

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM REQUIRES INCLUSIVE CITY POLICIES.

A case study in Rotterdam, the Netherlands



## INTRODUCTION



Many cities want to develop **sustainable tourism\*** using **creative strategies**. One way to do this is by attracting tourists that explore the city beyond its most touristic places, for example by visiting more local and creative areas. A study in *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* investigates **the role of creative entrepreneurs in the tourism development in Rotterdam**, one of the largest cities in the Netherlands. The study reveals that such sustainable tourism strategies only work when a diverse group of local residents are addressed and feel involved.

*\* / (sus·tain·a·ble) / (tour·ism) /: tourism that balances the interest of visitors with those of residents.*

## TAKE AWAYS

- Creative entrepreneurs who focus on engaging with the city and local people first, could lead to more sustainable tourism. However inclusivity of the diverse groups of residents in the city need to be considered to avoid exclusion and growing inequality.
- The consequences of urban (tourism) development based on creativity, such as rising rents or the arrival of international companies like Starbucks in popular areas, need to be considered when creating sustainable urban tourism strategies.
- This study shows that urban development strategies and tourism strategies are highly connected. Policy makers should thus not consider them as separate things. If sustainable tourism is the aim, inclusive and sustainable urban development policies need to be created.

## STUDY INFORMATION

Interviews were conducted with creative entrepreneurs, such as gallery owners or artists with a local shop, at different locations in Rotterdam that could potentially target tourists. Questions were asked about their role in urban development and tourism, the level of interaction with tourists and how they view tourism development in Rotterdam in general.

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Interviews with creative entrepreneurs in Rotterdam, the Netherlands

## FINDINGS

- The majority of the creative entrepreneurs focus on local people first, tourism is considered a nice bonus. They could therefore be part of a sustainable tourism strategy because it does not lead to touristification of the city (e.g. only souvenir shops).
- Creative entrepreneurs saw a role for themselves in urban development by making certain areas of the city more attractive with their businesses. At the same time they recognized some of the negative consequences of this (for example rising housing prices due to popularity).
- In creative areas that are more popular with tourists (but also with locals), like Witte de With, global companies such as Starbucks or Ben & Jerry's appear. Local creative entrepreneurs now consider these areas as less authentic and creative. As these companies do not benefit the local economy they also consider this less sustainable.
- Many entrepreneurs pointed out that the urban development strategies mostly target creative and higher educated people to come to the city. Therefore, they feel that many locals do not feel included or benefit from these developments. At the same time the gap between rich and poor is growing.

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