

Rotterdam

city of culture and tourist destination

a study



Wim Pijbes
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Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Figures**
- **Memos, themes and slogans**
- **Cultural tourism timeline**
- **International voices**
- **SWOT interviews**
- **From more to better**
- **Conclusion**
- **Figures**
- **Sources**

Introduction

In Rotterdam there are lots of possibilities and there is a lot going on. It has never been any different. At the same time, little seems to stick and every peak is followed by a trough and a return to the order of the day. Over the past few decades, Rotterdam has hosted a number of large-scale events, each of which, more or less successfully, has put the city on the map. Usually the effect has been short-lived; occasionally it has been longer-term or even permanent.

This study is an exploration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to Rotterdam as a city of culture and a tourist destination. It was prompted by an invitation from Cees de Bruijn, chairman of Rotterdam Partners, to share ideas on the current and especially the future position of Rotterdam.

During the meeting of directors on June 16 of this year, a commitment was expressed to convene an IABx Culture, an International Advisory Board of international experts, to be commissioned by Rotterdam Partners to consider how to put Rotterdam more firmly on the map as a national and international cultural hotspot. How can Rotterdam be presented in a way that really puts the city on the international map – not just for tourists but also for the art press, enthusiasts and collectors?

These findings will result in a recommendation to the Municipal Executive, to the cultural sector itself and of course also to all the parties involved in promoting the city in general and cultural activities in particular. The recommendation should also offer tools for a future coalition. The IABx has since spoken to a number of key stakeholders and they have expressed their support for this plan. Ultimate responsibility for the preparation and follow-up to the IABx formally rests with a steering group consisting of the mayor, the chair of the IABx, the deputy mayor for the economy, the directors of SO and MO and the managing director of Rotterdam Partners.

By means of archive research, interviews, literature and data analysis from 1985 to the present day, this exploratory study aims to formulate recommendations for future policy. The results can contribute to answering the question of how Rotterdam can be more explicitly put on the map. To that end, an inventory of the city's cultural potential has been drawn up, based on the current offer and that of the recent past.

This study is focused on the future and looks at the effects of (culture) policy over the medium term. In order to find relevant data, the period 1985 to 2015 has been retrospectively chosen. Several events took place in those years which harboured great ambitions, often with the participation of many, institutions as

well as individuals. Are there patterns to be discerned, constants perhaps, and what are the long-term effects? And how do, for example, the culture budget, visitor numbers and hotel overnight stays relate to one another? The study is based on thorough data analysis (facts), but also looks at the national and international perception of Rotterdam in e.g. the media (opinions).

The period 1985 – 2015 was chosen because it means a number of important events will be considered: Rotterdam '88, the jubilee year Rotterdam 650 and Rotterdam European Capital of Culture 2001. At the same time, the study looks at the effects of, for example, the construction of the Erasmus Bridge (1996), the developments at Kop van Zuid and Katendrecht and recent high-profile buildings like the Markthal and the new Central Station.

The year 1985 represents a turning point for a number of reasons: following many years of contraction, the population of the four major cities started to increase again, and there was a new impetus from policy documents and activities in the city. The final pages of the study *Visual arts and arts policy in Rotterdam 1945 - 1985* noted, by way of an epilogue, that the city benefits from a good cultural climate, also in economic terms. Other documents, too, expressed ambition and optimism, culminating in Rotterdam '88. Virtually at the same time, the IMAXtheater, Tropicana, Holland Casino, the Old Port and Waterstad opened. There was talk of 'The New Rotterdam'.

From an initial survey of useful figures about the recent past it is striking that, while data for recent years are reasonably easy to find, going a little further back in time this is considerably trickier. To this end, the Rotterdam municipal archives were consulted, among other sources. In addition to archive and literature reviews, a selected number of cultural opinion-formers were asked for their views on strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The initial findings were presented to Rotterdam Partners in draft form in mid-November 2016. Finally, the results were presented to the Directors' Meeting of the Rotterdam art institutions in the presence of deputy mayor Pex Langenberg (30 November 2016).

Figures

This study aims to establish comparisons and findings based on historical data, facts, and the views of opinion-formers. Data and figures from the recent past are scattered and sometimes incomplete, and are unfortunately not always usable due to the different methodologies used. Even so, it has been decided to set historical data (visitor figures, budgets, etc.) side-by-side and to draw possible conclusions from them. For this purpose, figures on population, hotel overnight stays, the value of the municipal arts budget and visitor figures for the larger institutions have been selected and compared. Among the notable findings is that the city's post-war population reached a peak in 1965 (731,564), then fell steadily to 560,000 in 1985, before again rising to the current figure of 623,652. Incidentally, as a result of the annexation of municipal borders, Rotterdam is larger in area today than it was before. A similar population growth may also be observed in Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. However, Rotterdam is growing less quickly. A second difference with the aforementioned three Dutch cities is that the number of inhabitants in the city centre of Rotterdam has been relatively low since the reconstruction era (approximately 30,000). The ageing of the population in Rotterdam is relatively less than in other cities, although whether that means Rotterdam can promote itself as a young city is open to question. The proportion of young people in Rotterdam is not significantly higher than elsewhere.

