

# IABx2025

## Building Rotterdam's Cultural Ecosystem

28 August 2025



### International Board Members:

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**Purpose**

**Equity**

**Relevance**

**Ambition**



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# FINAL REPORT OF THE NINE INTERNATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

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# IABx2025.

## Roadmap for an Evolving Cultural Transition and a Flourishing Equitable Culture

The International Advisory Board 2025 (IABx)<sup>1</sup> was commissioned by Rotterdam's city government to support the city's cultural transition and strengthen its cultural ecosystem. This report fulfils that mandate, reflecting deep engagement in reimagining Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem and exploring for potential structural transformation, locally and globally. A fuller description of the mandate is in the report.

Rotterdam is a world class city that intends to preserve its world class status and ambitions. In today's rapidly evolving highly competitive world, this aspiration can only be achieved with transparent, clear and critical perspectives.

With this ambition in mind, Rotterdam reached out to nine global experts in cultural issues, calling to the Port City a wealth of expertise and experience to actively engage with local stakeholders and serve as IABx members.



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<sup>1</sup> Our goal is to provide a report to engage in the most straightforward way possible. To that end, this report uses a few concise abbreviations:

**IAB:** International Advisory Board

**IABx:** International Advisory Board experts

**IAB25:** International Advisory Board event organized in Rotterdam in July 2025. Also referred to formally by the City of Rotterdam as “international advisory organ IABx2.0”

**IABx2.0:** another term for IAB25

We could have referred to everything simply as IABx. However, it seemed clearer, more useful and practical to improve differentiation between the IAB as a whole; IABx member experts; and IAB25 event. Clearly there are overlaps. The terms are not hard-edged. They simply add a bit more clarity.

**IABx2017:** IABx event in 2017. The abbreviation reduces risk of confusion with IAB25.

A few participants on a few occasions also used their own abbreviations, such as IAB2025 or IABx2025. Their meaning is clear. They are not errors. We simply chose to avoid interfering with what people wrote, to preserve historical facts and to respect each person in their authentic voice and words.

We trust that these few basic abbreviations make the document clear and concise to read.

All IABx members prepared in advance and participated energetically in a four-day event in Rotterdam held from July 2nd to 5th 2025. Most importantly, they continued their involvement well beyond the event, contributing valuable time and insight. Their engagement provided a remarkable wealth of constructive recommendations that made this report possible.

The IABx focused with attention, sustained energy and laser-sharp focus, on the critical issue of Rotterdam's current – and future – cultural transition and ecosystem. How does Rotterdam perceive itself? To what extent are current approaches, resources and equity honestly fit for purpose? What rapidly evolving new challenges as well as legacy issues must Rotterdam address? What are the risks if Rotterdam fails to address these exigencies?

The IABx responded to its mandate and related challenges with professionalism and, to their credit, cohered rapidly into an effective group with shared common purpose. They gave well-structured, well-articulated, rational and robust recommendations and a roadmap for structural change. This report captures IABx's wealth of insights. It offers ten observations and twenty recommendations rooted in lived experience, grounded expertise, and international best practice. Their text from page 28 onwards, of necessity, is unfiltered. It states the direct views of IABx members in their own voices with the full unedited and undiluted force of their compelling analysis.

It is imperative for readers to grasp the full scope of IABx engagement. It has been, and remains, an on-going process. The IAB25 event required more than a year of professional planning, preparation, robust briefing and teamwork. IAB25 crystallized in a highly visible four-day on-site event, with numerous hands-on visits to witness the diverse realities of multiple cultural locations throughout Rotterdam in structured teams supported by local makers, experts and initiators. IAB25 conscientiously built on Rotterdam's previous IABx2017. It is also rooted in everything that has transpired since 2017, including dramatic global challenges such as Covid-19, a world engaged in wars, and major transformations in Rotterdam's cultural infrastructure. The world is not as it was in 2017.



## Room for improvement: it's called equity.

The key IAB25 message: Culture is not a luxury. It is key to civic infrastructure. Cultural policy cannot succeed if it treats culture as an accessory. Rotterdam cannot rely on old assumptions. It cannot use lenses from the past to view future challenges. Rotterdam routinely claims it provides a “flourishing cultural ecosystem.” This may be the intent. Yet everyone with eyes and ears sees that fundamental necessities for culture, such as spaces for cultural creation, are increasingly less available or affordable. Resources are critical. IAB25 does not deny Rotterdam’s challenges. In fact, it applauds Rotterdam’s stated goals. It simply states that Rotterdam must do both: face hard facts and show ambition. Rotterdam: this is our moment. We have momentum. We can build on this. We can do this.

To this extent, it is no longer enough to simply state that Rotterdam is in a “cultural transition” or has a “flourishing cultural system.” These phrases served an original purpose, but the landscape is evolving. We must update them. The task ahead is to make **“a truly and fully EQUITABLE cultural transition”** and **“a flourishing EQUITABLE cultural system.”** Equity is a critical factor that has not previously received the degree of attention it requires. Yet a more equitable cultural ecosystem can be achieved through appropriate governance and fair practices. This report, drawing on the voices of global experts and local changemakers, presents a bold roadmap to dismantle outdated systems, embed equity at every level, and to reimagine cultural leadership for a resilient and inclusive future.

This challenge is in fact a profound opportunity. Culture reflects and shapes how peoples identify, belong, interact, and shape what Rotterdam is and becomes. This report is a call to action for Rotterdam to seize the moment and the opportunity. To move beyond antiquated infrastructure, symbolic gestures and fragmented governance, and to embrace culture as a vibrant structural force. Furthermore, if Rotterdam truly aspires for greater connectivity between domains, as it so often manifestly and explicitly states, and for culture to be woven into its political, spatial, and economic DNA, then Rotterdam must become more adept at Walking the Talk. Rhetorical claims are fine, but words alone are insufficient. Claims must rise to the new realities and translate into plans, commitments and deeds.

IAB25 has taken place successfully. This report now passes the baton to the city of Rotterdam itself and all stakeholders. The time for incremental change has passed. Rotterdam must act with courage, coherence, and conviction to create a holistic solution. IABx wishes all stakeholders and leaders the wisdom, ambition, realism and ability to steward this forward. Everyone who lives in, loves and cares for our culturally rich city of Rotterdam knows that we have what it takes to collectively achieve more, succeed, prosper, thrive and flourish. The choice to act is on us, the people.

Click [here](#) for an impression of those four days, interviews with board members and Rotterdam representatives.

# 1. Foreword by Heleen Ririassa, Quartermaster Cultural Transition Rotterdam

Rotterdam is constantly in motion, always at a crossroads. This has made Rotterdam a city that continues to look forward, asking the question: how should our city evolve with the times?

The IABx2017 posed a critical question: what is Rotterdam's DNA? What is its collective narrative? This question remains urgent. However, maybe it should not be our goal to answer this question with a set of fixed qualities, but rather to embrace this quality of constant change that our city is home to. That is exactly what we sought to do with this edition of the International Advisory Board 2025. How should our cultural ecosystem and its supporting system evolve?

This cultural transition is not a fixed road to one destination. It has required us to continuously reevaluate where the road should lead us, what the road should look like, or whether it should be a road at all. It is about sitting down and rethinking our ways of working, living and playing. This is an ethos that ought to be continuously embodied and practiced moving forward.



In the same vein, after I started my assignment as Quartermaster of the Cultural Transition and quickly engaged with a vast number of members of the community, it became clear to me that the IAB25 needed to look and feel different. It was necessary for IAB25 to enrich IABx2017 recommendations and properly address new challenges in the city's transition.

A crucial first step to achieve this was to create an IAB25 team willing to take a different approach. We needed a team based in Rotterdam, with international working experience, a proven track record and street credibility. This resulted in an IAB25-team consisting of Venla Keskinen as Executive Producer, Studio BengBeng as Creative Agency, and Rachid Pardo (Anders Vision) as filmmaker and Henca Maduro as Head of Programming.

Team IAB25 knew what challenge was ahead of us: capturing a city in transition in a single board visit. The team tackled this with great ambition, recognizing the exceptional opportunity. We also rolled up our sleeves and took on the task with "nuchterheid," a Dutch word for a quality in which Rotterdam takes great pride. It means being realistic, down-to-earth, pragmatic and focusing on getting things done.



The result is the IABx's recommendations that you are about to read. I am truly in awe of the remarkable quantity and quality of devotion, hard work, sweat and tears that poured into this project. The IABx experts and the IAB25 event delivered a set of observations and recommendations that can really drive forward the city's Cultural Transition.



## 2. Why an IABx and Why now?

The assignment<sup>2</sup> for the Quartermaster Cultural Transition was developed by the municipality in close collaboration with the cultural sector. One of the elements of this assignment was the organization of the IAB25:

“The Quartermaster guarantees the advisory role for the transition, by positioning an international advisory organ IABx2.0, who will produce a first advice in the first half of 2025”.

Rotterdam established the International Advisory Board in 2004 to reach out to global experts to gain strategic insights on issues vital to Rotterdam’s long-term development. Rotterdam expanded the IAB’s scope in 2017 to explicitly include culture, recognizing it as a powerful element of innovation, economy and urban transformation. In 2017, the IABx was organized by Rotterdam Partners in close collaboration with the City’s Cultural Department.

It was crystal clear from the start that the IAB25 would be an important strategic component of the cultural transition. To keep pace with today’s rapidly evolving and accelerating globalized world, it is imperative to involve perspectives from beyond the local context. The goal was to gather expertise, experience, good practices and fresh ideas from around the world into Rotterdam to shape cultural policy and concrete action.

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<sup>2</sup> The Quartermaster is responsible for advising, organizing and developing the conditions for a new, sustainable and flexible cultural system. She provides the municipality and the cultural sector with solicited and unsolicited advice about all matters involved in the transition, such as: advisory model, financing, real estate, collaboration models, (social) domain crossing.



It must be understood that this IABx would not be in a stable environment. Rotterdam is in multiple transitions. IABx members would arrive in a city in transition towards an alternative publicly subsidized cultural system. It was critical to inform and prepare IABx members for this reality. It was further essential to make the most productive use of their time. This required creating a new structure for a fruitful exchange of knowledge and expertise between the members of the board and the local cultural ecosystem. The board had to properly address the urgencies of the cultural transition. Moreover, this version of the IABx needed to enrich the 2017 recommendations in a useful way, as the IABx2017 report was still relevant to current issues and opportunities. Given this context, Team Quartermaster provided all third parties involved with a set of important strategic choices to realize an impactful IAB25.

First, all IABx members had to be integrated into the larger transition. A key element of the approach created by Team Quartermaster is an ongoing reiterative process to share information with stakeholders and involve their input. The IABx inputs proved as important, and complementary, as inputs from the local cultural ecosystem. The result has been a true joint effort with real synergies.



This IABx was also not conducted in a remote ivory tower, but truly connected to the city, local experts and visits to their real locations of cultural work and life. Being an integrated part of this transition also meant that the IAB25 became part of a larger positioning campaign, including the media campaign “Rotterdam Decoded.” The combined efforts became: “Rotterdam Decoded, powered by IABx.”

To integrate the IAB25 into the cultural transition, the subtopics of the Quartermaster’s assignment became the strategic backbone of everything the IAB25 team was doing. Both the media campaign and the board visit program were structured along these transition pillars: Advisory Model, Financing Instruments, Cross-Domain Collaboration, Real Estate, Makers Climate, Space & Place and Positioning.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the IABx board had to have a composition that more honestly reflects evolving global and local realities. The Quartermaster was inspired by a recent Dutch essay by the well-known contemporary Dutch writer Adriaan van Dis, in which he documents the

<sup>3</sup> Both ‘Space & Place’ and ‘Positioning’ were added to assignment by the Quartermaster herself. Makers Climate is not an explicit part of the assignment, but an essential element of the transition we are realizing.

dominance of European consultants and advisors in the Global South, yet an absence of agents from the Global South in Europe.<sup>4</sup> This illustrates an obstacle to equitable flows and exchanges of global knowledge and expertise. Considering trends in rapidly changing world demographics, it would be shortsighted for Rotterdam to neglect opportunities to engage with the wider world.

Knowing that the IABx2017 was mostly made up of European individuals, everybody involved with IAB25 realized that, to build upon IABx2017, it would be timely, logical and critical for IAB25 to reflect its truly global constituency, and to connect with people whose feet are rooted in multiple cultures and perspectives.

There is no value in relying on past approaches when the world is evolving rapidly in new directions. Inviting expertise from all possible regions of the world to create IAB25 struck us emphatically and unmistakably as the most effective and efficient way to accelerate transfer of best practices, lessons learned and valuable knowledge from around the globe. Rotterdam cannot risk falling behind. The wisdom to create a global IAB25 was clear. A goal was set to seek the most global, qualified and complementary IABx composition possible.

That is, after all, the goal. Instead of relying on the previous IABx2017 approach to seek wisdom from respected yet nonetheless predominantly European “éminences grises”

These choices were expressed in a formal creative brief to the creative agency, executive producer, film maker and head of programing as the kickoff document for their assignment.

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4 van Dis, A. (2024). Nijgh & Van Ditmar. “De kolonie mept terug” [Essay]. “The Colony Strikes Back.”



### 3. Members of the International Advisory Board 2025

In line with the creative brief, the team set out to curate an IABx Board. This is crucial to achieve the change we are realizing with this transition. This was a risk. Repeating patterns from the past would have been easier, but Team Quartermaster and IABx chose to embody this ethos of change themselves.

The IABx members form a carefully curated group of international professionals with proven success in the fields of culture, finance, governance, entrepreneurship, diplomacy, and urban development. In selecting the members, the IABx team aimed to align their professional backgrounds closely with the strategic pillars of the cultural transition. Special attention was given to entrepreneurship and finance when forming the Board. Both the sector, as well as civil servants, and politicians have emphasized the need to diversify the cultural sector's financial model. Having professionals from the creative business industry and finance sector on board helps address this challenge.

The IABx Board Members are visionary leaders from around the world who contribute to the development of cultural ecosystems. They have engaged with urban contexts addressing issues such as economic development, post-colonial policy, super-diversity, cultural restructuring, and justice. Their backgrounds range from academic research to politics, from diplomacy to community arts, from the museum world to urban development, but they share a common goal: the creation of structurally just, inclusive, and innovative urban cultural models.



