

Localhood for sale: left ungoverned, sold by the market

A neighborhood-level inquiry into tourism placemaking in Rotterdam's Oude
Noorden

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Master's Thesis

June 13, 2025

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ABSTRACT

As cities grapple with the pressures of overtourism, many are shifting from growth-centered strategies toward approaches that prioritize urban liveability. In this context, localhood-oriented tourism has emerged as a response to the rise of New Urban Tourism, where visitors seek out everyday life in residential neighborhoods. While localhood strategies promise more sustainable and community-driven tourism, their implementation often unfolds within broader frameworks of neoliberal urban development, raising critical questions about their actual outcomes. This thesis investigates how localhood strategies are implemented and experienced in Rotterdam's Oude Noorden, a post-industrial neighborhood identified in the city's 2020 tourism vision as a priority for place-based development. Despite policy ambitions to invest in local identity and quality of life, little empirical research has addressed how such aims translate on the ground. The central research question is: *How can a genuine localist tourism policy for Rotterdam's Oude Noorden be implemented in the face of neoliberal development challenges?* This is guided by a sub-question: *How do Oude Noorden's local actors from government, academia, industry, and civil society perceive the impacts and implications of localhood tourism implementation?* Using a qualitative case study approach, the research draws on 14 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from all four domains of the quadruple helix. Thematic analysis reveals three key findings: (1) ambiguity in decision-making power, exposing unequal influence among stakeholders; (2) a dislocating identity and offer, highlighting the narrowing of local appeal; and (3) Oude Noorden's resilient fabric, emphasizing the strength of grassroots initiatives. Based on these insights, the thesis presents seven context-specific recommendations to foster a more inclusive, place-based, and community-led localhood strategy in urban tourism planning.

KEYWORDS: Localhood, New Urban Tourism, Tourism placemaking, Sustainable development, Post-industrial city

Wordcount: 16032

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1. Introduction

In response to the growing challenges of overtourism, many cities and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have begun to rethink tourism's role in urban development. Traditionally centered on economic growth and increasing visitor numbers, tourism strategies are now being reframed to enhance the liveability of urban areas for residents. Cities such as Copenhagen and Rotterdam increasingly present tourism not as an end in itself but as a means of improving urban quality of life. This shift reflects the so-called 'local turn' in tourism planning, where community well-being and place-based approaches take precedence (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2023). Despite this rhetorical shift, critical scholars have begun to question how such localhood strategies are implemented in practice and whether they can deliver on their promises in the context of neoliberal urban development (Volgger, 2019; Milano & Koens, 2022; Nieuwland et al., 2025).

This issue becomes particularly pressing in light of the rise of new urban tourism, in which tourists increasingly seek out everyday experiences in residential neighborhoods, rather than only visiting traditional tourist attractions (Maitland & Newman, 2009). In response, DMOs have promoted non-central areas as authentic and less crowded alternatives. This dispersion strategy was initially viewed as a more sustainable form of tourism management (King et al., 2023). However, in practice, the expansion of tourism into residential neighborhoods has led to a number of adverse outcomes. The growing presence of short-term visitors has contributed to gentrification, rising housing costs, and the erosion of local identity (Lopez-Gay et al., 2020). The very neighborhoods once valued for their local character risk becoming homogenized extensions of the tourist core (Mansilla & Milano, 2019). These transformations have provoked mounting resistance from residents, highlighting a growing tension between tourism development and local urban life (Novy & Colomb, 2016).

Rotterdam is among the cities implementing a localhood-oriented tourism strategy. In neighborhoods such as Oude Noorden, tourism is framed as a byproduct of improving quality of life rather than as a direct policy goal. These initiatives often take the form of placemaking strategies. Yet, these placemaking practices take place within a broader urban development framework that remains driven by market forces, property-led regeneration, and competitive city branding. This raises concerns that, despite progressive language, such strategies may function as vehicles of displacement and social stratification (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

While these contradictions are recognized in critical urban literature, little empirical research has been conducted to examine how localhood tourism actually unfolds at the neighborhood level (Nientied & Toto, 2020, 2022).

This thesis engages with several interrelated gaps in the academic literature. Tourism development strategies are often poorly aligned with wider urban policy, limiting their capacity to address socio-spatial inequalities (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021). Placemaking, while commonly framed in tourism literature as a sustainable and community-oriented practice, has been critically evaluated in urban studies for its role in driving gentrification and creating uneven forms of development (Markusen & Gadwa., 2010). Although the intersection of placemaking, tourism, and urban change is gaining scholarly attention, the research remains largely fragmented and insufficiently interdisciplinary (Dupre, 2018; Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021). Furthermore, although participation is widely recognized as crucial for preserving local identities and fostering authentic place development, there is a lack of clear guidelines on how to achieve meaningful, long-term participation that generates community benefits (Dupre, 2018). Finally, while much of the sustainability discourse in tourism advocates for bottom-up, community-centered approaches, these perspectives often overlook the influence of broader systemic forces, including real estate markets, planning regulations, and neoliberal governance models (Nieuwland et al., 2025).

Within this context, the case of Oude Noorden offers a timely and relevant opportunity to study how localhood tourism strategies are designed and perceived in a specific neighborhood undergoing transformation. Although the city of Rotterdam positions tourism as a tool to enhance liveability, the outcomes of such strategies remain uncertain. There is a need for greater understanding of how tourism development at the neighborhood level can remain faithful to localhood ideals without contributing to processes of displacement or homogenization. This requires attention to the everyday experiences of residents and stakeholders, as well as the power relations embedded in broader urban change.

This thesis seeks to address these challenges through an in-depth case study of Oude Noorden. The central research question is: *How can Rotterdam's localhood tourism strategies be genuinely implemented in Oude Noorden in the face of neoliberal urban development challenges?* To further explore this question, the research investigates how local actors from the quadruple helix – government, academia, industry, and civil society – perceive the impacts and implications of localhood tourism in practice. This leads to the guiding sub-question:

How do local actors from all four domains of the quadruple helix perceive the impacts and implications of localhood tourism implementation in Oude Noorden?

By examining these questions, this research adds empirical depth to the concept of ‘localhood’ by situating it within real-world governance structures and spatial transformations in a specific urban context. It offers a more nuanced understanding of how placemaking and tourism intersect with broader urban development logics, particularly in a post-industrial city influenced by neoliberal planning agendas. By incorporating perspectives from all four domains of the quadruple helix, the research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of collaboration and conflict of tourism development in a transforming neighborhood.

The research questions were studied taking on a holistic qualitative case study approach, focusing on Oude Noorden. By conducting 14 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from government, civil society, industry, and academia domains, this case study shows both the challenges and opportunities for localhood development strategies. Based on these, the study proposes seven context-specific recommendations that policymakers should consider to preserve the unique everyday culture of the neighborhood that currently risks being eroded.

The remainder of this thesis presents a review of the relevant literature on; tourism planning in post-industrial cities; New Urban Tourism; the limits and opportunities of localhood strategies; and, tourism strategies in Rotterdam. After the theoretical discussions are laid out, the methodology is presented which describes the research design, data collection, and analysis techniques. The interview findings, then reveal a complex and contested landscape in which localhood tourism strategies are negotiated. The subsequent discussion chapter situates these findings within the broader theoretical framework to put forward seven policy recommendations. The thesis concludes with reflections on the study’s implications, acknowledges its limitations, and suggests avenues for future research. Overall, the study underscores the urgent need to implement genuine localhood strategies as urban development accelerates.

2. Theoretical framework

This literature review explores the intersection of urban transformation and tourism development in post-industrial cities, with a particular focus on Rotterdam. The first section examines the broader context of deindustrialization and the urban challenges it triggered, as well as the rise of urban regeneration strategies in which tourism became a key instrument of neoliberal growth agendas. The second section shifts to the phenomenon of new urban tourism, which encourages tourist dispersal into residential neighborhoods and the promotion of ‘local’ experiences. Here, the emergence and contestation of localhood strategies are critically addressed. The final section grounds these dynamics in the Rotterdam context, highlighting the tensions between sustainable tourism planning and the persistent influence of market-led urban redevelopment.

2.1. Post-Industrial cities and urban tourism planning

2.1.1. From industry to services: urban challenges

For decades, manufacturing and heavy industry were the backbone of economic success. Many cities across Europe and North America thrived thanks to their ports, factories, and large-scale production hubs. However, globalization and technological advancements, including automation, computing, outsourcing rapidly reshaped the economic landscape. Beginning in the 1960s deindustrialization set in and “*whole cities fell from prosperity and industrial leadership to advanced states of decay in less than a generation*” (Shaw, 2001, p.294). Cities whose economies had been heavily dependent on manufacturing – such as Chicago, Detroit, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Rotterdam – were particularly affected. The decline of industry had far-reaching consequences for their urban fabric (Hall, 1987; Law, 1992; Lever, 1991; Plöger, 2013; Shaw, 2001).

In these cities, industrial jobs drew large numbers of migrant workers, many of whom settled in working-class neighborhoods. These communities, characterized by low education, low incomes and ethnic diversity, were hit hardest by industrial collapse. Job losses surged, unemployment became widespread, and the departure of middle-class residents to the suburbs intensified the decline of inner-city neighborhoods. These areas quickly turned into concentrated areas of poverty with deteriorating living conditions (Doucet et al., 2011; Plöger, 2013). As a result, many deindustrialized neighborhoods acquired a reputation as “*dirty*,

unfriendly, and unsafe” (Law, 1992, p.605). Although the development of knowledge-based industries and services was widely promoted as a path to urban recovery, scholars also highlighted the downsides of this economic shift. Persistent skills mismatches meant that many low-qualified residents were marginalized in favor of suburban, better-educated workers (Hall, 1987; Plöger, 2013). Social and spatial inequalities grew and the post-industrial city became what Shaw (2001, p.287) describes as a “*dual city*”.

Despite these disparities, the shift to a service-driven economy was often regarded as the only viable way forward (Lever, 1991; Shaw, 2001). Unlike cities that successfully managed an early transition, many old industrial centers struggled to attract middle-class demographic and knowledge-based industries required to support post-industrial growth (Law, 1992; Lever, 1991; Shaw, 2001). Unable to compete with service-oriented cities, urban governments turned to urban regeneration strategies with the idea of “*breathing new life into old cities*” (Law, 1996, p.11). At the same time, a new phase of urban governance emerged with neoliberal and entrepreneurial models shaping the responses to decline. And, creating new winners and losers in the urban landscape.

2.1.2. Urban regeneration under neoliberal and entrepreneurial governance

Suffering from economic stagnation and urban decay, cities were compelled to explore new development strategies. The era of active, state-led intervention that characterized the post-war welfare and Keynesian models began to give way to a philosophy rooted in market principles and competitive urban branding. With fiscal constraints and rising global competition, policymakers shifted toward neoliberal approaches that emphasized deregulation, privatization, and marketization (Peck & Tickell, 2002). In tandem, the concept of entrepreneurial governance emerged, prompting city leaders to adopt business-like strategies aimed at attracting investment, fostering innovation, and reimagining urban spaces as dynamic hubs in the global economy (Harvey, 1989).

Under this new framework, urban regeneration shifted from welfare-driven investments and redistributive policies of the previous era to a competitive tool for rebranding and repositioning cities within global networks (Harvey, 1989; Paddinson, 1993; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Yet, while these strategies were framed as solutions to urban decline, evidence suggests they frequently served elite interests and exacerbated existing inequalities (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). For instance, state-led gentrification became a prominent strategy

to attract a more affluent middle-class population (Doucet et al., 2011; Fuller, 2012). However, the deregulation of social housing, coupled with the promotion of upscale housing and commercial projects, often led to the displacement of lower-income, immigrant, and marginalized populations (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Another key urban strategy that emerged were culture-led initiatives; spurred in part by Florida's (2003) Creative City model which promoted the idea that creative industries could act as catalysts for urban economic development. This strategy aimed to harness the cultural and creative sectors to stimulate economic growth and reinvent urban identities (Miles & Paddinson, 2005). However, critics contend that such approaches often prioritize the needs of investors and tourists over those of longstanding local residents (Evans 2001; Miles & Paddinson, 2005; Zukin, 1995). Similarly, the privatization and commodification of public space have become integral components of neoliberal urban regeneration. Yet, as they increasingly become venues for commerce and tourism, critics argue that locals' '*right to the city*' erodes (Mayer, 2009).

Despite widespread critiques, Slater (2006) found that these strategies continue to be framed as progressive and necessary. As a result, the rhetoric of renewal and 'urban renaissance' masks the restructuring of urban space in ways that systematically favor capital over communities (Russo & Scarnato, 2017). Within this climate of growth-oriented governance, another important regeneration strategy took root that coincided perfectly with the branding-and image making ideals: tourism planning (Hall, 1987; Law, 1992). Only, what was initially used as a competitive asset, soon turned out to be erasing both the local people and character of cities.

2.1.3. The limits of tourism-led urban regeneration

As urban space increasingly became a stage for consumption, lifestyle, and leisure, tourism was promoted as a key driver of economic growth (Novy & Colomb, 2016). Particularly in former industrial cities, local governments embraced tourism as a flexible and accessible regeneration strategy (Gelbman, 2007; Hall, 1987; Law, 1992; Murphy & Boyle, 2006; Sequera & Nofre, 2018). Its appeal lay in several factors: a rising market demand, expanded (public) funding opportunities, low entry barriers, limited development alternatives, and its potential to support city re-imaging efforts (Robinson, 1999). Yet under neoliberal governance, tourism-led regeneration have revealed social, cultural and spatial consequences.

