

# Rotterdam, stay close to what you are!

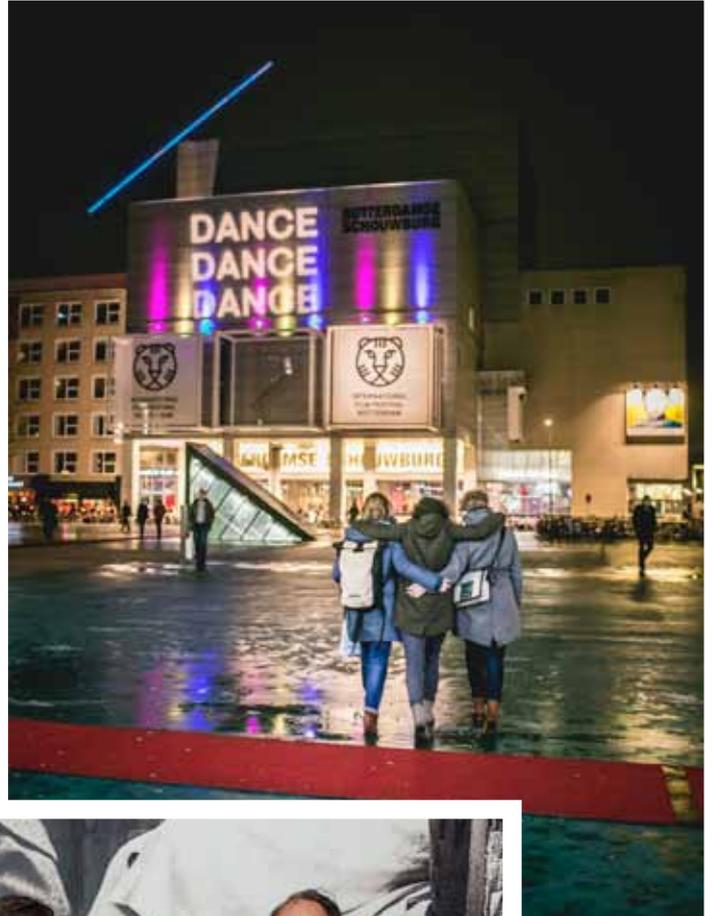
Becoming an international cultural hotspot, starts with authenticity

Recommendations of the Expert Edition of the International Advisory Board:  
the IABx 2017 on Culture



IABx  
ROTTERDAM

**ROTTERDAM. MAKE IT HAPPEN.**



# Rotterdam, stay close to what you are!

Becoming an international cultural hotspot, starts with authenticity

Recommendations of the Expert Edition of the International Advisory Board:  
**the IABx 2017 on Culture**



# Index

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Preface  | 4  |
| 01 Recommendations                                       | 6  |
| 02 The process of the IABx (October 2016 - October 2017) | 16 |
| 03 Findings in April                                     | 18 |
| 04 Reactions to the findings                             | 24 |
| 05 Relevant global trends                                | 26 |
| 06 Relevant local developments in Rotterdam              | 28 |
| 07 IABx Members  | 29 |
| Colophon   | 30 |

# Preface

The International Advisory Board Rotterdam 2017



## Foreword by Pex Langenberg

Rotterdam has experienced enormous developments on various fronts in the past five years. Its image has improved significantly, both nationally and internationally. As a tourist destination, the growth of its popularity is outperforming the national average in the Netherlands, but Rotterdam is also on the rise as a business destination and as a destination for creative industries and international encounter.

The ambition of both the cultural sector and the city is to strengthen Rotterdam's position as a national and international cultural hotspot as well. How can we profile the city in such a way that it really earns a place on the map internationally, not only for tourists, but also for the art lovers, curious residents and collectors?

For that reason, we organised an expert edition of the International Advisory Board, known as IABx. As Rotterdam's Vice-Mayor for Culture, I am proud of the commitment of the sector itself and of many other local stakeholders. This gives me confidence that Rotterdam will indeed strengthen its position as an international cultural hotspot in the years to come.

