring the need for inclusive and sustainable development policies.

2.2 Data collection

The data collection process involved desk research, semi structured in-depth interviews, and observations. Data collection was conducted iteratively, allowing for constant comparison and theoretical sampling to refine emerging concepts and theories, according to the GT methodology.

2.2.1 Desk research

Prior to conducting field research, desk research was carried out to craft a base-level understanding of the changes and processes happening in Amsterdam Noord. This involved consulting a wide range of documents, newspaper articles and statistical reports related to Amsterdam Noord, focusing on its demographics and socio-economic statistics throughout the past decades. The desk research encompassed analysing demographic trends, such as population growth and ethnic composition, as well as socio-economic indicators like income levels, employment rates, and educational attainment within the Amsterdam Noord area. The findings from the desk research provided valuable context and background information, helping to inform the interpretation of the interview data, and enriching the overall analysis of sustainable tourism dynamics in Amsterdam Noord. The findings of this desk research are used in chapter 3.1 Study area: Amsterdam Noord.

2.2.2 Interviews

Semi structured in-depth interviews were carried out to collect firsthand insights and perspectives on sustainable tourism development in Amsterdam Noord. These interviews offer a detailed understanding of complex narratives and experiences, such as community change processes, that are not directly observable by the researcher (Charmaz, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were employed to allow for flexibility while ensuring that key topics were addressed consistently across participants. Interview schemes were established beforehand to ensure the right topics could be covered regarding the research objectives and literature. These schemes can be found in Annex A. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to select 13 participants who were knowledgeable and actively involved in the tourism industry in Noord. These participants included tourism social entrepreneurs, local politicians and residents. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and neutral environment, either face-to-face or via virtual platforms, depending on participants' preferences and logistical considerations. The interviews lasted 40 minutes on average, depending on the participants' availability. Each interview was audio-recorded with the participant's consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis, either in Dutch or English, depending on the participant. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained for those who wished to remain anonymous. Any participants that are named in this research have given their explicit written consent for the researcher to do so.

2.2.3 Observations

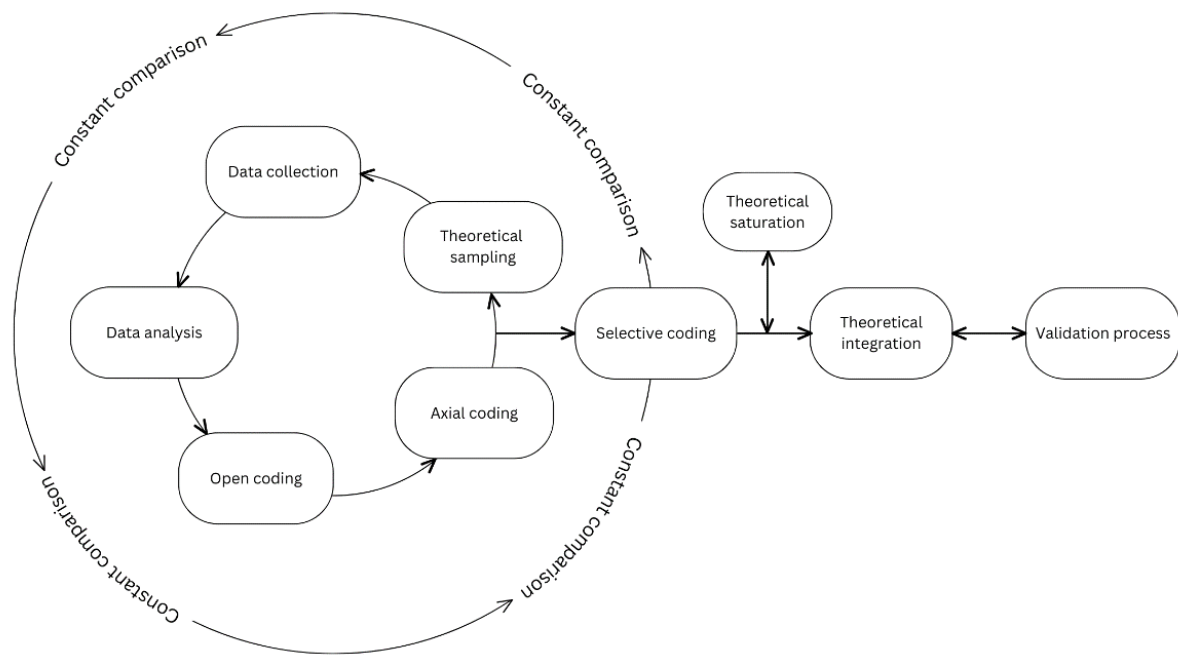
Qualitative non-participant observations played a crucial role in the research process by providing firsthand experiential insights into the physical environment, attractions, and tourism infrastructure in Amsterdam Noord. A tour of Amsterdam Noord was conducted to observe various aspects relevant to sustainable tourism development, including key tourist sites, cultural landmarks, transportation networks, and community spaces. The tour facilitated the observation of visitor behaviours, interactions between tourists and locals, as well as the overall atmosphere and ambience of the area. Additionally, visits to the Urban Leisure and Tourism Lab (part of InHolland University of Applied Sciences) in Amsterdam Noord and Rotterdam offered opportunities to observe innovative initiatives and community engagement efforts