In the pursuit of growth, cities began targeting wealthier visitor groups. This resulted in socio-economic mismatches with local populations and drove uneven development processes (Fainstein, 2007). As urban amenities increasingly cater to tourists, the quality of life for locals is reduced through rising rents, upscale retail, and aesthetics-driven urban planning that prioritizes form over function (Robinson, 1999). These changes exacerbated social inequalities and led to “*growing disparities of wealth and opportunity*” (McGuigan, 1996, p.99). The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the fragility of tourism-dependent strategies, as Milano and Koens (2021) highlight how cities overly reliant on tourism proved especially vulnerable to external crises.

Prioritizing competitiveness, urban planners increasingly turned to place marketing strategies to make their cities stand out. Yet, as Robinson (1999, p.117) observes, “*the overall formula is unrelentingly consistent*”. This resulted in a problem of serial production, where cities began to resemble one another through the creation of what Judd (2003, p. 27) terms a “*tourist bubble*”: a concentration of similar amenities such as new waterfronts, luxury hotels, shopping malls, convention centers, and entertainment districts. Richards and Wilson (2006) identify common cultural tourism strategies underpinning this trend, including the construction of iconic landmarks, the hosting of mega-events like the Olympics or European Capital of Culture, themed city branding (e.g. ‘creative cities’, ‘green cities’), and the repackaging of industrial or religious heritage as tourist attractions.

While cultural tourism was initially celebrated as a sustainable approach capable of strengthening connections to local culture (Richards, 2001), these standardized strategies often produce the opposite effect. The commercialization and homogenization of urban space erode distinctive cultural identities, leading to a loss of emotional resonance for residents and the emergence of placeless urban environments (Maitland, 2010; Robinson, 1999). As a result more and more visitors have begun to turn away from the scripted and sanitized city centers, giving rise to ‘new’ urban tourism.

2.2. New Urban Tourism and localhood strategies

2.2.1. The phenomenon of New Urban Tourism and governance tensions

From the 2000s onwards, in response to the growing homogenization and commodification of inner cities, urban tourists began seeking alternative experiences beyond

the standardized urban product (Gilbert & Hancock, 2006; Novy, 2010). Maitland and Newman (2004) were among the first to note that tourists were increasingly drawn to residential neighborhoods without traditional tourist attractions. Drawing on postmodern and mobilities research (i.a. Larsen, 2008; Urry & Larsen, 2011) – which challenges binaries such as tourist-resident and home-away – Maitland and Newman (2009) conceptualized this shift as New Urban Tourism (NUT), reframing tourism as deeply entangled with everyday urban life.

A growing body of work from urban and tourism studies has since developed the concept of NUT, marked by both qualitative and quantitative changes in tourism practices (Ba et al., 2022; Novy & Colomb, 2016; Russo & Richards, 2016). According to Maitland (2010, p.178) New Urban Tourists (NUTs) belong to what Fainstein et al. (2003) call the “*cosmopolitan consuming class*”: young, highly educated and mobile professionals, often from creative sectors (Maitland, 2010; Füller & Michel, 2014; Paulauskaite, 2017). These “*experienced travellers*” (Maitland, 2010, p.179) increasingly reject conventional sightseeing in favor of immersive experiences, seeking to “*live like a local*” (Richards & Russo, 2016, p.254) by venturing into “*off the beaten track*” (Maitland, 2010, p.176) neighborhoods. Füller & Michel (2014, p.1306) explain that their search for the “*ordinary and authentic*” often leads them to working-class districts characterized by ethnic diversity, cultural vibrancy, and independent local businesses.

The qualitative appeal of these neighborhoods was reinforced and scaled up by broader structural changes. The growth of low-cost airlines and the rise of sharing platforms such as Airbnb and TripAdvisor expanded access to these once peripheral areas, enabling short and spontaneous urban travel (Bock, 2015; Dredge & Gyimothy, 2017; Volgger, 2019). In response, many cities adopted placemaking and place-branding strategies to market these areas as alternative, creative, and culturally rich destinations (Colomb, 2011). As demand rose, the supply of such neighborhoods promoted as ‘*authentic*’ experiences also increased. However, this expansion came with growing concerns around gentrification.

While some scholars emphasize New Urban Tourism’s (NUT) potential to foster cultural exchange and vibrancy through co-creation (Pasquinelli, 2015; Richards & Marques, 2018), its impacts have often been negative. As Ashworth and Page (2011, p.13) put it: “*the local is explored and exploited in search of the unique global competitive advantage*”. Rather than benefiting local communities, NUT has facilitated the arrival of affluent, mobile groups, leading to demographic and spatial restructuring (Lopez-Gay, 2020). This process, termed

'touristification' by Sequera and Nofre (2018), involves rising rents, retail shifts, and resident displacement (Cocola-Gant, 2016, 2018; Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2017; Füller & Michel, 2014). The consumption patterns of visitors often conflict with residents' everyday needs (Novy & Colomb, 2016), while tourism infrastructure increasingly displaces essential local services (Mansilla & Milano, 2019; McKercher et al., 2015).

Over the past decade these tensions have fueled public discontent and contributed to the rise of the term *'overtourism'*, used to describe the wide-ranging consequences of excessive tourism growth (Koens et al., 2018). Although the growth of NUT frequently triggered protests, Novy and Colomb (2016) argue that the root cause lies not in tourism itself, but in neoliberal urban governance, which reduces public access and erodes residents' *'right to the city'* (Mayer, 2009). In response to these mounting tensions, Novy and Colomb (2019) identified four governance reactions by city officials and tourism actors: some ignore criticism and pursue growth; others dismiss protest as anti-tourist; some make superficial adjustments; and a few attempt structural reform. As Pasquinelli and Bellini (2017, p.4) observe: *"most tourism policies have to date been conceived as stand-alone marketing and promotion strategies"*. Against this backdrop of limited structural change, an increasing number of scholars advocate for tourism governance approaches that are more deeply integrated into broader urban policy frameworks, and that prioritize sustainability, participation, and social justice in both tourism development and placemaking practices (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Braun et al., 2013; Hardy et al., 2002; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Pasquinelli & Bellini, 2017; Timur & Getz, 2008; Uğur, 2017).

2.2.2. Localhood tourism strategies and its critiques

In response to growing concerns about overtourism and increasing public resistance, many cities have begun to explore alternative tourism planning frameworks that emphasize long-term sustainability. Within academia, the concept of sustainability has been critiqued for its historically narrow environmental focus, with scholars calling for a more holistic approach that includes social, economic, and cultural dimensions (Butler, 1999). Institutions such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2005, p.10) have echoed this, emphasizing the importance of *"addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"*. The involvement of local populations in tourism development has become widely acknowledged as a key component of sustainable tourism, both in academic

discourse and institutional policy (Uğur, 2017). Central to this evolving perspective is what Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby (2023) describe as the ‘*local turn*’ – a paradigm shift that places local communities at the heart of tourism planning and decision-making, arguing that tourism should ultimately contribute to building better futures for those who live in destinations.

This shift has also been acknowledged by Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMOs), which have responded to the growing backlash against overtourism by incorporating ‘localhood’ strategies into their agendas (Ebejer, 2024; Erdmenger, 2019). A pioneering and popular example is Copenhagen’s 2020 tourism strategy *The End of Tourism as We Know It*, launched in 2017 by Wonderful Copenhagen, the city’s official DMO. Jungersted (2023), the former lead strategist and development director of Wonderful Copenhagen, explained that the strategy called for a radical departure from traditional tourism models focused on visitor numbers and marketing. Instead, it promoted a model “*refocused on the value and contribution of tourism to local livability and well-being*” (p. 157). Central to this was the concept of ‘*Localhood for Everyone*’, which redefined tourism as a means to benefit residents and improve urban quality of life, rather than being an end in itself (Jungersted, 2023).

While localhood strategies promise more community-centered tourism, their implementation often falls short of these ideals. Milano and Koens (2022) warn that sustainable tourism concepts, like responsible or slow tourism, are frequently co-opted by the industry and repurposed for profit. Similarly, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) argue that strategies like *The End of Tourism as We Know It* use the language of degrowth while maintaining growth-oriented goals, making localhood vulnerable to ‘*localwashing*’ (Jungersted, 2023; Ooi, 2023). Volgger (2019) critiques the localhood definition to be vague and superficial, cautioning that it can enable laissez-faire governance and shift responsibility onto residents. Nieuwland (in response to Koens, 2022), further questions its inclusivity, noting that ‘local’ experiences often center on hip and gentrified neighborhoods, thus failing to account for what constitutes ‘local life’ in reality. Ultimately, while localhood strategies may appear inclusive, it is prone to reinforce urban inequalities under a sustainable façade.

2.2.3. Conditions for genuine localhood tourism

Although localhood marketing strategies have been criticized for continuing economic growth, a growing body of literature emphasizes the importance and urgency of pursuing more genuine, community-centered forms of tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2023). The foundational idea underpinning localhood tourism is that cities and urban spaces designed to serve and enrich the lives of local residents ultimately become more vibrant, inclusive, and attractive to visitors (Horgans & Koens, 2025; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021). This section outlines four recurring themes that emerge from good practices in locally-centered placemaking and urban development. While these themes are not fixed conditions or predefined components of localhood, they represent enabling frameworks that promise to be effective in shaping tourism development that is grounded in local values, inclusivity, and sustainability (Bellato, 2024; Gerritsma, 2025; PPS, 2022). Collectively, they constitute favorable conditions for fostering genuine localhood tourism.

1. Place-Based orientation: Putting the ‘local’ at the center

A central feature of effective locally-driven development is its emphasis on place-based orientation. This involves designing tourism and urban strategies that are deeply rooted in the cultural, ecological, and social specificities of a given locality (Bellato et al., 2023; Bellato, 2024; Bianchini, 2003; Gerritsma, 2025). Rather than applying generic models, place-based development prioritizes local identity, community narratives, and context-specific needs (Hes et al., 2020; PPS, 2022; Smith, 2015). By emphasizing the unique rhythms and characteristics of a place, this approach facilitates more meaningful forms of tourism. Furthermore, it underscores the need for building local capacity and providing access to resources, ensuring that local actors are equipped to participate in and shape tourism in ways that reflect their values and priorities (Rodríguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017).

2. Regenerative ethic: Aiming for net-positive benefits

Another recurring theme is the emergence of a regenerative ethic in tourism and place development practices. Unlike traditional sustainable development, which primarily seeks to minimize negative impacts, regenerative approaches aim to restore and enhance the social, cultural, and ecological systems of a place (CBI, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023; Bellato, 2024; Gerritsma, 2025). Regenerative tourism emphasizes ‘*net-positive outcomes*’: benefits that extend beyond economic contributions to include community well-being, cultural resilience, and environmental regeneration (Bellato, 2024; Gerritsma, 2025; Hes et al., 2020). This ethic

is underpinned by alternative value systems that challenge extractive growth models, promoting principles such as equity, diversity, solidarity, and stewardship of the commons (Bellato, 2024; CBI, 2022). These principles align with the goals of localhood tourism by placing community and environmental needs at the center of development processes.

3. Collaborative & democratic governance: empowering local stakeholders

Collaborative and democratic governance structures are also a key feature in successful locally-centered tourism and placemaking initiatives. These governance models enable residents, civil society groups, and small businesses to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Empowering local actors fosters a sense of ownership, accountability, and connection to place, which is essential for long-term support of tourism development (Cole, 2006). Public institutions have an important role in facilitating these bottom-up processes, ensuring that stakeholder engagement moves beyond symbolic participation toward genuine co-creation and shared responsibility (Chand, 2018; Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2023; Horgan & Koens, 2024). The Quadruple Helix Model – integrating government, academia, industry, and civil society – offers a practical governance framework to address complex tourism challenges through coordinated, inclusive collaboration (Carayannis & Campbell, 2010; European Commission, 2021). Initiatives such as tourism or urban labs exemplify how such structures can facilitate experimentation and innovation (Gerritsma & Horgan, 2024).

4. Relatedness and ecosystemic thinking: Embracing interconnection

Finally, good practices in local-centered development often adopt a systems-thinking perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness of tourism with broader urban, ecological, and social systems (Bellato et al., 2023; Bellato, 2024; Hes et al., 2020). Rather than viewing tourism as an isolated sector, this perspective situates it within the full ecology of place, encompassing people, environment, infrastructure, and cultural institutions. Managing tourism within such a complex system requires adaptive, flexible governance capable of responding to shifting conditions and long-term challenges (Bramwell & Lane, 2012; Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Gerritsma, 2025; PPS, 2022). This interconnected, ecosystemic approach supports resilience and helps ensure that tourism development remains aligned with local values and priorities (CBI, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023; Hes et al., 2020).

2.3. Localhood tourism in Rotterdam

2.3.1. Towards local-centered tourism strategies

Rotterdam, a former industrial-port city that was long burdened by the effects of deindustrialization and reputation of “*sick man*” (Custers & Willems, 2024, p.1), has been actively employing urban regeneration strategies and is starting to be recognized as the “*capital of cool*” (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021, p.927). Initially, the city followed the well-trodden path of tourism development seen in many post-industrial cities seeking economic growth – replicating standard strategies such as constructing iconic landmarks like the Erasmusbridge and central station; hosting mega events such as the European Capital of Culture and Eurovision; and pursuing large-scale waterfront redevelopment projects (Doucet et al., 2011; Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021; Richards & Wilson, 2004). However, in 2018 the city’s municipality and DMO Rotterdam Partners shifted course, moving away from a purely growth-driven agenda toward a tourism approach that is centered on improving local quality of life (Rotterdam Partners, 2019).