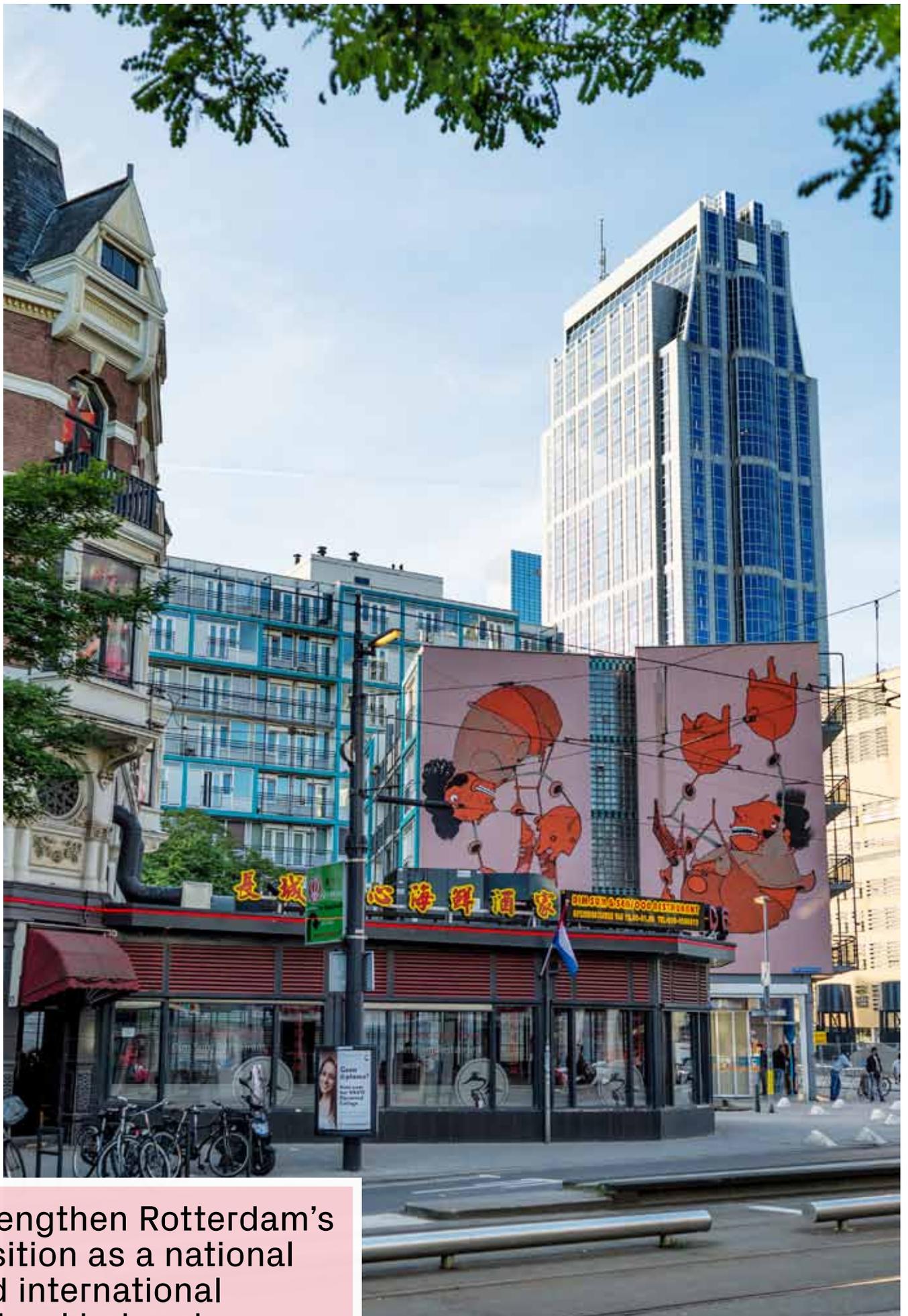
**Pex Langenberg**



## Introduction by Jan Peter Balkenende

After World War II, Rotterdam spent several decades focused on rebuilding both port and city. In the 1960s, the new Doelen concert hall and conference venue was officially opened, marking a changing perspective with more attention for Arts and Culture. Still, the main focus remained on 'building, building, building'. The opening of the Erasmus Bridge was another milestone in the resurrection of Rotterdam. Even so, despite all this building activity, Rotterdam remained an 'empty' city with a very sparsely populated downtown area. In 2001, Rotterdam was designated the 'Cultural Capital of Europe 2001', but it only led to a temporary upheaval for the Arts and Culture sector. In the first decade of this century, the focus shifted to densification and to creating a centre in which people would love to stay and recreate. The concept of the 'city lounge' was created. After 2010, three iconic buildings were opened within a very short time frame. In 2016, the 'Rotterdam Celebrates the City' festival was organised. In some sense, this marked the end of the 'rebuilding era'. On top of that, Rotterdam was internationally 'discovered' as an interesting destination. This seemed a good moment to launch this IABx, offering a boost to Arts and Culture and helping Rotterdam to really become a complete city again. As chairman of the IABx on Culture, I would be proud if this IABx were to truly contribute to a quest that started a few days after the bombing of the city in May 1940.

**Jan Peter Balkenende**



Strengthen Rotterdam's position as a national and international cultural hotspot

# 01 Recommendations

## Preamble

This report will start with the recommendations (chapter 1). It is important to emphasise that these recommendations are the results of two IABx meetings (in April and October) and a process of stakeholder involvement that took one year, starting October 2016. To understand where these recommendations come from and how the stakeholders were involved, it is important to read the other chapters as well. For a description of the process and the substance of the main steps leading to these recommendations, see Chapters 2-6.

Apart from being the end of a process it is even more important to stress that:

### Recommendation 0

These recommendations should be the beginning of an extensive long term process of change.



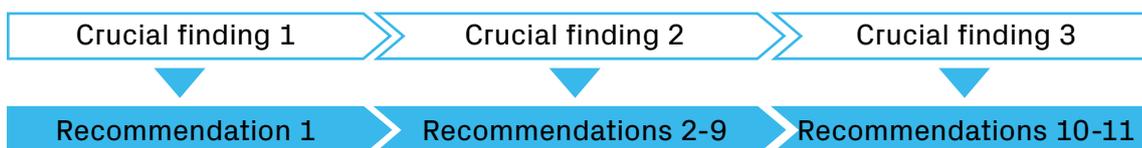
# The April meeting led to three crucial findings

1. One of the important observations of the IABx was that it starts with having a strong local foundation. In order to attract more visitors and become an international cultural hotspot, you have to start with selling the city to itself. Being an international hotspot which is attractive to visitors starts with being authentic, and grounded in a sense of local civic pride.
2. The IABx concluded that the primary potential is in Rotterdam's broad, diverse portfolio. To leverage on this potential there is a need of more interconnectivity<sup>1</sup>. Interconnectivity is much more than cooperation. It's about intense collaboration within the sector and with other stakeholders. None of the Rotterdam cultural institutions alone has so much international prestige that it would be able to lift the complete sector to a higher level. So the

strength lies in the ecosystem but there seems to be little feeling of responsibility for the ecosystem as a whole! This need for more interconnectivity also refers to the need of being connected to the narrative of the city.

3. Looking at the strengths and opportunities (see SWOT, in Chapter 3), the IABx really thinks there is potential and momentum: 'the strength of Rotterdam is in itself, a place where young initiatives can develop, where you can expect the unexpected, where boundaries can be pushed'. A great leap forward is within reach. The IABx was especially impressed by the power, diversity and vitality of the grassroots and informal components of Rotterdam's culture..

In the next three sections, each finding will be discussed briefly, followed by a number of recommendations:



1. Interconnectivity refers to the state or quality of being connected, or to the potential to connect in a effective way. It can be further elaborated as combining all parts of a system, which interact with one another and cannot be analysed if considered alone. In Rotterdam, the 'whole cultural system' (or cultural ecology) is more impressive than any one of its individual parts. Although there have been various initiatives taken to get people in the cultural sector to work together more closely (joint marketing in some cases, collaborations in others, etc.), there is a great deal still to be done. One model that is worth examining is the

'interconnectivity' of the festivals in Edinburgh with its 'Festivals Edinburgh' association, which encompasses 12 separate festivals. Their work goes far beyond 'joint marketing'; there are interconnections at many different levels. A similar model should be developed in Rotterdam, not just for its festivals, but to bring together all of the city's cultural resources. The City of Rotterdam should develop an integrated cultural plan that takes into account the city's entire cultural ecosystem, and connects the broad cultural sector with many other sectors (economic, social, educational, environmental, urban planning, etc).



## Finding 1: Authenticity

The first finding immediately shifted the focus of this IABx away from direct actions to attract more visitors, moving towards to being authentic, feeding local pride and strengthening 'the sector' in that perspective. This observation led to the discussion about the importance of a narrative (the connection to the DNA of the City), the discussion about interconnectivity and the discussion around the true potential of Rotterdam and of the city's cultural sector.

## Recommendation 1

The IABx noted that one of the most important preconditions for local pride is that the sector has narratives connected to the narrative (DNA) of the City and to the people of Rotterdam. The cultural (formal and informal) sector should really develop narratives connected to the narrative of the diverse city (DNA) and to the people of Rotterdam.

Try to close the gap between the Rotterdam locals and the Arts and culture around them and take into account the fact that audiences are changing in many ways<sup>2</sup>. This can only be done in a bottom up process; it is about democratisation of Arts and culture. (Please note: Never let the narrative become a slogan or a dogma).