related to leisure and tourism. These observations were documented through reflective field notes, memos and photographs, capturing noteworthy observations, patterns, and unique features observed during the visits. The observations have been included in the grounded theory analysis described below. Qualitative observations are considered a fundamental research method in the social sciences, helping to minimize the distance between the researcher and the subject (Busetto et al., 2020). While inherently subjective due to the interpretation and cultural background of the researcher, when triangulated with the interviews, the observational data provided valuable contextual information and insights into the tangible and intangible aspects of tourism experiences in Amsterdam Noord. Combined, it contributes to a holistic understanding of the research topic.

2.2.4 Data analysis

The analysis followed the principles of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2017; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as this systematic process allows for inductive emergence of new theories, as opposed to starting from an existing theoretical framework. The analysis process started with open coding to identify initial patterns and concepts within the data. This was followed by axial coding to establish connections between codes and categorize them into broader themes or concepts. Through selective coding, core categories emerged, forming the basis of the theoretical framework. Throughout the analysis, constant comparison was employed, comparing new data with existing data and codes to refine and validate the emerging theory. Theoretical saturation was sought, indicating that collecting additional data no longer provided new insights or contributed to further theory development. Figure 2.2 gives a schematic overview of the GT research process.

Figure 2.2: Steps of the Grounded Theory approach, adapted from (Roman et al., 2017)



