

# Sustainable tourism development in Amsterdam Oud-West

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The Netherlands is currently experiencing rapid tourism growth, with Amsterdam being the main destination. Academics widely discuss the impact of tourism on the environment, the economy and society, and stress the need for sustainable tourism development. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders (municipality, residents, and the tourism industry) to explore the current tourism situation and the extent to which sustainable tourism development is being applied in Amsterdam Oud-West. The main focus entailed two crucial aspects of the concept: stakeholder participation and strategic long-term tourism planning. Findings suggest that, although tourism numbers are increasing and further growth is expected, the situation in Oud-West is still in balance. Tourism adds value for the local economy, the society and the environment in a way that income is generated, jobs are created, contact with tourists is appreciated and the area “perks up”. On the other hand, the increase in real estate prices, pollution, nuisance and unsafe traffic are downsides. It is suggested 1) to further research the balance of stakeholder involvement in general because many researchers stress that all stakeholders should be involved in tourism planning, while participants indicated that not all stakeholders might have the right knowledge, and sometimes it can be inefficient and ineffective to involve stakeholders, and 2) to involve, along with residents, other stakeholder groups in the discussions regarding the plans for the destination. Currently, mainly residents are involved, while the interviews indicated that other stakeholder groups can add much value to the discussions.

**Keywords:** Amsterdam Oud-West, stakeholder participation, strategic long-term tourism, sustainable tourism development, tourism pressure

## Introduction

Rapid tourism growth is currently occurring in many popular tourist destinations across the world. In some of these destinations, such as Barcelona and Venice, this results in protesting residents. The Netherlands is no exception to this growth, with Amsterdam as the main tourist destination. There was an increase in hotel occupancy rates from 70 per cent in 2005 to 81 per cent in 2016 (Fedorova, Bakens, & Tepic, 2017). This has a big impact on the city and the surrounding areas in an economical, social and environmental way. The balance among these three dimensions is lost in some areas of the city, causing dissatisfaction among several stakeholders. Other areas of Amsterdam are less touristic (Schoonhoven, 2015), or tourism is currently increasing. This is the case in Amsterdam Oud-West, a rural area where most residents are satisfied, but where tourism numbers are increasing. Seeing the current tourism developments and the efforts of the municipality to spread tourism over the whole city, some residents are worried that within a few years their locality will be full of tourists (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2015; 2016). In order to achieve a balanced tourism situation that can be sustained over the long term, it is essential to make long-term tourism plans and to include all stakeholders in the decision-making process. This way, value is added to the economy, society and environment simultaneously, and tourism can be further developed in a sustainable way (Berke, 2002; Cavagnaro-Stuijt & Curiel, 2012; Clifton & Amran, 2011; Hall, 2000; World Tourism & Travel Council [WTTC], 2017). The aim

of this research is to further explore the tourism situation in Amsterdam Oud-West, and identify how this area applies the main concepts of sustainable tourism development. Different perspectives were taken into consideration to critically evaluate stakeholder participation and long-term tourism development, explaining the implementation of this widely discussed concept in practice.

## Literature review

Amsterdam has the highest number of overnight stays compared to the rest of the Netherlands, and a further increase of tourism numbers is expected due to low airline prices and the economic upswing everywhere in the world (Fedorova, 2018; Fedorova, Bakens, & Tepic, 2017; Fedorova & Van Der Wouden, 2016). In 2016, there was an increase of 8 per cent in nights spent by tourists in Amsterdam. In the city centre, there were almost 14 million stays. This accounts for 31 per cent of the total stays in the Netherlands, whereas the centre possessed 25 per cent of the total capacity in the Netherlands in 2016. For the whole AMA (Amsterdam Metropolitan Area) this percentage climbs to 42 per cent, while this region possesses 35 per cent of the available hotel capacity (Fedorova, Bakens, & Tepic, 2017). These statistics illustrate the high tourism numbers in comparison with the rest of the Netherlands. Besides hotels, vacation rentals are also popular. The current market share of AirBnB in Amsterdam is 12 per cent, with a total of 27 649 rooms. The most popular district in Amsterdam to rent out rooms via AirBnB is Oud-West/De Baarsjes, being