After a collaborative visioning process, the City of Rotterdam introduced a new tourism policy in March 2020 titled *As a Guest in Rotterdam: A New Perspective on Tourism* (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020, translated). Anchored in the guiding principle that “*tourism in Rotterdam should be of benefit to all our citizens*” (Rotterdam Partners, 2019, p.12), the policy is structured around four key pillars: identity, liveability, sustainability, and the local economy – each further detailed in Figure 1 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020). The implementation strategy, outlined in the policy’s final chapter, includes fourteen action perspectives (see page 13-19 Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020) designed to operationalize these ambitions. However, the document clearly states that these action perspectives are not yet fixed measures but serve as a flexible do-and-learn framework to guide future tourism-related policymaking. Recognizing the tourism domain as dynamic and evolving, the municipality expressed a commitment to ongoing dialogue and co-development with local stakeholders to ensure policy and practices remain responsive and inclusive (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020).

Identity	Liveability
(1) In Rotterdam we remain Rotterdam	(1) Unique offer of arts and culture
(2) Rotterdam is more than the inner city	(2) Balance between liveliness and liveability
(3) A hospitable city, now and in the future	(3) Invest tourism income in the city
(4) Valuable encounters between visitors and locals	
Sustainability	Local economy
(1) Sustainable transport in and to the city	(1) Space for authentic spots
(2) Green innovations in the shop window	(2) Attractive business climate
(3) Clean, tidy, circular	(3) Work for Rotterdammers
	(4) A Rotterdam way of overnight stay

Table 1, Source: Nientied & Toto (2020, p.5).

Just as this strategy was introduced, the COVID-19 pandemic struck the Netherlands. As part of the post-pandemic recovery strategy, Rotterdam Partners, launched the “*DO-ris*” campaign (June 2021 – March 2022) to support the revitalization of the local visitor economy (Altuïtion, n.d.; Gerlings, 2021). The do-ris visitor is positioned as someone who aligns with the city’s so called “*can do*” mentality and seeks out meaningful engagement with its “*authentic, lesser-known offerings*” (Rotterdam partners, 2024, para.6, translated). The campaign translates the tourism vision’s ‘*frontrunner*’ target group: individuals who resonate with Rotterdam’s identity and values and are in search for encounters, local culture, and everyday urban life (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020; Rotterdam Partners, 2024). Rather than fostering tourism development through traditional landmarks or mass tourism incentives, the strategy aims to attract visitors who contribute positively to the local quality of life. While this seems to align with the guiding principle of benefitting all citizens, scholars have raised concerns that Rotterdam’s tourism strategies may instead reinforce existing urban inequalities.

2.3.2. Exclusionary aspects and effects

Rotterdam’s tourism strategies seem to be a step into the direction of becoming more sustainable. However, when zooming out to the city’s broader urban governance, Clusters & Willems (2024) found that neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism are still widespread. This raises questions about the transformative potential of the tourism strategies as they may ultimately serve to reinforce economic-growth structures rather than challenge them. One area where this tension becomes especially visible is in the governance model underpinning the tourism vision. Although the municipality presents a do-and-learn approach as adaptive and inclusive, Nientied and Toto (2020) argue that it tends to favor politically attractive, high-visibility initiatives with quick returns. Such a focus on short-term gains risks sidelining the

deeper structural changes needed for truly sustainable, inclusive tourism governance. Furthermore, while the policy emphasizes collaboration, the municipality retains control over partner selection and leads all actions (Nientied & Toto, 2020). This leaves little room for genuinely community-led development and risks to legitimize pre-set agendas (Lew, 2017)

A second area where neoliberal rationalities surface is in Rotterdam's branding of local identity. Nientied and Toto (2020, p.7) argue that vague slogans like "*in Rotterdam we remain Rotterdam, true to ourselves, authentic and a bit edgy city*" lack substance and fail to guide meaningful preservation of local character amid tourism growth. This vagueness overlooks local debates on identity and belonging, especially as some residents feel their working-class roots are being ignored while their city is increasingly 'consumed' by outsiders (Liukku & Mandias, 2016). Belabas (2023) similarly critiques the *Make It Happen* branding for not reflecting Rotterdam's diverse population and reinforcing a sense of exclusion among residents. Nientied (2021) saw how the redevelopment of Katendrecht, once a working-class area, exemplifies these contradictions. It has been gentrified and rebranded as 'authentic Rotterdam' in its area branding despite displacing longtime residents (Nientied, 2021). Overall, Nientied (2021, p.354) suggests that such identity narratives benefit primarily those "*with enough income or entrepreneurship*".

2.3.3. So what?

While Rotterdam's recent tourism strategy marks a discursive shift toward more sustainable, locally-centered development, its implementation reveals tensions between inclusive rhetoric and persistent neoliberal urban governance. Scholars have begun to critically examine how localhood-oriented tourism strategies, despite their progressive language, may reproduce exclusionary practices and reinforce urban inequalities (Clusters & Willems, 2024; Nientied & Toto, 2020; Nientied, 2021; Belabas, 2023). Yet, most of this critique has remained focused on macro-level dynamics, such as city branding, policy discourse, and governance structures.

One exception is Nieuwland and Lavanga's (2021) study. Just prior to the launch of the new tourism vision, they explored the intersections of urban regeneration, placemaking, and the role of creative entrepreneurs in tourism development in Rotterdam. They found that creative entrepreneurs were not recognized as active agents in sustainable tourism, but were rather instrumentalized to support regeneration processes that ultimately benefited a white,

middle-class demographic. Their findings raised pressing questions about “*whose city Rotterdam is*” and “*who benefits from the urban and tourism development strategy*” (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021, p.926). These early insights offer a valuable starting point to assess how tourism development, under a new locally oriented vision, has progressed.

What has remained underexplored is how these strategies are currently experienced at the neighborhood level, particularly in areas undergoing transformation. Rather than taking a solely reflective stance, it is important to identify where potential still exists for inclusive and sustainable development. This is especially pressing given the accelerating pace of urban redevelopment in Rotterdam (Horgans & Koens, 2025). As formerly fringe areas like Zomerhofkwartier and Hofbogen undergo transformation, development pressures are increasingly shifting northward. In this process, real estate actors and project developers are gaining greater control over placemaking, often sidelining grassroots creative initiatives and eroding existing neighborhood identities (Lew, 2017). This dynamic threatens to turn previously peripheral districts into new city centers that are polished, marketable, yet disconnected from the communities that originally shaped them (Mansilla & Milano, 2019).

In this climate of rapid urban change, Oude Noorden stands out as a compelling case. It is a neighborhood known for its working-class roots, rich cultural diversity, and dynamic creative scene. At the same time, it has become a site of growing interest for tourism planning and urban redevelopment. This convergence generates critical tensions between safeguarding local identity and accommodating new forms of investment. Gaining insight into how tourism planning is perceived and experienced in such a setting is essential to understanding its real-life impacts. And, to identifying how these processes might be steered toward more inclusive and context-sensitive practices of localhood-based place development.

3. Methodology

There is a clear gap in understanding how Rotterdam's localhood tourism policies are actually implemented at the neighborhood level, especially in areas facing rapid urban redevelopment and neoliberal pressures. Existing studies largely focus on city-wide strategies and branding, but few investigate how local actors experience and respond to these policies on the ground. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring how localhood placemaking strategies can be genuinely applied in tourism development within the Oude Noorden neighborhood. The main research question guiding this study is: *How can Rotterdam's localhood tourism strategies be genuinely implemented in Oude Noorden in the face of neoliberal urban development challenges?*

This is further supported by the sub-question: *How do local actors from all four domains of the quadruple helix perceive the impacts and implications of localhood tourism implementation in Oude Noorden?*

Together, these questions focus on the intersection of urban development, sustainable tourism placemaking, and localhood strategies. The following sections describe and justify the research design, research method, operationalization of key concepts, data collection, and the approach to data analysis.

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to provide a detailed, nuanced, and contextually embedded understanding of the complexities surrounding localhood tourism implementation in Rotterdam. Rotterdam is characterized by significant socio-economic inequalities alongside a culturally diverse and dynamic urban landscape (Nieuwland et al., 2021). Capturing these multifaceted dynamics requires a method capable of capturing the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by local actors in their everyday contexts. The qualitative method facilitates (1) a deep understanding of how placemaking is experienced and negotiated on the ground, and (2) the identification of local actors' needs and attitudes, which are essential for uncovering genuine opportunities for sustainable localhood tourism development (Patton, 2015).

A case study design has been employed to enable a context-specific investigation into the practices and challenges of tourism and urban development. Given the intricate interplay of social, economic, and political factors shaping place-making, a case study allows for a comprehensive and holistic analysis of these processes within a defined spatial and social setting (Cresswell, 2013). This methodological approach aligns with the study's need to understand how localhood placemaking strategies manifest and unfold in specific urban neighborhoods rather than through broad generalizations at the city level.

Oude Noorden has been selected as the case study due to its strategic significance within Rotterdam's evolving tourism vision. It is a neighborhood with deep working-class roots, notable cultural diversity, and a vibrant creative community, making it emblematic of the challenges and potentials within localhood tourism frameworks (Füller & Michel, 2014). Moreover, Oude Noorden is explicitly targeted within the municipality's *Programma Stadscultuur*, which seeks to activate placemaking initiatives that embed cultural values into urban development (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020, p.14). From a practical perspective, the researcher's long-term residence in the broader Noord district and prior engagement with the adjacent Zomerhofkwartier (ZoHo) neighborhood, provide valuable contextual knowledge and access. Previous research in ZoHo revealed how creative placemaking efforts were gradually appropriated by project developers and reframed into economic agendas (Verheggen, 2024) – a process beginning to emerge in Oude Noorden. This familiarity offers a critical vantage point to explore whether and how similar patterns influence the neighborhood's tourism development and urban transformation.

To ensure a holistic and inclusive perspective, this study adopts the quadruple helix model, engaging actors from the public sector, civil society, academia, and the tourism and cultural industries (Carayannis & Campbell, 2010; European Commission, 2021). Including these diverse voices is essential because localhood tourism intersects with a wide range of agendas from policymaking and community activism to knowledge production and economic development (Novy & Colomb, 2016). A single-sector perspective risks reproducing dominant narratives or overlooking informal, bottom-up initiatives. By involving stakeholders from all four domains, the research is better positioned to capture not only the contested nature of tourism development but also to identify overlapping interests, structural barriers, and possibilities for more equitable and context-sensitive place-making practices (Gerritsma & Horgan, 2024).

An iterative approach, which enabled the identification of key knowledge gaps, is central to this research design (Patton, 2015). The study began with three preliminary interviews complemented by a broad content analysis of key tourism policy documents: *Te gast in Rotterdam, een nieuwe kijk op toerisme* (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020) and *The Rotterdam Way* (Rotterdam Partners, 2019). This initial phase underscored the importance of exploring how tourism development is experienced and enacted by residents and local stakeholders, which informed the decision to adopt interview methods for in-depth qualitative inquiry (Bryman, 2012).

3.2. Research method and operationalization

To explore how cultural and tourism-related place-making unfolds in Rotterdam's Oude Noorden, a total of 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility, allowing the researcher to follow up on emerging themes and probe for clarification. As Bryman (2012) notes, this approach enables the collection of rich and detailed data by allowing respondents to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. Since this is an exploratory study, the method supports understanding complex processes, relationships, and subjective interpretations rather than testing predefined hypotheses (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, the format is adaptive to different types of respondents, which is crucial in this study that draws on actors from multiple domains.

An interview guide (see Appendix A) was developed to structure conversations around five key themes. Table 3 outlines the objectives associated with each theme.

Interview Topic	Aim
1. Perceptions & experiences of change in Rotterdam	To understand how broader urban transformations (e.g. gentrification, policy shifts, tourism growth) are perceived by local actors, and how these are seen to affect cultural and social dynamics in the city overall. This helps situate Oude Noorden within the larger urban narrative.
2. Perceptions & experiences of change in Oude Noorden	To explore how stakeholders experience neighborhood-specific developments. This includes changes in identity, demographics, and physical or cultural space. It allows insight into local concerns, tensions, or opportunities linked to place-making
3. Relationship to cultural/tourism-related placemaking	To assess how each respondent relates to/engages with tourism or cultural initiatives; how they interpret their own role in shaping the neighborhood's identity and appeal; and explore if/how they have been supported or involved in municipal programs.
4. Cultural/tourism ecosystem in Oude Noorden	To identify the different actors, relationships, and infrastructures that form the cultural and tourism landscape of the neighborhood. This helps map out the 'localhood' ecosystem and understand how it functions or where it may be lacking.
5. Strengths and opportunities in Oude Noorden	To gather perspectives on what makes the area unique, resilient, or attractive, and to explore ideas for its future development. These insights help ground the research in local aspirations and potential strategies for sustainable place-making.

Table 3. Operationalization

The first three themes were designed to answer the sub-question, helping to contextualize individual narratives within broader city-wide processes. The final two themes were intended to directly inform the main research question, offering insight into the local potential for sustainable and locally rooted forms of tourism and culture-led development. The guide moved from macro to micro perspectives, enabling participants to gradually build up their narrative. It is important to note that while the core topics remained the same throughout the research, smaller adaptations were made to the interview guide, such as modifying sub questions to better fit the expertise and focus of different respondents.

3.3. Sample, data collection, and confidentiality

The interview sample was structured according to the quadruple helix model, which distinguishes four key stakeholder domains: academia, the cultural/tourism industry, civil society, and public (governmental) institutions. This framework provided a balanced perspective on tourism and culture-led place-making in the Oude Noorden. Appendix C details the distribution of interviewees across these four sectors.