**It is important to emphasize that culture has both formal and informal aspects, which may be organised in traditional ways, such as in formalised organisations and institutions, or be self-organised in more informal and spontaneous ways.. The word 'sector' as such is to a certain extend misleading as this relates to the field of culture. We will use it but on the understanding that culture described in this report is not a narrowly defined field.**

## Finding 2: Interconnectivity

Looking at this finding, an initial recommendation would be to enhance Rotterdam's interconnectivity. Interconnectivity refers to connections within the sector and to other actors (City, business community, maker movement, education institutes, start-up community, etc. ).

At first glance, this recommendation seems to be directed only at the stakeholders in the sector<sup>3</sup> itself.

2. See Chapter 5, 'Relevant Global Trends'.

3. See earlier remark about the word 'sector'.

# Culture should be seen as essential part of urban development

But there is much more to this.: The cultural 'sector'(formal and informal) as a whole should be involved in a much more integrated manner in developing the city. Culture should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but as an essential part of urban development. If the sector is governed and given subsidies as being something on its own, the sector will also behave as such. In the findings, the IABx mentioned that nobody seems to feel responsible for developing the cultural ecosystem as a whole. This is not something the sector can change on its own; it is a result of the way the sector has been governed and financed in the past 75 years, and it is the result of the fact that culture is often not seen as one of the crucial pillars of urban development.

In other words, it is not only the sector that has to change; it is also very urgent for other stakeholders to change their attitude towards culture. Moreover, it's not only about more cooperation between stakeholders within any one system or about one stakeholder working together with a third party. Interconnectivity requires that 'the broader cultural resources, amenities and facilities (which include the arts, of course) – should be seen as strategic urban assets that have an important and strategic role to play in urban development in the new economy'<sup>4</sup>. Interconnectivity necessitates thinking in terms of process and movement instead of individual KPIs and targets.

4. Colin Mercer, 2006. Cultural Planning for Urban Development and Creative Cities.

5. [www.rotterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/college-van-benw/Collegeprogramma-2014-2018.pdf](http://www.rotterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/college-van-benw/Collegeprogramma-2014-2018.pdf)

Please note: in the current programme<sup>5</sup> of the City Executive, the word 'culture' is only mentioned in the section on culture. There is nothing in this document about the importance of culture in the economic, social and spatial development of the City. Of course Arts and culture are important as such, but the contribution of Arts and culture to these other pillars of urban development cannot be underestimated. The cultural sector should not be blamed for not being interconnected within the urban fabric, since the sector has been governed as an isolated entity.

The position of culture in the 'pecking order' of Urban development should now be strengthened and integrated. This leads to two main recommendations. Culture must become 'Chefsache', as the Germans say: top priority for upper management.

## Recommendation 2

City Executive: redesign your policy on urban planning. Culture should be seen as one of the five strategic pillars (Economic, Social, Cultural, Infrastructural/spatial and Environmental) on which urban planning is based. Arts and culture should not only be seen as something on its own. The City of Rotterdam should develop an integrated cultural plan that takes into account the city's entire cultural ecosystem, and connects the broad cultural sector with many other sectors (economic, social, educational, environmental, urban planning, etc). The IABx advises to adopt the approach of the Agenda 21 Culture and the Culture 21 Actions as starting points.<sup>6</sup>

6. [www.agenda21culture.net](http://www.agenda21culture.net)

## Recommendation 3

Use the formation of a new City Executive (after a new City Council is elected in March 2018) as the occasion to redefine the role of culture as being essential to the future development of Rotterdam. Think about the way responsibilities or portfolios are combined and distributed amongst Vice-Mayors and Aldermen.

Culture as 'Chefsache' refers not only to the role of the City Executive, but also to the business community. Culture should be seen as more of a top priority for upper management in the private sector as well, which means the business community also has a responsibility for a thriving cultural ecosystem that is inextricably linked to the improvement of Rotterdam's overall quality of life.

Next steps on the road to redefining the role of Culture in the City's strategy should be:

## Arts and Culture as an asset to other developments

7. [www.mrdh.nl/RNE](http://www.mrdh.nl/RNE)

8. – 'Why the arts are essential to science and innovation', in *The Guardian*, 22 February 2011.  
– 'Why teaching humanities improves innovation', World Economic Forum, September 2014.

– De waarde van creativiteit [The Value of Creativity], report in Dutch by the Council for Culture and the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI), and the response of the Dutch national government to this report.

9. 'Design Thinking comes of age', *Harvard Business Review*, September 2015.

Innovation in the past was about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math); in the future it will be about STEAM (STEM + art & design). Arts and culture really have something to offer for the discussion about the regional program 'Roadmap Next Economy'<sup>7</sup> and the future of urban society. Innovation has everything to do with a way of thinking (design thinking, lateral thinking, a more holistic approach) which is quite common in the Arts and culture sector (and in the maker community and start-up community). Being or becoming a 'Smart City' is not only about technology, it's about the role of culture in developing and promoting creativity, about expanding the talent of people, about innovative learning. Many reports have been written on the lessons that Arts and culture have to offer that would benefit innovation<sup>8</sup>. A complete issue of the *Harvard Business Review*<sup>9</sup> was dedicated to 'design thinking' and there are many companies based completely on design.

### Recommendation 4

Start a dialogue with other stakeholders, such as the business community, different departments of the City administration, institutes of education and autonomous artists. Give focus not only on raising sponsorship and funding, but also on developing common interests and using proactively what the cultural sector has to offer. Forge connections with the maker movement and artists and also with art students, the broader student communities in both Delft and Rotterdam, and the city's start-up communities. Undertake research on the role of arts and culture for the regional program 'Roadmap Next Economy'.

How can the individual institutions and players within the sector help to achieve the strategic goals of our city? As mentioned on June 20 (local meeting with the sector; see Chapter 4), Rotterdam is not a global arts city; Rotterdam is a city of change, of progress, of emancipation. This should be reflected in our cultural portfolio; the 'definitive' solution lies in diversity. If culture really contributes to inclusivity, then we can be an example to the world. This of course also means something for the other stakeholders, such as the City Executive (see recommendation 2). This does not mean that the arts are not important in the Rotterdam context, but it does mean that culture can and must also be seen as instrumental to achieving other goals (economic, social, spatial). In this perspective: The IABx has heard of the plans for a major cultural development on the south side of Rotterdam. It is not possible for the IABx to say much about this 'in concreto', without knowing more about the exact local situation. However, it is apparent to assume that such an initiative could really contribute to the further development of that part of the City, provided that it is effectively connected to the people living there and to the narrative of the City and involves citizens in both planning and development,

### Recommendation 5

Start a dialogue within the 'sector' itself in which every player (large and small) really is taken seriously around the question: How can culture contribute to the strategic goals of the city and help each other to achieve their goals and create a stronger 'sector' (as a whole) and a stronger city. One way that the City could start this is by inviting cultural institutions, artists, etc. to contribute to certain defined issues. Models like 'Citylab010' (open competition) could also be used more often.