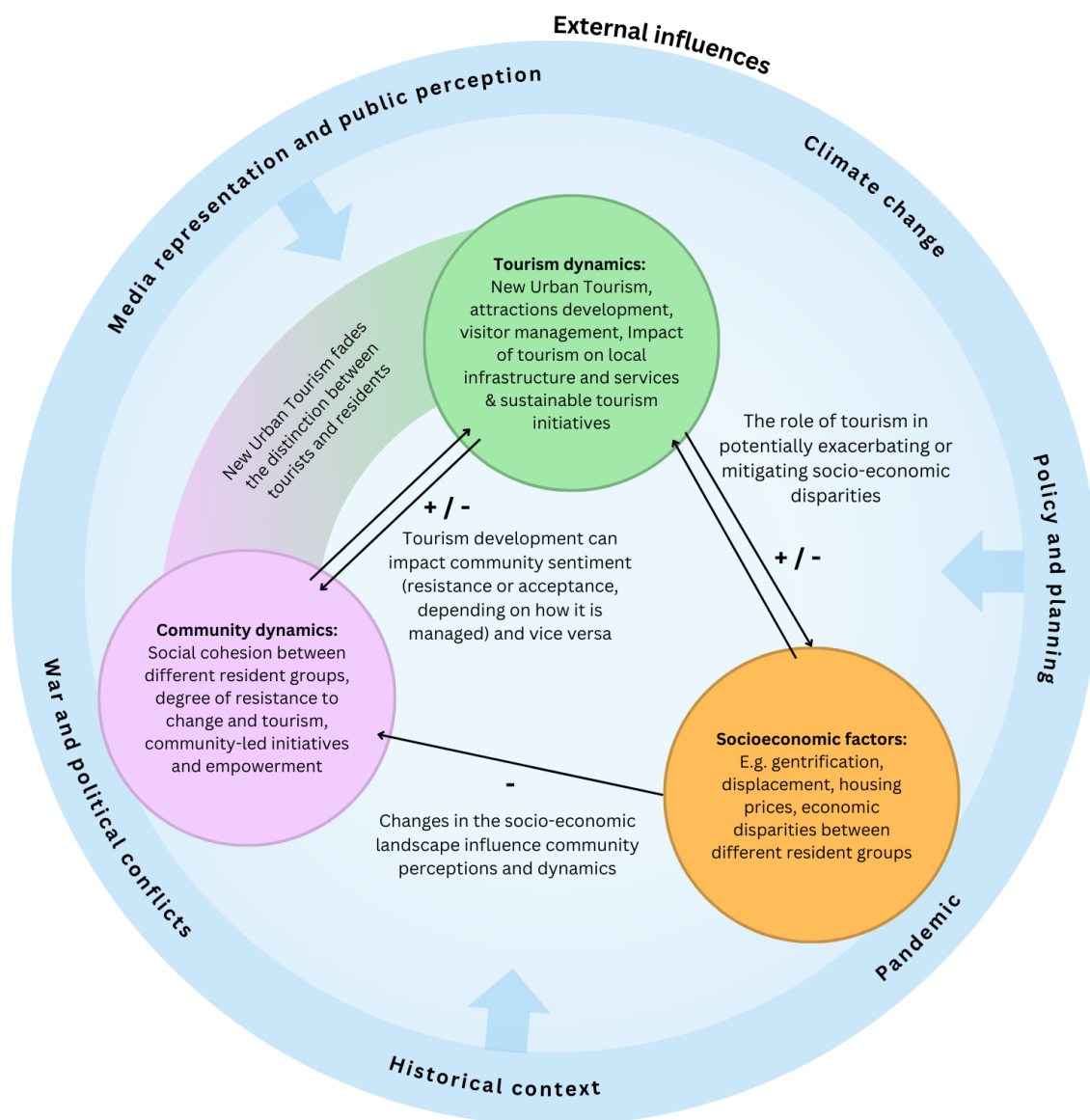
2.2.5 Validity and reliability

Ensuring validity and reliability is paramount in this research to uphold the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, particularly given the utilization of an inductive, qualitative approach. Grounded Theory's systematic approach, characterized by constant comparison and theoretical sampling, facilitated a rigorous and iterative analysis process, contributing to the validity of the interpretations. Methodological triangulation through multiple data collection methods such as interviews, desk research, and observations further enhanced validity by allowing for the convergence of different sources of evidence. Additionally, measures such as maintaining a detailed audit trail bolstered the reliability of the research findings. These measures aimed to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research findings, ultimately enhancing the robustness and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 3: Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative research conducted to understand what processes influence sustainable tourism development in Amsterdam Noord and how this can mitigate socioeconomic issues on the community, as perceived by experts in the field and from the area. The analysis is rooted in Grounded Theory and is summarized in the conceptual model in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: A Grounded Theory of processes influencing sustainable urban tourism



3.1 Tourism dynamics

One of the main processes influencing sustainable tourism development in Noord is the growing tourism industry. Interviewees unanimously mentioned that Noord was unknown to tourists for many years, with a persisting sentiment of “why would anyone even want to go to Noord?”. This aligns with previous literature on Noord, which highlights its historical unattractiveness and stigmas due to longstanding socioeconomic issues (van de Kamp & Welschen, 2019). In the recent years, the repurposing of industrial areas along the IJ-riverbanks and the growth of the hospitality industry have made Noord a more attractive destination for visitors, a trend observed in other peripheral urban destinations due to the emergence of NUT (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht, 2015; Koens et al., 2021). Most interviewees identified the EYE Museum, the Adam Tower, and the NDSM Wharf as key tourist attractions, noting that tourists generally stay within these areas and do not venture out to explore the rest of the region, with the exception of the natural surroundings of Noord (*Landelijk Noord*). While Noord’s image has been shifting in the public eye and in the media over the past years, interviewees mentioned that it is still relatively unknown as a tourism destination and that its development is in progress. This development is important when considering the future of Noord as tourism has potential for both positive and negative impacts on the local community. Therefore, it is essential to shape tourism in a way that ensures it is sustainable, or even regenerative.

As mentioned, Noord has had the feeling of being forgotten by the rest of Amsterdam. Many interviewees cited the IJ-river as the cause of this as the river acts as both a physical and mental barrier. The opening of the Noord-Zuid metro line was mentioned to be an important factor in the accessibility of Noord, contributing to the rise in visitors. The district commissioner of Noord said: “The Noord-Zuid line has actually provided the biggest impulse and boost for the accessibility of Noord, but also for its approachability. Thus, many more people have discovered Noord.” However, while these developments may improve economic prospects through increased visitor traffic, they also potentially attract more affluent residents and businesses, raising concerns about sustainable growth, the potential for overtourism and gentrification. One interviewee mentioned that Noorderlingen feel apprehensive about the improved infrastructure: “then they [tourists] can come here even faster and easier. We already had those ferries, and now we have a metro as well.” The disparity between the local government's vision for development and the residents' perspective is striking. While the government prioritizes economic growth and tourism development in its plans, residents often express concerns about potential negative impacts on their community, such as overcrowding,

rising living costs, and the loss of local character. Policymakers interviewed also expressed concern for sustainable growth, but their outlook tends to be more positive than that of the residents. This misalignment highlights the need for more inclusive and collaborative planning processes that consider the voices and needs of the local population. Bridging this gap is essential to benefit both the community and the broader economic objectives of the area.