What unites the IABx members is their shared commitment to systemic change. Some key competencies stood out when selecting these members as they are essential to advising on a cultural ecosystem in transition:

- Expertise in strategic policy development at local, national, and international levels
- Experience with governance in cultural institutions, municipal frameworks, and the creative economy
- Ability to design inclusive programs, mentoring structures, and talent development policies that reflect diversity
- Capacity to foster international collaboration and translate global networks into locally relevant impact
- Skill in developing innovative public-private partnerships and alternative cultural financing models
- Integration of social entrepreneurship into cultural practices and institutional strategies
- Understanding of the social dynamics and economics of post-industrial urban societies, like Rotterdam
- Understanding and/or proven track records in business and finance

### 3.1 Global exchange of knowledge and expertise

**Bringing Maori, Iranian, South African, Jamaican, Caribbean and European to the table.**

As mentioned, this version of the IABx had to be different to properly align with the current spectrum of challenges and opportunities in Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem. One of the elements crucial to achieve this alignment would be to involve members of the IABx who could bring expertise and experience that transcended European perspectives. Not only



because this would enrich the recommendations of the last IABx2017, but also because it was imperative for IABx members and the IAB25 event to embody a more equitable global exchange of knowledge and expertise.

The Quartermaster's commitment to this strategic choice resulted in a board diverse in multiple regards: culturally, geographically, gender, profession, expertise, etc. The members hold nationalities across the globe, from Canada, South-Africa, the Netherlands, New Zealand, United States of America and the United Kingdom. They embody different cultural perspectives, including Maori, Iranian, South African, Jamaican, Caribbean and European, as well as having international working experience in Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, etc.

These explicit choices should not be conflated with mere superficial representation. An IAB board that mirrors global realities as well as Rotterdam's reality as "majority-minority city,"<sup>5</sup> aids the development of the recommendations. It allows the board to think intersectionally and connect issues of cultural policy to identity, community, issues of systemic exclusion, and sustainability. Rotterdam is one of the most culturally diverse cities of Europe, with more than 170 nationalities and more than 50% of the inhabitants having a migration background. On top of that, the city is home to a growing young generation of makers and cultural professionals whose practice operates outside of legacy institutions more closely associated with canonized cultural expressions. The board reflects this reality.

### 3.2 Taking risks pays off

Evidently, the risk Team IAB25 and Team Quartermaster took paid off. The strategy formulated by the Quartermaster in her creative brief resulted in an IABx that reflected cumulative ambitions of Rotterdam. It is a group of individuals who are all active members of their respective societies, having a foot in two cultures. What sets these board members apart, is a combination of talent, commitment, work ethic, an open attitude, curiosity, and a strong sense of humor. They asked well-intended yet hard hitting 'tough love' questions, such as:



"Are these people fit for purpose?"

"Why should the taxpayer give you, their money?"

"What is your business plan? What is your ROI?"

"Do you really want the change you say you want?"

"Are you ready to activate your private sector?"

"What role do you wanna actively claim in society?"

"What needs to break for this system to change?"

It is exactly these characteristics that led to a set of observations and recommendations so valuable for our city's cultural ecosystem.

<sup>5</sup> A majority-minority city is where minorities make up more than half of the local population, such that no single group holds a majority. This demographic shift often reflects broader trends in diversity and immigration within a country.



## 3.3 Introducing the x's behind IABx2025

### Rana Amirtahmasebi



Rana Amirtahmasebi is an international expert in economic development, urbanism, and cultural planning. As founding principal of Eparque Urban Strategies, she advises global institutions like the World Bank and UNDP, focusing on post-conflict and marginalized urban areas. Her work embeds culture into economic and spatial policy to empower communities and drive sustainable development. With degrees from MIT and Azad University, she bridges urban design and policy. Rana's approach offers cities like Rotterdam integrated, values-driven strategies for resilience, inclusion, and culturally grounded urban transformation.

### Dr. Harlan Cloete



Dr. Harlan Cloete is a South African “pracademic” specializing in local government HR development and good governance. A research fellow at the University of the Free State, he's created national HRD tools, including a widely adopted training course and performance models. Founder of the Great Governance ZA podcast and co-founder of KC107.7 radio, he champions participatory governance and transparency. His expertise supports cities like Rotterdam in linking cultural institutions to measurable community impact. Harlan's work bridges policy, capacity building, and social transformation with a focus on evidence-based outcomes.

### Michael Lints



Michael Lints is a seasoned venture capitalist and social impact leader, currently Partner at Golden Gate Ventures. With 20+ years in entrepreneurship and investment, he leads VC initiatives bridging Southeast Asia and the MENA region. Formerly Vice-Chair of Rotterdam's Economic Development Board, Michael supports creative entrepreneurs by rethinking funding models for sustainability. He co-directed the documentary Broken Chains and promotes inclusive innovation in sport, media, and culture. A champion of underrepresented founders, he brings strategic insight and global networks to empower creative ecosystems like Rotterdam's.

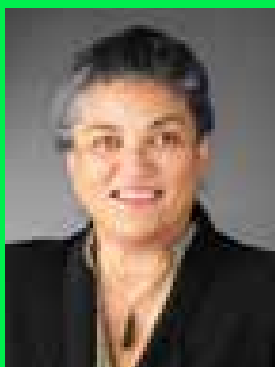


## Laura Raicovich



Laura Raicovich is a New York-based curator, writer, and activist shaping equitable cultural institutions. Author of *Culture Strike*, she co-founded Urban Front and launched the Francis Kite Club in NYC to explore art and resistance. Formerly Director of the Queens Museum and Leslie Lohman Museum, she also edited *Protodispatch*, amplifying global artist voices. A Rockefeller and Tremaine Fellow, Laura bridges cultural critique and civic engagement. Through curatorial work, writing, and public forums, she challenges institutions to embrace freedom of expression, justice, and inclusivity in cultural practice.

## Hinurewa te Hau



Hinurewa te Hau (Hinū) is a cultural strategist and Indigenous leader from Aotearoa New Zealand, with 20+ years in cultural policy and creative industries. Director of Matariki Cultural Foundation and GM at Creative Northland, she leads projects rooted in Māori values and community empowerment. With governance roles at Tātaki Auckland Unlimited and various cultural boards, she advocates globally for Indigenous visibility. Her work bridges cultural infrastructure, vocational education, and inclusive development. Hinū's systems-thinking approach offers cities like Rotterdam transformative strategies grounded in heritage, identity, and intercultural exchange.

## Jaap Veerman



Jaap Veerman is the Consul General of the Netherlands in Atlanta, representing Dutch interests across the U.S. Southeast. With 30+ years in economic diplomacy, he promotes trade, public-private partnerships, and cultural ties. Former postings include Deputy Ambassador to Mexico and Dutch Representative to the Asian Development Bank. Known for his expertise in urban development, water management, and logistics, Jaap connects culture to city branding and economic growth. He supports Rotterdam's international cultural ambitions through strategic diplomacy and deep-rooted knowledge of global policy and sustainable urbanism.

## Jorien Wuite



Jorien Wuite is a former Dutch MP and Minister of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport in Sint Maarten. With 30+ years in governance, diplomacy, and cultural policy, she has shaped institutional reforms and post-crisis recovery plans. A cultural advocate across the Kingdom of the Netherlands, she now chairs the Netherlands Film Fund Supervisory Board and serves on several advisory and supervisory boards. With master's degrees in public health and management, she promotes inclusive development and lifelong learning. Jorien's strategic leadership bridges Caribbean and European cultural exchange, supporting sustainable creative sector growth.

## Dr. Charlie Wall-Andrews



Dr. Charlie Wall-Andrews is an influential leader in Canada's music sector, named one of SPIN's 25 most influential people in 2025. As Executive Director of SOCAN Foundation, she champions programs like the TD Creative Entrepreneur Incubator and Equity X Production. A PhD holder and award-winning academic, she teaches at Toronto Metropolitan University and sits on the Canada Council for the Arts and Music Canada's Advisory Council. Also, an associate composer with the Canadian Music Centre, she blends research, advocacy, and arts leadership to foster innovation, equity, and sustainable careers in Canada's cultural industries.

## Ben Wynter



Ben Wynter is a dynamic leader at the nexus of music, media, and investment, with 20+ years of experience across major and independent labels. As founder of Unstoppable Music & Media, he provides consultancy, management, and cultural marketing for global talent. At PRS Foundation, he launched impactful grants like Hitmaker and Future Hitmaker. At AIM, as Director of Business Development, he supports music entrepreneurs and founded the AIM Angel Investment Syndicate. A co-founder of POWER UP!, he combats anti-Black racism in the UK music industry and advises government on streaming reform. Now Co-Chair of IMPALA's EDI Task Force, Ben advocates for equity and innovation in the European music sector.

## 4. The IABx25 Program

The IAB25 is part of the larger cultural transition. All efforts related to the IABx and its board visit programme are aligned with the original Quartermaster assignment and its subtopics. These include Advisory Model, Financing Instruments, Real Estate, Makers Climate, Cross-Domain Collaboration, Space & Place, and Positioning.<sup>6</sup>

The concept advice created and delivered by the Quartermaster, in fulfillment of Vice Mayor Kasmi's assignment, became in turn the first step in the process leading up to creating the IABx board visit program.

- Real Estate and Space & Place, concept advice delivered January 15th, 2025
- Advisory Model and Cross-Domain Collaboration, concept advice delivered January 31st, 2025
- Financing Instruments, concept advice delivered April 15th, 2025
- Advisory Model, Financing Instruments and Cross-Domain Collaboration next iteration delivered July 1st 2025

These subtopics also became the strategic pillars of the positioning campaign Rotterdam Decoded. By using these pillars as the backbone of the IABx program, the cultural community and board's visit would be aligned and optimally integrated with all previous efforts. With this approach, the program ensured that all aspects of the transition would be covered in the IABx board's recommendations. And conversely, the IABx board could optimally address and integrate all aspects of the transition.



<sup>6</sup> Both 'Space & Place' and 'positioning' have been added to the assignment by the Quartermaster. Makers Climate is not an explicit part of the assignment, but an essential element of the transition we are realizing.

The purpose of the IABx board visit's program is to support equitable and fruitful global exchange of knowledge and expertise to provide the city with strategic recommendations on its cultural transition. The four days that the members were physically present in the city were tightly packed with visits, panels, and formal and informal moments of deliberations. This program sought to authentically present the city's cultural ecosystem with all its challenges and opportunities. There were three elements especially important for a successful board visit:

- **Connecting local to global perspectives:** One of the most important elements of the board visit was a new format called "the triplets." Each board member was connected to two individuals from the local cultural ecosystem. Not only were the triplet members present during both formal and informal moments during the day, but each day was also concluded with a deliberation amongst IAB members and their respective triplets.
- The IAB25 was not an isolated gathering, but an engaged and outward-looking program spreading across the city. Having visited over 19 locations, involving more than 80 organizations, 47 speakers, and 41 triplet partners, with a large team of Rotterdam-based production volunteers and writing team, this IAB25 packed a prodigious scope of the city of Rotterdam into a compact and very full four days (see Appendix B).
- As was identified in the IABx2017 report, both legacy institutions, mid-sized institutions, as well as the grassroots are essential elements of a thriving cultural ecosystem. Both these groups received special attention in developing the program.

After developing and executing this program, the IABx Board's task was to place the city's facts, figures, frustrations, and dreams into global context, informed by their professional experiences. This exchange between the city and the board enabled a set of recommendations to be developed that is useful for realizing an impactful cultural transition.



# The Process Leading Up to the IABx: 2017 and 2025

The recommendations as formulated by the IABx2017 on Culture were a result of two IABx meetings in April and October and a process of stakeholder involvement that took one year, starting October 2016.

For IAB25 there was only one IABx meeting, namely in July 2025. This more compact and focused approach was possible thanks to the larger reiterative process of stakeholder involvement being driven forward by the Quartermaster, replacing the stakeholder process of 2016-2017.

## Process 2017

- **October 2016:** Kick-off meeting including a lecture by Wim Pijbes on culture in Rotterdam.
- **Late 2016 – Early 2017:** Five thematic working groups are formed, including representatives from cultural institutions, creators, policymakers, neighborhood initiatives, and businesses. Each group analyzes opportunities and bottlenecks in Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem.
- **February – March 2017:** Expert panels (consisting of international IABx members) are presented with the working group results and provide feedback.
- **April 2017:** First plenary session with IABx experts and local stakeholders. Exchange of insights and drafting of preliminary SWOT analyses.
- **May – September 2017:** Input is processed into concrete recommendations. Working groups submit their final reports.
- **October 5–6, 2017:** Second plenary session with international experts, policymakers, and sector representatives. The IABx presents its final conclusions and recommendations to Mayor Aboutaleb and Alderman Langenberg, at that time responsible for city cultural matters.
- **Fall 2017:** Final report is shared with the City Council and policymakers as input for future cultural policy.

## Process 2025

- **End of Dec 2024:** Team formed for IABx consisting of, Venla Keskinen as Executive Producer, Studio BengBeng as creative agency, Rachid Pardo (Anders Vision) as filmmaker and Henca Maduro as Head of Programming
- **Jan–March 2025:** Longlist created of potential IABx members for IAB25
- **April–June:** Program development
- **IABx July 2–5:**
  - \* July 2 (Day Zero): Introduction of Vice Mayor to IAB members at City Hall
  - \* July 3–5: Actual IABx full three-day programme
- **July 5:** Twelve (12) Draft Recommendations, based on ten (10) observations, presented to the alderperson during a dinner by the IAB members
- **July 11:** Eighteen (18) elaborated draft Recommendations compiled into a report by the IAB members. This was immediately sent by one of the IAB members driving the process to the Alderperson's supporting staff, the Quartermaster (and Quartermaster Team), all other IAB members, and IABx programmer. On July 12, this email was forwarded in full by the Quartermaster to, among others, the city council members, the core team members, the chairs of the Directors Roundtable (D.O.),<sup>7</sup> the New Deal core team, the Rotterdam Cultural Foundation (RCB),<sup>8</sup> and others who participated in the roundtable discussions in the run-up to the Quartermaster's recommendations. On July 15, the IABx programmer sent the email from Hinurewa te Hau (IABx member), containing the draft recommendations and the quartermaster's accompanying message, to all speakers, triplets, and other stakeholders involved in the IABx.
- IAB members on their own initiative actively continued this elaboration process after their three full-day IAB25 event stay in Rotterdam. They felt genuine engagement with the issues and challenges, ownership over the advice and were motivated by the people of Rotterdam whom they had met and interacted with during their visit.