even more popular than the western part of the city centre. Guests pay an average price of €134 per night, which makes renting out rooms a profitable business (Colliers International, 2018). The popularity of this business could cause a shortage in the housing market, leading to an increase of real estate prices and nuisance for residents (AT5, 2018). This is an oft-discussed issue in the local media, and *Trouw* (a Dutch daily newspaper) mentioned that vacation rental companies cause a shortage of living places and high real estate prices (Zwam, 2016). In addition, local newspapers often report other tourism-related issues such as nuisance. The alderman of Amsterdam considers nuisance to be a matter of perception and thinks that it is in the nature of Amsterdam residents to complain. A member of *De Vereniging van Vrienden* strongly disagrees and thinks that residents complain because they have a strong connection with the city. Besides, it takes effort to officially complain, so it is not in their nature (Zwam, 2016). The municipality says nuisance is subjective, while many people claim that nuisance, at the central station for instance, is definitively not subjective (Schoonhoven, 2015). Another remark is that crowdedness is not only caused by tourists, but that the growing population contributes to this as well. Also, the image of Amsterdam attracts a certain type of tourist, relating to prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse. This type of tourists is the cause for the most negative perception towards tourism (Ko & Stewart, 2002).

In order to get an overall idea of the tourism situation in a particular destination the stage of tourism has to be determined. The tourism area life cycle explains each stage of the tourism life cycle and is originally based on the life cycle of a product (Butler, 1980; 2006). The *exploration* stage has few visitor numbers and hardly any tourist facilities, resulting in more contact between tourist and resident. In the *involvement* stage residents start to anticipate tourists by providing facilities and accommodation. There is contact between tourists and residents, and basic marketing is put in place. The social pattern of residents may be slightly adjusted during the tourist

season. In the *development* stage, external companies provide accommodation, replacing small-scale lodgings. There is aggressive marketing, physical change in the area and various cultural attractions are developed with less contact between tourists and residents. Typical for the *consolidation* stage is that the numbers of tourists outnumber the residents. The local economy depends on tourism, and often residents, especially those who do not economically benefit from tourism, start to protest against tourism. The *stagnation* phase characterises a slow decline in tourist numbers due to carrying capacity being reached, and may cause social and environmental problems. Marketing efforts are needed to maintain visitors numbers, but the destination is not really popular anymore. After this stage, the life cycle can either decline or enter the *rejuvenation* stage. When a destination falls into the *decline* stage, it cannot compete with other destinations. Entering the rejuvenation stage is only possible by either finding a new type of tourist or providing unique attractions to keep the destination interesting for the same target group. A particular destination consists of various districts, therefore a particular stage is hardly ever found in its pure form (Garay & Cànoves, 2011). In addition, Butler (2006) emphasises that not all tourist areas experience life cycle stages as clearly explained above.

From the statistics it is clear that tourism growth is occurring in Amsterdam Oud-West. On their website, the municipality admitted that it cannot – and does not want to – obstruct the growing stream of tourism because this is not in line with the values of the city (international, open, inclusive, and hospitable) (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2015). The project *Stad in Balans* has been established in order to manage the growing numbers of tourists in a sustainable way. The project has four central focus points: to create more quality and diversity in the shopping and hospitality industry supply; to reduce nuisance and create boundaries regarding tourism growth; to spread visitors over the entire city; and to create more space on the streets and in the urban areas. The World Tourism Organisation (1993, p.

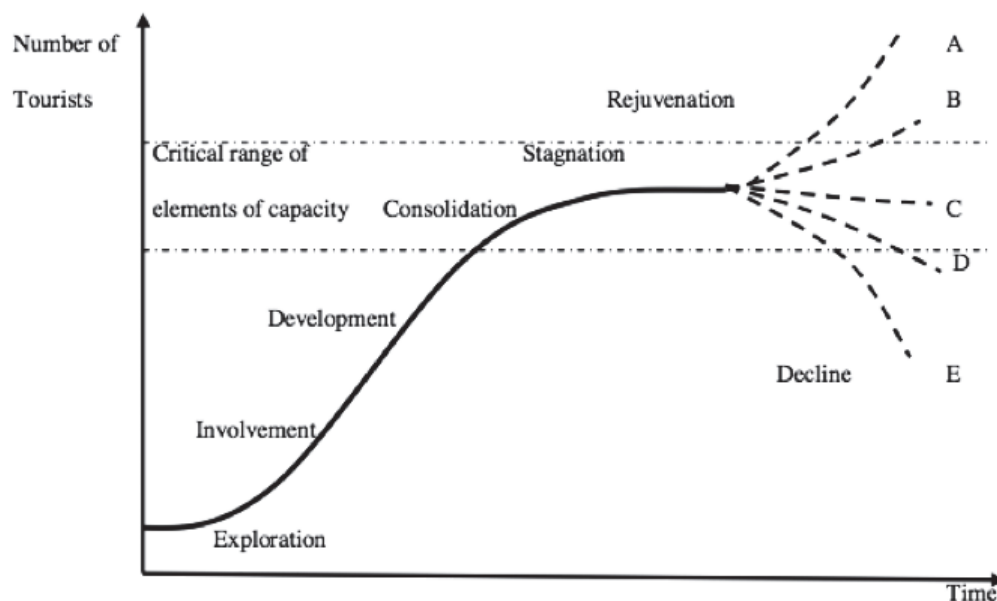


Figure 1: Tourism lifecycle (Butler, 1980)