Anyone reading all the statistics for Rotterdam over recent years will be struck by the fact that the number of hotel overnight stays is one of the biggest climbers. Halfway through the 1980s, Rotterdam averaged approximately 335,000 overnight stays; this number increased steadily, to more than double by 2000, to over a million by 2010 and to the current figure of 1,600,000 by 2015. In other words, over the period of this study, the number of hotel overnight stays has more than quadrupled (see figure on p. 28).

Another striking increase relates the number of visitors (which in this case should really be read as 'visits') to the IFFR. In 1985, this stood at about 55,000 and rose to over 300,000 in 2015 (see figure on p. 27).

At the same time, there are institutions such as Museum Boijmans which present a fluctuating picture over the years, with outliers upwards and downwards, adding up to a stable picture over the medium term. In 1985, the museum attracted 272,526 visitors, in 2015 270,000. Interim extreme outliers included 1990 (438,575) and 2002 (113,847). A similar picture emerges for other, similarly more established institutions: The Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, received between 140,000 and 185,000 visitors over those years (which are counted as seasons).

The picture for the Kunsthal over the years is similar to Museum Boijmans, with an annual average of approximately 200,000 visitors and outliers upwards (336,576 in 1998) and downwards (120,121 in 1994).

In the past, Rotterdam has attracted extremely high numbers of visitors with large-scale, one-off events. In 1950, Ahoy' drew 1,657,000 visitors, while between 18 May and 4 September 1955, E'55 attracted no fewer than three million visitors. The record is for the Floriade in 1960, the most popular exhibition ever held in the Netherlands with 3,715,286 visitors. The new Euromast alone attracted 749,691 visitors, numbers this attraction would not be able to maintain. In the 1960s and 70s, visits to Rotterdam stagnated, as is revealed by the figures for 'the big three', Spido, Blijdorp and Euromast. In 1990, for the first time visitor figures for the festivals were listed with the express comment that they were based on estimates; the Rotterdam Marathon is reported to have attracted a million visitors, the Summer Carnival 650,000. These figures do not seem credible. We know that the marathon has a length of 42 kilometres which members of the public are able to stand on both sides of the road. 1,000,000 visitors divided by 84 kilometres would mean 11.9 visitors per metre along the entire route. While Coolsingel is busy and packed, spectators are more thinly spread over the rest of the course.

In addition to the local data which relate specifically to Rotterdam, the study also looked at national and international trends. In the field of culture and tourism, the most recent report published by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – Culture in Perspective – contains relevant figures for the city as a cultural interchange. For instance, tourism contributes 3.7% to GDP and generates 5.2% of national employment. A large (and growing) percentage of incoming tourists mention culture as a reason for their travel destination.

Of course, numbers and tourism can never be the only or even the main reasons for cultural policy, however relevant hotel overnight stays, employment, cultural multipliers and entries on international lists may be.

Culture is among the essential soft qualities of a city. Culture binds, positions and differentiates. A thriving cultural offer contributes to an attractive city, liveable for residents and lovable for visitors.

Memos, themes, slogans

Over the past few years, countless memos and plans have been published in Rotterdam. Likewise, countless themed years, campaigns, principles and slogans have been devised. In order to provide a sense of these initiatives, a number of those with which Rotterdam has presented itself to the world and still does are listed below:

- Rotterdam as a shopping city (1987)
- The New Rotterdam (1988)
- Rotterdam, where you meet the world (1993)
- Rotterdam and surroundings... contrasting Holland (1998)
- Rotterdam European Capital of Culture is many cities (2001)
- Rotterdam Dares (2004)
- Rotterdam, Sports City 2005
- Rotterdam, City of Architecture
- Rotterdam, the Netherlands' number one sporting city
- Rotterdam: Gateway to Europe (2007)
- Rotterdam, city of the future (2007)
- Rotterdam goes green (2008)
- European Youth Capital 2009
- World port World city (2009)
- Rotterdam. Make it happen (2014)

This list is incomplete, but it indicates both consistent ambition and repeatedly changing goals. The conclusion may be that Rotterdam invents new themes over and over again and bets everything on them until a new theme comes along. This tendency to 'run from project to project' has been acknowledged in evaluations and cited as a weakness.

Asked about his opinion on Barcelona, Richard Florida said this city derives its position from its Mediterranean climate, cuisine, Gaudi's architecture and the football team. A clear list, which corresponds with reality. Florida asserts that effective city branding has everything to do with authenticity. In his view, choices made top-down only work when the branding '(...) captures the authenticity and soul of the city'.

Translated to Rotterdam, you could say that campaigns here only make sense if they respect the authentic values of the city. A campaign can only be successful if these authentic values are distinctive enough to attract interest nationally or internationally.