### Recommendations on governance and finance:

The IABx made a clear statement that the current subsidy model stands in the way of change and of a broader and more strategic approach to Arts and culture.

## Recommendation 6

Restructure the subsidy model and the way accountability<sup>10</sup> is organised; create space for experimentation and promote diversity and cross-collaborations and partnerships in the model. The sector should use this momentum to clearly formulate what they need to realise a better and more sustainable model.

10. Try to develop an evidence-based model for evaluation and monitoring.

## Recommendation 7

Involve other stakeholders in the discussion about a different governance model and a different system of finance. Hybrid forms of financing are becoming increasingly important. Funding is neither fully public nor fully private (see: expert panel on 'new financial models' in the appendices at [www.iabrotterdam.com](http://www.iabrotterdam.com)). There is gap between supply and demand. The two worlds do not speak each other's language.<sup>11</sup> Time should be invested in learning to understand each other, including the City, the business community and the cultural community.

11. Siobhan Burger, 2016. The Future of Corporate Sponsorship in the Arts, p.119-120.

## Recommendation 8

Restructure the relationship between the City Executive and the 'sector'. Interaction currently mostly takes place on a very small scale. There are account managers for different institutions. The bigger picture should be the starting point, incorporating the sector as a whole, but extending even further: culture as a contributing factor in the overall city strategy.

The last recommendation under this finding is about digital culture. Perhaps the fact that the cultural sector exists in relative isolation has led to a disregard for important developments in other sectors. For example, attracting an audience is not the same process as it was 50 years ago (see page 16). Every other event, every other institute, anything else that you can visit, represents a potential competitor for attention. So, it is important to take a serious look at how the audience is changing (Millennials, etc). Equally important is to take into account how new technology has developed new ways that culture is created, expressed and produced, which profoundly is influencing the nature of cultural development and patterns of cultural consumption in Rotterdam. There is no way to successfully become a smart city without also integrating culture; a cultural sector that does not adapt to the profound effects of digitalisation ( both in terms of content and in the means of communication) will become obsolete.

## Recommendation 9

Further develop the potential of digital culture. A big sea change is taking place and part the Arts and culture 'sector' doesn't seem to embrace its potential. This has to change. Use the knowledge and experience present (especially in younger age brackets and grassroots groups or organisations, but also in the educational institutes) to help the 'know-nots'.

12. For example: Luciano Hiwat (dance):  
[www.ad.nl/rotterdam/rotterdammer-luciano-15-wint-duitse-dansshow~a22a9401/](http://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/rotterdammer-luciano-15-wint-duitse-dansshow~a22a9401/)

- Emerson Akachar (music - Broederliefde, not international, but on a significant scale!)  
[www.rotterdamviertdestad.nl/verhalen/75-verhalen/emerson-akachar/](http://www.rotterdamviertdestad.nl/verhalen/75-verhalen/emerson-akachar/)

- Kenneth Asporaat (theatre, organiser; not international, but certainly national)  
[www.ad.nl/rotterdam/kenneth-asporaat-zet-spoken-word-op-de-kaart~aead2453/](http://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/kenneth-asporaat-zet-spoken-word-op-de-kaart~aead2453/)

- Elten Kiene (spoken word, also international):  
[www.decorrespondent.nl/6424/zo-wakkert-elten-kiene-bij-mensen-het-vuur-aan-voor-spoken-word/1470677469976-336bfdfc](http://www.decorrespondent.nl/6424/zo-wakkert-elten-kiene-bij-mensen-het-vuur-aan-voor-spoken-word/1470677469976-336bfdfc)

## Finding 3: Potential

In terms of uniqueness and becoming outstanding (from an international perspective), all the 'outsiders' – both international IAB members and the Dutch experts who are from other areas than Rotterdam – concluded that none of the Rotterdam cultural institutions individually has so much international prestige that it would be able to lift the complete sector to a higher level.

There was consensus on the fact that what makes Rotterdam special is much more the vibe, the diversity and the small grassroots players (who are sometimes global leaders in a niche<sup>12</sup>). For example the developing networks and activities around 'spoken word' and new styles of music are very impressive. The collective local cultural 'vibe' of Rotterdam that incorporates the attitudes and characters of Rotterdammers is more powerful than the city's cultural sector alone.

Does all this minimise the impact of the bigger institutions of Rotterdam? Certainly not, though some could improve connections to Rotterdam and its narrative, and focus more on cooperation between themselves and with the new emerging styles and talent, i.e. the 'new kids on the block'. Collectively, the large institutions are a major asset for Rotterdam. In combination, and perhaps marketed together, their collective power of attraction might constitute a stronger overall brand for Rotterdam. Especially the Museumpark, together with the new Collection Building of Boijmans van Beuningen also offer a great opportunity. The approach to such joint marketing cannot be the same, for example, as focusing on the single 'brand' of the Guggenheim or the Van Gogh Museum. The main Rotterdam institutions should work together to create a focused collective identity that is more powerful than their own individual identities for the purpose of international marketing. This should not be interpreted as a 'loss' of their individual identities and differences, but rather a 'strengthening' of Rotterdam's cultural institutional intensity.

## Recommendation 10

Remarkable potential in Rotterdam lies in the broad and diverse offer, and especially within the grassroots and informal initiatives. Both formal and informal cultural organizations should be equal partners in a discussion about the future of culture in Rotterdam. It is very much about inclusiveness. Think about a more broad and inclusive definition of Arts and culture.

Special attention should be paid to groups involved in the city's informal cultural scene, in terms of City Marketing but also in terms of involving this group in particular in developing a new strong narrative for Rotterdam (see Recommendation 1).

The next recommendation connects directly to this recommendation and to the fact that Rotterdam has been relatively successful in terms of attracting international attention. Perhaps this is also part of a worldwide growing interest in 'second cities' as destinations. Rotterdam could leverage this interest more fully.



## Recommendation 11

'Stay close to what you are.' As stated by the IAB: being an international hotspot starts with being authentic and capitalising of the existing strength of civic pride. Rotterdam has clearly defined its DNA: water, architecture<sup>13</sup>, diversity, informal culture, and the 'definitive Rotterdammer' are seen as strengths to build upon. In a way, having a young population is part of this DNA. Staying authentic involves including young people in all plans and all dialogues discussed above. Additional ways should be developed to invite the participation of the city's younger generation.

13. Provided that it is connected to other cultural developments.

### Large Scale Initiative

## Recommendation 12

Create a large scale interdisciplinary initiative in which all stakeholders can work together. The last truly major interdisciplinary cultural project that happened was 'Cultural Capital 2001'. Use existing events and organisations as a starting point, create something like a biennale or other form of major project in which many different events and stakeholders can cooperate and come together. Consider using the Rotterdam DNA as a starting point for such an initiative: water, architecture<sup>14</sup>, diversity, informal culture and the 'definitive Rotterdammer'.