Interviewees noted the importance of focusing on creating 'places for life' rather than merely developing tourism sites to foster a balanced approach to development, which aligns with the concept of regenerative tourism (Bellato et al., 2023). This is also crucial when considering the impact of NUT and how the distinction between tourists and residents is becoming increasingly blurred (Hannam, 2009; Novy & Colomb, 2019). An initiative that embodies regenerative placemaking in Noord, is the Urban Leisure and Tourism (ULT) Lab of InHolland UAS. This living lab works together with students and residents to come up with initiatives that attract both residents and visitors, to make Buikslotermeerplein, a neighbourhood in Noord, an appealing destination. One interviewee of ULT explained: "In terms of tourism, we are initially trying to create "places for life." This is also referred to as regenerative design, which aims to make it a pleasant place. We often talk about regenerative placemaking." Focusing on regenerative placemaking offers a holistic and sustainable approach to urban development in Noord. By prioritizing the creation of 'places for life,' initiatives can bridge the gap between tourism and community needs, ensuring that the tourism development supports the community wellbeing.

3.2 Community dynamics

Interviewees noted that with Noord becoming more known to the public, a new type of resident emerged, generally referred to as "New" Noorderlingen. Though not all interviewees spoke of this dichotomy between "old" and "new" residents, noting that these distinctions are often based on stereotypes related to socioeconomic factors and perceived behaviour within the community. Literature and governmental reports also note a more nuanced view of the different groups of residents based on when they moved to Noord. Nevertheless, participants frequently brought up this stereotyping, particularly when discussing polarization within the community. Thus, while it is not entirely accurate or nuanced to speak of 'old' and 'new' residents, it appears that for some Noorderlingen, these classifications serve as an easy way to frame the issues at hand. Therefore, these classifications of "old" and "new" are included in the study to provide

the local perspective and to understand why community dynamics have such a significant impact in Noord.

New Noorderlingen typically moved to Noord because of the lower real estate prices compared to other parts of Amsterdam and they usually have a better socio-economic position, aligning with what is reported by the local government regarding the real estate market and demographic changes in Noord. One interviewee noted that New Noorderlingen generally do not integrate very well into their new neighbourhoods because they tend to keep their jobs, social lives and even their kids' schools on the other side of the IJ river. On the other hand, Old Noorderlingen tend to be characterized by lower socio-economic status, more social cohesion due to the historical communities, an aversion to change and negative feelings towards New Noorderlingen. As mentioned, these classifications are largely based on stereotypes and tend to be influenced by media representation. Some interviewees therefore underscored that the reality is far more nuanced: "It has become a stereotype of what makes an Old Noorderling and what a New one is, but there is a lot in between." Regardless, the influx of new residents has impacted social cohesion, with mixed feelings about the integration of different resident groups within the existing community fabric. Other factors that impact social cohesion include temporary residents such as students. Interestingly, temporary residents were often named to be students, rather than digital nomads or people with second homes for instance, somewhat contradicting some of the previous literature (Hannam, 2009; Novy & Colomb, 2019). A possible explanation for this is that students are simply more easily identifiable, or that digital nomadism and second homeownership are not (yet) prevalent in Amsterdam Noord. Another point that was thought to contribute to the lack of social cohesion in Noord is the physical set-up of the neighbourhood: "On the ground floor of those apartment buildings, there is nothing. There is no cafe, no community centre or anything like that. And that leads to a lack of social cohesion, which can make it feel unsafe." This lack of community spaces can make Noord an unattractive place to visit and live, further highlighting need for creating 'places for life' that foster social interaction and a sense of community.