19) came up with one of the most widely cited definitions of sustainable tourism development: It

...meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

In this definition it is said that the social and environmental dimension should be maintained in order to achieve sustainable tourism development. Maintaining the economical dimension is not mentioned, saying something about the nature of tourism and that its economical profitability might be at the cost of the society and environment. The main objectives of the *Stad in Balans* project do not seem to focus on the economy, but mainly on the society because they try to minimise nuisance, and boundaries are created with regard to tourism. The objectives are not really focused on the environment.

According to the World Tourism & Travel Council, and many other researchers, involving all stakeholders in long-term tourism planning is crucial for sustainable tourism development (Cavagnaro-Stuijt & Curiel, 2012; Clifton & Amran, 2011; Gunn, 1988; Keeble, 1988; WTTC, 2017a). According to Freeman (1984), everyone who is affected by or can affect the achievement of certain objectives are stakeholders. The most important stakeholders in tourism development are the industry itself, the environment and the local community (World Tourism Organisation [WTO], 1993). These three stakeholders are legitimate, and they have power and urgency. The study by Kayat (2002) illustrated a significant relation between power to influence the decision-making process and positive tourism attitudes. Kayat even considers power to be a predictor of tourism attitudes. In this context, power can be defined as the economic access to resources, position in the community, and skills (Madrigal, 1993). There are researchers, however, who did not find that power to influence the decision-making process is related to positive tourism attitudes: "Perceived influence over tourism-related decisions, as well as involvement in the tourism industry, does not guarantee that a person will see solely the positive or negative side of the tourism industry" (Látková & Vogt, 2012, p. 62). It has also been found that the degree of involvement and informedness is of importance on stakeholders' perceptions on tourism (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). As discussed before, there are different opinions regarding the effect of involvement. Informedness seems to have a positive effect on residents' attitudes. Mak, Cheung, and Hui (2017) identified that the local government can enhance the degree of involvement and informedness by promoting the public consulting hours so that more people can attend these meetings. Mak et al. also found that most people (strongly) agree that residents should have an active role and participate in tourism planning, but a lack of knowledge or not being in the position to contribute are reasons not to participate in the decision-making process.

Long-term tourism planning is, next to stakeholder participation, considered to be the most important implication for sustainable tourism development (Hall, 2000; Simpson, 2001). A successful destination management approach takes economic, social and environmental issues into consideration

simultaneously. Here it is important that the private sector is well regulated, but tourism has a very complex nature; the chance that the private sector completely satisfies the objectives set by the local government is rather unlikely, which complicates the balance between guests and hosts (Theobald, 2005). This might be because the private sector mainly consists of commercial companies and therefore prioritises economic objectives rather than social or environmental objectives. Therefore other factors such as support from politicians and having experience and knowledgeable of local authorities are essential in destination management.

So, as stressed before, sustainable tourism development has two main considerations: long-term tourism planning; and applying stakeholder participation. Stakeholder participation aims at involving stakeholders in the main decision-making process. Hall (2000) identifies that strategic long-term tourism planning has three objectives: conservation of tourism resource values; experience of visitors who interact with tourism resources; and maximising economic, social and environmental returns for the communities' stakeholders. Figure 2 provides a conceptual framework of sustainable tourism development. The community, municipality and tourism industry are included since they are the key stakeholders.