Cultural tourism timeline

In order to get some sense of Rotterdam's cultural and tourist potential, to list some of the facts and to be able to identify development, growth, and constants, the following summary was compiled, based on the annual reports of the tourist information service VVV.

1950 The Ahoy' event attracts 1,657,000 visitors.

1953 VVV moves into a new pavilion on Coolsingel, 'a milestone' Blijdorp attracts 547,000 visitors, Spido 310,000 and Museum Boijmans 61,000.
From the VVV's annual report: 'In addition, both the national and foreign press are showing more and more interest in Rotterdam and tourist aspects.'

1955 'Each year, it may be demonstrated that Rotterdam is increasing in attractiveness.' E'55 draws three million visitors between 18 May and 4 September.

1956 Museum Boijmans breaks visitor records with its Rembrandt exhibition. The VVV annual report exultantly records: 'Never before has an event of such international significance been held in Rotterdam.'

1957 Economic arguments are used for the first time: 'Based on reliable data, it may be stated that more than 30 million guilders were spent in our city by foreigners during the year under review.' That year, the number of overnight stays totalled 315,140.

1960 The Floriade breaks all records with 3,715,286 visitors.

1965 The number of overnight hotel stays has doubled in the space of 10 years to 740,000. Together with Amsterdam, Rotterdam undertakes a promotional campaign in the US for the first time.

1966 De Doelen Concert and Conference Centre opens.

1970 The Salvador Dali exhibition at Museum Boijmans attracts 192,000 visitors. The Holland Pop festival is held in Kralingen forest on 26, 27 and 28 June, attracting an estimated 150,000 visitors.

1972 Rotterdam Promotion founded.

1970s/1980s Years of stagnation and decline in visitor numbers to the 'big three'
– Spido, Blijdorp, Euromast

1982 First major stadium concert at De Kuip (The Rolling Stones).

1984 The VVV annual report states '(...) that an unstoppable movement has been set in train to improve the city's attractiveness and quality of life.'
Museum Boijmans organises another blockbuster, the 'Gold of the Thracians'.

1987 Policy documents on tourist/recreational policy in Rotterdam and Rotterdam as a shopping city: 'There are sufficient positive elements present to make Rotterdam an attractive centre for a wide area.'

1988 A new impetus. References to 'The New Rotterdam' with new attractions like Waterstad, Tropicana, the Old Port, the IMAX theatre, the outdoor museums, the new theatre and Holland Casino. R' 88 brings it all together.

1989 Tropicana reports 650,000 visitors.

1990 For the first time, visitor figures to the festivals are stated with the explicit comment that they are based on estimates. The marathon attracts 1,000,000 visitors, 200,000 more than the previous year. The Summer Carnival reports 650,000 visitors, 150,000 more than in 1989. Rotterdam 1990, the celebration of the city's 650th anniversary, is not a success.

1992 Opening of the Kunsthal Rotterdam.

1993 Opening of Hotel New York, for many the first reason to cross the river. Establishment of Rotterdam Festivals Foundation. Image campaign: 'Rotterdam, where you meet the world'.

1994 Publication of strategic marketing plan for 1995-1997 aimed at improving the participation of the population and the image of Rotterdam as a city of culture. Introduction of guest accommodation tax.

1996 The City Council decides to rebuild the cruise terminal. Additionally, for the first time the ambition is expressed to nominate Rotterdam as European Capital of Culture 'before the start of the next century'. The opening of the Erasmus Bridge, remarkably often described as 'the new connection to Zuid (i.e. the south bank). (This is factually incorrect

because of course the bridge is just as much the new connection to the north bank. WP)

- 1997 Documents from this year determine to henceforth focus on young people. At the same time, the city wants to intensify cultural/historical tourism. To this end, 'market development activities' will be instigated.
- 1998 Another new slogan: 'Rotterdam and surroundings... contrasting Holland'. Documents refer to a transitional year, a new field of force and the transfer of responsibility between Rotterdam Marketing, the Rotterdam Congress Bureau, Rotterdam Topsport, Rotterdam Festival and the Waterstad Association.
- 2001 Rotterdam is European Capital of Culture.
- 2005 Initial plans to acquire the SS Rotterdam and moor it at Katendrecht as a tourist attraction and training centre. The original budget is €6 million. By 2011, the final sum stands at over €128 million.
- 2005 The Museumpark is renovated again, with a multi-storey car park being added. The final bill in 2010 is €108 million.
- 2005 Establishment of RRKC, the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture.
- 2006 Rotterdam secures the Volvo Ocean Race with a budget of €3 million, aiming to achieve at least 10,000 extra hotel overnight stays and €15 million in extra media value, with reported visitor figures of 550,000.
- 2006 North Sea Jazz moves from The Hague to Ahoy.
- 2008 First culture plan advisory period 2009-2012; the Gergiev Festival, live at Nighttown and Kunsthal Rotterdam do not receive any municipal subsidies.
- 2008 The Urban Culture Podium, championed by politicians but controversial, opens, only to close again in 2012 having lost millions.