The sampling process consisted of two phases. The first phase used purposive sampling to directly target actors with known involvement in *Programma Stadscultuur*. This included municipal program managers, DMO decision-makers, and cultural entrepreneurs. As Bryman (2012) explains, purposive sampling is appropriate when selecting individuals based on their relevance to the research question. In the second phase, snowball sampling was employed to build on the local network of initial participants (Bryman, 2012). This approach was well-suited to the tightly interconnected nature of the Oude Noorden, where many stakeholders are familiar with each other's work.

In total, fourteen interviews were conducted: eleven in person and three online. The online interviews were conducted due to practical constraints related to scheduling or geographic distance. However, the primary aim was to conduct interviews in person whenever possible to support engagement and encourage deeper reflection. This aligns with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) notion of the interview as a form of dialogue, and Seidman's (2013) emphasis on trust-building through face-to-face interaction. Prior to participation, all respondents signed an informed consent form (Appendix B), which outlined the purpose of the research, interview procedures, privacy regulations, and the voluntary nature of participation.

All but one interview were audio recorded using a mobile device. In the exception, detailed notes were taken during the interview and supplemented with a written summary immediately afterward to capture key insights. Recordings were transcribed verbatim using *NottaAI* (for in-person interviews) or an online transcription tool (for online interviews), with all transcripts subsequently reviewed and manually corrected to ensure the reliability of the data. To ensure anonymity, all names were pseudonymized, and any sensitive or identifying information was handled with strict confidentiality.

3.4. Data analysis

Given the exploratory and inductive nature of this research, thematic analysis was chosen as the most suitable method for analyzing the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach facilitates the identification of patterns and relationships between actors across the quadruple helix domains, which is central to understanding the complexity of interactions, challenges and opportunities in tourism and culture-led place-making in Oude Noorden.

The six-step guide by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis process. The first three steps, consisting of data familiarization, generating initial codes, and searching for themes, were conducted manually using an ideation wall. This visual technique encourages holistic thinking (Kasser, 2015), which is particularly beneficial for analyzing data structured around the quadruple helix model, where interconnectedness and complexity are key aspects. The latter steps, involving reviewing themes as well as defining and naming them, were supported by ATLAS.ti software. This tool enabled efficient management and organization of codes, making it easier to visualize which themes emerged within each quadruple helix domain.

It is important to acknowledge that thematic analysis involves interpretative work, which carries an inherent degree of subjectivity. This means that the themes identified and the relationships interpreted are influenced by the researcher's perspective and background (Bryman, 2012). Also, in the final step of thematic analysis – reporting – only the most telling quotes are presented in the research. This selective presentation means that some of the broader context is inevitably lost.

4. Results

4.0. Oude Noorden

The Oude Noorden neighborhood in Rotterdam exemplifies the complex dynamics of urban transformation in a post-industrial context. Historically a traditional working-class area, Oude Noorden faced the severe consequences of deindustrialization, including poverty, crime, drug-related issues, and housing deterioration. In response, state-led regeneration policies such as the Rotterdam Urban Design Strategy 2030 and the ‘Rotterdamse krachtwijken’ programme aimed to revitalize the neighborhood, triggering processes of gentrification (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021). As a result, the area has seen increasing inflows of middle-class residents and now exhibits a high degree of diversity across ethnic, economic, and demographic lines (Uka, 2023). Despite these changes, Oude Noorden has retained a unique identity rooted in its grassroots creative ecosystem, with a high density of pubs, galleries, and creative retail. It was also a focal point of the *Programma Stadscultuur* (2020–2022), a bottom-up initiative designed to strengthen the neighborhood’s cultural and social infrastructure (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020). However, the abrupt discontinuation of this programme due to political shifts (Participants 8.1 & 8.2), has introduced new uncertainties around the neighborhood’s development path.

This chapter examines the current state and future of Oude Noorden through three key sections: Section 4.1 analyzes the ambiguity surrounding local decision-making power and its implications for governance; Section 4.2 explores the resulting dislocation of the neighborhood’s identity under ongoing urban development; and Section 4.3 highlights the resilient aspects of Oude Noorden’s socio-cultural ecosystem, which may offer a foundation for more grounded localhood place-development and tourism.

4.1. Ambiguity in decision-making power

The interview analysis reveals that there is a lack of clarity among each component of the quadruple helix regarding who has decision-power over how Oude Noorden develops as a lively destination. This had led to little mandate from the public sector. This is especially apparent in discussions about the commercial and leisure offer and the area’s marketing narrative. As Participant 7 (Retail entrepreneur) states: “*where I feel the municipality has*

absolutely no vision or policy or whatever; housing associations do, that's very clear, but the municipality... ". This comment illustrates a widely shared perception that the municipality plays a passive or unclear role in steering neighborhood development, in contrast to housing associations that appear to act with greater direction and initiative. The resulting leadership vacuum creates space for other stakeholders to influence development trajectories in ways that may not necessarily align with the broader goals of localhood tourism.

This dynamic is further shaped by structural and political limitations. Municipal respondents highlighted that the discontinuation of the *Programma Stadscultuur* due to political decisions has led to the loss of dedicated resources for directly advancing tourism policy. As a result, tourism development now takes place indirectly through other policy fields, such as cultural programming or spatial planning, which possess the mandate and funding to take action. While this reflects the cross-sectoral nature of tourism, it also raises concerns about the effectiveness of such an arrangement. Without a clearly defined scope or institutional anchoring, tourism risks becoming a secondary concern, potentially weakened by bureaucratic fragmentation and a lack of clear ownership within the public sphere.

Moreover a respondent from Rotterdam Partners, the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), clarified that their role is not to create the tourism or leisure offer itself, but to promote and facilitate access to it once it exists: *"We are not there to create the offer, but once there is an offer, we are there to unlock it. There are other parties, such as the municipality, who can encourage supply"*. This statement underscores the dependency of the DMO on proactive efforts. If the municipality lacks the vision or authority to shape the local offer, then the DMO's ability to enhance local liveliness through tourism promotion is also constrained.

Overall, the current reliance on indirect forms of tourism development, is, as Participant 7 highlighted in the first quote, not beneficial for fostering a vision. The absence of accountability hampers coordinated action. The data analysis identified three issues that reinforce the ambiguity: urban developments dominated by project developers/housing corporation (1), barriers to sustaining entrepreneurial agency (2), and senses of distant municipal support and mistrust (3).

4.1.1. Urban developments dominated by project developers and housing corporations

Actors from both civil society and the private sector perceived project developers and housing associations as dominant forces shaping the development of Oude Noorden. As a result, they felt dependent on the limited spaces available to exercise any form of agency. As Participant 3 (Academic & Creative entrepreneur) notes: *“You have to be able to take real estate off the market. And as long as you have to rent that, yes, then you are just always behind”*. Several respondents explained that properties once owned by social housing associations are increasingly being sold to project developers, or that the associations themselves are becoming more commercialized. Participant 2 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) reflects: *“You used to just have a housing organization and they made sure people could live. Now that has just disappeared. Housing cooperatives have been commercialized. That is a really big problem.”* This shift toward profit-driven models is perceived as undermining the neighborhood’s social function, as new developments increasingly target higher-income groups. Concerns about ownership and control were clearly expressed by Participant 3, who questioned:

But how is it done? Who decides? Where is the power? (...) Ultimately, when you talk about ownership, it's still the project developers, real estate developers who own that. And they just work on the basis of certain values that are not necessarily always good for liveability. (Participant 3 – Academic & Creative entrepreneur)

Dominant actors are described as prioritizing economic returns over community-oriented outcomes. An approach that, according to respondents, directly affects the social fabric of Oude Noorden.

Moreover, data analysis highlighted feelings of instrumentalization among private and civil actors, who expressed that their efforts to create a vibrant neighborhood will most likely serve external branding objectives. Respondents explained that while project developers rely on creative and entrepreneurial initiatives to make the area attractive, the social and cultural value generated by these efforts is often reduced to market terms. Once a place gains appeal, it becomes commodified and is subsequently sold for profit, sidelining the original contributors. As Participant 11 (Creative entrepreneur) notes: *“we are now being chased out of the area again and the municipality comes along with the developer and we are the ones who are screwed you know. We put all the energy into it for nothing”*.

Interestingly, some private-sector respondents viewed housing corporations as more favorable actors compared to private owners. In the Zwaanshalskwartier, for example, housing corporations regulate rent, allowing small business owners to maintain not only financial viability but also their creative and sustainable values. Here, a Business Investment Zone (BIZ) is active through which entrepreneurs collaboratively developed a branding strategy, curating business types accordingly. However, a civil society respondent emphasized that this curated commercial identity still felt top-down rather than co-created with residents. As Participant 2 explained:

But it's also all via policy, because a handy shop wanted to start there, for example. No, said the housing cooperative, that doesn't fit the image of the Zwaanshalskwartier. But if you make a street hip or nice or beautiful, you have to have practical things too. And it doesn't have to be just fun colours, crazy things, fiddles or riddles, because that doesn't light up the neighbourhood, it just doesn't necessarily make it attractive. First the residents and then the nice things. (Participant 2 – Resident & Creative entrepreneur)

Overall, the data suggests that residents experience urban development as something done to them rather than with them. While housing corporations may mitigate some of the market pressure, both they and project developers are seen as gatekeepers of neighborhood change, often making unilateral decisions based on commercial logic or branding goals.

4.1.2. Barriers to sustaining entrepreneurial agency

While the public sector and DMO seem to lack mandate for facilitating bottom up efforts, several actors from the private sector, creative and small-business entrepreneurs, are taking agency of their own. However, they have also experienced limits to do so. Here, entrepreneurial agency refers to not only to the ability to survive economically, but includes the freedom to initiate projects, collaborate with others, and express a creative or social vision without being stifled by external barriers. The interviews, revealed three main barriers to sustaining this agency: market pressures, municipal restrictions, and challenges in funding access.

Starting with market pressures, some respondents mentioned that commercialization pressures make it difficult to pursue inclusivity. Where a local festivals for example used to be

free, now ticket prices are rising every year. Participant 4 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) explains: *“We started with 10 euros. And now last year 15 and this year 17.(...) Production has become massively expensive. So it's really hard work to keep that in balance. Just keeping it accessible”*. This reflects that the grassroots power of local events rest on a fragile foundation. Participant 2 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) said: *“you have to be firm on your feet, if you want to keep that community idea alive”*. Also, related to the increased power of urban developers, many local creative professionals rely on below-market rents to stay afloat, as expressed by Participant 5 (Resident): *“It is by grace that there are still all kinds of premises here that are still affordable”*.

Second, municipal restrictions were perceived as limiting the flexibility and informality that many entrepreneurs in Oude Noorden rely on. For example, one respondent described how a popular community-led open-air cinema had to stop operating due to a regulation prohibiting outdoor programming after 23:00. Similarly, Participant 2 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) reflected on how stricter rules around local events had impacted their accessibility and community feel: *“But it did lose its neighbourhood strength, because there are just these 3-metre high fences around it with black siding (...) It's not accessible anymore”*. These examples illustrate how regulatory frameworks, intended to manage public space, are hindering grassroots and community-driven initiatives. Rather than being seen as facilitators of neighborhood development, one respondent noted that the municipality is experienced as a regulatory obstacle: *“the municipality is simply seen more as an adversary you have to watch out for (...) than as a partner who likes the fact that you are trying to put this neighbourhood on the map”* (Participant 7 – Retail entrepreneur).

The third barrier that was highlighted by respondents was the access to funding and municipal support. While grateful for the subsidies that some of them received via the *Programma Stadscultuur*, or Local Cultural Programming (LCP) grant, they also pointed out that these were project-based, one-off collaborations. Currently, applying for subsidy is experienced to be time-consuming due to the complex nature of funding applications, which discourages repeated participation. Participant 4 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) expressed that applying for subsidies was *“a job on its own”*, suggesting that the process demands significant time and energy that most entrepreneurs simply do not have. Without training, support, or clearer guidance in navigating these bureaucratic procedures, many creatives find it unfeasible to apply consistently. This ultimately restricts their capacity to pursue flexible or experimental projects. At the same time, some actors choose to avoid large

fundings altogether, wary of the obligations that come with institutional money. As Participant 2 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) put it: *“People say then look for the big subsidies. But I don't want those (...) Then I get all demands and I don't want that”*. This tension highlights how conditionality attached to funding can discourage the very actors the city may want to support.

Overall, the findings suggest that, as the barriers persist, the space for grassroots and community-oriented tourism actors to experiment and contribute to the neighborhood's identity becomes increasingly limited.

4.1.3. Senses of distant municipal support and mistrust

A recurring theme that surfaced in the interviews is a prevailing sense of mistrust regarding the municipality's role in urban development projects. More than half of the interviewees voiced concerns about how bottom-up the support actually is. Not necessarily in what support is offered, but how this support is administered and implemented. Importantly, this mistrust is not directed at the *Programma Stadscultuur* itself. The two respondents who received funding from this program expressed appreciation for the financial support, noting that their initiatives were able to grow from grassroots efforts into more established cultural endeavors that attracted visitors.

Several respondents however, pointed out a lack of active and reciprocal communication between the municipality and local actors. Participant 6 (Public cultural coordinator) remarked: *“If you say, come over to talk, people don't always come, you have to look for it yourself (...). People also don't always feel, maybe completely understood. Especially not by the big organisations I can imagine”*. Participant 7 (Retail entrepreneur) echoed this need for more open and constructive interaction, stating: *“It would be nice if we could have some more conversations with the municipality there. (...) I think things could be much easier if that were done differently”*. Here, the desire for increased dialogue suggests that current collaborative structures are experienced as inefficient. There's a clear implication that certain processes could run more smoothly if there were stronger relationships and clearer channels of exchange.