14. Provided that it is connected to other cultural developments.

### Architecture

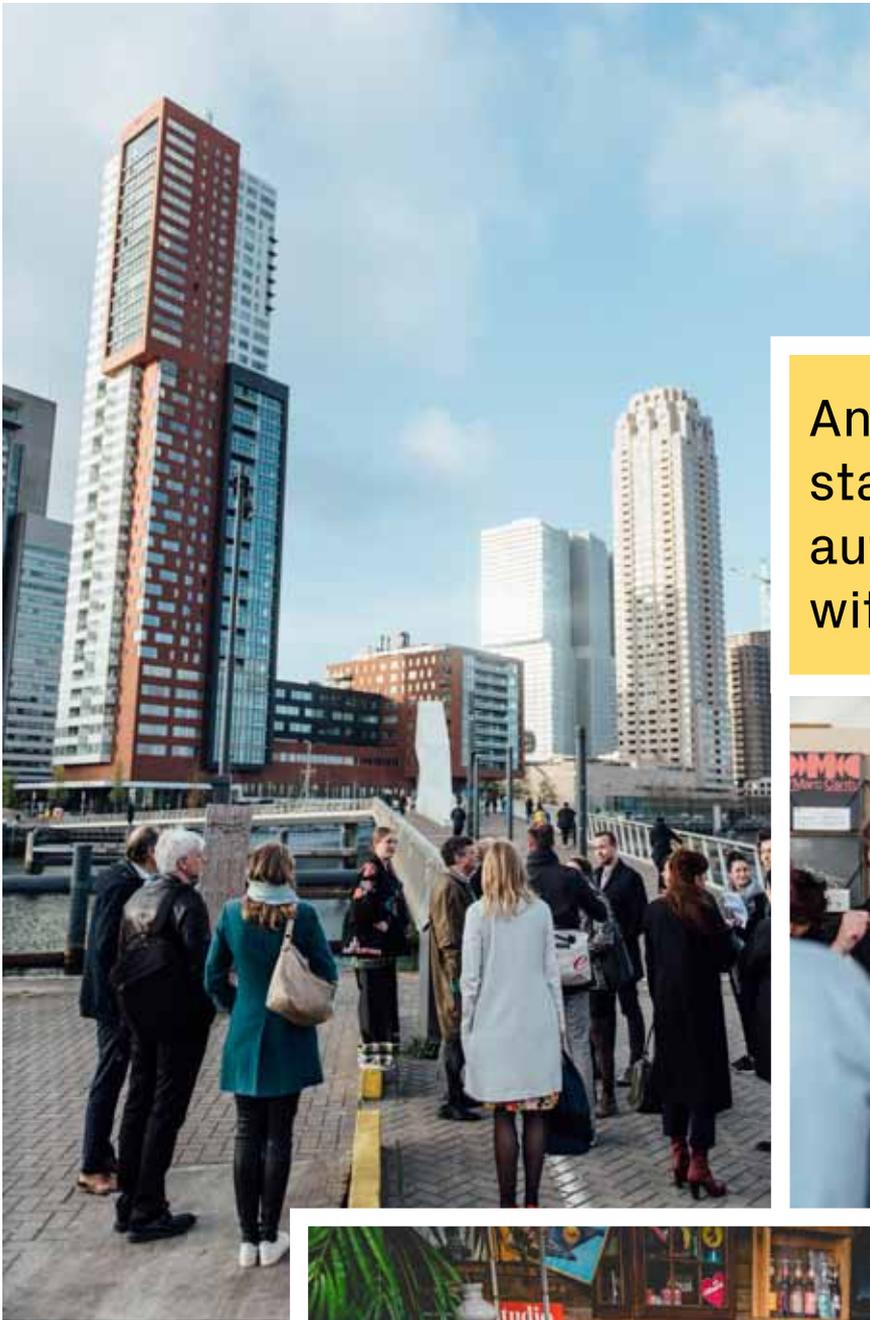
## Recommendation 13

Embrace the fact that Rotterdam is a hub of architectural innovation. More cooperation -also in this field- is needed. Many organisations are working in this field but there is too little coordination.

Start a dialogue with the 'Nieuwe Instituut' about how to regain prestige and local meaning in the field of Architecture, brought along with the former NAI.

To make this sustainable and to make Rotterdam visible as a city of architecture : Invest in establishing some kind of an 'Architectural expo'. Use existing organisations, programmes and events like IABR, AIR, AFFR (and many others) as starting points. The central focus should be on the role that architecture plays. Architecture can help to deal with the major global issues of today: migration, climate change, etc.

Never forget: an event or an expo is not the end goal. Instead, it should be a means to realise or accelerate urban development (social or economic) in a specific area of Rotterdam. It should always be part of a broader urban strategy.



An international hotspot starts with being authentic and with civic pride



# 02 The process of the IABx

(October 2016 - October 2017)



## Main Question(s)

Obviously, the process of the IABx started with formulating the main question(s). The main question was formulated as follows:

‘The ambition of both the cultural sector and the city is to strengthen Rotterdam’s position as a national and international cultural hotspot. How can we profile the city in such a way that it really earns a place on the map internationally?’ ‘So the big question is, of course: how? A crucial element in this respect is to identify and foster the specific assets that characterise our thriving multi-cultural city. What current strengths must be further developed?’

In this report, the cultural sector is regarded as the whole array of institutions and organisations, artists and cultural entrepreneurs, both subsidised and self-sufficient (non-subsidised), which are involved in the production, presentation, consumption or conservation of art and culture.<sup>15</sup>

Given these main questions, the preparations for the IABx started in the fall of 2016 with a presentation by Wim Pijbes.<sup>16</sup> Speaking to a group of about 100 stakeholders (mostly from the sector itself), Wim Pijbes offered his analysis of the Rotterdam cultural sector and his answer to the main question.



### Involvement of the field

One of the important elements in the set-up of the IABx was that the urban stakeholders were involved at several points. After Wim Pijbes’ analysis, five working groups were asked to react to Pijbes’ analysis and to answer the main question. The working groups were formed based on an arbitrary division according to size (Big Locals, Mid-sized and Grassroots). Two separate groups were also formed: Architecture and Non-subsidised. This division worked and made things clear, but it was also concluded that these categories should not be used again in future. All the reports of the working groups can be found on the IAB website<sup>17</sup>.

In the beginning of 2017, various expert panels were organised to reflect on the main questions and on the reports by the working groups. All this material was sent to the IABx members (via a blog) and was the starting point for the session in April. After the meeting in April, the findings of the IABx (see Chapter 3) were presented to the sector on June 20. Chapter 4 provides the highlights of this meeting and lists global trends relevant for this subject. Chapter 5 highlights some specific relevant developments in Rotterdam as well as some potentially decisive moments (like elections) in the coming years. All this input led to the recommendations of the IABx, as outlined in Chapter 1.