International voices

During 2015 and 2016, Rotterdam has regularly been mentioned and praised in the national and international media. Of course, newspapers appear every day, lists are drawn up ever more frequently and these days awards are presented at the drop of a hat. But when the intensity increases and appears to be a pattern, there really is something going on. Even if it is temporary. Aside from positive comments and entries on a number of relevant lists (including New York Times, Rough Guide, Lonely Planet), in the context of this study it is particularly useful to look at regular mentions over a longer period of time. After all, a positive image takes a long time to acquire but can be gone in a flash.

Can we discern a pattern in the way national and international media report on Rotterdam? From a large sample, based on the digital archives of international media, the author searched on the keyword Rotterdam and looked at the relevant articles in terms of cultural tourism. This yielded the following picture:

Le Monde: articles on design (Daan Roosegaarde), Calais (in connection with refugees), the Kunsthal (Peter Lindbergh), Museum Boijmans (Jeroen Bosch), the film festival, Yannick Nézet-Séquin and the Art Rotterdam.

Le Figaro: wrote about the Markthal, the Kunsthal (Peter Lindbergh) and about '*Rotterdam laboratoire pour l'integration des immigrants*' (05/04/16)

The Guardian: published articles on the IFFR and architecture, among other subjects.

BBC: it is striking that when it comes to Rotterdam, the BBC reports almost exclusively on sports topics, mainly tennis.

El Pais: in Spain, Rotterdam is covered in connection with architecture, Boijmans, Rem Koolhaas, the Kunsthal and tennis (Nadal).

Süddeutsche Zeitung: Rotterdam is primarily covered in terms of sport and the port. Culture from and in Rotterdam rarely features in this important newspaper.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: the serious FAZ wrote about the Kunsthal, Art Rotterdam, Boijmans, the Markthal, lots of sport and '*Rotterdam ist ein Architekturlab*' (16/11/15)

Time: no culture, but shipping, the port and the Markthal

CNN: the ATP tennis tournament, architecture, Peter Lindbergh in the Kunsthal and 'Sci-fi foodhall opens in the Netherlands' (13/10/14)

The New York Times: lots of reporting on Rotterdam, more than 2000 references and articles between 1985 and 2016. Plenty of art, Boijmans, the Kunsthal, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, IFFR, MDRDV, Koolhaas, architecture, the Markthal: 'Rotterdam is increasingly becoming to architecture what Paris is to fashion, or Los Angeles to entertainment' (20/03/05)

Conclusion: when Rotterdam receives international coverage, in many cases it is in connection with the subject of architecture. The IFFR and high-profile exhibitions in Museum Boijmans and the Kunsthal also attract international interest, as does the Rotterdam Philharmonic with its star conductors Valeri Gergiev and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Other Rotterdam topics which regularly attract media interest relate to the demographics of the city, events in the port, or sport. In contrast to references to Rotterdam as a city in the Dutch press, in which problems and prominent entries on the 'wrong lists' dominate, the international press paints a far more optimistic picture. Anyone looking at publications about Rotterdam in the foreign media over a somewhat longer period can easily see that in an international perspective, measured by articles in the area of culture (which, incidentally, are virtually without exception positive), the constants are:

- architecture – both buildings and architects (Koolhaas etc.)
- RPhO concerts, in particular those featuring Gergiev and Yannick Nézet-Séguin
- the IFFR film festival
- exhibitions in Boijmans and Kunsthal

SWOT interviews

A list of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, based on statements and comments by individuals including Sophie Bargmann, Birgit Donker, Jacob van der Goot, Wilfried de Jong, Neelie Kroes, Jan Raes, Leon Ramakers, Daan Roosegaarde, Gertjan Schoonhoven, Jantje Steenhuis and Siebe Weide. From the interviews, so-called 'word clouds' have been compiled (see pp. 16 -19).

Strength(s)

Notable here is the consistency of the answers and observations and the confirmation of the cliché image of Rotterdam. The latter can of course also be regarded as a quality. Strengths listed include ambition, boldness, faster decision-makers, strong mayors, recent architecture, youth culture, many young residents, committed port authorities and entrepreneurs, several cultural icons, space for young, new initiatives and physical space for new things. Also cited is the fact that locals always take pride in their city when talking to each other, whereas to the outside world they are too reticent about praising Rotterdam. The Netherlands' friendliest big city. Rotterdam is multicultural, as a result of which the city is programmed and presented by various cultures and ages. This makes the city urban, transparent and dynamic. Rotterdam continues to develop and surprise with its young and thriving character. Respondents observe that, compared to other cities, the alignment of the streets is different, offering a different perspective on the world. They also note that there are various places where everything and everyone is jumbled together. Erasmus University has the highest number of non-white students in the country.