Beyond the lack of engagement, others questioned the sincerity of collaboration. Participant 11 (Creative entrepreneur) shared a critical view: *“Instead of sort of buying off*

and ticking off in your annual report like 'hey we collaborated with that organization, we meet our sustainability target for this year'... that's obviously not how it works". Moreover, there was skepticism among the respondents about whether attention was paid to local visions. Participant 10 noted:

But I know, for example, that there is a need, for example, for, yes, Islamic meeting places. (...) but, things like that are then less likely to get off the ground. (...). But I do think that the municipality and the cooperatives and so on, together have come up with a certain vision for the old north what they think is appropriate. (Participant 10 – Public service manager)

This creates a sense that development is less about enabling local diversity and more about fitting into a predetermined framework. Perhaps the clearest example of this disconnect is the controversy on Kruiskade, where, as Participant 13 explained, the municipality asked existing businesses to consider selling alcohol to fit a new development vision:

That is, of course, a completely upside-down world. For the municipality to start asking entrepreneurs who are already here to start doing work other than what they are doing because the municipality has a certain purpose with that piece of the city. (Participant 13 - Resident)

Although not directly linked to Oude Noorden, this remark encapsulates the skepticism of several respondents. These experiences directly affect the level of trust neighborhood actors have in collaborating with municipal institutions. Especially against the backdrop of urban development controversies in adjacent neighborhoods like Crooswijk. These areas were frequently referenced as cautionary tales, illustrating what can happen when local voices are sidelined in top-down planning processes.

4.2. A dislocating identity and offer

As a consequence of ambiguity in decision-making, and the power of non-local actors to guide urban development, Oude Noorden is evolving that is perceived to become increasingly commercial and targeted to high-income groups. Respondents repeatedly pointed to a growing mismatch between long-established local businesses and a newer, curated offer of shops, market, and eateries. While they all recognized that this has contributed to the

liveliness and improved public space of the neighborhood, they also reflect that not all residents of Oude Noorden can afford to make use of it.

Examples like the Oogstmarkt and certain boutiques in the Zwaanshalskwartier illustrate how the neighborhood is gaining appeal through amenities that reflect a more middle-class, lifestyle-oriented image. However, these developments are not always rooted in the lived character or social needs of the area. Instead, they risk projecting a selective version of Oude Noorden's identity that resonates more with newer or external audiences than with long-standing community members. This shift is further reinforced by what Participant 7 (Retail entrepreneur) described as misaligned cultural stewardship, where visibility and recognition are primarily given to new, curated initiatives, while established local entrepreneurs remain overlooked. As he noted:

And it's also in... Yes, giving those entrepreneurs a stage. (...) For example, IsisInc (Boutique). Well, she's been there for decades. (...) She has seen this whole street change. But she never gets the attention she actually deserves as a pioneer. Because, for example, such platforms as 'IndeBuurt' (marketingplatform), of course they often only give attention to new initiatives. (Participant 7- Retail entrepreneur)

Maarten's reflection points to the problem that without inclusive recognition or shared marketing strategies, such long-standing entrepreneurs risk becoming invisible. The result is a dislocated identity: an externally appealing, but unrepresentative vision of the neighborhood that often fails to support, or even harms local actors that are not often in the spotlights. For example, the Zwartjanstraat is a lively and multicultural shopping street known for its concentration of Islamic-oriented businesses, particularly Moroccan and Turkish, alongside entrepreneurs from other ethnic backgrounds. The street offers a wide variety of establishments, including eateries, clothing stores, salons, and specialty shops. Yet, the entrepreneurs there are often left out of promotional campaigns, even though they are essential to the daily life and economy of the neighborhood.

Another respondent, reflected on how such developments often result in a kind of aesthetic sameness that overlooks what makes a place locally distinctive:

And, of course, in these kinds of neighbourhoods you also have all these places that... natural wine bars, for example, (...) they all have the same shapes, the same playlist and the same type of people. So that's just not conducive then, I think. While what is peculiar to the neighbourhood. Well, you have a big Turkish community living here

and moving around Zwartjanstraat. That might not be what is promoted in a campaign. (Participant 13 - Resident)

This observation reinforces the concern that a curated and externally appealing image may erase or overshadow the cultural specificities that truly define the neighborhood's identity. If only a one-sided or gentrified image of Oude Noorden is actively cultivated, this risks reinforcing rather than alleviating social inequalities. The benefits of tourism and cultural investment are then unevenly distributed, favoring certain spaces and actors while marginalizing others. To better understand this dynamic, the data analysis points to three key processes driving the sense of dislocation: Spatial and social fragmentation (1), increasing liberalism (2), and romanticization (3).

4.2.1. Fragmentation

The shifting offer of shops and cafes in the Oude Noorden has contributed to a growing sense of exclusion and fragmentation among the interviewees. The influx of new, often more expensive establishments creates an environment that caters primarily to newcomers with higher incomes, leaving existing residents feeling out of place. As Participant 5 explains:

Well, I think that's all that comes in, (...) They're all expensive shops. And that's all the same genre that's on the Oogstmarkt. People, people who (...) in terms of income are doing well. And they can just all easily afford those kinds of parties, so that won't be much for residents. (Participant 5 - Resident)

This quote illustrates how the changing retail landscape contributes to a sense of commercial displacement among long-term residents of Oude Noorden. It also reinforces forms of socio-economic segregation within the neighborhood. This segregation also extends to visitors, who are often drawn by the neighborhood's marketed image, but only selective parts of it. These visitors, as well as newcomers, tend to remain in a curated bubble rather than engaging with the broader, more diverse local offer. Participant 2 (Resident & Creative entrepreneur) captures this divide: *"But they also sometimes call it the white people's market"*. This remark points to the perception that certain places are, symbolically, only for specific groups.

This growing sense of symbolic displacement and alienation further shapes everyday experience in Oude Noorden. Participant 4 (Resident & Creative Entrepreneur) for example

spoke about the loss of places that once brought different people together, replaced by spaces aligned with a more exclusive audience. He recalls: *“Nika (a coffee bar) used to sit there. The whole neighbourhood came there. Just having a cup of coffee. And that guy unfortunately stopped. Now Bar Lou is there. Those are just white highly educated Yuppies”*. This quote shows how changes in ownership and clientele shift the social function of a place, transforming it from a shared neighborhood space into something more exclusive. This loss of shared ground contributes to a decreasingly mixed character of the neighborhood. Participant 4 continues:

And apart from that, you really have very few places that are really used by everyone. (...) it's all pretty segregated, you know. White, highly educated ones go to the hip coffee shops. And less educated ones go to the Dirk and to Zwartjansstraat.

(Participant 4 - Resident & Creative Entrepreneur)

And as Participant 2 (Resident & Creative Entrepreneur) adds: *“And the old old Rotterdamers don't feel at home in either place”*. Together, these reflections reveal a shift in Oude Noorden toward fewer shared spaces and increasing feelings of exclusion and disconnection

4.2.2. Increasing liberalism

A key shifts observed in the Oude Noorden is the rise of liberal, individual-oriented values, which contrasts with the neighborhood's historically strong culture of collectivism and social engagement. However, this culture is increasingly being challenged by the arrival of new businesses and residents who are perceived as more individualistic and disconnected from the local context. Participant 4 reflects on how these changes affect his working approach:

Then I could walk in there, I could say (...)maybe we can make a deal (...). And because you know each other and favour each other, it was always possible. But that is no longer possible, because, for example, the hotel here on Schiekade, they have both become big companies (...), they [have] zero connection with the neighbourhood.

(Participant 4 - Resident & Creative Entrepreneur)

He adds that this detachment is also present in other recent arrivals to the neighborhood:

And you also notice that with other things that come here in the neighbourhood, you know whether they are hotels, cafes, or other initiatives, it's quite difficult to connect with them, because they don't come from the neighbourhood and actually want to make pure profit. (Participant 4 - Resident & Creative Entrepreneur)

Participant 9 (Creative entrepreneur) experienced similar difficulties when trying to set up a collaborative ‘strippenkaart’ system, an initiative where businesses and cultural venues would work together to attract and circulate visitors. The idea fell flat due to a lack of interest in collective investment: “*Then every euro seems to be too much*”. These quotes highlight the more individualistic, profit-oriented outlook of many newcomers. This individualistic shift is not limited to the business sphere. Although the Oude Noorden still has a tradition of community-led initiatives, such as collaboratively greening public space or organizing block parties, newer residents are often seen as anonymous and detached. Participant 2 expressed this disconnect clearly:

And I could say, they don't bother you, but they also don't contribute anything. Because they don't really live here. They're only here for a short while. They have no connection, (...) they do their shopping elsewhere or have it delivered. Sometimes they don't even leave the house. No, they go to work, maybe to the gym, and that's it.
(Participant 2- Resident & Creative Entrepreneur)

Taken together, the increasing liberalism in the Oude Noorden is experienced as a risk for the neighborhoods’ collective engagement and social reciprocity.

4.2.3. Romanticization

As the Oude Noorden becomes increasingly associated with a hip and creative image, several respondents emphasized how this representation can gloss over the neighborhood’s persistent challenges. These include ongoing issues such as poverty, crime, drug-related disturbances, and subversive crime. The narrative of success risks overshadowing the realities of the area. Participant 6 warns against this narrow portrayal, noting how such romanticized imagery may exclude people who no longer feel represented in their own neighborhood:

On the negative side, of course, people might not feel completely at home in some kind of hip city or something. It should remain a city for everyone and all sides should be highlighted. It shouldn't become a kind of Disney city where everything just looks nice.

Of course, all sorts of things happen on the other side too. (Participant 6 - Public cultural coordinator)

Her words point to the risk of the neighborhood being reduced to a curated showcase, while overlooking deeper complexities and lived experiences. Participant 2 similarly highlights how the shift in reputation from a so-called “problematic” neighborhood to a highly desirable one masks the continuing issues residents face:

So now it has changed enormously. From one of the worst neighbourhoods, even of the Netherlands and Rotterdam, to a very desirable neighbourhood, but where there are still quite a lot of problems, there is also a lot of poverty. The street, it's just which eye you look at it from. (Participant 2 - Resident & Creative entrepreneur)

His statement reflects that the external appreciation grows, yet structural problems remain largely unaddressed.

Participant 7 adds a critical reflection on nostalgic narratives that portray the Oude Noorden as a typical working-class neighborhood:

This is no longer a working-class neighbourhood. It is a neighbourhood with an all-around variety of cultures, ranks, positions, salaries. But it hasn't been what it used to be for a long time, and that underlying ecosystem no longer exists (...). So you can't on the one hand (...) imagine a bit of that romantic image of a working-class neighbourhood without the historical awareness that what then made a neighbourhood is no longer there. (Participant 7 – Retail entrepreneur)

Here, he challenges the idea of using historic narratives to represent the area, especially when the social fabric that once defined it has fundamentally changed. Overall, these reflections underscore that outside narratives are dislocated from what the neighborhood is in reality

4.3. Oude Noorden's resilient fabric

The data analysis highlighted that in the face of urban development challenges discussed earlier, Oude Noorden continues to show signs of resilience. In this context, resilience refers to the neighborhood's efforts in adapting to change to maintain a sense of community. Rather than passively undergoing a transformation, neighborhood actors actively

respond to challenges in ways that aim to preserve the neighborhoods' social cohesion and foster shared belonging. Participant 10 described such an example:

I think the entrepreneurs here are also very enterprising in that sense, with a social heart often, so they definitely contribute too. Everyone here picks up gloves themselves to organise something. (...) and not sitting around waiting for the Municipality to come up with something. (Participant 10 – Public service manager)

This attitude reflects a progressive understanding of dealing with gentrification processes where bottom-up initiatives are organized to retain agency over the everyday culture and identity.

Not only local entrepreneurs, but also creatives and residents in Oude Noorden have, over the years, been investing in this ecosystem which have led to a strong foundation for events to flourish and to welcome and engage newcomers. Participant 5 provides a clear example of how this manifests in daily life:

On the one hand, you just have people who so have the houses to buy (...) And on the other hand, you have rentals of just 3/400 euros. But they do organise parties, plant façade gardens together. (...) So I see things like that happening. (Participant 5 - resident)

Despite socioeconomic differences, there is a willingness among residents to connect and collaborate, resisting the divisive effects of gentrification. Participant 10 adds that this culture was carefully constructed over time:

I also do think it's easy to hook up then, because setting up is obviously the hardest thing. And here just at a moment in time has been the opportunity for many people to do that, (...) to make that culture. (Participant 10 – Public service manager)

This suggests that the current resilience of the neighborhood is not incidental, but the result of consistent investment. However, this resilience remains conditional. It depends on continued access to resources, as well as a strong sense of ownership over the area's future. Without these conditions, resilience risks being eroded, particularly as neoliberal urban agendas gain ground and social fragmentation increases. The analysis points to three key aspects that together form this resilient fabric: spaces of encounter and integration (1), collaborative networks (2), and local ownership (3). These dimensions will be further explored in the following sections.

4.3.1. Spaces of encounter and integration

Oude Noorden hosts a wide array of social meeting hubs, cultural venues, and grassroots festivals that play a key role in fostering resilience. According to the interviews, a common characteristic that contributes to their success is their mixed programming. By offering a diverse range of activities, from workshops and exhibitions to shared dinners to intimate music performances. Importantly, these initiatives pay attention to accessibility so residents from all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds can meet and engage. Many visitors not only return regularly but also become involved themselves as volunteers, organizers, or contributors. The interviews suggest that such spaces are vital to the neighborhood's social cohesion, as they nurture feelings of connection and shared belonging. Participant 2 describes how programming at *Noorderlicht bij de Bar* is deliberately curated to create cultural crossovers:

It's [at Noorderlicht] also a bit about getting people who normally go to hip tents into a brown café through the mixed programming we put there. But also to get people who come from brown cafes to hip tents (...) through the programming. And that succeeds. And that's a big part of our success. (Participant 2 – Resident & Creative entrepreneur)

This intentional bridging between different cultural milieus reinforces social mixing and mutual recognition.