<sup>7</sup> In Dutch, the Directeuren Overleg (D.O.)

<sup>8</sup> In Dutch, the Rotterdamse Culturele Basis (RCB)

- **July 30:** More comprehensive report delivered by IABx members, following the same distribution process as the draft recommendations of July 11th.
  - \* **August 20:** Final report of IABx members sent to Vice Mayor. Their report is included in this final document, starting at page 28.
- **September 3rd:** The IABx report is officially sent to the City Council, together with the Final Advice Quartermaster Cultural Transition Rotterdam and an accompanying letter from the Vice Mayor.



# FINAL REPORT OF THE NINE INTERNATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

“Culture is not a sector to be managed, but a system to be nourished”





# CULTURAL TRANSITION IN THE ROTTERDAM MUNICIPALITY:

Recommendations from the International Advisory Board (IAB25)

July 2025

Prepared By:

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“These observations are about the right to exist,  
So do we really speak the language of urgency  
Who is the one really that decides and who is the one that really is  
in charge?”

— Carina Fernandes, spoken word artist —

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Advisory Board 2025 (IAB25) was convened to support the Municipality of Rotterdam in reimagining the city's cultural future through structural transformation.

Over a three-day period, nine international experts drawn from cultural, Indigenous, academic, creative, urban planning, financial, and community sectors engaged in a process of deep listening, strategic analysis, and cross-cultural exchange.

Each IAB25 member was paired with “triplets” local cultural and community leaders, who enriched this process by sharing context, anchoring field visits, and participating in nightly reflections.

This Final Report is the culmination of that process. It draws on what we heard, saw, and debated across site visits, hui, studio tours, policy meetings, and debriefs. It offers ten observations and twenty recommendations rooted in lived experience, grounded expertise, and international best practice. What unites this work is a belief that culture is not a sector to be managed, but a system to be nourished, one that requires reconfiguration across governance, funding, infrastructure, and policy to thrive.

The report directly responds to the seven strategic priorities set by the Vice Mayor in the IAB25 appointment brief:

- \* **Advisory Model:** Recommendations address transparency, civic participation, and long-term legitimacy in cultural governance.
- \* **Makers Climate:** We highlight the need for investment in living conditions, fair pay, and peer-led ecosystems for artists and creative workers.
- \* **Space & Place:** Observations call for a renewed spatial politics of culture, one that activates underused sites and reimagines ownership.
- \* **Financing Instruments:** We explore hybrid funding models, localised financial innovation, and sustainable resource alignment.
- \* **Real Estate:** Cultural and community access to space must be secured through new policy instruments and cross-sector negotiation.
- \* **Cross-Domain Synergies:** Our findings support embedding culture in health, education, justice, and urban planning as core civic infrastructure.
- \* **Positioning:** Cultural policy must make the value of culture visible, not only in economic terms but through identity, belonging, and collective repair.

Together, these seven priorities shaped how the IAB25 engaged with Rotterdam's cultural landscape and guided the structure of this report.

## What We Heard

Rotterdam's cultural scene is vibrant, experimental, and deeply rooted in local histories. Yet structural barriers persist. Cultural workers spoke of short-term funding, unclear pathways, and disconnects between municipal strategy and community practice. Communities expressed a need for inclusive, transparent policymaking and support for grassroots leadership. Institutional actors called for policy coherence, future-focused planning, and clear signals about the city's direction.

## Why Structural Shift Matters

A structural shift means moving beyond project-based cycles to embed culture within the city's long-term governance and urban fabric. This includes cross-departmental alignment, equity in investment, and clear pathways for both established institutions and new voices. Without these, fragmentation persists — and the promise of culture as a civic tool remains unfulfilled.

## What the IAB25 Offers

This report is a blueprint for transition. It includes:

- \* **Ten Observations:** System-level insights across governance, equity, community, and strategic alignment
- \* **Twenty Recommendations:** Practical actions co-developed by the IAB25 in response to local dynamics and global insight
- \* **Reflections from Each IAB Member:** Lived, expert perspectives grounded in site experiences and sector expertise

The framework centres four structural themes: governance, strategy, equity, and community, that must be activated together to enable meaningful and enduring transformation.

**This is not a final answer, but a provocation: an invitation to act with courage, align across silos, and hold culture as a critical foundation for the city's shared future.**

**-- IAB25 --**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Rotterdam's cultural sector sits at a turning point, alive with innovation and ambition, but constrained by structural limits that inhibit long-term impact. The Vice Mayor's brief to the IAB25 asked not just for commentary, but for strategic insight into what a fairer, more resilient, and more connected cultural future might require. That brief shaped our process, framed our observations, and directly guided the structure of this report.

## 1.1 Who we are (IAB25 context)

The International Advisory Board 2025 (IAB25) brings together a diverse group of cultural strategists, policymakers, artists, community leaders, and innovators from across the globe. We were invited to Rotterdam to lend independent and constructive insight to the city's cultural transition efforts, grounded in deep experience in community-building, governance, cultural equity, urban design, and creative economies.

Our strength lies in our multiplicity of perspectives, informed by Indigenous worldviews, postcolonial realities, migrant experiences, and lived knowledge of both state and non-state cultural systems.

This report is structured to respond to the seven strategic questions posed by the Vice Mayor:

- \* **Advisory Model:** We explore transparent, civic-led frameworks for decision-making and cultural governance (see Observations 2, 6).
- \* **Makers Climate:** Our recommendations support fair pay, stability, and shared infrastructure to enable artists to thrive (Observations 1, 4).
- \* **Space & Place:** We highlight the need to unlock space for community-led culture, particularly in overlooked and undervalued areas (Observations 3, 5).
- \* **Financing Instruments:** New models for cultural finance and sustainability are proposed, with an emphasis on local experimentation (Observations 7, 9).
- \* **Real Estate:** We address access to space through urban partnerships, land-use tools, and long-term stewardship approaches (Observation 5).
- \* **Cross-Domain Synergies:** We call for culture to be embedded across sectors, including health, education, and justice as public infrastructure (Observation 8).
- \* **Positioning:** Culture must become visible and valued as essential civic infrastructure. We offer tools to amplify its presence and impact (Observations 10, and across recommendations).

## 1.2 The remit of the IAB25

Our task is to act as independent advisors to the City of Rotterdam; specifically, the Vice Mayor for Culture and the Quartermaster for Cultural Transition. Our advice is grounded in observation, evidence, and direct community engagement undertaken during the July 2025 IAB programme, site visits, and dialogues with local cultural leaders.

While Rotterdam's cultural activity is governed by the Dutch Cultural Policy Act and structured through four-year Cultuurplan cycles, the city currently lacks a long-term cultural strategy. The IAB25's role is not to replace existing planning processes, but to offer a broader provocation, one that identifies structural and systemic gaps, and supports the city's ambition to embed equity, continuity, and community power into cultural governance.

We offer:

- \* Strategic recommendations aligned to core values of equity, identity, sustainability, and civic inclusion
- \* Practical provocations to support enduring cultural transformation
- \* A structured framing for long-term planning and investment

## 1.3 Why this moment matters

Rotterdam stands at a crossroads. It is a city rich in cultural ambition, yet challenged by fragmented delivery, short political cycles, and persistent inequities in access, governance, and representation.

Rotterdam's long-term cultural and urban ambitions are clear, but they remain structurally vulnerable. The four-year Cultuurplan cycle, tied to shifting political mandates, lacks the safeguards needed to embed cultural continuity and carry transformative visions across electoral change. This creates a tension: continuity is interrupted, equity commitments become inconsistent, and communities are left to navigate systems that often exclude those they aim to serve.

What we have witnessed is not a failure of vision, but a failure of systemic embedding. This moment offers a rare opportunity to move from intention to infrastructure, from consultation to co-governance, and from siloed action to whole-of-city vision.

## 1.4 Relationship to the Quartermaster's Process

Our deliberations were shaped by, and respond directly to, the Quartermaster's brief: to support the municipality in transitioning towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and community-anchored cultural ecosystem.

The Quartermaster has signalled an openness to new governance models, public-private partnerships, evaluation frameworks, and long-term investment mechanisms. Our recommendations build on this direction, while also identifying structural blind spots, legislative limitations, and areas where stronger integrity and alignment are required.

This framing underscores the political and structural stakes of the transition. It expands the conversation beyond cultural development to issues of governance, legitimacy, and long-term equity. The Quartermaster also challenged the sector to "take position", to demonstrate its value not through justification alone, but through action, visibility, and systems-level engagement with the city's future.

We understand the Quartermaster's work not as a conclusion, but as a critical foundation. The responsibility now rests with the City to determine how bold it is prepared to be.

**"We're not just talking about culture anymore - we're talking about public money, who decides how it's spent, and who is recognised as legitimate in that process."**

**— Heleen Ririassa, Quartermaster**

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The IAB25 adopted a values-led, hands-on approach grounded in the deliberation framework developed to guide the July 2025 programme. The process was shaped by four interconnected modes: direct engagement, collaborative design, facilitated synthesis, and values-based framing. Together, these helped ensure that each recommendation was grounded in lived experience and shaped through shared reflection and clear, collective understanding.

The full deliberation framework used to guide this process is included as Appendix B.

### 2.1 Summary of Engagements: Site Visits, Roundtables, Cultural Activations

The IAB25 process was anchored in direct, place-based engagement across Rotterdam. Over the first two days, IAB members participated in:

- \* **Site visits** to cultural institutions, community-led initiatives, urban redevelopment sites, and grassroots collectives, including Afrikanerwijk co-ops, multifunctional artist spaces, and architectural heritage projects.
- \* **Roundtables and discussions** with cultural workers, youth leaders, creative entrepreneurs, and city officials — spanning themes of equity, infrastructure, public-private collaboration, and spatial justice.
- \* **Cultural activations**, performances, and immersive experiences hosted by local artists and cultural producers, which revealed the lived realities, ambitions, and frustrations of Rotterdam's creative communities.

These engagements were not passive observations — they shaped and sharpened IAB25's thematic focus, values alignment, and understanding of both structural tensions and community aspirations.

## 2.2 Co-design approach with IAB members

The recommendations presented in this report were developed through a collaborative, iterative process involving all IAB25 members. This included:

- \* Daily debriefs and synthesis sessions
- \* Shared thematic mapping (values, principles, issues, opportunities)
- \* Peer validation of observations and provocations
- \* A joint deliberation framework and recommendation grid used during the working session to organise thinking
- \* Ongoing engagement with “triplets” — local cultural, creative, and community-based actors assigned to each IAB member, offering contextual insight, critical reflection, and helping to bring forward the lived realities of those most affected by cultural policy and municipal planning

This process upheld the IAB’s ethos of collective intelligence, respectful critique, and transparent authorship, ensuring that the final outcomes reflect both individual expertise and shared insight.



## 2.3 Working session structure

The formal deliberation session (Day 3) was designed to support strategic clarity, shared authorship, and tangible outcomes. It included:

| Segment             | Focus  |
|---------------------|--|
| Frame the Challenge | Revisit structural tensions, legislative context, and cultural system gaps |
| Thematic Group Work | Co-develop strategic recommendations grounded in key IAB themes            |
| SWOT & Alignment    | Conduct a live SWOT analysis to align observations with future scenarios   |
| Closing & Consensus | Confirm shared priorities and outputs for the IAB25 Final Report           |

The session was co-facilitated by IAB members as a collective effort, with real-time synthesis and documentation to ensure shared ownership. Outputs include a populated recommendation grid, an expanded SWOT analysis, and a unified framework for short-, medium-, and long-term pathways to support Rotterdam's cultural transition.



## 3. OBSERVATIONS

The observations in this section reflect what IAB25 members saw, heard, and felt during four days of field engagement in Rotterdam. Through site visits, community exchanges, and direct conversations with artists, cultural workers, institutions, and municipal leaders, members encountered a set of recurring challenges, contradictions, and aspirations. These observations were not collected for academic distance, but as real-time reflections that shaped the group's understanding and ultimately informed the recommendations that follow.

The section begins by outlining the **key structural challenges** voiced across multiple engagements (3.1), followed by a **SWOT analysis** (3.2) that captures the internal and external conditions shaping the cultural sector. It concludes with a **thematic analysis** (3.3) that synthesises what the IAB25 observed, bridging experience with insight.

### 3.1 Key Challenges

#### 3.1.1 4-year political cycle vs. 30-year vision

The city may have 30-year cultural plans, but these are routinely disrupted by the political cycle. Despite their publication (e.g. “Rotterdam Culture City 2035”), there is no legislative safeguard to ensure these longer-term visions are implemented or maintained across election cycles.

Key issues identified:

- \* **Continuity is compromised:** Long-term plans are frequently reset or deprioritised after four years. There is no civic mechanism to protect the implementation of cross-decade strategies.
- \* **Accountability is weak:** Inclusion, equity, infrastructure, and access goals are often stated but rarely enforced. This undermines trust, especially among communities most affected.
- \* **Transparency is inconsistent:** While some long-term cultural frameworks exist, access to detailed planning and funding documentation is limited and fragmented.

This reveals a structural contradiction: the legislative architecture is not strong enough to uphold the city's cultural ambition. Without mechanisms to embed continuity, codify equity, and ensure interdepartmental coherence, the system risks delivering performance cycles — not transformation.

3.1.2 Disconnection between policy, planning, and lived experience

One of the most visible tensions in Rotterdam’s cultural landscape is the gap between high-level policy ambitions and the lived realities of communities, artists, and organisations. While long-term cultural strategies exist, the mechanisms to sustain, align, and monitor their implementation across political cycles and municipal departments remain weak. This results in inconsistent outcomes, a lack of accountability, and a growing trust deficit. The table below outlines core observations related to these systemic gaps:

3.1.3 Gaps between planning and Implementation

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 30-Year Vision vs. 4-Year Cycle | Rotterdam has long-term ambitions, but true continuity is broken every election cycle. Without statutory safeguards, plans risk being shelved.                            |
| Access to Documents             | Difficulty obtaining comprehensive multi-year planning and budgetary data limits transparency and public scrutiny.  |
| Implementation & Oversight      | While inclusion and interconnectivity are emphasized, enforcement mechanisms (e.g. diversity, participation, fair practice) may lack consistency or weight.               |
| Cultural Literacy & Alignment   | Conflicting priorities across departments — culture, planning, finance — lead to policy misalignment (e.g. cultural infrastructure often excluded from urban strategies). |

3.1.4 Additional tensions

- Absence of a legal definition for culture and creativity**  
Rotterdam’s legislation outlines funding categories but lacks a clear legal definition of culture or creativity. This gap creates ambiguity, often leaving contemporary, cross-disciplinary, and creative industry practices outside policy scope. Without a shared framework, interpretation varies across departments, limiting coherence and inclusion in cultural decision-making.
- Siloed funding obstructs integrated community responses**  
Separate funding streams for culture, education, social development, and urban planning prevent cohesive, place-based approaches. This fragmentation hinders collaboration, weakens programme impact, and restricts investment in initiatives that span multiple policy domains — such as cultural wellbeing, creative education, and community regeneration.
- Participation gaps between policy and delivery**  
Although inclusivity and co-creation are stated policy goals, community feedback reveals gaps in how these values are enacted. Participatory processes are inconsistently applied, risking tokenism and undermining long-term trust. Bridging this disconnect is essential for meaningful engagement and equity-led transformation.