Weakness(es)

The observations here, too, are familiar: the inferiority complex, too many big plans with average execution, few female decision-makers, too much short-term thinking, the fact that much of the local audience does not live in the centre and that 'it's a small world – everyone knows everyone else'. Policy is too fickle. The point is regularly made that the city should stop making comparisons with others and instead 'build on its own strengths'. Rotterdam is agile and ambitious, but there appears to be no stable foundation and structure. There seems to be no long-term strategy or strong framework for filling in the details. Also cited is the fragmented centre, which still consists of separate elements, and the lack of a historic city centre, despite the volume of modern architecture. Additionally, the unbalanced composition of the population seems an obvious weakness in the international competition between cities.

The city's ethnic diversity could be a strength. Also a weakness is that Rotterdam has few must-see attractions. The museum quarter looks run-down. Rotterdam has given a lot of priority to occasional festival-like events, and has been quite successful in that, but the permanent, day-to-day offering is lean. Locals seem like metropolitans but can be all-too parochial.

Opportunities

The opportunities for Rotterdam lie in its young population, youth culture, lots of young people with a background of migration; a Muslim mayor, boldness, the excess of tourists in Amsterdam; interculturality, uniqueness, distinctiveness, not too many large cultural institutions; a small, fast airport and the stimulus of deprivation. Rotterdam is very local and therefore transparent and honest, and still offers scope for trends in tourism. The link with the river can offer unique urban experiences (water taxi, outdoor cinema etc.). See the city as a laboratory for urban innovations such as interactive street lighting (the lights come on as you drive towards them), the cleanest city in the Randstad (making use of particulate innovations) and more innovations in the areas of clean energy, clean water, clean air.

Rotterdam is a young city, where you can eat unexpectedly good and interesting food. Where the facilities are unexpectedly good, including for families. There is space for expansion and brownfield developments. The city is still searching for its identity, as it were: this offers all kinds of points of departure for lots of different opportunities. The city is still more affordable for promising start-ups and for young families. And Rotterdam is marked by an undiminished enthusiasm to make something happen. It's in the DNA of its people. This calls for a re-evaluation of buildings and institutions. What is a museum? What is an office block in the city centre? How do we want to live? Hofplein is a good example, from defunct railway station to new nightlife centre.

Draw strength from the creative students in the city. Let them look and act far into the future. Create places in the city where they can do and make things as an example to the viewing majority. They can be the flywheel for the city. All those nationalities mixed together in and around Witte de Withstraat, just after the Paris attacks. A jumble of colours, languages. And all on one dance-floor in Worm. That was a huge kick. Real life as opposed to the 'talking heads', who sometimes worry too much. Rotterdam can perform a very positive role in that dialogue, with Aboutaleb as a mobilising force. Don't forget innovation, daring and wanting to be a modern city. Provide more reasons to make the best use of the city, turn parks into places you want to go to accentuate the contrast with the crowded city. High-rise and low-rise, noise and silence, popular and elitist.

Threats

Interestingly, this generated the fewest comments. The same picture emerges from the SWOT analysis conducted during the Sector Analysis 2015, as drawn up by the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture (RRKC), which also lists twice as many opportunities as threats.

The threats identified by the interviewees are too little support from the municipal authorities in the form of money and otherwise, lack of focus, political polarisation, populism, reactive policy and thinking in terms of investment/returns. The WNT standard was also cited, as were cluttered public space, inter-ethnic tensions and social tensions. Lack of housing for (upper) middle-class families. Too many flats and apartments, not enough Real Houses. An erosion in the attractiveness of the museums. Too much traffic. Head in the clouds: Rotterdam mustn't start thinking things are really going well. Things may be improving, but the city remains vulnerable in many fundamental respects. Rotterdam may be fashionable right now, but it could just as quickly fall out of fashion. Make sure there are not too many stand-alone initiatives with no strategy behind them.

The image of the flashy new city is also a threat. You can get your kicks for a few days in Rotterdam – there is plenty to do. But behind the facades and festivals, depth is sometimes lacking. Fenixloods is splendid, Deliplein has had a makeover with some great new businesses, but as soon as you walk on a bit, there isn't much to do on de Kaap – the SS Rotterdam aside. Old North and Noordereiland are potential areas where living and culture ought to go well together. But there is nothing more than the odd attractive leisure spot there. Whereas in many large cities, you see neighbourhoods rapidly change for the better over the course of 10 years, in Rotterdam that is less common. Take Zwaanshals, where good intentions are still coming to naught. The 'Williamsburg effect' familiar from NYC is absent in Rotterdam.

From more to better

On 13 September 2014, on the occasion of the opening of The World of Witte de With festival, I delivered a lecture on Rotterdam. At the request of the editors, this was subsequently published in the online magazine Vers Beton. For this study, the text of that lecture and publication has been edited again.