Similarly, Participant 5 reflects on the atmosphere at Perron Noord, which is equally diverse in its offer and audience:

That's the nice thing about PerronNoord (café). All kinds of people come in here. It's also a place where people exchange things that don't happen elsewhere. (...) And it's modest, so it's very different in nature, so that's why it attracts people who don't normally just meet each other. (Participant 5 - Resident)

These insights underscore how these spaces foster encounters between people who might not otherwise cross paths. Helping people to cross the symbolic distinctions that are increasingly shaping Oude Noorden. Participant 6 (Public cultural coordinator) noticed this need for connection, stating that: “*you just see that people continue to feel the need to meet*”. This desire for social connections is exactly what the spaces of encounter in Oude Noorden recognize and respond to.

4.3.2. Collaborative networks

Oude Noorden's resilient character is strongly supported by its collaborative networks. Within the creative sector, a well-established infrastructure exists, composed of accessible spaces, cross-sector partnerships, and a tightly connected community. Creatives often find each other easily and collaborate on projects that contribute to both cultural vibrancy and social cohesion. These partnerships result in diverse outcomes, from small-scale performances to youth workshops, often involving cooperation with schools, social organizations, and neighborhood hubs. As Participant 11 explains:

So I think that there is quite some cooperation here already, between all kinds of organisations, that everyone knows how to find each other quite well (...) and that there are quite a few places where you can already do something. So the infrastructure is pretty good here. (Participant 11 – Creative entrepreneur)

This networked dynamic not only enables a dynamic cultural landscape, but also gives room for bottom-up programming that aligns with residents' values and needs.

In addition to creative infrastructure, a commercial network is visible in the form of the Business Investment Zone (BIZ) in the Zwaanshals shopping district. This municipal instrument enables entrepreneurs to pool financial resources and expertise for the improvement of their shared commercial environment. Beyond area branding and event planning, the BIZ model reinforces local representation and decision-making. As Participant 14 notes:

At the branding, stakeholders were invited. Also residents, the whole neighbourhood. In the sense of municipality, property owners, residents, entrepreneurs and tenants. They all had a say in that positioning. (...). In the same way, we are now doing a follow-up project. That is about the quality of the outdoor space. (Participant 14 – Resident & Retail entrepreneur)

This suggests that the BIZ is not just a top-down commercial initiative, but rather a platform for shared governance where local voices are actively involved. It shows a commitment to long-term, community-driven development, which in turn strengthens the neighborhood's resilience.

4.3.3. Local ownership

An important element contributing to Oude Noorden's resilient fabric is local ownership. Here referring to initiatives that are created, managed, or maintained by residents themselves. Several examples of this emerged from the interviews. This is visible not only in entrepreneurial models like the BIZ but also in cultural and social projects shaped from the ground up. A clear example is 't Klooster, a community hub operated under self-management, where residents and users coordinate the programming and daily operations. This results in a space that reflects and responds to local needs. As Participant 10 explains:

You also notice in the neighbourhood that they often talk about my monastery or our monastery. People do quite really have such a certain sentiment about this place. That they really, indeed, that it feels like it belongs to them. (Participant 10 – Public service manager)

This sense of emotional ownership fosters attachment and responsibility, which are key ingredients for sustained community engagement.

Such ownership also extends to cultural events like *Noorderdicht*, a poetry festival initiated and curated by a local resident. Participant 2 emphasizes its hyper-local character:

It is also truly a festival of the residents. In fact, half of what performs there comes from Noord. (...), but even those poems, which are also there on those flonders, those are also all poems by the residents (...). And is it not made up from above. (...) They sometimes talk about authenticity and things like that, about really local. But it doesn't get any more local than this. And it also really shows the soul of Oude Noorden.
(Participant 2 - Resident & Creative entrepreneur)

Similarly, the *Rotterdam Bluegrass Festival*, which started as a resident-led event, continues to involve a significant number of locals as volunteers and organizers. Together, these examples show how cultural ownership strengthens a sense of collectivity, cultural stewardship and shared pride which are important assets to sustain in the face of change.

5. Discussion

5.1. Guiding principles and Recommendations for implementing localhood strategies

The interview findings and discussion of key issues highlight the need for a more active/engaged and supportive policy implementation that genuinely fosters local development. The neighborhood development program, part of the municipality's 2020 tourism vision, appears to have stalled, and the IAB's recommendation to adopt a community-led approach has remained largely symbolic (Rotterdam partners, 2019). As neoliberal development pressures from the city center increasingly affect adjacent neighborhoods, it is crucial that the municipality reasserts its responsibility. This is particularly important to preserve the neighborhoods' distinctive local character, rather than allowing it to be shaped by private sector agendas. Drawing on insights from both the theoretical framework and the interviews, this section outlines 6 principles and 7 recommendations that, if seriously pursued, can help ensure that tourism policy actively supports and strengthens the local community and well-being. For each principle and recommendation, a case-specific example is provided to illustrate its potential implementation in Oude Noorden.

5.1.1. Guiding principles policy implementation Oude Noorden

The following principles are grounded in a regenerative tourism perspective, which views tourism not just as a tool for economic growth, but as a potential catalyst for social, cultural, and ecological renewal. A regenerative approach emphasizes local well-being, place-specific solutions, and long-term systemic thinking. While there is some alignment with the broader IAB principles on tourism in Rotterdam, this set is specifically adapted to guide policy implementation at neighborhood level in a context like Oude Noorden.

Principle 1. Take a place-based approach:

A place-based approach starts from the specific characteristics, histories, and dynamics of a given location. Rather than applying generic solutions, it emphasizes the importance of understanding the local context; socially, culturally, economically, spatially, and environmentally. In Oude Noorden, this means recognizing the neighborhood's multicultural fabric, working-class heritage, and dense everyday economy. It also means acknowledging

local challenges, such as poverty, dilapidated housing, or the effects of gentrification. By centering the neighborhood's distinctive identity, localhood tourism strategies can align more closely with local values and realities.

Principle 2. Be inclusive and equitable:

Inclusivity and equity are central to regenerative approaches, which prioritize the distribution of benefits and opportunities across all segments of society. Tourism should not reinforce existing inequalities but instead create space for marginalized voices and vulnerable groups to participate and benefit. Oude Noorden's diverse population includes people from many cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. An inclusive approach means being attentive to who feels welcome, who has access, and who might be excluded or displaced by tourism or related development pressures.

Principle 3. Be community-driven:

This principle highlights the importance of local ownership and agency. Rather than viewing residents as passive recipients of tourism, a regenerative model treats them as co-creators and stewards of place. In many neighborhoods like Oude Noorden, grassroots initiatives, community events, and local networks form the social infrastructure for deeper engagement. This principle stresses the importance of recognizing and valuing such local dynamics as foundational to shape narratives and pathways of tourism development.

Principle 4. Foster diverse collaboration and co-creation:

The implementation of the neighborhood tourism policy requires a broad coalition of actors, not just tourism decision-makers, but also community organizations, artists, local businesses, housing experts, and policymakers. Collaboration ensures that tourism is integrated into wider urban and social systems, and co-creation helps develop shared visions for the future. Oude Noorden's mixed-use character, where living, working, creating, and socializing happen side by side, provide a strong foundation for such cross-sector partnerships. This principle emphasizes the importance of creating horizontal relationships where knowledge and resources are shared.

Principle 5. Take a holistic and system-thinking approach:

Tourism doesn't operate in a vacuum, it is embedded in a web of systems: housing, mobility, safety, culture, economy, and environment. A systems-thinking perspective encourages seeing the bigger picture, understanding how interventions in one domain can

impact others. In a neighborhood like Oude Noorden, where social, economic, and spatial changes are deeply entangled, this principle supports integrated thinking. It advocates for policy implementations that move beyond silos, aiming to create resilient and adaptable urban environments that benefit both residents and visitors.

Principle 6. Protect the residential function of the neighborhood:

In implementing localhood policies it is crucial to recognize that neighborhoods are primarily residential environments. Tourism development should operate in service of local life, not in competition with it. This means ensuring that interventions do not compromise housing availability, displace residents, or shift the neighborhood's function toward serving visitors over inhabitants. In Oude Noorden, this principle requires careful consideration of which events and locations can meaningfully benefit from or accommodate visitors and where clear limits must be set to preserve the neighborhood's residential character.

5.1.2. Recommendations policy implementation Oude Noorden

Building on the guiding principles outlined above, this section presents a set of practical recommendations for municipal implementation of localhood-oriented tourism in Oude Noorden. These recommendations aim to translate the policy framework into concrete actions that support community well-being, safeguard neighborhood character, and embed tourism within wider urban systems. Each recommendation is designed to empower local actors, foster long-term collaboration, and ensure that tourism policy contributes meaningfully to neighborhood development.

Recommendation 1: Establish an Oude Noorden visitor economy panel

What: Create a neighborhood-based advisory panel focused on the visitor economy, composed of a diverse group of residents, local entrepreneurs, cultural and civil society actors. This panel should meet regularly and be formally linked to the municipality's planning and implementation cycles, ensuring continuous local input into tourism-related developments.

Why: A well-supported and inclusive panel helps ensure that development of the local in Oude Noorden is developed with the community, not imposed upon it. By grounding implementation in local needs, knowledge, values, and ambitions, the panel fosters place-based development.

How: Expand the existing neighborhood council or establish a dedicated task force on the visitor economy. To ensure meaningful and long-term participation, members should be compensated for their time and expertise. This could take the form of for example a modest stipends or tax benefit.

Recommendation 2: Protect and activate spaces for diverse, local use

What: Establish formal partnerships between the municipality, housing associations (e.g. Havensteder, Woonstad), and the neighborhood visitor economy advisory panel. These collaborations should focus on keeping spaces accessible and affordable for small-scale, community-rooted businesses and cultural initiatives.

Why: To preserve Oude Noorden's distinct character and entrepreneurial diversity. This place-based strategy promotes long-term affordability, shared decision-making, and safeguards inclusive local economies from displacement and gentrification pressures.

How: Leverage the existing Business Investment Zone (BIZ) model currently active in the Zwaanshalskwartier; a proven form of public-private collaboration and co-investment. Similar BIZ structures can be piloted in areas such as Zwartjanstraat, Benthuizerstraat, and Zaagmolenkade to support diverse entrepreneurship and strengthen neighborhood identity. Additionally, vacant or underused spaces could be activated for community-led and social initiatives such as repair cafés or community dining rooms that are both attractive for local communities and visitors from outside the neighborhood.

Recommendation 3: Establish a neighborhood grant program for the local arts and culture sector

What: Introduce a structural, multi-year funding scheme at the neighborhood level to support grassroots arts and culture initiatives.

Why: Oude Noorden's identity is shaped by local, collaborative initiatives such as spontaneous concerts, neighborhood festivals, and creative events that bring together residents, artists, schools, entrepreneurs, and cafés. However, these small-scale initiatives often struggle with short-term, complex subsidy procedures that do not reflect the flexible, bottom-up nature of their work. Long-term funding would enable these groups to plan, experiment, and take ownership of their projects, sustaining the unique character of the neighborhood.

How: While existing subsidy programs like the Local Cultural Programming (LCP) are a strong starting point, their main focus is local audiences. Future funding schemes should also acknowledge and support visitor-related initiatives that generate local economic benefits and contribute to a more balanced, community-oriented visitor economy.

Recommendation 4: Support local capacity-building and shared stewardship

What: Deliver training programs, co-management pilots, and support schemes for local initiatives and entrepreneurship.

Why: Empowering residents and local entrepreneurs with skills, knowledge, and resources ensures that the benefits of visitors remain locally anchored. With their own knowledge of the neighborhood challenges and opportunities they will know what needs to be addressed. Building capacity also fosters a sense of ownership over related assets, moreover it strengthens a sense of belonging and stewardship over the neighborhood.

How: Rotterdam Noord has a strong foundation of locally rooted organizations and institutes whose aim is to provide guidance and support programs for the neighborhoods' youngsters and residents to develop skills and foster personal growth. Partner up with, for example:

- Stichting Rottetalent - a talent development and youth empowerment organization
- Zadkine - a vocational education and training institute (MBO school)
- CulthNorth - a youth culture and community organization focused on creativity and self-expression
- SOL - a social development foundation active in welfare and neighborhood support
- Rotterdam Circulair (Noord department) - a municipal sustainability and circular economy initiative that supports green entrepreneurship and reuse

or other incubators and social enterprises to offer accessible workshops and mentorship programs. Together, explore co-management models for specific assets such as social cafés, meeting points, event programming, or cultural venues that allow local actors to take on shared responsibility in planning and operations.

Recommendation 5: Co-create inclusive neighborhood branding and visitor communication

What: Collaborate with a diverse group of local residents, creatives, and entrepreneurs to design neighborhood branding and visitor communication tools. This includes materials such as maps or signage, storytelling platforms, neighborhood welcome guides, and campaigns that highlight local values, stories, and tips for respectful engagement.