For a complete assessment of the economic value of tourism (job creation and rise in GDP), the indirect and induced spending needs to be taken into consideration along with the direct contribution. For the Netherlands this means that for every euro that is directly spent on tourism, 2.8 euros contribute to the GDP. The same multiplier principle can be applied to job creation. In 2016, tourism created 446 000 direct jobs, whereas the total amount of jobs created by tourism is

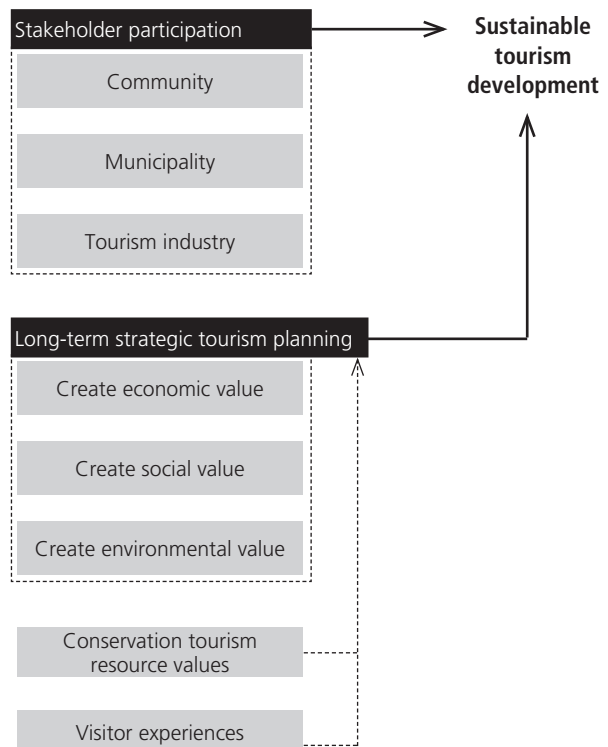


Figure 2: Conceptual framework (Noordeloos, 2018)

677 000, resulting in a multiplier of 1.5 (WTTC, 2017b). Besides these positive impacts, tourism can have economic downsides too. Tourism growth leads to an increased number of flights from and to Schiphol airport, causing pollution and noise. Much revenue is created for Schiphol, so they want to expand, whereas the limit of flights has already been reached, resulting in protests from locals (Hermandes, 2018; nu.nl, 2018; RTL Z, 2018). Another disadvantage of tourism is scarcity in the real estate market, which increase the prices of properties.

Social and environmental impacts of tourism seem to be negatively related to residents' attitudes. Of the social impacts, the factor "improves understanding and image of different communities/cultures" was the most positive (0.55), whereas "increases alcoholism, prostitution, and sexual permissiveness" was perceived to be the most negative factor (0.70) (Ko & Stewart, 2002). This difference illustrates that negative social factors have a stronger relation to overall perceptions of tourism than positive social factors. The factor regarding "increases alcoholism, prostitution and sexual permissiveness" might be especially applicable to inhabitants of Amsterdam, since Amsterdam is well-known for the red light district, which promotes alcohol and drug abuse, and prostitution. Carneiro, Eusébio, and Caldeira (2018) have found that the interaction between residents and tourists does not occur very frequently, and when it does, the interaction is often superficial. [D]espite this, it still causes high satisfaction for residents. With regard to the environment, tourism has both positive and negative effects. According to Ko and Stewart (2002), the most negatively perceived environmental effect is "increases environmental pollution (litter, water, air and noise)". "Damage natural environment and landscape" and "destroy local ecosystems" are other negative effects tourism has on a particular destination. Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001) add that tourism causes traffic congestion and overcrowded parks, beaches and other public spaces in a community. Positive effects on the environment are improved public facilities such as the pavement and traffic network, improvement of the infrastructure of utilities such as water and electricity, and preservation the environment and the improved appearance of a destination (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Besides this, tourism provides leisure facilities in a destination from which locals profit as well, such as parks (Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). Overall, researchers agree that negative environmental effects outweigh the positive effects because feelings towards negative effects are stronger. The same goes for social effects of tourism (Bonimy, 2011; Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001).

## Method

In this study it is important to approach the main issue from different perspectives and to consider underlying motives and reasons in order to compare and contrast perceptions of sustainable tourism development. Therefore interpretivism is applicable due to the fact that participants have different thoughts and different "realities" regarding the main concept. This epistemology really fits the constructivism philosophy and leads to a mainly inductive research approach. However, this study also contains a deductive element since the theoretical concept of sustainable tourism development is used as the basis of the research. Therefore both a deductive and inductive

research approach is chosen since there are many other factors that influence the application of the concept in practice besides the factors in the main framework (see Figure 2).

The design for this exploratory study is purely qualitative. The aim of the research is to identify how Amsterdam Oud-West applies the main concepts of sustainable tourism development. Therefore, obtaining stories and examples about tourism, tourism management, involvement and collaboration are essential to clarify how the concepts of sustainable tourism are applied. The critical question regarding this design is about external validity of a case study. How can findings that are based upon one single case be generalised? The answer to this question is surprisingly simple: it cannot. It is very important to interpret findings in the context of the particular case study. How a destination is managed depends on many factors, such as culture, tourist popularity and number of residents, and therefore findings simply cannot be generalised. Still, it can provide insights and suggestions on destination management that, seen in the right context, can be useful for other destinations.