### **3.1.5 Tokenism and trust deficit**

While city-led initiatives often promote inclusion, many communities report being consulted without genuine influence. In several cases, long-standing grassroots programmes that foster cohesion in underserved areas are placed at risk due to rigid administrative classifications, such as being deemed education rather than culture. This misalignment between policy intent and lived experience contributes to frustration, weakens trust, and jeopardises the long-term sustainability of inclusive cultural development.

### **3.1.6 Cultural displacement through urban planning**

As Rotterdam invests in urban renewal, cultural spaces and communities in lower socio-economic areas risk being priced out or relocated. Gentrification, rising costs, and zoning decisions can displace vital cultural initiatives and dislocate communities from their historical and cultural roots, even when those initiatives are successfully addressing social challenges.

What's needed is urban planning must be integrated with cultural policy to protect community-anchored cultural infrastructure, especially in vulnerable neighbourhoods. Hybrid spaces like those operating at the intersection of education and culture should be supported, not displaced.

## 3.2 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was a critical tool used by the IAB25 to synthesise real-time findings from field visits, community engagements, and sectoral dialogues. It helped identify the structural strengths, systemic weaknesses, urgent opportunities, and persistent threats affecting Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem. Rather than a theoretical exercise, the SWOT served as a shared framework to surface practical insights and align them with the IAB's values and strategic themes.

Key findings included:

- \* **Strengths:** Rotterdam's cultural diversity, dynamic grassroots energy, strong educational institutions, and a growing cohort of community-based leaders.
- \* **Weaknesses:** Siloed governance structures, short funding cycles, weak interdepartmental coherence, and limited legislative protections for long-term vision.
- \* **Opportunities:** Cross-sector partnerships, redefinition of governance models, embedding culture in urban planning, and designing equitable investment mechanisms.
- \* **Threats:** Gentrification-driven displacement, political turnover disrupting continuity, burnout in the sector, and community mistrust due to consultative fatigue.

These findings directly informed the 20 recommendations presented in this report. The guiding principles — including equity as structure, cultural sovereignty, transparency, and long-term vision — emerged in response to these dynamics, ensuring each recommendation was grounded in lived realities and positioned for structural impact.

**“You can feel how much energy this city holds, but it’s also constantly being extracted without being replenished.”**

**— Cultural leader —**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse international perspectives grounded in lived experience</li> <li>• Access to community leaders, practitioners, and cultural workers</li> <li>• Independence from local political cycles</li> <li>• Alignment on core principles: equity, identity, transparency</li> <li>• Strong will for collaboration and experimentation</li> <li>• Rotterdam's diversity and indigenous cultural scene is strong and vibrant</li> <li>• Rotterdam's public spaces are well-designed and approachable</li> <li>• Exceptional resilience in spite of adversity</li> <li>• There is a willing private sector for investment</li> </ul>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape a 30-year vision to transcend 4-year political cycles</li> <li>• Embed equity as a measurable governance and funding tool</li> <li>• Propose policy reforms (e.g., co-governance, spatial legislation)</li> <li>• Recommend a Cultural Planning Office, a Cultural Plan, and/or a Culture Advisory Unit</li> <li>• Build a Rotterdam-wide cultural infrastructure map (human + spatial)</li> <li>• Private sector engagement to support the arts</li> <li>• Mapping on the arts sector to share resources and opportunities</li> <li>• Rebrand Rotterdam as a relevant and vibrant city with a robust culture</li> <li>• Build upon the strengths of the municipal cultural department</li> </ul> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent long-term vision across departments – While 30-year plans exist, they are not implemented or aligned due to political cycles.</li> <li>• Low cultural literacy within municipal leadership – Resulting in poor prioritisation of cultural investment.</li> <li>• Underdeveloped civic infrastructure for consultation – Communities are consulted late or in fragmented ways.</li> <li>• Limited support for grant writing or development roles – Small orgs lack internal capacity to compete.</li> <li>• Lack of clarity on roles/responsibilities between levels of government – Blurs accountability.</li> <li>• Lack of collaboration with the private market to diversify the funding mix</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short political cycles override long-term planning – Four-year terms undermine implementation of 30-year strategies.</li> <li>• Cultural gentrification and displacement – Rising property values push out grassroots actors.</li> <li>• Tokenisation of diverse communities – Cultural identity used symbolically, not structurally embedded.</li> <li>• Over-reliance on individual champions – Places sustainability at risk if key individuals leave</li> <li>• Erosion of trust in public institutions – Without action, engagement fatigue may deepen</li> <li>• Lack of legislation to protect cultural space and practices – Leaves vulnerable communities exposed</li> </ul>                         |

### 3.3 Thematic Analysis

This section presents a deeper analysis of the ten key observations that underpin the IAB25 Final Report. These observations are not abstract conclusions—they are grounded in what each IAB member saw, heard, and experienced across the city.

Over three days, IAB members engaged in community conversations, site visits, interviews, policy reviews, and peer reflections. Each evening, they reconvened to deliberate on the structural and systemic patterns emerging from those interactions. The observations captured here reflect that collective process: they synthesise lived experience, sector expertise, and strategic insight.

To enrich the analysis, each observation includes short remarks from IAB members. These reflections bring the observations to life, offering concrete examples, personal perspectives, and critical provocations. Together, they help articulate not only what was said, but also what was meant—surfacing the nuances, tensions, and possibilities embedded in Rotterdam's cultural landscape.

This thematic analysis acts as the bridge between listening and action. It provides the context for the twenty recommendations that follow, ensuring that each proposed shift is clearly anchored in the realities of the communities and systems it seeks to serve.

#### 3.3.1 Equity as Structural and Systemic - Laura Raicovich

In a city as diverse as Rotterdam, uneven distribution of resources is part and parcel of how urban landscapes have evolved under neo-liberalism. Culture can play a pivotal role in supporting the recalibration of resources, human, financial, cultural, etc, to forge a more holistic understanding that how we live in our cities IS OUR CULTURE. Culture is not a separate or autonomous part of life but rather something all inhabitants practice daily.

To support this reality, particularly towards equitable cultural practice and policy, a structural shift is necessary from within the city's bureaucracy. Importantly this systemic work must happen both inside the culture department, and through the integration of cultural practice into other departments, from housing and finance, to sanitation and education.

This structural approach has the potential to provide a broader base of financial and systemic support for culture workers and organizations, as well as making additional resources available for cross-sector collaboration. From within the culture department, looking deeply at how current funding apparatuses function is a key element towards a more equitable cityscape. For example, access to funding is hampered not only by the requirements of the process (knowledgeable/ experienced grantwriters, budget-makers, etc) but also by having access to the languages that the city recognizes as important.

Further, integrating cultural action and practice across traditionally siloed city departments amplifies access to resources, broadens the base of cultural engagement, and ultimately serves the city as a whole.



### 3.3.2 Cultural Infrastructure & Spatial Access - Rana Amirtahmasebi

A consistent thread across these sessions was the precarious position of cultural communities in Rotterdam's development landscape. While the city is rich in creative energy, artists and grassroots organisations are increasingly at risk of being marginalised in spatial terms.

The spatial needs of artists and culture bearers are integral to a Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem, as creative practice depends on access to diverse, affordable, and secure spaces for production, presentation, collaboration, and community engagement. Our field observation unpacked a lack of secure access to spaces for cultural production.

While our field trips and interviews mostly focused on performing arts sector, we do believe that a range of functions—from studios and rehearsal spaces to galleries, performance venues, community centers, and live/work housing should be considered. Artists require informal, flexible spaces for experimentation and cross-disciplinary exchange, which are often at risk in rapidly developing urban environments. Without intentional planning and zoning that recognizes cultural production as a vital landuse, artists are routinely displaced by rising rents, speculative development, and incompatible land use policies, leading to the erosion of local cultural identity and creative economies.

Without studying Rotterdam's landuse policies it is difficult to recommend a specific typology. But in general, the city can adopt a spectrum of spatial strategies, including adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings (e.g., warehouses, schools, churches), temporary activation of vacant spaces, and inclusionary zoning to mandate or incentivize affordable cultural space in new developments.

One emerging and promising model to safeguard long-term affordability is through community land trusts (CLTs), nonprofit ownership models, and cultural easements that restrict land use to creative and cultural activities in perpetuity. Public investment, such as capital grants, percent-for-art programs, and property tax incentives for cultural use, can further stabilize these spaces. Crucially, preserving cultural space is not just about affordability but also about ensuring long-term tenure, cultural relevance, and self-determination for artists and culture bearers rooted in their communities.

As one participant put it:

“Creatives are losing their spaces and being asked to animate the very city that no longer makes room for them.”

This is not simply a crisis of property, it is a design failure. Cultural, education, and sport sectors operate in silo, and despite good intentions, there is limited integration of culture into long-term spatial policy.

“You've got culture, education and sport, and they're all debating who gets the budget and who does what.”

The government has not taken the lead in coordinating a unified response with developers, community leaders, and cultural actors.



“If the government doesn’t lead these conversations, there’s no motivation for the developer to do anything ... the arts community is very much silenced.”

Yet, hope remains. Rotterdam’s placemaking culture, the adaptive reuse of the Fenix building, and the BoTu 2028 initiative show what is possible when community, infrastructure, and governance align.

“Urban planning without culture is just construction.”

For cultural ecosystems to thrive, space must be protected, co-designed, and structurally embedded in the city’s future, not temporarily allocated, but intentionally safeguarded as cultural infrastructure.

“Cultural ecosystems without a home will not last.”

Spaces like Magbon address community needs that arise outside conventional hours and systems. Embedding night-time cultural governance (e.g., Night Mayor models) into city infrastructure ensures cultural spaces are not just permitted but supported. It also recognises nightlife as a cultural and economic driver worthy of coordinated policy support and inclusion in spatial development plans.

### 3.3.3. Public–Private Partnerships (Blended Models) - Jorien Wuite

Throughout our program, it became increasingly evident that public-private funding models can play a pivotal role in supporting the city's ongoing cultural transition. Site visits and panel discussions highlighted a dynamic ecosystem where innovation, artistic production, and urban regeneration intersect. Yet, these initiatives also revealed the fragility of cultural funding structures when overly reliant on no, project-based or (short-term) public grants.

Conversations with local changemakers brought forward a shared desire for more sustainable, co-created financial frameworks as we observe Rotterdam's progress and exploration with private funding models for culture. While these initiatives demonstrate significant private support, it also underscores several risks inherent in public–private funding models as recently also highlighted in news paper articles..With so many voices reflecting a cultural sector that is already deeply entrepreneurial, socially engaged, and spatially embedded, structural support and leverage from private capital or long-term public-private partnerships does not seem to be a transparent co-governance framework with public cultural goals, strategic safeguards, equity principles and broad based (neighborhood or other) representation yet.

Different participating thoughtleaders feel the urgent question of how blended models can create more opportunity and sustainability for Rotterdam social and economic development of the future while ensuring that culture remains a democratically co-created pillar of the city's future: transparent, equitable, and deeply rooted in local artistic practice and community needs.

In the Netherlands, public–private partnerships are emerging in the cultural health space, where health insurers invest directly in arts-based care. Notable examples include De Friesland's funding of dance classes for Parkinson's patients and Cordaan's integration of creative practitioners, such as poets and dancers, into therapeutic care. These models demonstrate how cultural interventions can be positioned as preventive health strategies, funded through blended mechanisms. Rotterdam could explore similar partnerships, enabling insurers and cultural organisations to co-invest in long-term, community-based creative health programmes.

### 3.3.4. Governance Reform, Trust, and Accountability - Dr Harlan Cloete<sup>1</sup>

A central theme emerging across these sessions was the issue of trust, or more precisely, the erosion of it. Participants voiced a deep legitimacy gap between institutions and communities. Governance structures were repeatedly described as unclear in mandate, disconnected from stakeholders, and unfit to deliver on public expectations.

“There is no trust.”

“My trust was already gone.”

“If we cannot fix distrust, nothing else will hold.”

This breakdown cannot be addressed by structural change alone. It requires a shift in culture, one that prioritises accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Participants asked bluntly:

“Is this department fit for purpose?”

“Do they even know who their stakeholders are?”

There was strong consensus that governance must move beyond compliance toward community-anchored, learning-based reform. This includes clear goals, stakeholder engagement, regular evaluation, consequence management, and open feedback loops, all principles reflected in Dr Cloete’s Governance 5iQ framework.

“We are moving from government to governance.”

True reform is not technical, it is relational. Trust cannot be retrofitted into systems; it must be designed into them from the start. Governance that is credible, courageous, and centred on people is the foundation for cultural transition.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This observation has been drafted on behalf of Dr Harlan Cloete, based on his panel contributions, field reflections, and the Governance 5iQ framework, which underpins his work on institutional readiness, consequence management, and public service reform.

### 3.3.5 Long-Term Cultural Vision and Civic Ambition - Jaap Veerman

One of the core challenges identified during these sessions was the absence of long-term cultural vision across institutional layers. While Rotterdam holds extraordinary creative potential, its planning and governance structures often fall short of matching that potential with sustained civic ambition.

“They couldn’t explain their institutional framework.”

“What is your ambition, and how do you want to get there?”

Cultural policy is still treated as peripheral programme-based, short-term, or siloed. Instead of being structurally embedded, culture is often added post-facto to other domains, like housing or development.

“Urban planning without culture is just construction.”

“Cultural policy without equity is just decoration.”

But civic ambition requires cultural ambition. The ability of a city to lead, to become more than a destination or a brand, rests on whether it invests in the cultural life, memory, and identity of its people. A long-term cultural vision must shape not just policy, but how the city sees itself.