Why: Tourism branding and visitor messaging often reflect outsider perspectives, which can romanticize or oversimplify a neighborhood's identity. This risks misrepresenting everyday life and ignoring the complexities faced by communities. Co-created content ensures realistic visions, supports community pride, and encourages respectful, low-impact interactions between visitors and locals. Importantly, it can also foster visitor awareness of local realities such as social inequalities or spatial pressures, thereby supporting a more grounded and socially conscious visitor experience

How: Establish a creative working group that brings together diverse neighborhood voices. Use participatory tools like storytelling workshops, urban walks, or photovoice to inform tone, imagery, and messaging. Partner with organizations like Rotterdam Partners to help disseminate locally made content through visitor channels. Pilot materials with different user groups (residents, visitors, entrepreneurs) before full-scale rollout.

Recommendation 6: Develop a shared local agenda for events and initiatives

What: Create a publicly accessible neighborhood agenda that showcases the diverse array of local events, initiatives, and activities. This can take the form of an online platform and/or printed posters and flyers, distributed across local cafés, shops, community centers, and cultural venues.

Why: Local events and initiatives in Oude Noorden are often fragmented in their communication and visibility. A shared agenda strengthens the neighborhood's social fabric, supports cross-promotion between initiatives, and helps both residents and visitors engage with the area's cultural life in a more integrated way.

How: Partner with neighborhood organizations, to co-develop and maintain the agenda. Ensure it reflects a diverse range of voices and initiatives, from grassroots collectives to small businesses and schools. Use both digital and analogue formats to reach broader audiences.

Recommendation 7: Develop a participatory impact monitoring system

What: Design a local monitoring system to evaluate the impact of the visitor economy on Oude Noorden. This system should include clear and measurable indicators related to local livelihoods, space, culture, and the neighborhood economy to find out what the successes and risks are of localhood tourism.

Why: Without active monitoring, tourism impacts may go unnoticed or unaddressed. A participatory monitoring approach ensures transparency, enables early response to negative effects, and empowers residents to shape the metrics that matter most to them.

How: Co-develop indicators with local stakeholders based on shared neighborhood values. Hold annual review sessions to assess outcomes, adjust policy priorities, and communicate findings publicly to promote accountability.

5.2. Limitations and future research

While this research has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of localhood and placemaking in Rotterdam's Oude Noorden, several limitations should be acknowledged. As a neighborhood-based case study, the findings are context-specific and cannot be directly generalized to other urban areas without considering their own socio-spatial and political dynamics. The unique history, demographic composition, and regeneration trajectory of Oude Noorden means that similar research in different neighborhoods may yield varied results.

The scope of interviews also presents limitations. Notably, newer venues that primarily cater to middle-class residents were not included in the research. Their perspectives remain absent, leaving a gap in understanding how these recent arrivals contribute to, or potentially reshape, the neighborhood's cultural and economic identity. Similarly, due to time constraints and limited access, the study did not include entrepreneurs from the ethnically diverse Zwartjanstraat. This omission risks presenting a one-sided view of opportunities in the area and underrepresents the lived experiences and contributions of minority business owners. Given Oude Noorden's superdiverse population, future research should make an effort to include these voices to develop a more holistic and inclusive account of the neighborhood.

Moreover, the study focused primarily on analyzing the outcomes of localhood-inspired policy implementation rather than assessing whether there is a local demand or openness toward tourism. As localhood approaches aim to retain and celebrate local identity, further exploration is needed into how residents perceive tourism and whether they are willing

to engage with it. Understanding local attitudes could inform more sustainable and community-driven tourism strategies, especially if residents are also made more aware of tourism's potential benefits when guided by inclusive principles.

Another limitation lies in the relatively narrow pool of participants involved in *Programma Stadscultuur*. Only three individuals who received support from the programme were interviewed, providing limited insight into its overall effectiveness. Future research should expand this group to better assess whether the programme's initial steps aligned with localhood principles and to explore the potential for its adaptation or revival in a new form.

Finally, a key group of stakeholders was missing from this study: housing cooperatives and project developers. These actors have significant decision-making power and play a crucial role in shaping the neighborhood's future. Their vision regarding sustainable urban and tourism development is essential to understand, as they hold the capacity to either support or hinder efforts aimed at maintaining local identity. Future research should therefore include these perspectives to create a more complete and grounded view of how sustainable development in Oude Noorden might unfold.

6. Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate how localhood tourism strategies can be genuinely implemented in Rotterdam's Oude Noorden in the face of neoliberal urban development challenges. At its core, the research questioned whether localhood – widely promoted as a sustainable and community-centered tourism framework – can live up to its promises when implemented within market-driven governance systems. By studying Oude Noorden, a neighborhood deeply shaped by post-industrial decline and recent regeneration efforts, the research has shown how ideals of inclusivity, diversity, and liveability are both enabled and constrained by broader structural forces.

To address the research question, *How can Rotterdam's localhood tourism strategies be genuinely implemented in Oude Noorden in the face of neoliberal urban development challenges?*, and sub-question: *How do local actors from all four domains of the quadruple helix perceive the impacts and implications of localhood tourism implementation in Oude Noorden?* a qualitative case study was conducted using 14 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the quadruple helix: government, civil society, industry, and academia. The empirical findings were organized around three central themes: ambiguity in decision-making power, a dislocating identity and offer, and Oude Noorden's resilient fabric. Together, these themes have illuminated the often contradictory nature of localhood implementation on the ground. While the city's tourism vision discursively prioritizes liveability and inclusivity, decision-making remains fragmented, and the practical tools for embedding local values into tourism development are lacking.

The first finding, on ambiguous governance, revealed that institutional roles are unclear and unevenly distributed. Real estate developers and housing corporations hold disproportionate influence over the trajectory of neighborhood change, while municipal bodies and the DMO play limited and reactive roles. The result is a policy environment in which tourism and placemaking unfold without clear coordination, often reinforcing commercial logics at the expense of community needs. This governance ambiguity challenges assumptions in tourism literature that bottom-up strategies inherently lead to more inclusive outcomes.

The second theme, a dislocating identity and offer, demonstrated how the neighborhood is increasingly curated to appeal to a middle-class, often external audience. This selective representation sidelines long-standing residents and minority-owned businesses

, particularly along the Zwartjanstraat, and contributes to symbolic and spatial fragmentation. These findings add nuance to critiques of New Urban Tourism by showing how not only tourists, but tourism policy itself, can shape place identity in ways that displace the very communities it claims to empower.

The third theme, Oude Noorden's resilient fabric, however, offered a counterpoint. Despite systemic pressures, the neighborhood retains a rich network of informal, creative, and collaborative initiatives that demonstrate an ongoing commitment to place. These grassroots efforts illustrate that a more inclusive, place-based tourism strategy is not only desirable, but already emergent. However, without structural support, such initiatives remain precarious and vulnerable to being instrumentalized.

These findings hold several theoretical implications. First, they complicate optimistic readings of localhood strategies within tourism and placemaking literature. While the concept draws from regenerative, place-based, and participatory paradigms, its practical application is often hindered by the very neoliberal systems it operates within. In line with critiques by Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) and Volgger (2019), this research substantiates the claim that localhood risks becoming a form of "localwashing" – a progressive façade that masks market-oriented agendas.

Second, the research underscores the need to better integrate urban theory into tourism planning. While tourism studies often focus on destination management and visitor behavior, the case of Oude Noorden illustrates that tourism cannot be detached from broader urban governance, housing policy, and spatial justice. The findings support calls by scholars such as Nieuwland & Lavanga (2021) to consider tourism not as a siloed sector, but as a cross-cutting force within urban change.

From a policy perspective, the research shows that genuine localhood requires more than soft strategies or discursive shifts. It demands a reconfiguration of how power and resources are distributed in urban planning and tourism development. Recommendations proposed in this thesis such as ensuring long-term support for community initiatives, expanding cultural representation in neighborhood branding, and institutionalizing participatory governance mechanisms aim to provide actionable pathways for more equitable and grounded tourism policy.

Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of contextual sensitivity. Localhood cannot be rolled out through generic policies or abstract principles; it must be rooted in the

lived realities, struggles, and strengths of a specific place. In this sense, the thesis challenges policymakers to rethink what is meant by ‘the local’. Not as a brand identity, but as a complex and dynamic social fabric that must be protected and nurtured, especially in neighborhoods under transformation.

Finally, the research invites a critical reflection on tourism's role in the city. Rather than asking how tourism can grow or diversify, planners and policymakers must ask: *who benefits? who decides?* and *what kinds of futures are being enabled or foreclosed?* By repositioning tourism genuinely as a means to serve urban life rather than the other way around, cities like Rotterdam have the opportunity to move beyond symbolic gestures and toward more just and sustainable forms of development.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Interview Topic	Aim	Interview Questions
0. Demographics & Introduction	To understand how broader urban transformations (e.g. gentrification, policy shifts, tourism growth) are perceived by local actors, and how these are seen to affect cultural and social dynamics in the city overall. This helps situate Oude Noorden within the larger urban narrative.	0.1 What is your name? 0.2 How old are you? 0.3 How long have you lived in Rotterdam (which generation)? 0.4 Which neighborhood / part of Noord do you live in? 0.5 What kind of work do you do? 0.6 What does everyday (living) culture in Rotterdam Noord look like to you?
1. Perceptions & Experiences of Change in Rotterdam	To understand how interviewees perceive broader transformations in the city—urban development, tourism trends, or cultural shifts—offering wider context.	1. How is the identity of the city changing, in your opinion? 2. What stands out to you about Rotterdam’s urban redevelopment? 3. Do these changes align with the way you know Rotterdam? 3.a. Why or why not? 4. What are advantages and disadvantages? 4.a. For whom?
2. Perceptions & Experiences of Change in Oude Noord?	To explore how stakeholders experience neighborhood-specific developments. This includes changes in identity, demographics, and physical or cultural space. It allows insight into local concerns, tensions, or opportunities linked to place-making.	5. What kinds of places or things have you seen change over the past 5 years in Oude Noorden? 5.a. Positive or negative? 6. What places attract visitors? 7.a. Can you describe the type of visitors? 8. What impact do these changes have on Oude Noorden’s everyday life? 8.a. How do you respond to them? 9. When people say the neighborhood is 'developing,' what does that mean to you?
3. Relationship to Cultural/Tourism-Related Placemaking	To assess how each respondent relates to tourism or cultural initiatives; how they interpret their own role in shaping the neighborhood’s	10. Have you been involved in any local cultural/visitor-related projects/events? 11. How do you see your role (if any) in shaping the image or identity of Oude Noorden?

	identity and appeal; and explore if /how they have been supported, or involved in municipal programs	12. Have you ever been approached or supported by the municipality for cultural or tourism initiatives in the neighborhood? What was that like?
4. Cultural/Tourism Ecosystem in Oude Noorden	To identify the different actors, relationships, and infrastructures that form the cultural and tourism landscape of the neighborhood. This helps map out the ‘localhood’ ecosystem and understand how it functions or where it may be lacking.	<p>13. Who or what do you see as important players in the everyday cultural scene in Oude Noorden?</p> <p>13.a. What makes these important?</p> <p>13.b. who are involved?</p> <p>14. How do different groups—residents, entrepreneurs, artists, or the municipality—interact when it comes to shaping everyday culture?</p> <p>15. Are there any gaps or missing connections in this ecosystem that you’ve noticed</p>
5. Strengths and Opportunities in Oude Noorden	To gather perspectives on what makes the area unique, resilient, or attractive, and to explore ideas for its future development. These insights help ground the research in local aspirations and potential strategies for sustainable place-making.	<p>16. hat elements of the neighborhood do you think are most worth preserving or strengthening?</p> <p>17. In your opinion, what are the biggest opportunities for developing the area in a way that benefits the community?</p> <p>18. What kind of support or resources would be needed to move in that direction?</p>

Appendix B – Informed Consent

Master Thesis TCS at Erasmus School of Culture, History and Communication

Informatie en toestemming studenten-onderzoek Cultuur en de Bezoekerseconomie in Rotterdam Noord

Ik ben Lotte Verheggen en ik doe onderzoek voor mijn studie op de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Hieronder leg ik dit onderzoek uit. Als u iets niet begrijpt, of vragen heeft, dan kunt u die aan mij stellen.



Waar gaat het onderzoek over?

Voor mijn masterscriptie aan de opleiding *Tourism, Culture and Society* (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam) onderzoek de bezoekerseconomie en cultuur van Rotterdam Noord. De gemeente Rotterdam en haar partners streven er sinds 2020 naar om vormen van toerisme te ontwikkelen die bijdragen aan het lokale – aan de buurten en hun bewoners. In mijn onderzoek kijk ik kritisch naar hoe deze ambitie zich heeft ontwikkeld in Rotterdam Noord en hoe dit door lokale bewoners en culturele spelers wordt ervaren. Uiteindelijk wil ik onderzoeken hoe bezoekers op een betekenisvolle manier kunnen bijdragen aan de wijk en haar gemeenschap. Het onderzoek denkt daarbij na over nieuwe, meer rechtvaardige vormen van stedelijke bezoekersdynamiek.

U kiest zelf of u meedoet

Deelnemen aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt op ieder moment en zonder uitleg stoppen.

Wat kunt u verwachten van het interview?

In dit gesprek gaan we het hebben over uw beleving en mening van de bezoekerseconomie en culturele ontwikkelingen in Rotterdam Noord. Als u tijdens het gesprek een vraag niet wilt beantwoorden, hoeft dat niet; de interviewer gaat dan verder met de volgende vraag. Ik neem het geluid van het gesprek op, zodat ik het later kan uitwerken voor mijn onderzoek



Welke gegevens hebben wij van u nodig?