15. Our definition of culture excludes non-artistic aspects of human behaviour, such as ritual, religion, tool use and cooking, etc.

16. The complete report is available at [www.iabrotterdam.com](http://www.iabrotterdam.com).

17. [www.iabrotterdam.com](http://www.iabrotterdam.com)

# 03 Findings in April

The findings of the IABx (see below) were presented to the local stakeholders on June 20. These findings should not be seen as final recommendations (although they may already tend to take that format). They should be seen as initial observations meant to be given back to the local stakeholders for feedback, after which the IABx would be able to finalise its recommendations.

This also means that the following text is not completely balanced. Sometimes it will be staccato, sometimes only offering an impression or a black & white sketch. The choice of words used in these findings are sometimes a little sharper than in the final recommendations. The quotes are sometimes fairly long, but should be seen as an integral part of these findings.



# IABx Main Findings

## Authenticity

One of the first observations of the IABx was that if you want to attract more visitors and become an international cultural hotspot, you have to start with the city itself. Being an international hotspot and being attractive to outsiders starts with being authentic and with local civic pride. Furthermore, it is not so much about the individual institutions but much more about 'how to develop the cultural climate as a whole?'

## Potential

Looking at the strengths and opportunities, the IABx really thinks there is momentum:

### Strength

- Creative youth
- Significant cultural resources
- Sound infrastructure
- Diversity of people
- Civic pride
- Strong sense of community
- Rotterdam is not Amsterdam
- Superpower of grassroots
- Outspokenness of people
- Scale is okay
- Quality of Niches
- Entrepreneurial nature of many artists in 010
- Number of architecture studios
- Overlapping of fine art studios & creative studios

### Opportunities

- Rotterdam has a distinct story (use it better)
- Migration is a dominant geopolitical trend
- Diversity
- Rotterdam has a 'tabula rasa' element
- Rotterdam has the opportunity to 'redo' herself
- Change is within reach (momentum)
- Less money generates creativity

### Weaknesses

- Disappearance of NAI and Berlage Institute
- Weak interconnection:
  - ↳ between different 'subsectors' with cultural sector
  - ↳ between Cultural sector and other sectors
- Lack of involvement of major universities
- Weak political support of diversity/culture
- Weakness of the process/system (in terms of focus)
- Lacking of common goal/nobody feels responsible for the cultural ecosystem as a whole
- Certain flatness/lack of passion (big institutions)
- Weak communications/lack of narrative
- Lack of digital culture (a big sea change is taking place and the 'sector' seems to miss it)

### Threats

- Lack of political will for change
- Political threat
- Mismatch education and real world/overall economic climate for culture is not positive/other priorities (trend is negative)
- Too much diversity/too much opportunities >> no focus

SWOT by IABx members (April 2017)

## Quote:<sup>18</sup>

On : One way of profiling Rotterdam is to identify, appreciate and promote the elements of street, or pop, or underground culture. I received the impression that Rotterdam is a vibrant place to live and much appreciated by young people. To bring some of that underground culture into the so-called temples of 'high culture' is, I think, a key priority. Then one can talk of the city's cultural profile as an eclectic and organic phenomenon – both of these qualities are important elements of 21st century urban life, and of the way that Millennials view the world.

18. The quotes in this chapter are quotes by the IABx members made during the first meeting or in their emails in commenting on initial drafts of the April findings.

## Quote:

As far as branding is concerned, the idea of a city that has by necessity reinvented itself, and consequently now has that ethos in its DNA, is very attractive. It should be a place to expect the unexpected, to push boundaries, to harness cultural discussion with the social and political phenomena that the world faces. Migration is an obvious focus here. If there was one issue on which a city strategy could concentrate, this is surely the one. I remain convinced that, pursuing some of these ambitions, Rotterdam can carve a niche for itself, as a place of tolerance, creativity, energy, and moral well-being.

## Quote:

: I so strongly believe that the can-do spirit and the desire to further progression are massive benefits for all the endeavours ahead. I think people want to talk to each other and have spaces where they could connect if mentored well. I also believe that through the innovative city planning and constant addition of new iconic spaces or ideas, there is opportunity to cross over and celebrate, with a new building, a new opportunity to bring people together. Also, the large institutions are a lot more open-minded than in other cities, yet have slowed down, while the grassroots are moving fast. But they both do not know about each other, nor do they know how to define common ground. And the grassroots do not know how to reach for funding in the appropriate manner, it seemed. Yet all want change and that is still a super place to start from.

**Summarised:** the strength of Rotterdam is in itself, a place where young initiatives can develop, where you can expect the unexpected, where boundaries can be pushed.

**But:**

## Lack of interconnectivity

To make a leap, more cooperation is needed. This need touches directly upon one of the most apparent weaknesses of the Rotterdam cultural sector: the lack of interconnectivity<sup>19</sup>. Nobody really seems to feel responsible for the ecosystem as a whole! There is a lack of interconnectivity in Rotterdam, which is needed for more sustainability. A cultural system should function as a system, not too many separate organisations. How the ecology is maintained is a big issue. Sustainability requires more effort on another level. Institutions are currently focusing on interconnectivity on a relatively small level. Though there is certainly much awareness that more cooperation is needed, the autonomy of the individual institutes stands in the way of deeper and more structural cooperation. Interconnectivity is more than cooperation.

An aspect of the lack of interconnectivity is the existence of strong perceptions/opinions about 'others'. There is very much an 'us vs. them' atmosphere:

## Quote:

The SWOT analysis has established that a serious issue is the debilitating and socially/culturally/economically divisive separations between what is typically seen as high culture and the arts, often represented by: large institutional agencies in the fine arts and performing arts; popular culture and creative industries; and local cultural expression and ways of life. Divisions are made worse by perceptions of how funding is distributed unevenly and/or with bias to certain sectors. This is the fundamental basis of the call for 'interconnection'. On top of that, the connection to the narrative of the city seems to be lacking (at least in the way the sector presented itself).

- The government does not respect us (sector referring to municipal authorities)
- Developers are against us (Fenixloods) (grassroots/ non-subsidised)
- Rotterdam Partners should do more to market the sector

---

19. See footnote 1 for a full definition of interconnectivity and suggestions for improving interconnectivity in Rotterdam through integrated cultural planning.



Rotterdam: a place where young initiatives can develop, where boundaries can be pushed.

The IABx concluded that none of the Rotterdam cultural institutions individually has so much international prestige that it can lift the complete sector to a higher level.

## Entrepreneurship/funding

A rethinking of entrepreneurship and cultural funding is needed. The IABx thinks it is not very realistic to expect extra public funding in the near future. In that context, the IABx used the words 'unsustainable system'. Policy makers need to begin to search for new models. More creativity on this level is necessary for further development of the cultural sector. Finding money elsewhere is one element.