“Structure without imagination is just repetition. Policy without trust is just noise.”

Rotterdam now faces a choice. It can continue with fragmented initiatives, or it can align its governance with bold cultural commitment. If it chooses the latter, it can realise the ambition set out by the Vice Mayor: to become a city that leads, not just administratively, but culturally. Making a government department “fit for purpose” involves a structured transformation to ensure it can effectively and efficiently deliver its mandate.

To improve leadership, systems, people processes, and culture; consider a step-by-step approach which involves clearly defining the change, building a strong coalition, developing a clear vision, and implementing effective change management strategies for example;

1. Define purpose and mandate clearly: clarify the department’s mission and core objectives, align with the city’s policy goals, ambition and strategy and stakeholders needs, identify key performance outcomes.
2. Conduct a comprehensive diagnostic review: evaluate current performance: structures, processes, staffing, resources and budget. Assess gaps between current state and desired state. Use tools like DRAM, SWOT or performance audits.
3. Strengthen leadership and governance: appoint or educate leadership. Establish clear lines of authority, accountability and decision-making. Promote and implement transparency and dialog.
4. Build capacity and skills: Assess current workforce capabilities. Upskill staff through training, mentorship and technical assistance. Recruit strategically where gaps exist, based on the vision and strategy of the city of Rotterdam multi year plan.
5. Streamline structures and processes: eliminate duplication and inefficiencies. Be transparent and redesign workflows to become stakeholder service focused.

6. Implement performance management: Set SMART performance indicators (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). Establish monitoring and evaluation and include output and outcome goals and indicators systems. Where applicable use data to drive decisions and accountability.
7. Foster a result-driven, adaptive culture: promote and intertwine in the work processes values like service, integrity, collaboration and innovation. Especially in change management, recognize and reward good performance. Address resistance to change through communication and engagement.
8. Improve service delivery and public engagement with (potential) stakeholders and partners: use stakeholder, partner and citizen feedback to evaluate, update, design and create, innovate and develop policy and services. Important to increase departments accessibility, efficiency and responsiveness. Enhance communication and transparency with stakeholders, partners and the public.
9. Ensure sound financial and resource management: strengthen budgeting, procurement and auditing processes. Align resources with strategic priorities.
10. Monitor, learn and adjust: Develop a “continuing learning organization” Regularly review performance and adapt. Encourage learning from mistakes. Institutionalize and introduce improvement mechanisms.

### 3.3.6 Community Building & Engagement - Ben Wynter

You must ensure that capital, when engaged, does not override the democratic and inclusive purpose of cultural policy. It must instead bThrough the work I have undertaken across the creative industries and equity-based initiatives, it has become increasingly clear that equitable cultural engagement cannot be achieved through surface level interventions or one-off consultations. If we are serious about ensuring that culture is accessible, representative, and empowering for all citizens, then we must critically examine and reshape how we structure both policy and engagement.

Across multiple regions, I've observed a growing ecosystem of creative practice that is both socially engaged and community driven. However, as I witnessed whilst on site visits and engaging practitioners in Rotterdam, the infrastructure supporting these ecosystems often lacks long-term resilience. Much of it is underpinned by short-term, project-based grants or sporadic investment which, while valuable, do not provide the sustained support needed for cultural equity to take root and grow.

For a city as multi-cultural as Rotterdam, engagement must go beyond token consultation. What's needed is transparent, co-governance where communities, particularly those historically excluded from cultural decision-making are not simply recipients of programming but are embedded as partners in the shaping of cultural policy, funding priorities, and strategy. Equity must be hardwired into the system through safeguards, representation, and accountability.

There is a clear appetite, especially among cultural changemakers, for models that move toward sustainable, co-created frameworks blending public support with private partnership, but within a structure that centres public cultural value, community need, and social impact. Without this, the risk is the reinforcing of the very inequalities the vice mayor, quartermaster and department of culture seek to dismantle.

The opportunity here is significant. If designed thoughtfully, a cultural strategy that is equitable and future-facing can serve as a cornerstone of social cohesion, innovation, and civic pride. But this can only happen if we acknowledge the uneven terrain we're starting from and commit to building a system where all communities have the power, the access, and the platform to shape their own cultural futures.have the power, the access, and the platform to shape their own cultural futures.

### 3.3.7 Capacity & Capability Building - Dr Charlie Wall-Andrews

The arts scene in Rotterdam is rich with creativity, but structural gaps remain that limit its ability to fully thrive. To deepen the city's cultural soul, there is a clear need for capacity building initiatives that develop the next generation of cultural leaders and support underserved communities.

This includes investing in training, mentorship, and access to resources that empower emerging artists and cultural workers to lead, create, and sustain impactful work. Such models must be anchored by strategic guardrails, equity principles, and a commitment to broad-based representation; whether geographically, demographically, or artistically.

Strategic investment must also be paired with thoughtful cultural policy reform. By moving beyond legacy-based models and embracing policies that prioritize equity, innovation, and sustainability, Rotterdam can cultivate a more resilient and inclusive cultural ecosystem. These efforts will not only strengthen the city's creative industries but also ensure that its cultural narrative reflects the full diversity and identity of its people.

### 3.3.8 Cultural Identity & Anti-Gentrification - Hinurewa te Hau

Cultural identity is not just a memory of the past. It is a living inheritance that anchors belonging, especially for Surinamese, Antillean, Cape Verdean, Turkish, Moroccan, and other long-established migrant-rooted communities. In many of Rotterdam's neighbourhoods, this identity is being reshaped, not by the communities who live there, but by the economic and spatial pressures of regeneration. The fear of displacement is not theoretical. It is lived - spaces built, inhabited, and sustained by these communities are increasingly at risk through development, rising costs, and shifting narratives that erase or commodify their histories.

The communities we visited were welcoming and culturally vibrant. But their stories revealed deeper truths: rising crime, cost-of-living pressures, and a slow erosion of belonging. What defines a "lower socio-economic area" is not just statistics. It is the everyday challenge of staying rooted in a neighbourhood that no longer feels affordable or safe.

The legacy of colonisation lives on in Rotterdam. It is visible not only in cultural memory, but in street names, statues, and public institutions. While Dutch law affirms equality, many Dutch people of colour still face structural barriers. Cultural and creative sectors can help dismantle these, but too often they do so at a cost to the communities they spring from.

Protecting cultural identity means upholding whakapapa (genealogy), ensuring people see themselves, their histories, and their communities reflected in the places they call home. Yet grassroots leaders and artists are often left carrying the burden of preservation without institutional recognition or support. Anti-gentrification is not anti-growth. It is a call for development that does not displace. Effective cultural policy must protect place-based identity by supporting community-controlled infrastructure, securing tenure for neighbourhood groups, and embedding anti-displacement principles in publicly funded urban planning. Cultural development must be grounded in justice, or it risks reinforcing the very exclusions it seeks to redress.



### 3.3.9 Finance, Investment & Funding Models - Michael Lints

Diversifying finance and funding models for the Art and Culture scene will bring sustainability to current and new cultural programs, increase engagement from the private sector and relieve pressure from grant programs.

During the site visits and especially in between the visits, there were two common themes:

(1) there is insufficient capital flowing to grass roots initiatives, caused by “big-project-syndrome” and unsophisticated mechanisms to include diversified local (neighborhood) initiatives,

(2) no financial involvement from the private sector towards grass root initiatives. Rotterdam has passion for its arts and culture scene and the sector deserves a broadening and well-balanced funding framework. The initial observations during our visit didn’t lead to the conclusion there isn’t sufficient funding.

As part of the findings there are two relevant (high-level) programs that can support a more sustainable funding framework. The first part is balanced financing. A more balanced approach to providing funding to mid- and top-tier institutions, whilst providing “seed”-capital to grass roots initiatives. This seed capital is effectively a percentage carve-out from existing funding programs, but earmarked for smaller initiatives who deliver impact for Rotterdam (based on pre-determined factors). Seed capital doesn’t need to provide 100% funding for grass root initiatives but should act as a catalyst to inspire other stakeholders to step as co-financers/investors.

The second part is a blend of private sector capital and public funding through separate funding vehicles. The private sector needs a significant role in funding and financing models for the arts and culture sector. Governance is an important factor when involving the private sector in funding non-profit initiatives. Involvement from the private sector can be achieved through the following principals: (1) funding and co-branding, (2) investment and building sustainable funding models, (3) mentorship and strategic support\*, and (4) commercialisation for a select group of initiatives.

An updated funding framework, investments via the private sector and more balancing of funding is meant to benefit grass roots initiatives and well diversified sustainable arts and culture programs. \* The private sector has a wealth of knowledge and experience they can share with projects and initiatives they get involved in. Anything from financial modelling, strategic partnerships, branding, and coaching and mentoring can be of significant value to grass roots initiatives and increase their longevity.

\* The private sector has a wealth of knowledge and experience they can share with projects and initiatives they get involved in. Anything from financial modelling, strategic partnerships, branding, and coaching and mentoring can be of significant value to grass roots initiatives and increase their longevity.

### 3.3.10 Legislation, Policy & Cultural Sovereignty - Hinurewa te Hau

Rotterdam's Department of Culture leads a wide and ambitious range of initiatives across the city. However, in both IAB discussions and community kōrero (conversations), a consistent concern emerged: the absence of sustained, integrated collaboration across sectors. While the city meets its obligations under the Dutch Cultural Policy Act through the four-year Cultuurplan cycle, the Cultural Plan, while emphasising interconnectivity, innovation, and inclusion, does not appear to mandate or structurally embed cultural development across sectors such as health, education, housing, or social inclusion. As a result, cultural ambitions remain vulnerable to political cycles and disconnected from broader social impact strategies

The Cultuurplan, while essential for cultural funding, is not a cross-sector cultural strategy, nor is it mandated to align with broader city-wide systems. Funding remains siloed and short-term, and there is no legislative mechanism to protect long-range cultural ambitions when political leadership changes.

If I was to draw a comparison with Aotearoa New Zealand, our local government (municipality) operates under a legislative framework that mandates a 10-year Long-Term Plan (LTP) and an Annual Plan, both reviewed regularly under the Local Government Act. These tools ensure strategic and cultural priorities are not reset with every new electoral term. Even with three-year political cycles, this planning system enables intergenerational thinking and protects community and cultural outcomes over time.

Encouragingly, Rotterdam is already home to initiatives that model the type of systemic shift required. Indirah Tauwnaar's House of Urban Arts (HUA) is a co-created cultural ecosystem where development, creativity, and entrepreneurship are central. Quardin, led by Farresh Hossain, supports interdisciplinary talent development with programmes that prioritise community voice. Magbon, founded by Gordon Sana, provides a safe, relational space for youth to explore identity, artistry, and belonging.

While HUA has benefited from Cultuurplan funding, Quardin and Magbon typically operate independently or rely on alternative resourcing, an important distinction that exposes the precarious sustainability of community-led cultural work within current policy frameworks. Regardless of resourcing, all three are rooted in local leadership, responsive to community needs, and built on circular investment models where "what goes in, stays in."

As Indirah Tauwnaar shared "even programmes with strong community backing can face eviction or disruption simply because they do not fit institutional categories like 'education'. Her programme, rooted in dance and relational care, supports communities impacted by cost-of-living pressures and rising crime. When these spaces are displaced, it's not just the programme that's lost, it's the community infrastructure around it.

For Rotterdam, the absence of mechanisms to protect these community anchors may place long-term aspirations at risk. What is at stake is not legal compliance, which is met, but whether current frameworks are strong and connected enough to carry forward the city's cultural ambitions over time.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

This section outlines the foundational principles that should guide Rotterdam's cultural transition. Derived from IAB25 deliberations, these principles are not abstract ideals; they are grounded in the lived experiences of communities, practitioners, and institutions across the city. They speak to the “how” of transformation: how decisions are made, how relationships are built, and how public value is created and sustained over time. Together, these principles form a compass for implementation, helping ensure that future policies and structures are not only ambitious, but also inclusive, accountable, and durable.

### 4.1 Governance and Leadership Required

- Shift from symbolic consultation to shared decision-making, particularly with community-based leaders, artists, and local organisations.
- Embed community voice and cultural expertise into formal governance structures (e.g. planning, infrastructure, and investment boards).
- Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure inclusion, continuity, and responsiveness beyond political cycles.



### 4.2 Policy and Legislative Shifts

- Introduce a statutory framework to protect long-term cultural strategies from disruption every four years.
- Expand the definitions of culture, creativity, and public value to legitimize interdisciplinary, community-led work.
- Reconfigure cultural policy to align with urban development, education, social care, and housing, breaking siloed structures.

### 4.3 Resourcing and Capacity-Building

- Prioritise multi-year funding to ensure stability and reduce the administrative burden on grassroots organisations.
- Invest in community infrastructure as civic infrastructure—not temporary or pilot-based programming.
- Build internal capacity within the municipality to support transdisciplinary, equity-led work, especially at the intersections of culture, space, and social inclusion.

### 4.4 Partnership Models

- Move from transactional project partnerships to long-term, trust-based relationships with local actors.
- Support intermediary organisations that can translate between institutional and grassroots systems. Pilot co-governed cultural spaces where policy, planning, and community voices intersect in shared ownership and responsibility.

## 4.2 Implementation Recommendations

The following twenty recommendations are the result of a three-day ideation, deliberation, and validation process undertaken by the International Advisory Board (IAB25). Each recommendation is grounded in lived expertise and informed by direct engagement with Rotterdam's communities, institutions, and municipal stakeholders. Together, they aim to address the systemic conditions identified in the IAB25's ten key observations.

These recommendations are not isolated fixes. They form an interconnected strategy designed to deliver a structural shift in how culture is governed, funded, and integrated across the city. They respond to the recurring challenges observed across planning, equity, governance, funding, and community voice.

To support implementation and future planning, the recommendations are grouped below into three timeframes:

- **Short-Term (0–12 months):** Immediate, high-leverage changes to unlock coordination, inclusion, and transparency.
- **Medium-Term (2–5 years):** Foundational policy, funding, and governance reforms requiring collaboration and systems change.
- **Long-Term (10–30 years):** Transformational ambitions aligned with Rotterdam's broader civic vision and spatial strategy.

Each recommendation is linked back to one or more of the IAB25's core observations and offers a concrete response to the city's current structural and cultural challenges.