In the annual *Quality of Life survey* drawn up by the international magazine Monocle, cities around the world are measured against a strict but at the same time subjective yardstick. Major global cities, but also smaller-scale cities from the periphery, often not even the obvious capital cities, have been highlighted since 2007. Monocle compiles a ranking which, for what it's worth, indicates which cities are doing well, and which less so. For each city, Monocle lists its strengths and gives reasons why it has gone up or down in any one year, while also explaining sudden new entries and other shifts. There are other lists of cities which are doing well or less well in terms of conferences, tourism, quality of life, etc. – lists based on facts and figures. In addition, there are lists based on emotions, on subjective criteria. Rotterdam has featured on several of those lists for some time now. However, the value of these lists is open to question. A further question is what carries more weight these days, emotions or facts. In times when the everyday world is increasingly making way for a false reality, 'framing', image creation, in a 24/7 media landscape where 'post-truth' is more the norm than the exception, caution is advised. Statistical information appears reliable, but it often is not, particularly when it comes to visualised models. And even statistics can lie.

Whatever the truth, what is certain is that according to the 2013-2016 cultural plan, Rotterdam's annual art budget was over €77 million. The majority of that went to 72 institutions which receive long-term funding. For the 2017-2020 Cultural Plan period, €75.9 million are available for 83 institutions. This means that the cuts to the subsidies introduced for the period 2009-2012 have still not been compensated for. In other words, for most institutions, the income from subsidies for the next four years is still at its 2008 level.

The number of institutions has not declined, which means you can still go to a different subsidised institution every week of the year in Rotterdam. Of course nobody does, and fortunately nobody has to.

The municipal authorities take art seriously – in its own words:

'Art and culture are necessary conditions for achieving the ambitions we have for our city in economic, spatial and social terms.'

It couldn't be more Rotterdam – future visions, plans, ambitions, forecasts. This city cannot help but look ahead, everything has to be newer, bigger, higher and more. The first generation of post-war buildings has already made way for newer, bigger and taller buildings. Dynamism, decisiveness and growth are essential characteristics of the city. What already exists is good, new is better. 'Rotterdam: First class second city, a search for the Rotterdam identity' (Erasmus magazine, 29 April 2016) is a sharply-drawn character sketch of Rotterdam. It compares Rotterdam with Liverpool, Genoa and Marseilles, cities which have similarly struggled with 'second city-syndrome' from time immemorial. The term for this persistent inferiority complex was first coined in 1952 by the American journalist A.J. Liebling in his book on Chicago, which he compared to London, Paris and especially, of course, New York. Decisiveness and a strong desire to move forwards are typical characteristics of second cities, and thus also of Rotterdam. However, an additional feature of Rotterdam is the failure to take stock and to take a long-term view. And it is also necessary to look back, even if that is painful in a city where most of the historic buildings have been destroyed.

De Boompjes was once Europe's finest riverfront. When London was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666, observers came from England to see how its capital might be rebuilt. During the Golden Age, the merchant city of Rotterdam lay majestically on its river.

In 2004, I was asked for my response to the bid book put together by Rotterdam with the aim of capturing the title of Sports City 2005. There were hundreds of pages, but nowhere could I find a sport that was related to water, let alone the River Maas. No sailing, no water skiing, no swimming, no synchronised diving, none of that. A missed opportunity – when virtually everything connected to the port or the river, in cultural terms as otherwise, has potential and can be successful in Rotterdam. The Submarine Wharf and a wealth of small initiatives at Katendrecht are testament to that.

Rotterdam has a port which is no longer the biggest in the world as of 2004, but which nevertheless explains the origins and character of the city. The port is still of huge importance to the city economically, but almost nowhere is it part of the physical, social and cultural fabric.

The Rotterdam city historian Hilde Sennema advocates reconnecting the city with its identity as a port. There are already good examples of this which have become successful in cultural-historical terms almost organically, virtually without help. Delfshaven is obviously the oldest example, but Veerhaven, the

Old Port and more recently Katendrecht demonstrate that Rotterdam is a port city *par excellence*.

However characteristic they may be, the port and the river rarely feature in cultural policy. What is mentioned, for example, is the Hague-Rotterdam metropolitan region. Ideas about the so-called metropolitan region are new and seem exciting, while the port and river are forgotten. If you didn't know better, you might think this city lies with his back to the river. What is Rotterdam's Unique Selling Point? The business of a global port and a location on a characteristic river to which Rotterdam owes its origins.

Everything else you can also find elsewhere, often done better. And, of course, the port translates to more than just ships, trade and water. The port also stands for a mentality, in addition to phenomena which you will not find anywhere else. For example, why did the first immigrants, the Chinese, settle in this city? That is visibly and historically explainable. The port is the biggest connecting factor in this city. There is a reason why urban planner Riek Bakker called the Maas the city's capital. (She was horrified by the design of housing along Maasboulevard with emergency exits facing the river.) } This is Rotterdam's gold.