Data was obtained using in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews that took between 35 and 90 minutes. Sample triangulation was a relevant and applicable method to strengthen the dataset since the main issue was approached from various perspectives, which ensured credibility. The perspectives that have been included are from residents, the local government, and the tourism industry. The same interview guide was used for each stakeholder group, some questions, however, differed slightly in order to obtain as much relevant knowledge as possible. All interviews included questions on the current and expected state of tourism, the extent of involvement and collaboration, on the economic, social and environmental effects of tourism, on visitor experiences and questions to explain the relation of the participant and Oud-West for validity reasons and to ensure reliability. In the interview guides there was a focus on observations and examples of the implementation of sustainable tourism development together with perceptions and personal opinions. Along with the interviews, a complaint analysis was carried out. Using information from one of the local newspapers, the number of complaints and other reports that concern tourism in Oud-West from March 2017 till March 2018 were analysed.

For this study, residents with positive as well as negative tourism perceptions were included, as well as economically benefiting and non-economically benefiting residents. Furthermore, three interviews were conducted with the tourism industry, including a duty manager of a hotel, a manager of a tourism shop, and one cultural entrepreneur. Two interviews were conducted with the local government, including one regional manager and one employee of the *Stad in Balans* project. In addition to the interviews, there were two separate data documents. One resident and one participant representing the tourism industry answered the questions in the interview guide via email since they were not able to do an interview because of a lack of time. This is a limitation for the sample since probing was not possible and therefore these documents lack in-depth data. Many participants live in Amsterdam Oud-West, so they have much knowledge and experience with tourism in this area. The methods to select the sample were convenience and snowball sampling. Two

participants from the municipality knew entrepreneurs and residents that were suitable to participate in this study.

The interviews were conducted in Dutch since this was easier for most participants. While transcribing the audio recordings, the interviews were directly translated into English. After the transcripts were complete, all the meaningful segments were coded and assigned a few words to identify the topic of the segments. All the codes for a single interview were put in one column of a table; each stakeholder group has its own table. Since the conceptual model gives a clear structure and identification of the main topics of sustainable tourism development, the main themes could be decided based on the conceptual model. These main themes all got a different colour. The codes in the tables were given the colour that fit the themes. All main themes could be easily compared and sub-themes were defined. By doing this it was easy to find pieces of texts about a specific theme and thus to compare and contrast opinions, explanations and examples on one specific theme (Renner & Taylor-Powell, 2003). In order to ensure validity as well as reliability, an external person without prior knowledge of the main issue of the study coded several parts of various data documents to see if the codes were similar, and they were. This person also checked the coding tables and some corrections were made.

The interviewees were informed and had to accept beforehand that the interview would be recorded and transcribed and that the information obtained would be used for this research. It was not necessary to ask the permission to use the name of the participant because names were not important for this matter so they were not used. Therefore the interviews are not mentioned by name but by a code, such as res1, municip2 or indus3, etc.

## Findings

### **The state of current and future tourism**

All participants noticed tourism growth, but according to them the overall the situation in Oud-West seems to be in balance.

*I do not have the feeling that it is too crowded, I think that there is a good balance. (Res2)*

*We notice that tourism is slowly moving this way. (Indus1)*

*At first there were only Amsterdam residents living here, but we notice now that it becomes more touristic. (Indus3)*

*Tourism in our neighbourhood does not cause any problems. In contrast, it has added value to the local economy and to the liveliness of the neighbourhood. (Indus4)*

It is remarkable that participants directly make a clear distinction between tourism in the city centre and Oud-West.

*They talk about tourism every single day in Amsterdam, but that is because the problem is relevant in the city centre. (Indus2)*

*You cannot walk normally in the area around the central station and De Nieuwedijk etc., that is already beyond the borders of sustainability. Here we have a nice balance; there are possibilities for growth. (Res3)*

It is hard to identify one form of the tourism life cycle to this district because there are various characteristics that all

belong to other stages of the life cycle. Most participants agree that there are plenty of tourism facilities (development stage), residents provide accommodation for tourism by renting out their apartments (involvement stage), some residents start to protest against tourism (consolidation stage), and the municipality states that no marketing is used to promote the area (exploration stage). As discussed by Butler (2006) and Garay and Cànoves (2011), sometimes it is not possible to find a stage in its pure form, which is the case in Amsterdam Oud-West. Nevertheless, it became apparent that the problem of mass tourism is applicable in the city centre and not particularly in Oud-West. Tourism numbers are increasing, however, but expectations for the future differ among participants. Some expect tourism numbers to stagnate after five years, while others think that Amsterdam might become a world city.