## SHORT-TERM (0–12 months)

| Timeframe  | Recommendation   | Linked Observation | Strategic Focus / Problem Solved                         |
|------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Short-Term | Change grant assessment criteria to elevate “Relevance” and embed equity quotas for underserved groups.  | Obs 1              | Outdated funding criteria fail to support transformation |
| Short-Term | Introduce quota-based equity criteria across public funding to ensure access for structurally excluded groups.   | Obs 1              | Underrepresentation in public arts funding.              |
| Short-Term | Develop accessible funding frameworks with multilingual, plain-language guidance, peer review, and capacity-building support.  | Obs 6              | Complex, exclusive application processes.                |
| Short-Term | Reform funding application and reporting systems to ensure transparency, equity, and simplicity — with community accountability embedded throughout design, assessment, and decision-making. | Obs 6              | Inequitable and non-transparent systems.                 |

## MEDIUM-TERM (2-5 years)

| Timeframe   | Recommendation  | Linked Observation | Strategic Focus / Problem Solved  |
|-------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Medium-Term | Embed a cultural outcomes evaluation framework across all public cultural funding contracts, with regular review, community input, and mandatory reporting.                   | Obs 1              | Lack of outcome-driven evaluation in cultural funding.  |
| Medium-Term | Progressively increase investment in diverse cultural communities from 4% to 30%, with corresponding and incremental decreases for legacy institutions.                       | Obs 1              | Inequitable funding distribution.   |
| Medium-Term | Secure long-term cultural space via land trusts, 'percent for the arts' mandates, community ownership models, and revised municipal rental schemes.                           | Obs 2              | Cultural spaces threatened/displaced due to gentrification, lack of tenure security, and absence of safeguards. |
| Medium-Term | Create a public-private partnership stimulus fund for small-to-mid arts organisations, offering training, pre-approval, and matching mechanisms to unlock private investment. | Obs 3              | Generate new revenue, unlock private sector investment, build capacity for smaller organisations.               |
| Medium-Term | Establish a Cultural Investment Board with co-governance and independent authority over public and blended funds.   | Obs 4              | Exclusion of communities from funding governance.   |

|             |   |             |   |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|
| Medium-Term | Redesign advisory and governance structures to embed community co-ownership and decentralisation.   | Obs 4       | Centralised and exclusionary decision making structures.  |
| Medium-Term | Embed long-term strategic vision and adaptive leadership by applying ecological, learning-based governance and evaluative systems.                          | Obs 4       | Absence of feedback culture and adaptive leadership; fragmented roles across stakeholders.                  |
| Medium-Term | Design and implement a transparent and inclusive financial system for culture, integrating public and private investment — supported by a public dashboard. | Obs 4       | Lack of visibility and accountability in cultural funding flows.  |
| Medium-Term | Develop municipal co-investment tools to match private funding in grassroots cultural initiatives.  | Obs 9       | Uneven financial support for the grassroots; private sector is an untapped resource for talent development. |
| Medium-Term | Establish leadership succession pathways and diversity quotas for governance, advisory, and cultural funding bodies.  | Obs 4, 7, 8 | Lack of structural pathways into leadership and limited visible representation in governance roles.         |



**“At Quardin, we don’t wait for systems to change, we build new ones. Ones rooted in culture, care, and creativity. We meet young people where they are, so they can become who they’re meant to be.”**

**— Fariesh Abdoelrahman, Founder of Quardin —**

## LONG-TERM (10-30 years)

| Timeframe        | Recommendation  | Linked Observation | Strategic Focus / Problem Solved  |
|------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Long-Term        | Publish a 10–30 year civic cultural strategy with cross-sector alignment, publicly visible benchmarks, and annual review.   | Obs 5              | Absence of a coherent, long-term cultural plan; misalignment between government initiatives and culture sector. |
| Long-Term        | Codify a city-wide cultural vision as a foundation for structural and spatial planning.   | Obs 5              | Lack of unified cultural planning framework.  |
| Long-Term        | Develop a transdisciplinary social enterprise framework for long-term sustainability across arts, culture, and related sectors — with municipal mandate and staff training.                   | Obs 7              | Lack of sector resilience and long-term sustainability.   |
| Long-Term        | Codify a values-based cultural identity framework that defines the city’s cultural ambition and integrate it into a cross-sector strategy linking education, health, and spatial development. | Obs 10             | Siloed sector strategies with no alignment.   |
| Long-Term        | Annually invest in a cohort of 8–10 emerging arts leaders through a year-long development programme and retreat; build an alumni network to foster trust, collaboration, and resilience.      | Obs 4, 7, 8        | Enhanced sectoral leadership, improved trust and capacity building in community-based arts leadership.          |
| Medium–Long Term | Mandate cultural legislation and zoning protections to prevent displacement and preserve cultural identity.   | Obs 8, 10          | Cultural erasure, displacement, lack of legal protection.   |



## 4.3 Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning

Governance 5iQ is a strategic implementation framework based on 5 Questions. The implementation framework is applicable at the micro (municipal) and macro (stakeholder) level and is based on decision making according to concrete evidence as opposed to by 'gut feeling' or ideology. This critical organizational paradigm shift is a move away from process (inputs) towards outcomes and is considered important for the long-term sustainability of the organization in line with objective 16 of the SDGs – peace, justice and strong institutions.

**Table 1: Governance 5iQ**

| The five questions   | Processes  |
|--|--|
| 1. Why do we do what we do?<br>(Vision)  | Defines the unique contribution and impact with specific, measurable goals and clear priorities that are clearly communicated to all levels of the organization.   |
| 2. How is it being done?<br>(Mission)  | Clear practical plans that are implemented and regularly updated through standard operating procedures and policies. This section explains the day-to-day task and the development of a change management plan with the identification of resources. |
| 3. How will we know at any given moment that we are on track?<br>(Monitoring and evaluation) | A reliance on good, steady real-time data (evidence) on key indicators with analysis, and monitoring routines involving all key stakeholders.  |
| 4. If we are not on track, what is being done about it?<br>(Consequences management)         | Agreement on corrective actions to be taken that is continually refined with a focus on innovative approaches to problem solving.  |
| 5. How do we lead and learn?<br>(Knowledge management)                                       | Organizational commitment to innovation, lifelong learning and building lessons back into the system. A relentless pursuit of continuous improvement and high performance.   |

**“We’ve had a seat at the table, but the menu’s already been chosen.”**

**— Community organiser, North Rotterdam —**

## 5. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

Over the course of this wānanga (panel discussion), what we've witnessed is not a lack of creativity or courage, quite the opposite. Rotterdam is rich in makers, in movement, and in quiet leadership already happening at street level. What's missing is the recognition, the structural inclusion, and the political will to meet that energy with real commitment.

Artists have organised. Communities have carried culture forward, often without institutional support. Yet they remain in silos, while systems designed to support them struggle to reflect their collective power. There is deep disappointment in how institutions have failed to show up, or only show up when it's already too late. Creatives are losing their spaces and being asked to animate the very city that no longer makes room for them. As one voice in the wānanga (panel discussion) said: "You organise, or you starve."

Urban planning without culture is just construction. Cultural policy without equity is just decoration. And creative ecosystems without a home will not last.

Disruption, in this context, is not destruction. It is a necessary recalibration, a reset of systems that no longer serve the communities they were meant to support. Incremental change, however well-intentioned, is no longer sufficient. What is needed now is a bold rethinking of the mechanics of funding, governance, evaluation, and participation, not simply refining them, but in some cases, replacing them entirely. Disruption becomes necessary when continuity protects exclusion. It becomes constructive when equity is placed at the centre.

Transformation is not just about improving what already exists. It's about rethinking the purpose of a system, how it works, and who it truly serves. It asks whether the current way of doing things is still fit for purpose, and if not, what needs to change at a deeper level.

If Rotterdam truly commits to this moment, it can become more than a city of plans, it can become a city of people whose cultures, stories, and futures are structurally valued.

This is not just a local reckoning, it is a global opportunity.

Cultural transition begins when we stop asking communities to prove their value and start building systems that honour it.

**Disruption is not destruction, but a necessary recalibration of systems that no longer serve.**

**Cultural transition requires more than incremental change; some systems must be replaced entirely.**

**Urban planning without culture is construction; cultural policy without equity is decoration.**

**Communities should not have to prove their value; systems must be designed to honour it.**

**Transformation depends on courage, structural integrity, trust, and long-term investment in people.**

**Rotterdam has the opportunity to lead globally by placing equity and imagination at the centre of its cultural future.**

## Reflection from Jaap Veerman, Consul General of the Netherlands in Atlanta

“We’ve spoken of culture, but this was also a conversation about courage. Because to **rebuild trust**, something has to give. **Something has to break, a cycle, a pattern, a silence.**

So maybe this is the real question we now hold:

**What are we willing to let go of, to let something truly different take shape?**

Because structure without imagination is just repetition.

And policy without trust is just noise.

We have the insight.

We have the people.

What remains is the courage to **act before it’s too late.”**

This is the work of **cultural transition**. And the time is **now**.



# Appendix A

## IAB25 Deliberation Framework – Rotterdam Cultural Transition

### PURPOSE OF IAB WORKING SESSION

To collectively develop strategic recommendations for the Deputy Mayor and Quartermaster of Rotterdam, grounded in our insights, field visits, and public engagements over Days 1 and 2.

The goal is not to redesign cultural policy, but to offer informed, independent, and future-focused advice.

### STRUCTURE OF THE SESSION (3 HOURS)

#### 1. Frame the Challenge (45 mins)

Unpack the structural tensions observed in the field. Identify root causes, clarify roles, and examine the values we're protecting.

#### 2. Thematic Group Work (60 mins)

Collaboratively refine recommendations, mapped to core themes — governance, equity, spatial access, finance, engagement, and cultural vision.

#### 3. SWOT & Strategic Alignment (45 mins)

Conduct a collective SWOT analysis. Identify short-, medium-, and long-term levers. Align recommendations to values and implementation principles.

#### 4. Closing & Next Steps (30 mins)

Confirm the working draft. Agree on next steps, anchors for disruption, and reflections on how bold we must be.

### IAB25 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The IAB25 Guiding Principles were developed from file notes and 'Triplet' conversations during the Day 1 debrief. They serve to guide our thinking as we shape key recommendations.

- Equity must be structural, not performative
- Trust is built through representation, clarity, and consistency
- Cultural identity is a right, not an afterthought
- Governance must separate power and finance
- Cultural infrastructure is human, social, and spatial
- Urban planning must resist cultural displacement
- Mixed models must serve public good, not private control

## TOP 10 IAB25 OBSERVATIONS

The IAB are asked to provide their observations developed from real-time feedback and kōrero (discussion) captured across the first two days of IAB25 reflections with “triplets”. The deliberation framework itself has been created following Day 1, helping structure Day 2’s reflections and surface collective insights.

| Who | Observation |
|-----|-------------|
|     |             |

## SWOT ANALYSIS FOR IAB25 RECOMMENDATIONS

The SWOT analysis within the deliberation framework is designed to help us test, refine, and strengthen our thinking. It serves as a prompt to deepen analysis, clarify tensions, and ensure our recommendations are both visionary and grounded. We’re ahead of the curve: the ten observations already identified through fieldwork and group feedback give us a strong base from which to shape strategic direction.

| STRENGTHS  | OPPORTUNITIES |
|------------|---------------|
| WEAKNESSES | THREATS       |

## IAB25 RECOMMENDATION GRID

Each IAB member is asked to contribute 2 strategic recommendations, grounded in observations and guided by the shared principles. This will directly inform the IAB25 Final Report.

### Reminder of Timeframes:

- Short term: Within 1–2 years | Medium term: 3–7 years | Long term: 8–30 years

| Name | Theme | Recommendation | What problem does this solve? | Timeframe (Short / Medium / Long Term) | Principle it advances |
|------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
|      |       |                |                               |  |                       |

## FINAL NOTE FOR DELIBERATIONS: Observation from Hinurewa te Hau

Rotterdam operates under the Dutch Cultural Policy Act and delivers its cultural planning through the four-year Cultuurplan cycle. But given the city’s 30-year cultural vision, a deeper question arises:

**Can short political cycles and shifting mandates realistically support long-term cultural continuity and systemic change?** While urban strategies across different sectors may project 20–30 year horizons (e.g. climate resilience or infrastructure), Rotterdam’s cultural vision remains largely anchored in short-term funding cycles. The absence of legislative safeguards means longer-term cultural ambitions are vulnerable to political turnover. Despite public commitments to equity, infrastructure, and access, there is no enforceable policy mechanism that ensures these values endure across elections.

### Key issues identified:

- \* **Continuity is compromised:** Long-term plans are frequently reset or deprioritised after four years. There is no civic mechanism to protect the implementation of cross-decade strategies.
- \* **Accountability is weak:** Inclusion, equity, infrastructure, and access goals are often stated but rarely enforced. This undermines trust, especially among communities most affected.
- \* **Transparency is inconsistent:** While some long-term cultural frameworks exist, access to detailed planning and funding documentation is limited and fragmented.

This reveals a structural contradiction: the legislative architecture is not strong enough to uphold the city's cultural ambition. Without mechanisms to embed continuity, codify equity, and ensure interdepartmental coherence, the system risks delivering performance cycles, not transformation. **And so the question stands: how disruptive must we be to protect long-term cultural vision?**

We won't resolve this in one session, but we must surface the type of disruption we are each willing to stand behind.

- Are we recommending a **structural shift** (e.g. governance reform, codified civic vision)?
- A **procedural shift** (e.g. mandated evaluation and equity benchmarks)?
- A **narrative shift** (e.g. redefining the value of culture in Rotterdam's civic identity)?

What matters is recommendations are: Principled, anchored in evidence and field observation, clear on the change we seek and why it matters now. Because what we are witnessing is a system that performs inclusion, but does not sustain it. A structure that aspires to long-term vision, but is limited by short-term political cycles. A policy environment where values like equity, cultural identity, and community power are present in the language, but not embedded in law, finance, or governance.

### Therefore Disruption, in this context, means:

- Naming the structural gaps between vision and implementation.
- Proposing mechanisms that outlast elections — not just programs that serve the present.
- Embedding community voice in governance with power, not just consultation.
- Making continuity, cultural sovereignty, and accountability non-negotiable.

Our final output will be a full IAB25 report with short, medium, and long-term recommendations; including this framework and SWOT analysis as foundational components.



## Appendix B

### Field Observations and Community Voices - (Expanded reflections from Section 4)

Appendix A provides the unabridged version of the field observations captured in Section 4. These reflections — gathered through site visits, conversations, performances, and roundtables — capture the raw, unscripted realities of Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem. Included here are extended narratives, quotes, and practitioner insights that offer additional texture and depth to the core observations of the IAB25.