The findings further note that residents struggle with the changing identity of Noord, they face a loss of sense of belonging and social exclusion due to rising cost of living. Furthermore, they have seen how overtourism has impacted the city centre and fear the same happening to Noord. Interviewees reported that, therefore, Noorderlingen generally resist tourism. This resistance varies from confusion regarding Noord's touristic appeal to outright public protests. One interviewee said: "For them, for the Noorderling, tourism is still very much about 'oh, you need to be in the city for that'. They mean the city centre." Another respondent

shared the story that the 'I Amsterdam' sign, a famous photo spot for tourists, was placed in de Van Der Pekbuurt in Noord to alleviate the overtourism in the city centre. This was met with various protests by Verdedig Noord, and the letters eventually burned down, presumed to be arson (Damen, 2019). The community perceptions of tourism and the lack of social cohesion can inhibit the development of tourism. Tourismphobia can lead to worse issues such as conflicts between residents and tourists, or xenophobia (Almeida-García et al., 2021; Gerritsma & Vork, 2017). Managing the community's attitude towards tourism is thus important not just for tourism development, but also to mitigate tensions. A majority of the interviewees agreed that a top-down approach to tourism will cause backlash among residents, while community-based initiatives tend to be more successful. Community attachment (Lee, 2013) and resident empowerment positively impact residents' support for tourism (Boley et al., 2014), underscoring the need for tourism development driven by the community. Residents further expressed concerns about avoiding the pitfalls of overtourism and preserving the authentic character of their neighbourhoods. There is a strong preference for sustainable, small-scale tourism projects that prioritize the well-being of the local community over commercial gains. Positive examples of community-driven initiatives were noted, where both old and new residents collaborated on projects aimed at sustainable community development. Examples include de VerbroederIJ, de Ceuvel, Pilek and community vegetable gardens. Empowering the community through these initiatives ensures that tourism development aligns with the residents' vision for their area, fostering social cohesion and preserving the neighbourhood's unique identity.

3.3 Socioeconomic factors

The changing community dynamics, fuelled by a loss of sense of belonging and socioeconomic inequality, lead to friction and polarization among Noorderlingen. Although these issues are not necessarily caused by tourism development, there is a recognition of its potential to exacerbate existing socioeconomic disparities if not managed carefully. This observation aligns with previous literature on urban destinations, which highlights tourism's role in amplifying social challenges (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Interviewees expressed concern about the potential negative impacts of tourism development, which are well-researched (Hall & Lew, 2009; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). Interviewees specifically mentioned the rising cost of living, the perceived disparity in socioeconomic status between "Old" and "New" Noorderlingen, and the pace of gentrification, which they felt was

displacing the original community and altering the neighbourhood's character, causing a loss of sense of belonging. Multiple interviewees mentioned that tourism inevitably causes things to become more expensive, which may result in residents being excluded from participating in society. While some interviewees explicitly blamed tourism for causing these issues, some recognized that tourism was simply a part of a broader strategy leading to this inequality: “Urban renewal has to do with it, the real estate market, tourism.” One interviewee called it “gentrification by policy”, underscoring the role of policymakers and the government in this process. The respondents at Stadsloket Noord, however, recognized the socioeconomic issues that a lot of Noorderlingen face and mentioned the challenge of keeping Noord accessible for both old and new residents. The district administrator said: “That’s why we engage in unequal investing for equal opportunities. So, for every cent we spend, it is carefully considered ‘who actually benefits from this? And how can we ensure that existing neighbourhoods also benefit from it?’ This doesn’t always go well, I must immediately add.” Thus, despite promising strategies, the reality is that Noorderlingen still face these issues and may feel unsupported by their local government. The findings show that residents may be less likely to support or participate in tourism initiatives because of socioeconomic issues.

One respondent who grew up in de Van Der Pekbuurt, one of the most gentrified neighbourhoods in Noord, shared a powerful anecdote about living there and witnessing the changing neighbourhood, feeling unsupported: “It's really a working-class neighbourhood. And it was meant for the workers too. I lived there briefly as a property guardian and I was very shocked by the condition of that house. Drafts everywhere, black mould, cold, dampness. My laundry wouldn't even dry, you know. I remember in the past waking up in my mother's house and it would be freezing inside. Many houses in the neighbourhood were in a similar condition. Meanwhile, those same houses were selling for half a million. Then I'd have these sort of nosy neighbours near my house... Like a family saying, ‘This is the house, it's for sale for 500.000 [euros], we could live here!’ Yeah, almost like something out of a movie, seeing that happen.” She then went on to give the example of an expensive clothing store that settled in the Van Der Pekstraat, highlighting how these establishments do not fit in with the character of the neighbourhood nor benefit the local residents as they usually cannot afford to shop there. “So, it feels very much like the change is being forced down your throat. Change that you don't benefit from yourself. While you're still stuck in the mould-infested house.”

However, the example of this store is complicated. One participant, who is familiar with the store, mentioned that the entrepreneurs came to Noord intentionally, having been promised that their arrival would contribute to the regeneration of the neighbourhood.