There is another Rotterdam phenomenon which is more developed here than in most other cities. The Feyenoord anthem is called 'Hand in hand kameraden'. This slogan is characteristic of the city and indicates a willingness to work together – cooperation between institutions, between companies and institutions and a striking commitment from private patrons. There is no city in the Netherlands with a larger number of private foundations than Rotterdam. That is an unmistakable sign of committed patrons who have been donating significant sums to the city in life or by way of legacies from time immemorial.

The Volkskracht Foundation, set up in 1923, and the Erasmus Foundation, are familiar names. More recent are the Van Leeuwen van Lignac Foundation and the De Verre Bergen Foundation. What is striking in the many policy documents and municipal documents is that there is virtually no mention of them. And that is a shame, because this growing flow of money could be complementary to money from the authorities – complementary in the sense of strengthening, not replacing. It must not be the case that where the authorities retreat, private patrons are expected to fill the gaps. Both parties should provide their own share, based on their own responsibilities.

When the Kunsthal opened in 1992, it was said that the era of reconstruction was over and that Rotterdam was finally a city where you could not only make money, you could also enjoy spending it. Some cities are good for earning

money, other cities are good for spending it in. The latter are always the cities which have something special to offer. And you now find that in Rotterdam too. 25 years ago, Hotel New York and Dudok opened, Marlies Dekkers and Herman de Blijker started out and the Kunsthal the opened its doors. These may seem random examples, but they are cited for a reason. All five were trend-setters for the city. Since the early 90s, Rotterdam's growth has seemed unstoppable, and in 2001 the city took over the mantle of European Capital of Culture. The comparison with 2016 could be that Rotterdam is once again ready for a quantum leap. Indicators which suggest so include the opening of the Markthal, the new Central Station, De Rotterdam and the flourishing of Katendrecht – further high-profile developments which are attracting international interest, resulting in mentions and recommendations in travel guides, newspapers and magazines. Just like in the early 90s. But history does not repeat as a recurring refrain, history is heard as an endless echo.

Now that Rotterdam once again appears to be on the brink of a cultural flourishing, it is sensible to take a look at what happened during the previous 'flowering', which took place between 1992 and 2001, culminating in Rotterdam European Capital of Culture.

The effect of Rotterdam European Capital of Culture was to empty the sponsorship coffers and severely deplete the budgets of the large funds. From that moment on, growth fell back and cultural stasis took hold. The uncertainties after 9/11 also played a part in the background.

However, not to be deterred, the art world continued to believe in more. Anything was possible, everything had to be done. Policymakers, planners and the art world had each other running from one project to the next – focusing on urban neighbourhoods one time and on the world the next. Rotterdam art in Marrakesh and Ommoord. The art world was repeatedly seduced by new subsidies, new media, multiculturalism, creative industry. It seemed as though a new institute or festival was created for every new initiative. In the meantime, the existing institutions went on undaunted. Nothing was scrapped, plenty was added, year in, year out.

The cultural policy of those years most resembles that typical Rotterdam snack, the *kapsalon*, with lots of everything. But in the same period, the political climate changed, in Rotterdam more drastically than anywhere else; on top of that there was the banking crisis, followed by economic recession. For the first time, the sector was hit by unprecedented cuts. National figures for the performing arts reveal that:

In 1999, the Netherlands had 407 theatres; by 2012 there were 530

In 1999, this was equivalent to 165,000 seats, which had increased to 260,000 by 2012

In 1999, 38,000 performances were put on; in 2012 the figure was 55,000

The total number of visitors was 14,300,000 in 1999; by 2012 there were 17,000,000

Rising numbers across the board. However, what did not increase but in fact substantially decreased was the average attendance per performance. In 1999, the average was 376 visitors per performance; by 2012 that had fallen to an average of 309 visitors per performance – a decline of a full 20% per performance.

We are now several years further down the line; the big cuts and the consequences of the economic recession have been processed and the economy is on the upswing. Alluding to the city's '010' dialling code, De Volkskrant of 20 August 2014 wrote in exultant terms about an imminent new cultural heyday for Rotterdam: '010 in the top 10'. On 28 October 2016, the same publication again wrote about 'The miracle of Rotterdam'. It seems that every achievement prompts eulogies in the media, even though there is usually no lasting success. At the same time, in no other city are there as many things disappearing or merging, or as many one-offs as in Rotterdam.

This typical Rotterdam dynamic, the (literal) space for new things, the willingness to work together and meet, the second-city mentality and the ongoing influx of newcomers means that the city wants to move forwards and therefore looks ahead. But this fixation on the new comes at a cost to what is already there. And if you only ever add and take nothing away, sooner or later supply and demand will be out of step. As long as funding grows in tandem, that is not noticeable, but when the funding flow stagnates, as has been the case since 2008, or is cut, holes appear, even among institutions which had been successful in previous years and were hailed as the miracle of Rotterdam.

The development and growth of Rotterdam will never endure if the city does not think about how the growth and success of institutions set up previously can be perpetuated or developed. After all, growth does not always mean more. Above all, growth means better.