#### A.1 Field Visit Reflections

Over the course of four days, IAB25 members engaged in a rich programme of site visits, community gatherings, institutional briefings, and informal conversations. These engagements offered an invaluable lens into the daily realities, challenges, and aspirations of Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem.

Before moving into structured thematic analysis (Section 5), this section captures initial field-based observations and community voices that shaped the IAB25's perspective. The reflections below are not yet analytical; rather, they highlight moments that were emotionally resonant, structurally revealing, or representative of broader systemic patterns.

Each IAB member has contributed a brief snapshot from their field experience — offering insights into what was heard, felt, and seen. These moments help centre the report in lived experience, setting the foundation for the recommendations that follow.

#### A.2 Community and Practitioner Voices

This appendix preserves original field-based observations and practitioner insights gathered during IAB25 engagements. While select themes have been synthesised in the body of the report, the depth and nuance captured here provide vital context. These reflections speak directly to the lived experiences of cultural workers, educators, and community leaders across Rotterdam — revealing systemic tensions, barriers, and aspirations that informed the advisory board's recommendations.

##### A.2.1 Emergent Tensions and Patterns

Across multiple engagements, a recurring set of tensions emerged: between vision and implementation, policy and practice, inclusion and bureaucracy, and ambition and resourcing. These patterns were not isolated — they repeated across different communities, institutions, and city actors.

##### Urban Planning and Cultural Precarity

The IAB field visits and roundtables revealed deep and recurring tensions between grassroots practice and structural frameworks. These tensions were especially visible in the intersections of urban planning, gentrification, policy rigidity, and funding misalignment.

The following three snapshots illustrate how these dynamics manifest on the ground — from community-led initiatives to housing cooperatives and cultural organisers working in Rotterdam’s most vulnerable neighbourhoods:

“The system doesn’t acknowledge what’s already working. We’re always proving we exist, again and again.”

— Thomas Heerkens, West 25

Thomas expresses the fatigue of constant justification. Even long-established, effective community-led initiatives face precarious funding, limited recognition in formal urban plans, and little structural support. His comment reveals a planning culture that privileges ‘newness’, formal credentials, and capital investment — often at the expense of existing, proven local ecosystems.

“They want us to make the area ‘vibrant’, but not to stay.”

— Rajiv Bhagwanbali, Roffa

Rajiv’s comment underscores the paradox of creative-led regeneration: cultural and community actors are asked to animate neighbourhoods, attract attention, and uplift public perception — but are not guaranteed tenure, ownership, or long-term investment.

“We’ve been doing urban planning without calling it that. The city only recognises it when it wants the land back.”

— Kamiel Verschuren, Nieuwe Ateliers Charlois

This quote captures a structural tension: grassroots revitalisation often precedes formal recognition — yet, once land values rise, cultural actors face precarity, short-term leases, and eventual displacement. These dynamics reflect a broader pattern of extractive urban development, where cultural value is leveraged but rarely protected as civic infrastructure.

### **A.2.2 Voices from Community, Practitioners, and Institutions**

These engagements gave voice to both frustrations and hopes. Artists shared the limits of funding models that don’t reflect new forms of cultural practice. Educators described how arbitrary distinctions (e.g. “Is it culture or education?”) created barriers to innovation. Practitioners spoke to the fatigue of being consulted without impact.

At Theater Rotterdam, Artistic Director Alida Dors described a different kind of transformation — one that begins from within. Drawing on her background in hip-hop and the philosophy of Ubuntu, she emphasised the importance of slowing down, listening, and building a new institutional culture rooted in reciprocity and shared authorship:

“Our credo is: I am because of you. That philosophy guides everything — from how we speak with new audiences to how we transform our internal culture. We didn’t promise new adventures; we promised to take time — to listen deeply, to build with care, and to become a house of the future rooted in reciprocity, openness, and shared growth.”

— Alida Dors, Theater Rotterdam



Similarly, Indirah Tauwnaar, founder of House of Urban Arts, spoke of structural rigidity and policy silos that threaten long-term grassroots cultural development:

“We didn’t just run classes in the school. We built a community around it.”

“We’ve been building this with nothing for ten years. Now that it’s working, they want to move us out because it doesn’t ‘fit’ the definition.”

— Indirah Tauwnaar

### A.3 Quote Snapshots

These are raw expressions from the field that reflect the emotional and structural weight of Rotterdam’s cultural ecosystem. They are presented here without analysis, standing on their own as provocations.

- “Funding for one part of our practice means we have to leave the rest behind. There’s no flexibility to be both artist and community leader.” — Local creative worker
- “The word ‘participation’ gets used a lot but it rarely means power.” — Institutional stakeholder
- “I know how to write a policy document, but what we need is a city that listens before writing it.” — Community project lead
- “We’ve had a seat at the table, but the menu’s already been chosen.” — Community organiser, North Rotterdam
- “It’s not that people don’t care, it’s that the system doesn’t know how to hold all this difference.” — Creative sector facilitator
- “The work we’re doing is culture but the city sees it as social work.”
- “Don’t tell us to be innovative and then only fund what you already know.”
- “We know what works. We’ve been here. We don’t need another pilot.”
- “Being seen is not the same as being heard.”  
“It’s a full-time job just to stay eligible.”
- “Sometimes it feels like culture is the last thing planned, but the first thing blamed.”
- “These observations are about the right to exist. So do we really speak the language of urgency?”

#### A.3.1 Snapshot with Academic Attribution

##### Snapshot: Culture & Health – Community Voices

Local cultural practitioners described how arts-led activities; dance, music, or storytelling, nurture mental health, reduce isolation, and support chronic care. These community-led health practices mirror national models where arts in healthcare are being integrated. As **Professor Tineke Abma** emphasized during the panel:

“Creative expression has a measurable health impact, especially in later life, if systems recognise it, artists become care partners.”

These insights suggest potential for Rotterdam to partner with insurers and care providers to formalise arts-based care and bridge community resilience with professional health systems.

# Appendix C

## Key Questions Tailored for IABx + Rotterdam Decoded

### Theme 1: Advisory Model

- How is Rotterdam Decoded informing advisory or governance decisions?
- Is it being used to guide funding allocations in real time, or just for retrospective insight?

### Theme 2: Makers Climate

- Does the platform show where artist-led space is under threat or displaced?
- Are makers involved in curating or owning their presence on the map?

### Theme 3: Space & Place

- What role do community anchors (e.g., religious, ethnic, youth, queer spaces) play in shaping cultural identity here?
- Can the map reveal intergenerational relationships to place, or is it just transactional?

### Theme 4: Financing Instruments

- Can Decoded identify gaps in resourcing by geography, demographics, or artform?
- Is there potential to link this to new investment tools (e.g., cultural impact bonds, social procurement zones)?

### Theme 5: Real Estate

- Is the map influencing land use decisions or just documenting outcomes?
- Are there examples where Decoded has helped protect or repurpose cultural space?

### Theme 6: Cross-Domain Synergies

- Are cultural data layers linked with health, education, justice, or climate data?
- Could this tool be expanded to tell stories of social return on cultural investment?

### Theme 7: Positioning

- How does this tool challenge existing power structures in cultural narrative-building?
- Could artists or communities co-curate public-facing stories about their neighbourhoods using this platform?

### Key Provocations from IAB25 Members

- Could Rotterdam Decoded become a co-governed platform, with cultural collectives guiding its updates, ethics, and strategic direction?
- How might the city devolve decision-making on arts funding or cultural zones to locally trusted institutions or networks?
- Are there distributed governance models from other sectors (e.g., port management, housing, education) that could be adapted for the cultural domain?
- What legal, administrative, or financial tools are required to support long-term civic contracts that go beyond advisory roles?
- How will Rotterdam ensure that this transition is not symbolic, but results in binding, equitable power-sharing arrangements?

## Appendix D

### Strategic Cultural Documents and Frameworks – City of Rotterdam

This appendix provides a summary of current and emerging strategic documents, policy frameworks, and long-term initiatives shaping Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem. It reflects the city's integrated approach to culture, where arts, innovation, resilience, infrastructure, and urban planning intersect

While the Culture Plan 2025–2028 provides the formal policy foundation for arts and cultural development, this list also includes visionary planning documents (such as Watercity 2035), infrastructure investments, and emerging strategies like the city's night-time economy framework (Nachtplan). Together, these illustrate how Rotterdam's cultural ambitions are embedded in both civic policy and spatial transformation.

#### Rotterdam Strategic Documents & Initiatives

##### 1. Culture Plan 2025–2028

Rotterdam's foundational arts and culture strategy, rooted in the Verandering Verankerd advisory report. It prioritizes inclusivity, interconnectivity, and innovation, with concrete funding streams and programmatic support for cultural organizations.

##### 2. Uitgangspuntennota (Principles Note) for the Culture Plan

The guiding framework preceding the 2025–2028 plan, defining cultural policy values including fair practice, diversity, and social relevance.

##### 3. Ruimtelijke Visie Cultuur (Spatial Vision for Culture)

A planning tool mapping cultural activity distribution, reinforcing the spatial integration of cultural policy with urban planning operations.

##### 4. Cultural Institutions & Urban Integration Partners

Entities such as CBK Rotterdam and OMI Rotterdam serve as bridges between culture, urban design, public art, and civic engagement, embedding arts within spatial development agendas.

##### 5. Watercity 2035

An influential speculative vision blending infrastructure, ecology, and creative public space design—featuring floating venues, water squares, and harbour revitalization. It offers a long-term lens through which cultural space, sustainability, and urban design intersect.

##### 6. Droom en Daad–Supported Cultural Infrastructure (2024–2030)

Ambitious infrastructure investments including Fenix Museum, the National Museum of Photography, and a new dance center—signaling a long-term cultural identity shift toward European relevance.

##### 7. Resilient Rotterdam Strategy (2022–2027)

Rotterdam's comprehensive resilience framework, embedding climate adaptation, social inclusion, and cultural diversity into spatial and governance systems. A linked Integrated Action Plan includes piloting resilience governance through urban labs in Feijenoord and Afrikaanderwijk.

## 8. Cross-Departmental Night Culture Team & Nachtplan

In 2023, the city established the Nachtdienst (Night Culture Team) to integrate nightlife and the night-time cultural economy across departments. A formal Nachtplan (Night Plan) is underway, aimed at coordinating sustainable and inclusive night-time cultural strategy.

## 9. “Night Mayor” Legacy and Emerging Governance

The cultural memory of Rotterdam’s nightlife is anchored by the late poet Jules Deelder, who was widely recognised as the city’s informal “night mayor” (nachtburgemeester). Rotterdam continues to engage with evolving models of night-time governance as part of its broader cultural strategy.

### Interpretive Framing: Rotterdam Culture City 2035

The phrase “Rotterdam Culture City 2035” is introduced not as a formal strategy or publication, but as an interpretive concept emerging from the cumulative analysis of Rotterdam’s cultural ecosystem. It offers a way of describing the city’s aspirational trajectory; where long-term cultural development, spatial innovation, resilience planning, and night-time governance intersect.

This framing draws from multiple strategic foundations detailed in this appendix, including Culture Plan 2025-2028, Watercity 2035, the Resilient Rotterdam Strategy, and the evolving Nachtplan. Together, these threads suggest a forward-facing cultural horizon, one not yet codified, but clearly visible in ambition, policy direction, and investment.

## Appendix E

### IAB25 Draft Recommendation Grid – Rotterdam Cultural Transition

Appendix E provides the working draft of the IAB25 Recommendation Grid, which formed the analytical foundation for this final report. It captures the collective input from IAB members throughout the cultural transition process and has informed the refinement of key recommendations presented in the body of the report. This document has been shared with the Vice Mayor's office, the Quartermaster, and the Department of Culture as part of our transparent and collaborative approach to developing a long-term cultural vision for Rotterdam.

IAB25

**End Final Report of the Nine International Board Members**

# FINALLY: OVERVIEW OF THE ENTIRE PROGRAM

**Program Wednesday 2nd of July**

**16.30**

Departure from Double Tree Hilton

**Start:**

**Gemeentehuis (Coolsingel 40, 3011 AD Rotterdam) 17.00-17.45**

Meet & Greet

Official Welcome of the IAB members by Vice Mayor Said Kasmi

**Verhalenhuis Belvedere (Rechthuislaan 1, 3072 LB Rotterdam) 18.15-21.30**

Presentations & Dinner

#411 Exchange

Speakers: Heleen Ririassa (Quartermaster), Kim Heinen (Rotterdam Partners), Sylvia Aartsen (Cultuur Concreet), Frans Vreeke (Rotterdam Festivals), Franc Faaij (Rotterdam Festivals), Pascale Fischer-Beker (KCR)

Program ends approximately at 21.30 Transport to Double Tree Hilton

**Program Thursday 3rd of July****07.40**

Departure from Double Tree Hilton

**Start:****De Doelen Studios (Kruisplein 40, 3012 CC Rotterdam)**

Breakfast 08.00-08.55

In Depth convo between IAB members and Vice Mayor Said Kasmi (Gemeente Rotterdam)

**09.00-09.20**

Opening: Kick Off IABx2025 with Said Kasmi (Gemeente Rotterdam)

Introduction: The Journey to be the home to all people in Rotterdam by Janneke Staarink (De Doelen) Musical Performance by Asther Tauwnaar

**09:20 – 10.10**

Panel 1: Urban planning and Cultural Transition ... a match made in heaven?