*I have joined relatively many meetings and I see that there is much fear regarding tourism. Many people say "look in the city centre it is really bad, it will be the same here within a few years'. I do not have the fear that this area is going to be a circus with beer bikes and Nutella shops and all these things that are aimed at tourists. (Indus2)*

*Maybe the hype around Amsterdam will stop; I will not exclude that thought. (Indus1)*

*Maybe we are becoming more like a world city. (Indus3)*

*All possible scenarios indicate growth, unless something very unexpected and unfortunate happens, but in fact there will be much growth. Two years ago the predictions were 25 000 000 visitors in 2025. If we look at the current predictions, this number is already relatively low. (Municip2)*

As explained in the paragraph on the tourism life cycle, either keeping the destination attractive for the existing target group or focusing on a new target group can achieve further growth. In 2015, De Hallen opened, a relatively new tourist attraction in Oud-West. For the near future there are no plans, however, for opening up additional tourism attractions. Not all participants, however, seem to agree on the number of tourism attractions.

*Of course, De Hallen are very crowded, there are more tourists than residents, but I do not avoid it, while I do avoid the Damrak [popular area in central Amsterdam], etc. (Municip2)*

*The fact is that there is not much to see for tourists in Oud-West. Tourists do not have anything to do here and I do not say this because the area is not interesting, in contrast, this place is very interesting and nice to live in, but not for tourists. (Indus2)*

Considering the fact that the marketing department does not actively promote the city in order to limit tourism growth, currently there is no new target group attracted. Once tourism numbers seem to drop, this might be an action to take to make this destination more attractive. Uncertain factors such as the global economic situation in the future, expansion of Schiphol and climate goals make it even harder to predict the tourism situation in the future.

*I hope that the climate goals will play a role in this. Because tourism growth does not go hand-in-hand with climate goals, if we want to do something against ruining nature, we should use fewer airplanes. (Res3)*

### **Stakeholder participation**

There are several reasons for stakeholders to be involved, or not, in tourism planning.

*My daughter is growing up in this area and because of that I find it important that the situation stays manageable. (Res2)*

*I live in this area and I think it is important to establish something that my grandchildren can profit from as well. If I can influence or change things in a positive way, I would feel bad if I couldn't do it. (Indus3)*

*Some people experience things in the city and they have an opinion, but they have no clue about what to do with their opinions or what they can do about it themselves and how to influence it. (Res2)*

*The people who have problems with something are the ones you hear. They will say that there are way too many restaurants and hotels. You will not hear someone who is happy about the fact that finally there are more restaurants, because these people do not protest against it. They do not send emails and they do not attend meetings to share how happy they are about the developments. (Municip1)*

A feeling of responsibility towards future generations and community attachment are reasons for participants to involve themselves, whereas other participants are satisfied or they do not know how to exert influence. Currently, there is a small part of the residents involved in tourism planning; these are mostly highly educated white residents.

*It is actually a very diverse group, with residents from all over the city. There is even someone included who lives in south-east. They are all very involved. What we notice is that they are all white, highly educated residents. (Municip2)*

*People who do these kind of things? Yes, white, highly educated people. The only diversity in these groups is the age range. (Res2)*

According to the municipality, most residents are satisfied about the tourism situation, nevertheless they try to involve residents by inviting them to participate during information meetings to discuss plans for the destination. This was found through the analysis of the local newspaper *De Echo*. The municipality mainly carries out plans made by politicians, and they have an advisory role to the main decision-makers because of their knowledge. Involvement within the tourism industry depends on the role in the industry. A regular employee of a hotel, for instance, does not seem to have the opportunity to participate, whereas entrepreneurs in the tourism industry can exercise more influence. Entrepreneurs play their part in a way that they are looking for collaborations.