Wij slaan uw gegevens op zodat wij contact met u kunnen opnemen. Voor het onderzoek heb ik ook nog andere gegevens van u nodig:

- (Voor)naam
- Leeftijd
- Geslacht
- Beroep en functie
- Uw mening en ervaring met de bezoekerseconomie en culturele ontwikkelingen in Rotterdam Noord
- Geluidsopnamen van het gesprek

Ook hebben wij uw mailadres nodig, om de resultaten van het onderzoek naar u op te sturen per email.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

Uw privacy is en blijft maximaal beschermd. Er wordt op geen enkele manier vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u gedeeld waardoor u herkend zou kunnen worden. Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens worden gepubliceerd of gedeeld, worden uw gegevens anoniem gemaakt.

Bij de start van het onderzoek krijgt u een pseudoniem; dat betekent dat uw naam direct wordt versleuteld. Zo kunnen onderzoekers uw antwoorden analyseren zonder te weten dat u het bent. Alleen de onderzoeksleider bewaart de sleutel tot dit pseudoniem en deelt deze niet met anderen.

De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten worden veilig opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam en op versleutelde computers van het onderzoeksteam.

De gegevens kunnen – indien noodzakelijk, bijvoorbeeld voor controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit – in anonieme vorm beschikbaar worden gesteld aan een daartoe bevoegde onderzoekscommissie van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

Wat gebeurt er met de resultaten?

De resultaten van het interview worden verwerkt in de scriptie. Hierbij kunnen er quotes worden gebruikt die de bevindingen van het onderzoek ondersteunen. Deze resultaten worden ook besproken tijdens de verdediging van de scriptie. Na afloop worden de resultaten, inclusief geanonimiseerde data en citaten, opgeslagen in het Thesis Repository System van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Dit systeem is toegankelijk voor andere onderzoekers, zodat het onderzoek gecontroleerd kan worden en ter beschikking staat voor toekomstig gebruik.

Later spijt van uw antwoorden?

U kunt altijd stoppen met het onderzoek, ook tijdens het interview, zonder dat u een reden hoeft te geven. Mocht u later spijt krijgen van uw antwoorden, neem dan contact met mij op. Ik zal uw gegevens dan verwijderen. In sommige gevallen moeten we uw antwoorden bewaren, maar ik zal u altijd uitleggen waarom dit nodig is.

Heeft u vragen over het onderzoek of uw privacy?

Als u vragen hebt over het onderzoek of uw privacy rechten, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw antwoorden, neem dan contact op met mij:

Naam: Lotte Verheggen

Telefoonnummer: 06 12142697

E-mail: heg.lotte@gmail.com

Heeft u een privacy klacht? Mail dan naar fg@eur.nl (functionaris voor gegevens-bescherming) of kijk op www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl (Telefoonnummer: 088 – 1805 250).

Toestemmingsverklaring

Ik heb de informatiebrief gelezen.

Ik begrijp waar het onderzoek over gaat en dat de onderzoeker gegevens van mij bewaart.

Ook kon ik vragen stellen.

De onderzoeker heeft mijn vragen beantwoord.

Ik begrijp dat mijn naam niet wordt genoemd in eventuele publicaties.

Ik begrijp dat de onderzoeker mijn naam kan veranderen in een andere naam, en mijn gegevens (interview opname en transcript) gebruikt worden voor de scriptie

Door dit formulier te ondertekenen

1. geef ik toestemming voor deelname aan dit onderzoek
2. geef ik toestemming voor het verwerken van mijn persoonsgegevens;
3. bevestig ik dat ik ten minste 18 jaar oud ben;
4. geef ik aan dat ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek geheel vrijwillig is en ieder moment kan stoppen;
5. geef ik aan dat ik begrijp dat mijn gegevens zullen worden geanonimiseerd met het oog op publicatie, en verder gebruik voor onderwijs en onderzoek.

Kruis hieronder de hokjes aan als u hier toestemming voor geeft

Geluidsopname

Ik geef toestemming voor het opnemen van het interview doormiddel van een geluidsopname

☐

Antwoorden in de eindpresentatie en rapportages

Ik geef toestemming voor het gebruiken van mijn antwoorden in stukken, zoals de eindpresentatie en het eindrapport.

☐

Mijn naam:

Mijn handtekening:

Datum:

U ontvangt een exemplaar van het volledige informatie- en toestemmingsformulier.

Appendix C – Interview Participants

Participant	Role	Quadruple domain	Years of engagement Oude Noorden
Participant 1	DMO	Industry (Tourism)	No information
Participant 2	Resident & Creative Entrepreneur	Civil / Industry (Culture)	37 years
Participant 3	Academic & Creative entrepreneur	Academia / Industry (Culture)	1 year
Participant 4	Resident & Creative Entrepreneur	Civil / Industry (Culture)	20 years
Participant 5	Resident	Civil	52 years
Participant 6	Public cultural coordinator	Public (Mediator)	4 years
Participant 7	Retail Entrepreneur	Industry (Retail)	1 year
Participant 8.1	Municipal Program Manager	Public (Government)	No information
Participant 8.2	Municipal Program Manager	Public (Government)	No information
Participant 9	Creative entrepreneur	Industry	33 years
Participant 10	Public service manager	Public (Social welfare)	2 years
Participant 11	Creative entrepreneur	Industry (Culture)	3 years
Participant 12	Academic	Academia (Urban Tourism)	5 years
Participant 13	Resident	Civil	32 years
Participant 14	Retail Entrepreneur	Industry (Retail)	4 years

Appendix D – Codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Codegroup	Example quote
Ambiguity in decision-making power	Urban developments dominated by project developers and housing corporations	Commercialization of housing cooperatives	<i>"You used to just have a housing organization and they made sure people could live. Now that has just disappeared. Housing cooperatives have been commercialized. That is a really big problem."</i>
		Ownership concentrated in developers	<i>But how is it done? Who decides? Where is the power? (...) Ultimately, when you talk about ownership, it's still the project developers, real estate developers who own that. And they just work on the basis of certain values that are not necessarily always good for liveability</i>
		Dependency on rental property	<i>"You have to be able to take real estate off the market. And as long as you have to rent that, yes, then you are just always behind"</i>
		Displacement by development	<i>we are now being chased out of the area again and the municipality comes along with the developer and we are the ones who are screwed you know. We put all the energy into it for nothing</i>
		Controlled neighborhood branding	<i>But it's also all via policy, because a handy shop wanted to start there, for example. No, said the housing cooperative, that doesn't fit the image of the Zwaanshalskwartier. But if you make a street hip or nice or beautiful, you have to have practical things too. And it doesn't have to be just fun colours, crazy things, fiddles or riddles, because that doesn't light up the neighbourhood, it just doesn't necessarily make it attractive. First the residents and then the nice things</i>
	Barriers to sustaining entrepreneurial agency	Financial strain on initiatives	<i>"We started with 10 euros. And now last year 15 and this year 17.(...) Production has become massively expensive. So it's really hard work to keep that in balance. Just keeping it accessible".</i>
		Community agency pressured in a competitive environment	<i>"you have to be firm on your feet, if you want to keep that community idea alive"</i>
		Precarious access to premises	<i>"It is by grace that there are still all kinds of premises here that are still affordable".</i>
		Municipal restrictions	<i>"But it did lose its neighbourhood strength, because there are just these 3-metre high fences around it with black siding (...) It's not accessible anymore"</i>
		Feeling monitored or controlled	<i>"the municipality is simply seen more as an adversary you have to watch out for (...) than as a partner who likes the fact that you are trying to put this neighbourhood on the map</i>

		Complex funding application process	<i>"a job on its own"</i>
		Restrictive demands subsidies	<i>"People say then look for the big subsidies. But I don't want those (...) Then I get all demands and I don't want that"</i>
	Senses of distant municipal support and mistrust	Distance from large organizations	<i>"If you say, come over to talk, people don't always come, you have to look for it yourself (...). People also don't always feel, maybe completely understood. Especially not by the big organisations I can imagine"</i>
		Frustration lack of dialogue	<i>"It would be nice if we could have some more conversations with the municipality there. (...) I think things could be much easier if that were done differently".</i>
		Tokenistic collaboration	<i>"Instead of sort of buying off and ticking off in your annual report like 'hey we collaborated with that organization, we meet our sustainability target for this year'... that's obviously not how it works"</i>
		Marginalization of specific community groups	<i>But I know, for example, that there is a need, for example, for, yes, Islamic meeting places. (...) but, things like that are then less likely to get off the ground. (...). But I do think that the municipality and the cooperatives and so on, together have come up with a certain vision for the old north what they think is appropriate.</i>
		Top-down directives	<i>That is, of course, a completely upside-down world. For the municipality to start asking entrepreneurs who are already here to start doing work other than what they are doing because the municipality has a certain purpose with that piece of the city.</i>
A dislocating identity and offer	Spatial and social fragmentation	Limited accessibility for locals	<i>Well, I think that's all that comes in, (...) They're all expensive shops. And that's all the same genre that's on the Oogstmarkt. People, people who (...) in terms of income are doing well. And they can just all easily afford those kinds of parties, so that won't be much for residents.</i>
		Social and cultural exclusion	<i>But they also sometimes call it the white people's market".</i>
		Replacement of inclusive local spots	<i>"Nika (a coffee bar) used to sit there. The whole neighbourhood came there. Just having a cup of coffee. And that guy unfortunately stopped. Now Bar Lou is there. Those are just white highly educated Yuppies"</i>
		Division along educational and racial lines	<i>And apart from that, you really have very few places that are really used by everyone. (...) it's all pretty segregated, you know. White, highly educated ones go to the hip coffee shops. And less</i>

	Increasing liberalism		<i>educated ones go to the Dirk and to Zwartjansstraat.</i>
		Alienation	<i>“And the old old Rotterdamers don't feel at home in either place”.</i>
		Loss of personal, community-based negotiations	<i>Then I could walk in there, I could say (...) maybe we can make a deal (...). And because you know each other and favour each other, it was always possible. But that is no longer possible, because, for example, the hotel here on Schiekade, they have both become big companies (...), they [have] zero connection with the neighbourhood.</i>
		Profit-driven motives dominate	<i>And you also notice that with other things that come here in the neighbourhood, you know whether they are hotels, cafes, or other initiatives, it's quite difficult to connect with them, because they don't come from the neighbourhood and actually want to make pure profit</i>
		Economic rationality over community goals	<i>“Then every euro seems to be too much”</i>
	Romanticization	Newcomers lack local engagement	<i>And I could say, they don't bother you, but they also don't contribute anything. Because they don't really live here. They're only here for a short while. They have no connection, (...) they do their shopping elsewhere or have it delivered. Sometimes they don't even leave the house. No, they go to work, maybe to the gym, and that's it.</i>
		Critique of urban aestheticization	<i>On the negative side, of course, people might not feel completely at home in some kind of hip city or something. It should remain a city for everyone and all sides should be highlighted. It shouldn't become a kind of Disney city where everything just looks nice. Of course, all sorts of things happen on the other side too</i>
		Perception vs. reality	<i>So now it has changed enormously. From one of the worst neighbourhoods, even of the Netherlands and Rotterdam, to a very desirable neighbourhood, but where there are still quite a lot of problems, there is also a lot of poverty. The street, it's just which eye you look at it from.</i>
		Misaligned nostalgic narrative	<i>This is no longer a working-class neighbourhood. It is a neighbourhood with an all-around variety of cultures, ranks, positions, salaries. But it hasn't been what it used to be for a long time, and that underlying ecosystem no longer exists (...). So you can't on the one hand (...) imagine a bit of that romantic image of a working-class neighbourhood without the historical awareness that</i>

			<i>what then made a neighbourhood is no longer there</i>
Oude Noorden's resilient fabric	Spaces of encounter and integration	Mixed programming fostering cultural bridging	<i>It's [at Noorderdicht] also a bit about getting people who normally go to hip tents into a brown café through the mixed programming we put there. But also to get people who come from brown cafes to hip tents (...) through the programming. And that succeeds. And that's a big part of our success</i>
		Everyday encounter infrastructure	<i>That's the nice thing about PerronNoord (café). All kinds of people come in here. It's also a place where people exchange things that don't happen elsewhere. (...) And it's modest, so it's very different in nature, so that's why it attracts people who don't normally just meet each other</i>
		Demand for connection	<i>"you just see that people continue to feel the need to meet".</i>
	Collaborative networks	Network infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural networks ▪ Physical meeting places ▪ Strong creative infrastructure 	<i>So I think that there is quite some cooperation here already, between all kinds of organisations, that everyone knows how to find each other quite well (...) and that there are quite a few places where you can already do something. So the infrastructure is pretty good here</i>
		BIZ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-stakeholder engagement platform ▪ Cross-sector partnerships ▪ Shared visioning 	<i>At the branding, stakeholders were invited. Also residents, the whole neighbourhood. In the sense of municipality, property owners, residents, entrepreneurs and tenants. They all had a say in that positioning. (...). In the same way, we are now doing a follow-up project. That is about the quality of the outdoor space</i>
	Local ownership	Place attachment and emotional connection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 't Klooster ▪ Perron Noord ▪ Goud van Noord 	<i>You also notice in the neighbourhood that they often talk about my monastery or our monastery. People do quite really have such a certain sentiment about this place. That they really, indeed, that it feels like it belongs to them</i>
		Resident-led cultural events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bluegrass festival ▪ Noorderdicht ▪ Murals ▪ Poëm route 	<i>It is also truly a festival of the residents. In fact, half of what performs there comes from Noord. (...), but even those poems, which are also there on those flonders, those are also all poems by the residents (...). And is it not made up from above. (...) They sometimes talk about authenticity and things like that, about really local. But it doesn't get any more local than this. And it also really shows the soul of Oude Noorden.</i>