Interviewees advised that for such efforts to be successful, it is essential for entrepreneurs to collaborate with locals and integrate into the neighbourhood. Building relationships with the community, being transparent about their goals, and involving locals in the planning and implementation processes can foster trust and ensure that the initiative is seen as beneficial for the community. Some interviewees also highlighted the importance of ‘giving back’ to the community, for instance through job creation or providing spaces for community events. This approach not only helps in gaining community support but also enhances the effectiveness of regeneration projects by aligning them with the actual needs and desires of the residents, ensuring a more sustainable future, contradicting certain existing assumptions that urban renewal inevitably leads to negative outcomes for marginalized communities (Hall & Lew, 2009; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015).

3.4 External influences

Several external factors have been identified to play a role in tourism development in Noord. Integrating these external factors into the analysis aims to provide a holistic view of the complex interplay between sustainable tourism and the broader socioeconomic and cultural forces at play. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive; many other direct and indirect external factors, such as climate change, war, political conflicts, and pandemics, can also impact tourism development in a destination. The factors highlighted in this model were identified as having a particularly substantial impact on the case of Amsterdam Noord.

3.4.1 Historical context

The historical backdrop of Amsterdam Noord provides crucial insights into the current dynamics and challenges faced by the community, as well as their responses to the current tourism-driven changes and gentrification. Historically, Noord is made up of different small villages (*tuindorpen*) that, over time, conglomerated and were united as Amsterdam Noord. Hence, there are many different histories and social structures within Noord’s various neighbourhoods that remain present to this day. One local interviewee said that this meant “there is not really one culture” in Noord. This is especially relevant when looking at how different communities react to an influx of new residents for instance, or how strongly they resist tourism.

Moreover, Noord has long felt unseen, unheard and left behind when it comes to urban development. Noord used to be an industrial area and after the industry moved further away from Amsterdam, social issues such as unemployment and alcoholism increased significantly. As mentioned, Noord still faces several socioeconomic issues which may impact community support for tourism. Additionally, the relation between Noord and the city centre is complicated. Interviewees reported that this sentiment still resonates with Noorderlingen today, using terms such as a “poor relation” and “the sink drain of Amsterdam” to describe the city part. Interestingly, some interviewees did consistently refer to Noord as a separate entity from the rest of Amsterdam (e.g. referring to the other parts of Amsterdam as “Amsterdam” or “the city”). One local interviewee remarked: “We are part of Amsterdam, but then again not really”. The image of Noord is slowly changing, causing apprehension among Noorderlingen. There is a stark contrast between historically being seen as an unattractive, forgotten neighbourhood, and now being viewed as a trendy place-to-be. One entrepreneur commented: “Geez, there is so much pain and suffering caused by the industry leaving here. While all of us [non-Noorderlingen] now feel like ‘Oh yay, Shell is gone so now we can all go live there!’” This sentiment of not truly feeling a part of Amsterdam underscores Noord’s distinctive history, which should be safeguarded from commodification. While tourism development could be seen as a potential threat by residents, it also poses an opportunity to foster pride in the community. By carefully balancing development with preservation, tourism can help highlight Noord’s unique character and history, turning its past struggles into a source of communal strength and identity.

3.4.2 Media representation and public perception

Media plays a powerful role in shaping public opinion and perception about tourism development. This aligns with Koens et al. (2018) and Milano et al. (2024), who found that media heightens the visibility of discontented community members and grassroots organizations. Additionally, the media has been cited as promoting harmful stereotypes of 'Old' and 'New' residents, potentially exacerbating the polarization within the community. This negative representation can impact community dynamics, hindering community attachment and local initiatives. The media's portrayal of Amsterdam Noord as an up-and-coming 'cool' area is seen by interviewees as a double-edged sword, attracting investment and tourists while also fuelling gentrification and commodification.

Amsterdam's public image of "anything goes" contributes to undesirable tourist behaviour and supports a certain type of tourism offer, which perpetuates this reputation. Interviewees mentioned that the "coffeeshop tourist of the city centre" is not the kind of tourist Noord would like to attract. Shifting the overall destination image of Amsterdam may help attract a different type of tourist, better aligned with the community's aspirations for sustainable and respectful tourism in Noord. It should be noted that Amsterdam has been making an effort to do this already, through anti-marketing campaigns, an image campaign and shifting the leisure and tourism offer in the city centre. Thus, while the media can draw attention to important issues and promote tourism, it also has the potential to perpetuate stereotypes, contribute to community polarization, and attract undesirable forms of tourism. Therefore, it is essential to manage media narratives and destination image carefully to ensure they support the goals of sustainable tourism development and community cohesion in Amsterdam Noord.