Speakers: Thomas Heerkens (West 25), Kamiel Verschuren (Nieuwe Ateliers Charlois), Rajiv Bhagwanbali (Roffa), Barbara Luns (AIR)

Moderator: Anouschka Biekman (Gemeente Schiedam)

**10.15-10.30**

Tour of De Doelen: The development of the Plint and all the other multi-functional spaces and collaborations

**10.35-11.35**

Panel 2: Cultural Real Estate owned by municipality – threats and opportunities

Speakers: Olof van der Wal (SKAR), Indirah Tauwnaar (House of Urban Arts), Janneke Staarink (De Doelen), Lindy Schuin (Gemeente Rotterdam), Irma van Lierop (Islamunda)

Moderator: Anouschka Biekman (Gemeente Schiedam)

Productiehuis Flow (Pleinweg 226 D, 3083 EX Rotterdam)

**12.00-12.30**

Tour and Q&amp;A with Mich 'YMP' Simons: The Culture creates paths moving forward! DIY is a must....The Story of Productiehuis Flow

C3 Studios (Huismanstraat 30, 3082 HK Rotterdam)

**12.45-13.05**

Tour and Q&amp;A with Kamiel Verschuren: C3 an example of how urban development and cultural infrastructure meet each other

**13.15-14.15**

Lunch at C3 Studios

Werkplaats Walhalla (Tolhuisstraat 105, 3072 LS Rotterdam)

**14.30**

Open Session: Makers Climate in Rotterdam

Introduction: Theater Walhalla Community Theatre at its finest by Harry Jan Bus (Theater Walhalla) 14.40-15.40

Panel 1: Talent developers' role in a strong makers climate

Speakers: Henca Maduro (Epitome Entertainment), Oscar van der Pluym (New Grounds), Mich 'YMP' Simons (Productiehuis Flow), Jolanda van Dinteren (AIR)

**16.00-17.00**

Panel 2: Makers discussing how to create a valuable Makers Climate in Rotterdam

Speakers: Lloyd Marengo (Lloydscompany), Eva van Breughel (AIR), Eloah Udenhout, Jeansen Djaoen (FunX)

Note: This session is open to the wider cultural sector.

End

**17.20**

House of Urban Arts (Zwartewaalstraat 28, 3083 SB Rotterdam)

Dance performance by House of Urban Arts kids

Introduction: House of Urban Arts “Home to the culture” by Indirah Tauwner 17.30-18.30

Dinner: Neighbourhood BBQ

**18.30-19.15**

Deliberations Triplets

**19.30-20.30**

Deliberations IAB Members

Program ends approximately at 20.30 Transport to Double Tree Hilton



**Program Friday 4th of July****09.00**

Departure from Double Tree Hilton Day Host: Augustina Austin

Start:

Theater Rotterdam (Schouwburgplein 25, 3012 GP Rotterdam) Walk-in &amp; registration:

**09.30-09.45**

Theater Rotterdam Tour

**09:45**

Open Session: Advisory models and the financing of culture

Welcome by Vice Mayor Said Kasmi (Gemeente Rotterdam)

Introduction: The Future of Theater Rotterdam by Alida Dors (Theater Rotterdam)

**10.00-11.00**

Presentations: Advisory Models and Financing of Arts &amp; Culture Funding - Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the US

Speakers: Charlie Andrews (Socan Foundation), Jaap Veerman (Consul General of Atlanta for Kingdom of the Netherlands), Hinurewa te Hau (Matariki Cultural Foundation), Heleen Ririassa (Quartermaster) Moderator: Farid Tabarki (Studio Zeitgeist)

**11.15-12.15**

Panel: How do we re-allocate public resources to ensure a fair and future proof society

Speakers: Rana Amirtahmasebi (Eparque Urban Strategies), Hinurewa te Hau (Matariki Cultural Foundation), Ben Wynter (Unstoppable Music/Power UP), Dr. Charlie Andrews (Socan Foundation), Harlan Coelte (University of the Free State/ KC 107.7)

Moderator: Farid Tabarki (Studio Zeitgeist)

Spoken Word Performance by Rotterdam's Finest Carina Fernandes

Note: This session is open to the wider cultural sector.

Euromast (Parkhaven 20, 3016 GM Rotterdam)

**13.00-14.15**

Lunch

Natuurhistorisch Museum (Westzeedijk 345, 3015 AA Rotterdam)

**15.25-16.10**

Welcome by Meike Moors (Natuurhistorisch Museum) Presentations: Financing

Instruments: In the Mix!

Speakers: Michael Lints (Golden Gate Ventures), Annet van Otterloo (Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie), Laura Raicovich

**16.20-17.15**

Panel: Money Talks

Speakers: Laura Raicovich, Jorien Wuite (Lemonade), Michael Lints (Golden Gate Ventures), Maud Dik (Voordekunst.nl)

Kunsthal Rotterdam (Westzeedijk 341, 3015 AA Rotterdam)

**17.15-18.00**

Presentation by Marianne Splint (Kunsthal)

Tour Exhibition Cute

Foodhallen (Wilhelminakade 58, 3072 AR Rotterdam)

**18.30-19.30**

Dinner

**End**

Nieuwe Luxor Theater (Posthumalaan 1, 3072 AG Rotterdam) 19.30-20.15

Deliberations Triplets

**20.20-21.05**

Deliberations IAB Members

Program ends approximately at 21:05 Transport to Double Tree Hilton

**Program Saturday 5th of July****08.45**

Departure from Double Tree Hilton Day Host: Carina Fernandes

Start:

Oase (Schiehaven 15-A, 3024 EC Rotterdam) 09:00-11.00

Breakfast celebrating Capeverdian Independence

Quardin (Schouwburgplein 25, 3012 GP Rotterdam)

**11.30-12.00**

Tour &amp; Presentation: Domain Crossing at its best by Fariesh Abdulrahman (Quardin)

Magbon (Mathenesserdijk 293, 3026 GB Rotterdam) 12.30-13.20

**Lunch**

Open Session: Major societal challenges – Culture as part of the solution

**13.30-15.00**

Panel: Societal Issues – culture as an integral part of the solution

Speakers: Deborah Stolk (Babel)), Fariesh Abdulrahman (Quardin), Lorenzo Elstak (IkbenWij), Tineke Abma (Erasmus Universiteit), Hinurewa te Hau (Matariki Cultural Foundation)

Note: This session is open to the wider cultural sector. Third Place (Westersingel 73, 3015 LB Rotterdam)

**15.30-17.30**

Group Session: Positioning Rotterdam's cultural ecosystem

**End**

De Machinist (Willem Buytewechstraat 45, 3024 BK Rotterdam)

**18.00-19.15**

Dinner with IAB members &amp; Said Kasmi (Gemeente Rotterdam)

**19.30-21.00**

Final Deliberations &amp; Recommendations

Program ends approximately at

**21:00**

Transport to Double Tree Hilton

# SPECIAL THANKS TO

## Triplets:

|                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Alice Fortes         | Art Studio Hoogvliet              |
| Angelo King          | Living Room                       |
| Tomi Hilsee          | MOMO                              |
| Annett van Otterloo  | Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie        |
| Anouschka Biekman    | Gemeente Schiedam                 |
| Asther Tauwnaar      | Ast.HER                           |
| Barbera Luns         | AIR                               |
| Carina Fernandes     | CasadeCarina                      |
| Ciska van Beek       | De Doelen                         |
| Eloah Udenhout       | SlagKr8                           |
| Emmelien Matthijsse  | Zuidplein Theater                 |
| Eva van Breugel      | Kickstad, AIR                     |
| Fariesh Abdulrahman  | Quardin                           |
| Frank Vreeke         | Rotterdam Festivals               |
| Gordon Sana          | Magbon                            |
| In-soo Radstake      | In-Soo Productions                |
| Indirah Tauwnaar     | House of Urban Arts               |
| Janneke Staarink     | De Doelen                         |
| Joan Biekman         | Fonds Podiumkunsten               |
| Jolanda van Dinteren | AIR                               |
| Kamiel Verschuren    | Nieuw Ateliers Charlois           |
| Kim Heinen           | Rotterdam Partners                |
| Lindy Schuin         | Gemeente Rotterdam                |
| Lloyd Marengo        | Lloydscompany                     |
| Luciano Winter       | Stormi Capital                    |
| Marc Vlemminx        | Chinnoe & Vlemmix                 |
| Martin Miles         | Team Enkelband                    |
| Mich Simons          | Productiehuis Flow                |
| Najel Monteiro       | Cultuur Concreet                  |
| Nuria Ribas Costa    | Dependance, journalist            |
| Nychenda Fecunda     | Cultural programmer Wereld Museum |
| Oscar van der Pluym  | New Grounds                       |
| Rajiv Bhagwanbali    | Makerscoalitie/ Roffa             |



|                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Rodney Meye      | Fonds Podiumkunsten  |
| Saskia van Stein | IABR                 |
| Simone Diop      | Grounded Future      |
| Sinan Karaca     | Banlieue             |
| Sylvia Aartsen   | Cultuur Concreet     |
| Thomas Heerkens  | West 25              |
| Tineke Abma      | Erasmus Universiteit |

## Speakers:

Alida Dors (Theater Rotterdam)  
Annet van Otterloo (Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie)  
Anouschka Biekman (Gemeente Schiedam)  
Barbara Luns (AIR)  
Claudia Doesburg (Kinderdam)  
Curtis Millen (Maker)  
Daan Lustenhouwer (Productiehuis Werkplaats Walhalla)  
Deborah Stolk (Theater Babel)  
Eloah Udenhout (Slagkr8)  
Eva van Breughel (Kickstad)  
Evita de Roode (Moderator)  
Farid Tabarki (Moderator) (Studio Zeitgeist)  
Fariesh Abdoelrahman (Quardin)  
Franc Faaij (Rotterdam Festivals)  
Frans Vreeke (Rotterdam Festivals)  
Harry Jan Bus (Theater Walhalla)  
Heleen Ririassa (Quartermaster)  
Henca Maduro (Epitome Entertainment)  
Indirah Tauwnaar (House of Urban Arts)  
Irma van Lierop (Islamunda)  
Janneke Staarink (De Doelen)  
Jolanda van Dinteren (AIR)  
Jorien Wuite (Lemonade)  
Judy Rambags (MaMa)  
Kamiel Verschuren (Nieuwe Ateliers Charlois)  
Kim Heinen (Rotterdam Partners)  
Laura Raicovich  
Lloyd Marengo (Lloydscompany)  
Maaïke Schravenzande (Heijmans)  
Marianne Splint (Kunsthal)

Maud Dik (Voordekunst)  
 Meike Moors (Natuurhistorisch Museum)  
 Mich 'YMP' Simons (Productiehuis Flow)  
 Michael Lints (Golden Gate Ventures)  
 Michelle Mandos (Gemeente Rotterdam)  
 Olof van de Wal (SKAR)  
 Oscar van der Pluym (New Grounds)  
 Pascale Fisher-Beker (KCR)  
 Petra Rutten (Verhalenhuis Belvédère)  
 Rajiv Bhagwanbali (Roffa)  
 Said Kasmi (Gemeente Rotterdam)  
 Sylvia Aartsen (Cultuur Concreet)  
 Teun van der Meulen (Gemeente Rotterdam)  
 Thomas Heerkens (West 25)  
 Tineke Abma (Erasmus University)  
 Urias Bakker (Havensteder)

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Jody Aikman  
 Tehani Amarasuriya  
 Jin Young Chang  
 Tyyne Huhtaniska  
 Danijel Petrovic  
 Katarzyna Salbut  
 Kirti Soekaloe  
 Sotirios Theologis  
 Isabella Yazici

#### Locations/organizations visited:

1. Gemeentehuis Rotterdam – Coolsingel 40, 3011 AD
2. Verhalenhuis Belvédère – Rechthuislaan 1, 3072 LB
3. De Doelen – Schouwburgplein 50, 3012 CL
4. De Doelen, Studio 1 – Schouwburgplein 50, 3012 CL
5. C3 – Huismanstraat 30, 3082 HK
6. Werkplaats Walhalla – Tolhuisstraat 105, 3072 LS
7. House of Urban Arts – Zwartewaalstraat 28, 3081 HZ
8. Theater Rotterdam – Schouwburgplein 25, 3012 CL
9. Euromast – Parkhaven 20, 3016 GM
10. Depot Boijmans van Beuningen – Museumpark 24, 3015 CB
11. Natuurhistorisch Museum – Westzeedijk 345, 3015 AA

- 12. Kunsthal – Museumpark 6, 3015 CX
- 13. Foodhallen – Wilhelminakade 58, 3072 AR
- 14. Nieuwe Luxor Theater – Posthumalaan 1, 3072 AG
- 15. Oase – Schiehaven 15A, 3024 EC
- 16. Quardin – Delftsestraat 17A, 3013 AC
- 17. Magbon – Mathenesserdijk 293, 3026 GB
- 18. Third Place – Westersingel 73, 3015 LC
- 19. De Machinist – Coolhaven 155, 3024 AG

#### Organizations involved:

Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie  
AIR  
Art Studio Hoogvliet  
Banlieue  
C3  
Cultuur Concreet  
De Doelen  
De Machinist  
Depot Boijmans van Beuningen  
Epitome Entertainment  
Erasmus Universiteit  
Euromast  
Foodhallen  
Gemeente Rotterdam  
Grounded Future  
Heijmans  
House of Urban Arts  
IABR  
KCR  
Kickstad  
Kunsthal  
Livingroom  
Lloydscompany  
Magbon  
Natuurhistorisch Museum  
New Grounds  
Nieuwe Ateliers Charlois  
Nieuwe Luxor Theater  
OASE  
Podium Islemunda

Productiehuis Flow  
Quardin  
Roffa  
Rotterdam Festivals  
Rotterdam Partners  
SKAR  
Slagkr8  
Theater Babel  
Theater Rotterdam  
Third Place  
Verhalenhuis Belvedere  
Werkplaats Walhalla  
West 25

In addition, many other organizations attended the open sessions, including SKVR, Impact, Studio de Bakkerij, LKCA, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Cultureel Denkwerk, CBN Rotterdam, the Maritime Museum, Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam Rooftop Days, Blueyard, Cultuur-ondernemen.nl, Wijkcoöperatie, Passionate Bulkboek, Roffa Mon Amour, CBK Rotterdam, Hiphophuis, Garage Rotterdam, AFK, Rotterdams Wijktheater, Sinfonia Rotterdam, Avans University of Applied Sciences, Hyperion Art, Brutus, Makerscoalitie, ICAF Rotterdam, Pretty Girls Like Trap Music, Worm, Goddess of the Mic, Panah Studio, Get Proef, Boijmans van Beuningen, Motel Mozaïque, DoelenEnsemble, O. Festival, Scapino Ballet, N8w8rdam, as well as several members of the Rotterdam City Council, a significant number of municipal officials, and numerous Rotterdam-based makers who attended the “makers climate” segment.



# COLOFON

## Team IABx2025

Venla Keskinen - Executive Producer

Maria Christopoulou – Producer

Studio Beng Beng - Creative Agency

Rachid Pardo - Film

Sabine van der Vooren – Photograpy

Iza Smit – Graphic Design

Henca Maduro – Author and Head of Programming

Co Engberts – Author and member of Team Quartermaster

Heleen Ririassa – Author and Quartermaster Cultural Transition Rotterdam