*I have the feeling that I only play a small role in this... If we do a good job, get good reviews and ask a high room price, then people will keep visiting. So in that*

*sense I play a role in tourism development...I would like to be more involved. (Indus1)*

*We have around ten breweries in Amsterdam, everyone individually brings one box to each café. They said "okay guys deliver it all together", then one person goes to all the cafés with one car. All different companies also maintained public green, then entrepreneurs said "that's crazy, 5 cars in a row! Why don't we do it all together with one car?" They said to the municipality "if you give the money that you invest in it to us, we make sure we manage it by using only one person. That is cheaper so we can have more green". (Municip1)*

The desired level of involvement is different for everyone. The main discussion is about the extent to which people should be involved. According to the literature, involving stakeholders is stressed as one of the most important aspects of sustainable tourism development (Cavagnaro-Stuijt & Curiel, 2012; Clifton & Amran, 2011; Faulkner, 2003; Gunn, 1988; Keeble, 1988; WTTC, 2017a). Several participants agree on the importance of collaboration, and emphasise the participation of stakeholder groups.

*A while ago there was a symposium with entrepreneurs, home owners, politicians and the residents. It was about how to avoid crazy tourism situations. We can regulate everything but we can also collaborate, that works better. (Municip1)*

*No I don't think that residents are involved enough. I think they noticed they need to involve residents more so then focus groups were being established. But residents are less organised; economical parties are more interesting for the municipality. (Res3)*

Whereas the arguments of some participants are in line with the literature, others say that, due to a lack of knowledge, it might be better not to let everyone fully participate in tourism management.

*I think it is good to know what people appreciate what is bothering people, to know things they encounter, where irritations arise: it is important to know what they experience. On the other hand, we can be involved but my expertise lies somewhere else. So, sometimes I can come up with something that makes sense, but it is not my expertise. I think it is better to ask people about their experiences, wishes, irritations, desires and how to get to them, rather than asking them to come up with solutions, because sometimes these are things that you need to study. We can organise sessions where diverse people look at the situation with a fresh mind. Sometimes people with other expertise need to look at your problem, but you cannot expect that you can create a coherent long-term policy out of that. (Res2)*

This is in line with the suggestion from Mak et al. (2017) that a lack of knowledge or not being in the position to contribute can be reasons for inhabitants not to participate in the decision-making process. It is definitively important to know how stakeholders feel about tourism, but letting them participate in the development of long-term plans on a complicated matter in which many different things are at

stake might not be the solution according to some. In addition, involving all stakeholders in tourism plans can sometimes be at the cost of the effectiveness of the plans.

*It is advantageous to involve residents, but not with everything. For instance, the measure to forbid tourism shops was prepared secretly and discussed with no one. This was approved in a secret meeting with the city council. These are very far-reaching measures. At the moment that we announce such a measure, entrepreneurs might quickly start a new shop. The same happened with the tourism taxes. This was decided without discussion with other stakeholders. So sometimes residents are involved, but not always; both options occur.* (Municip1)

Having discussed the contra-arguments of stakeholder participation, it could be said that not everyone fully agrees with the statements of the majority of the researchers, namely that all stakeholders should be involved in tourism planning, because involving everyone is time consuming, so sometimes it is less efficient and effective, people might not have the right knowledge and people do not want to be involved themselves.

### **Long-term tourism development**

Essential objectives for long-term strategic tourism planning are conservation of tourism resource values, visitor experiences and maximising economic, social and environmental returns for stakeholders (Hall, 2000). According to Andereck et al. (2005), the most important tourism resources are the inhabitants. Some residents have moved out of Amsterdam because of the current tourism developments, but participants indicate that original residents still live in the area. So it can be said that this important tourism resource is available in Oud-West.

*Original Amsterdammers still live here.* (Res1)

Visitor experiences are essential for the obvious reason that tourists will not visit a destination if they do not like the destination, meaning there will not be any tourism to sustain. The tourism industry takes visitors' experiences seriously by actively asking for reviews and feedback to improve performance. The municipality monitors tourism attitudes by looking at statistics, such as numbers of visitors in museums, canal trips, etc. And they try to enhance visitor experiences by increasing the social encounters between them and locals.

*Our guests are very influential in the way we operate. Reviews and comments, we want to know how we can maximise convenience for guests.* (Indus1)

The main discussion of the economic effects of tourism can be summarised as follows:

*People also protest against attracting big international companies. Someone of the VVD [Dutch political party] will say that it is good; good for the economy and the employment opportunities. "No" says the other group, then we lose our houses or expats ruin the market.* (Municip1)

Besides job creation and income, participants mentioned increase in diversity as an additional benefit. On the other hand, tourism growth contributes to a strong increase in the real estate prices. This is becoming a serious problem in the area.