## Lack of digital culture

There is a lack of digital culture: a big sea change is taking place and the 'sector' seems to be missing it, especially the bigger institutes.

Still, the potential is huge: the enormous energy which is there (especially at the grassroots level) can be leveraged only by bringing together people, institutions and all stakeholders.

Some remarks coming from the meetings – during the April conference – with the different working groups:

### Big locals

The big locals have built a reputation of being offbeat, but have a problem telling their story. Big locals are important for the cultural ecosystem and Rotterdam is blessed with a sound cultural infrastructure. Big locals can gain more strength when they invest in their networks, especially in social media and connections with all other stakeholders, but especially with the grassroots organisations.

It is important to make connections with other networks. Actually, it is not only about funding, but about coproduction. Cooperation between big locals and city marketing could also be better.

There is still a lot of potential in social media. Put a senior strategist on social media, hire international influencers, organise an Instagram take-over (swapping of Instagram accounts). Learn the lesson from young artists who have many followers on social media.

### Mid-Range

These institutions play an important role in the education and schooling; they are the mediators for talent in the city. Some of the mid-range institutions produce top-quality arts and culture. They're targeting specified audiences, on a level that grassroots can't, and the top level (big locals) won't.

The mid-range sector has 'potential' in relation to the necessary dialogue within the sector and with the external stakeholders.

### Grassroots

Grassroots organisations were born out of urgency. The superpower of the grassroots should not be underestimated. Grassroots have their place in the ecosystem and should be acknowledged more as part of the cultural capital of Rotterdam, and be made more visible in communication and City Marketing. Grassroots initiatives should clarify what they are offering. They need help to access the system, but they should also become aware that a clear proposition is mandatory for funding or cooperation.

Grassroots have fantastic stories.

## Quote:

...'no single cultural institution on its own' in Rotterdam has significant international prestige that can lift the entire sector. However, the large institutions are collectively a major asset for Rotterdam. When 'added together' and perhaps marketed together, their collective power of attraction can make a mark. The approach to such marketing cannot be the same, for example, as focusing on the 'brand' of Guggenheim or Van Gogh. The main Rotterdam institutions should now work together to create a focused collective 'identity' which is more powerful than their own individual identities for the purpose of international marketing. This should not be interpreted as a 'loss' of their individual identities and differences, but rather a 'strengthening' of Rotterdam's cultural institutional intensity. Such an initiative must go much further than simply creating a common logo or common slogan, or a united platform for online presence. Specialist expert support will be required, in my opinion, to work with the institutions to develop a powerful collective brand that the international public can understand and be attracted by. Again, this effort will not 'replace' the individual marketing initiatives of each institution, but would supplement them – especially when addressing international markets.

## Quote:

The quarters we visited felt, to me, to be full of ideas and hugely appealing – but they also felt undercooked. A drive to develop these neighbourhoods so that they offered a complete cultural experience – architecture, food, galleries, shops, residential – would make a difference. It is a matter of drawing those threads together.

## Non-subsidised

It is somewhat unclear what defines this 'sector'. In general, we have seen some interdisciplinary work with an amazing quality. The definition of 'arts and culture' should be broadened in relation to our assignment: bring the creative industry under the umbrella of the arts.

## Architecture

There was a lot of debate about whether or not Rotterdam is a 'City of Architecture'. However, there was consensus that if Rotterdam wants to be a 'City of Architecture' and retain that status, it will have to invest in establishing some kind of an 'Architectural Expo' and really invest in institutes and organisations that are leading in the global debate.

## Quote:

In itself, I am not convinced that Rotterdam's architecture is a key motivation to visit (except by architects!), unless it is combined with other elements of Rotterdam's unique creativity and 'quirky individuality' that distinguishes it from many of its competitor cities.

Of course Rotterdam does have some 'iconic' architectural features, and these should not be forgotten, and certainly would remain a 'part of a package' that reflects Rotterdam's unique identity. When you drive over the spectacular Erasmus Bridge or the 'Swan' with the sun's rays shimmering between the asymmetric buildings, the scale and originality is awe-inspiring. And the massive new Rem Koolhaas building on the other side: De Rotterdam, and the new Markthal, the basilica-like indoor market/apartment building/piece of art, are certainly impressive, as are examples of the post-war reconstruction like the Cube Houses, etc. But for me, all that is just not enough to meet the key objective that the IABx was asked to address. So, the architectural focus, in my opinion, needs fresh thinking, and its position in Rotterdam's global image may be strengthened by less focus on the architecture of the building, [and more] on the eccentric stories, the peculiarity of the people, the rough intercultural context and other 'features' that makes Rotterdam [what it is], in a nonconformist, and very unusual manner. It will be the notion of 'the craziest city of Europe' that may attract more media and public attention, than being a 'city of architecture'.

## Quote:

Here let me deal with the matter of architecture, much discussed in our SWOT analysis. We are agreed that architecture is not just buildings, however much they may inspire as iconic modernism and beyond. Architecture has been associated with institutions – as a mode of discourse and focus of expertise and debate. Rotterdam has lost such a connection, in some ways.

Architecture as an ecological process is city building: building environment, community and sense of place, and thus identity. Architecture is the theatre setting for life, culture, in the broadest sense. Architecture can contribute to what we called the eventful city: a place where fabulous things happen, at every scale.

Beyond the fascinating architectural experiment, Rotterdam is very distinctive. Look at the developments along the river and old docklands. The city is already an extraordinary locale, carrying fascinating unique stories. The IAB has tackled in previous years the shift of focus from nation state to city – Rotterdam has extraordinary potential and character in this regard – as a city locale.

# 04 Reactions to the findings



## June 20

On June 20, some 50 stakeholders from the cultural sector met in the Worm cultural centre in Rotterdam. The findings (see Chapter 3) from the IAB meeting in April were presented by Jan Peter Balkenende (Chairman IABx) and Siobhan Burger (R'damse Nieuwe). After the presentation, the findings were discussed in five groups.

Some important observations:

### Authenticity

The IAB really was spot-on in pointing out that it all starts with authenticity and civic pride. We really have to come up with a clear narrative

### Potential

Most people seem to agree with the conclusion of the IAB that there is no single institution that is so prestigious that it can lift the whole sector to a higher level. 'In Rotterdam, it is not so much about the icons but about the vibe, the atmosphere.' Most participants seem to agree about the potential of the grassroots and were open to a new discussion. The merging, the dynamics and sometimes the tension between all kind of cultures, groups, etc. are a source of energy. The definitive solution lies in diversity. If culture really contributes to inclusivity, then we can be an example to the world. Perhaps this will not attract mass tourism, but a more interesting kind of tourism.

### Interconnectivity

Most participants agree with the findings about the lack of interconnectivity: let's start some kind of a dialogue with other stakeholders. Compared to other cities, we're not doing that bad. The music sector is a good example of a sector which is well interconnected.