3.4.3 Policy and planning

Policies set by local and national governments, as well as actors like UNESCO, are pivotal in determining the regulatory and operational framework within which tourism operates. Participants recognized the role of urban planning in managing the impacts of tourism, calling for policies that prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains. The negative effects of Amsterdam's previous pro-growth tourism strategy are apparent, prompting efforts to shift from initial pro-growth policies to ones that balance tourism with liveability. One policymaker for the city of Amsterdam noted some important policies that were being put in place, but that stricter policies are needed. Examples include raising the tourist tax, limiting cruise tourism, imposing a visitor limit, and replacing souvenir shops with more local businesses and social enterprises. These policies aimed at reducing overtourism in other parts of Amsterdam also influence the development of Noord. This can have positive effects, but it may also limit Noord's relatively recent tourism development. For example, Amsterdam enacted a policy that prohibits the construction of new hotels, while in Noord, the tourism infrastructure could benefit from more hotels. The district commissioner of Noord said: "As Noord, we said that a hotel can be of added value here near the shopping mall. Based on the employment opportunities of course, but also for Noord as a whole, because we want it to become a destination." Thus, there is a need for a holistic approach to policymaking that fits each city part, while allowing for flexibility.

Many participants stated the importance of inclusive and collaborative policymaking is in this context. Engaging the right stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and community organizations, ensures that policies reflect the community's needs (Gerritsma & Stompff, 2023). This collaborative approach can foster a sense of ownership and support for tourism initiatives, promoting social cohesion and mitigating the potential negative impacts of tourism. By involving diverse voices in the policymaking process, Amsterdam Noord can develop a sustainable tourism strategy that enhances the quality of life for residents while attracting visitors in a responsible manner. While efforts are being made to include stakeholders in the planning process, some participants raised concerns about the inclusivity: “to which voices do we listen? And not just to the most dominant voices.”. The Stadsloket recognizes this issue as well: “our internal challenge is also that in the so-called ‘better’ neighbourhoods, you often have outspoken people who know how to reach us as the municipality and who often place a significant demand on our administrative resources. And there, we need to seek out the people who don’t know how to reach us. How do we reach them, and how do we continue to see their problems?” This reiterates the interconnectedness of urban development and socioeconomic issues, showing how non-inclusive systems may unintendedly be reinforced, further highlighting the need for systemic change. Tourism is inherently interdisciplinary, and it is part of a broader urban development plan for Amsterdam which makes that the discussions surrounding this topic often overlap with themes such as gentrification, cost of living and social cohesion (Novy & Colomb, 2019). This holistic understanding is crucial for developing strategies that are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable.

Conclusion

4.1. Theoretical implications

This study explored what processes and dynamics impact the sustainable tourism development of Amsterdam Noord. It provides significant theoretical contributions to the understanding of NUT and its impact on previously marginalized urban areas, and enriches existing theories on sustainable urban tourism, gentrification and community resilience. Specifically, it enriches existing theories on sustainable urban tourism, gentrification, and community resilience by illustrating how NUT can both positively and negatively impact socioeconomic dynamics within communities.

One key theoretical contribution is the nuanced understanding of NUT's role in marginalized areas. This study reveals that while NUT can lead to gentrification and displacement, it can also foster community resilience and economic upliftment if managed correctly. It builds on the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that residents' support for tourism hinges on the perceived balance of benefits over costs. This study expands on SET by demonstrating that the perceived socioeconomic benefits of NUT can outweigh the costs when local communities are empowered and engaged in the tourism development process. The findings therefore also challenge certain assumptions that negative outcomes of tourism development in marginalized areas are inevitable.

The research expands on the theory of gentrification by integrating the concept of 'dedifferentiation' between residents and tourists. Traditionally, gentrification theory emphasizes the economic and social displacement of lower-income residents by wealthier newcomers. However, this study highlights how the blurring lines between residents and tourists can both mitigate and exacerbate gentrification effects. Furthermore, this study contributes to sustainable urban tourism theories by presenting a comprehensive framework that emphasizes stakeholder collaboration and resource allocation. It underscores that tourism-related issues are often symptomatic of broader urban development strategies favouring higher socioeconomic status residents, rather than tourism itself being the root cause of societal issues. This insight urges the adoption of a holistic view of urban development, incorporating sustainable tourism as a component rather than a standalone concept in research.