*There is much misuse by using vacation rentals. Someone with a social housing apartment moves in at their friend's place for six weeks because they can rent out the house for thousands of euros. That is not allowed, especially not for social housing apartments.* (Indus2)

*The thing that I am very afraid of is that because the rental prices are becoming so expensive, some people do not have another choice but to rent it out, otherwise they cannot pay their rent. Then you create another problem. I noticed that more and more students in the think tank<sup>1</sup> said "but if I don't rent it out, I cannot pay the rent". This way we maintain the problem.* (Res2)

Social and environmental impacts seem to be negatively related to residents' attitudes (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). The most negative effect is "increases alcoholism, prostitution, and sexual permissiveness" (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Amsterdam has the image that everything is possible with regard to alcohol and drug usage, and therefore this negative perception effect is especially applicable in Amsterdam.

*People think that this is a Valhalla to use drugs and alcohol.* (Indus1)

*We saw these British guys who come to visit and they wear very stupid costumes and only drink alcohol.* (Indus2)

Participants mentioned that groups of tourists who drink a lot of alcohol and celebrate stag parties are most bothersome. The nuisance of these groups is tackled by different campaigns.

*We recently started two campaigns, one is called "enjoy and respect", and this campaign is aimed at Dutch and British visitors, at young males. The campaign makes very clear that although Amsterdam has the image that everything is possible and allowed, it is not tolerated if you do not obey the rules.* (Municip2)

Another negative social effect is that people slowly move away from the area, so there is no social cohesion anymore. And the increase in expatriates has negative consequences for the social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

*The bad part is that there are no normal people returning. People move out but when they leave the house, it is sold or rented out via vacation rental services or for expats. There aren't people moving back in who care for the society, and that will happen in Oud-West and east as well.* (Res3)

Positive factors that have been mentioned are "improves quality of life" and "increases availability of recreational facilities and entertainment", and interaction between residents and visitors is proven to cause satisfaction for residents (Carneiro et al., 2018).

*But you know, the area perks up because of it, of course.* (Res1)

*I think tourism is cosy. I always try to have a chit-chat with tourists, so I like it.* (Res1)

Although the environmental effects of tourism can be both positive and negative, the general perception of the relation between tourism and the environment is negative (Chen,

2000; Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001)

*Tourism only creates pressure for the environment.* (Res2)

*Tourism still plays a negative role for the environment.* (Indus1)

From all the environmental effects that have been mentioned in the literature review, the participants often mention waste and the pollution of airplanes as the most negative effects. A positive effect that was mentioned several times by the participants is that the area “perks up”.

Most participants have other ideas about “long-term” tourism planning. Whereas one participant does not look any further than two years, the other considers 2030 to be long term.

*We only look at a period of two years because that is how fast the developments are going.* (Indus3)

*I think that with the municipality takes a term of ten years into consideration, but that not is long term.* (Res2)

*They often talk about 2030, something like that. We cannot really look further into the future because you don't know what is going to happen to the economy, higher airline prices. I think that they often think in terms of 2030, 2025.* (Res3)

## Conclusions

This paper concludes that tourism in Amsterdam Oud-West is still in balance, but forecasts indicate strong tourism growth for the coming years. With regard to stakeholder participation, it can be said that the municipality tries to involve residents and that the tourism industry seek collaborations with other stakeholder groups. Not all residents feel the urge to involve themselves in tourism planning since it is time consuming or they are already satisfied. The critical question that can be raised is the extent to which stakeholders should be involved. Not all stakeholders have the right knowledge to work on coherent long-term policies, and in some cases it might be ineffective and inefficient to involve stakeholders. For long-term tourism planning there are some critical considerations as well. First of all there is no clear classification for “long term”; for one participant the year 2030 is long term, for another this is ten years in advance, whereas another thinks two years in advance. In addition, currently there is no equal added value for the economy, society and environment. Although the area “perks up” because of tourism and social encounters cause satisfaction, the effects of tourism on the society and environment is in general considered to be negative, mainly because of nuisance, a decrease in social cohesion, and increases in pollution. For the economy, tourism is beneficial in terms of job creation and additional income. There are, however, some serious issues for the future. Renting out apartments via vacation rentals and the misuse of housing drive up the property prices. For some residents the only way to be able to pay the rent is to rent out their apartments for several days, which keeps the problem and enlarges some negative social and environmental effects. In response to these conclusions, it is suggested to further research the

balance of involvement of the various stakeholder groups. Furthermore, it is suggested to involve various stakeholder groups in the meetings and discussions regarding the plans for the destination. Currently, mainly residents are involved, while both the literature and participants stress the benefits of involving various groups of people.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> As an initiative of the project Stad in Balans, a think tank has been established. It consists of various inhabitants of Amsterdam that now have the opportunity to participate in the tourism decision-making process.

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