Interconnectivity is also about recognising that all stakeholders (big and small) are just as important; interconnectivity starts with knowing each other, trusting each other. Interconnectivity necessitates thinking in terms of process and movement instead of individual KPIs and targets (subsidy model).

### Other conclusions

Most participants agreed that the division into big locals, grassroots, etc. should be abandoned. It made some things clear, but it also sometimes blurred the picture. Rotterdam is not a global city of the arts, like Berlin, Amsterdam, New York or London; Rotterdam is a city of change, of progress, of emancipation. This should be reflected in our cultural portfolio. Consensus was achieved that the model of governance (including the subsidy system) stands in the way of necessary change and of interconnectivity.

### Possible actions

Rotterdam needs a huge project in which the sector really can cooperate. (Nothing big happened since 2001!) The sector needs places, free zones where people can meet, establish connections and networks, and experiment. The City Executive could really help with this.

# 05 Relevant global trends





Before starting to formulate the IABx recommendations, it seemed wise to take a look from a broader perspective. So far, the process can be described as inward-focused. Of course the members of the IABx contributed their outsiders' perspective, but it seemed wise to look at relevant trends in the world and see whether they are influencing or could influence Arts & culture in Rotterdam, as well as Rotterdam in general. These trends will be listed without any additional commentary; since they are described in many articles, books and reports, these trends do not require further explanation.

- **Urbanisation**
- **Migration**
- **Climate change**
- **The flip side of tourism: growing tourism**
- **Growing attention for (and interest in) 'second cities'**
- **Importance of Culture in urban development<sup>20</sup>**
- **The flip side of gentrification**
- **Blurring or changing of borders / shift of power**
  - Between disciplines
  - Between city and state (importance of cities is growing)
  - Between city and neighbourhood
  - Between citizen and City Executive
- **DIY culture / importance of thinking different**
  - Lateral thinking
  - Design thinking
  - Multidisciplinary approach
  - Parallel between grassroots culture, makers movement and start-up world

- **21st century skills:**

What are the future skills? In bigger companies, there is a discussion about STEM vs STEAM in innovation. In the past, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math were qualities considered crucial for innovation. Nowadays, Arts is often added.

- **'Good is the new cool'**

- People don't just want a job; they also want to do something useful for society.
- More and more social entrepreneurship

- **New audiences, different consumers, the influence of Millennials**

- Consumers of today and tomorrow want to be surprised constantly; they enjoy art and culture as 'experiences', combine high and low, and will become less and less loyal to official institutions.
- Both the production and consumption of art will become more (culturally) diverse. Authenticity will become increasingly important for consumers, including tourists. They want to see a city that is different from others, honest, and real.

---

20. Article: 'Cultural planning for urban development and creative cities' by Colin Mercer

# Relevant local developments in Rotterdam



Most of the trends listed above are exhibited in one way or another in Rotterdam. Most relevant in the context of this IAB report are:

#### Migration/diversity

Rotterdam is a very diverse city. Looking at the findings of the IAB in April and looking at the reaction of the local community on 2 June, this diversity should be central in the further development of Arts and culture in Rotterdam.

#### Growing tourism and popularity of 'second cities' around the world

Although Rotterdam doesn't have problems with mass tourism (yet), Rotterdam is in the position to focus on a different type of tourist: visitors who are more interested in the culture and in authenticity. Culture could be used to focus on specific target groups of potential visitors/tourists.

#### Special attention should be paid to moments of possible change:

- Municipal elections in 2018
- New round of subsidies in 2020
- Rotterdam participating in 'The next economy' regional programme
- etc.

# IABx Members



**Mr J.P. (Jan Peter) Balkenende**

Chairman of IAB Rotterdam | External Advisor to EY | Professor of Governance, Institutions & Internationalisation at Erasmus University Rotterdam | Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

**Mr M. (Michael) Shanks**

Professor of Archaeology, Stanford University | Senior Faculty Member, Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (Stanford d.school) | Co-Director of Revs Program, Center for Automotive Research at Stanford | Former Co-Director, Stanford Humanities Lab.

**Ms F. (Francine) Houben**

Founding Partner / Creative Director at Mecanoo | Board Member at the Society of Arts of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences | Member of the Van Alen Institute | Member of the Akademie der Künste | Board Member at the Carnegie Foundation | Member of the Supervisory Board at Kröller-Müller Museum.

**Mr P. (Peter) Aspden**

Arts Writer at the Financial Times.

**Mr R. (Robert) Palmer**

Robert Palmer is an independent consultant who works internationally on a wide range of cultural projects in the areas of cultural policy and strategy, organisational development, festivals and events, the creative economy and issues related to cultural policy and strategy, cultural rights and the cultural development of cities. He was formerly the Director of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage for the Council of Europe based in Strasbourg, France (2006-2013).

**Ms Y. (Yasha) Young**

Yasha Young is the director and curator of URBAN NATION. Her creative vision has been a catalyst to the creation and evolution of the two internationally renowned Project M/ and OneWall series. As a former gallery owner, curator and producer, Young is deeply involved in international urban arts.

**Mr B. (Burkhard) Kieker**

Burkhard Kieker has been Chief Executive Officer of visitBerlin since 1 January 2009 and is thus the city's senior tourism advertiser. He previously headed the Marketing and Corporate Communication department of Berlin Airports for many years. Kieker is a trained journalist ('Die Zeit', Deutsche Welle TV).

**Ms S. (Siobhan) Burger**

Acting chair of R'damse Nieuwe and co-founder/co-owner of 'Arttenders'.

**Ms M. (Michelle) Provoost** (advisor during April session)

Dr Michelle Provoost is an architectural historian specialised in urban planning history, post-war architecture and contemporary urban development.

**Mr S. (Sander) de Jongh**

Secretary-General of IAB Rotterdam.

# Colophon

## Steering Committee

Ahmed Aboutaleb  
Pex Langenberg  
Jacob van der Goot  
Herman Jaeger  
Hermineke van Bockxmeer  
Wim Hoogendoorn  
Wilma Verschoor  
Jannelieke Aalstein  
Sander de longh

## Advisory Group

Alice Vlaanderen  
Johan Moerman  
Ocker van Munster  
Rento Zoutman  
Kitty Tang  
Sander de longh

## Authors

Reinier Gerritsen  
Sonja Pruimers  
Sander de longh

## Photography

Iris van den Broek  
Sophia van den Hoek  
Jan Bijl  
Gaby Jongenelen  
Niké Dolman  
Roy Borghouts  
Richard Theemling

## Design

Trossenlos.nl

The IABx was a co-production of Rotterdam Partners, together with the City of Rotterdam, Rotterdam Festivals, RRKC and the consultative council of managing directors.

All appendices, the report by Wim Pijbes and all reports from working groups and expert panels can be found on [www.iabrotterdam.com](http://www.iabrotterdam.com)