In conclusion, this research provides a nuanced and contextually rich understanding of NUT and its impact on marginalized urban areas, offering valuable insights that can be adapted

and tested in other urban contexts. By integrating and expanding upon existing theories, it offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding sustainable urban tourism.

4.2. Managerial implications

The insights gathered from this research offer practical insights for policymakers, urban planners, and tourism managers aiming to foster sustainable tourism development in upcoming urban tourism areas like Amsterdam Noord. Key managerial implications include the necessity of truly inclusive planning processes that actively empower and engage local stakeholders to ensure that tourism development aligns with community needs and values. Moreover, policymakers and tourism entrepreneurs should be aware of the changing behaviours of tourists who are increasingly behaving like ‘locals’, now leading to a dedifferentiation between tourists and residents. The study underscores the importance of creating and maintaining balanced tourism infrastructures that benefit both visitors and residents, creating resilient urban environments that can sustain both tourism and community wellbeing: places for life. Furthermore, it is essential for policymakers to recognize that tourism, while a visible element, is often intertwined with broader urban development strategies. While tourism can indeed exacerbate social problems, policymakers and legislators should adopt a holistic view, recognizing the multifaceted nature of urban development and addressing underlying structural issues. By identifying the potential risks of gentrification and socioeconomic inequalities in relation to tourism development, the study provides a framework for implementing measures that prevent the loss of sense of place in NUT destinations. The conceptual model developed through this research can serve as a guideline for urban planners and tourism organizations to balance tourism growth with sustainable development, ensuring the long-term viability of destinations like Amsterdam Noord. Through a holistic approach that prioritizes community engagement and empowerment in the planning process, tourism can serve as a vehicle for positive change.

4.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

While this study offers valuable insights into sustainable urban tourism development, it has certain limitations. The scope is limited to Amsterdam Noord, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other urban areas with different socio-economic and cultural

contexts. Future research could extend this study by examining other urban areas experiencing similar transformations to validate and refine the conceptual model. Additionally, this study relies heavily on qualitative data from interviews and observations, which, while rich and detailed, may be subject to researcher bias and interpretation. Future studies could employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative data to validate and build on the qualitative findings. Longitudinal studies would also be beneficial to understand the evolving nature of sustainable tourism development and how to engage local communities long-term.

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Annex A: Interview scheme

Subjects/questions	Research objective	Literature
Can you briefly describe your role and involvement in the tourism industry in Amsterdam Noord?	/	/
Perceptions of tourism impacts		
What do you believe are the most significant benefits of tourism in Amsterdam Noord?	Exploring the socio-economic and community impacts of tourism development	(Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023)
In your view, what are the main challenges or negative impacts associated with tourism in this area?	Exploring the socio-economic and community impacts of tourism development	(Atkinson, 2004; Goodwin, 2021; Novy & Colomb, 2019)
What social changes have you noticed in the community as a result of tourism development?	Exploring the socio-economic and community impacts of tourism development	(Almeida-García et al., 2021; Koens et al., 2018)
Tourism development		
How has tourism in Amsterdam Noord evolved over the past few years?	Understanding the underlying processes that shape Noord's tourism development	(Gerritsma & Vork, 2017; Vongvisitsin et al., 2024a)
What sustainable tourism practices have you observed/implemented in Amsterdam Noord?	Understanding the underlying processes that shape Noord's tourism development	(Lee & Xue, 2020; Zolfani et al., 2015)
Stakeholders and community involvement		
How would you describe the role of local government and policymakers in shaping tourism in Amsterdam Noord?	Understanding the underlying processes that shape Noord's tourism development	(Roxas et al., 2020; Sharples, 2023; UNWTO, 2005)
How do you feel the local community is involved in tourism planning and development in Amsterdam Noord?	Understanding the underlying processes that shape Noord's tourism development	(Farsari, 2023; Lee, 2013; Uslu et al., 2020)
Do you think the local community feels empowered to influence tourism policies and practices? Why or why not?	Understanding the underlying processes that shape Noord's tourism development	(Boley et al., 2014; Farsari, 2023)
Future of tourism in Noord		
What do you envision for the future of tourism in Amsterdam Noord?	Evaluating the role of sustainable tourism in mitigating or exacerbating negative impacts	(Bellato et al., 2022)
What steps do you think are necessary to transition to sustainable or regenerative tourism in this area?	Evaluating the role of sustainable tourism in mitigating or exacerbating negative impacts	(Bellato et al., 2023; Zolfani et al., 2015)
Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences or views on tourism in Amsterdam Noord?	/	/