Conclusion

1. Momentum

In 2016/17, Rotterdam does indeed once again stand at a turning point. The opening of the Markthal, Central Station, De Rotterdam, the flourishing of Katendrecht, the uninterrupted flow of new restaurants and high-profile food service outlets, enhanced by regular positive publicity, have led to a real buzz around the city. The refurbishment of De Meent and new apartments in the city centre have at long last generated sufficient population density in the city centre – and of course, the city centre is the calling card for the whole city. As a result of the increase in the number of residents, strengthened by the upswing in the economy, Rotterdam now has sufficient critical mass to take the next step forwards. The years of stagnation in the arts, lack of focus in policy and economic headwinds appear to be behind us.

2. Ingredients

What matters now is to develop Rotterdam further, based on the city's strong brands. This study aims to provide an initial impetus for that. Rotterdam has sufficient cultural capital to capture the imagination internationally as well as nationally. We don't need a Guggenheim. With Museum Boijmans and the Kunsthal as proven venues for large-scale exhibitions, with the IFFR as a compulsory stop on the international cinematography circuit and a wealth of modern and contemporary architecture – from Het Nieuwe Bouwen to the Markthal – Rotterdam is in a strong position to further develop cultural tourism. In addition, the city has a colourful population, a mighty river and everything that goes with it. In terms of strengthening international cultural tourism, these are the city's most potent ingredients. Moreover, the city has committed patrons, a willingness to work together and a willingness to formulate great ambitions.

3. Future

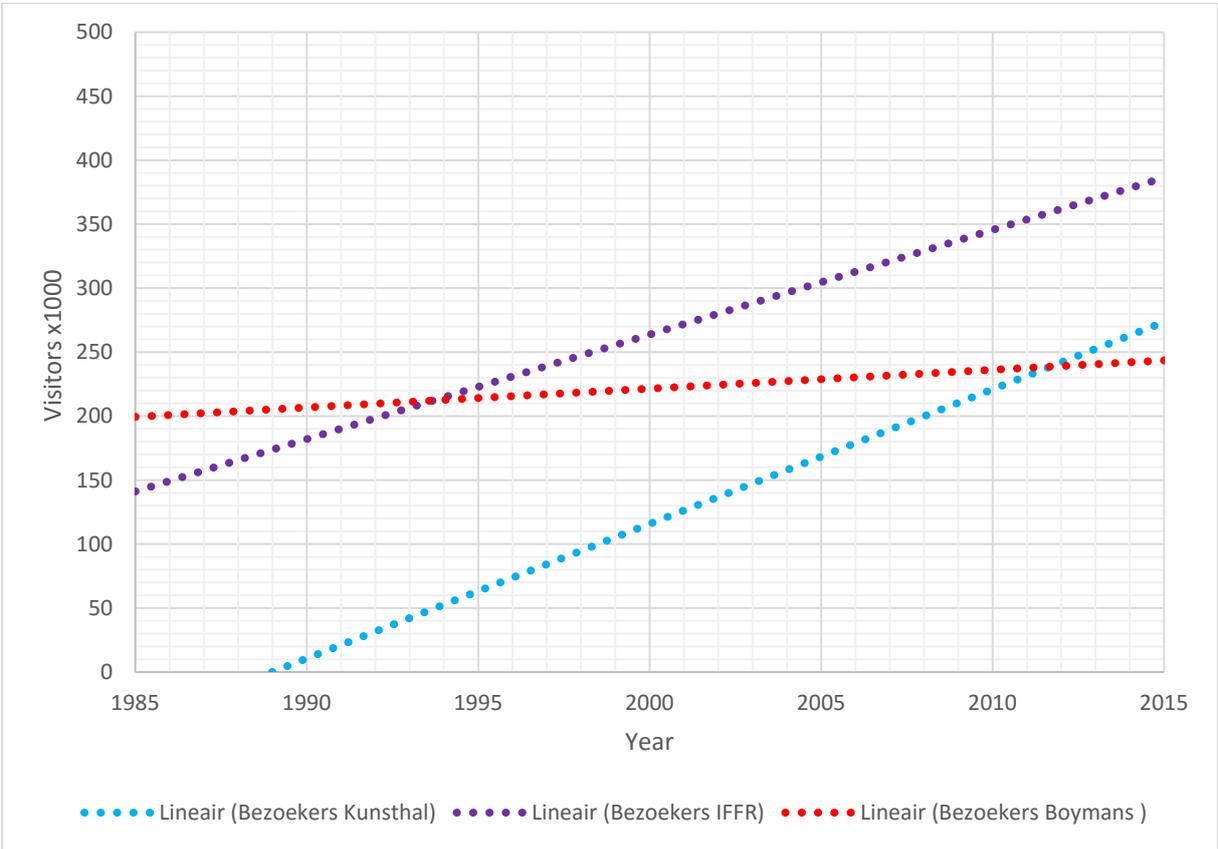
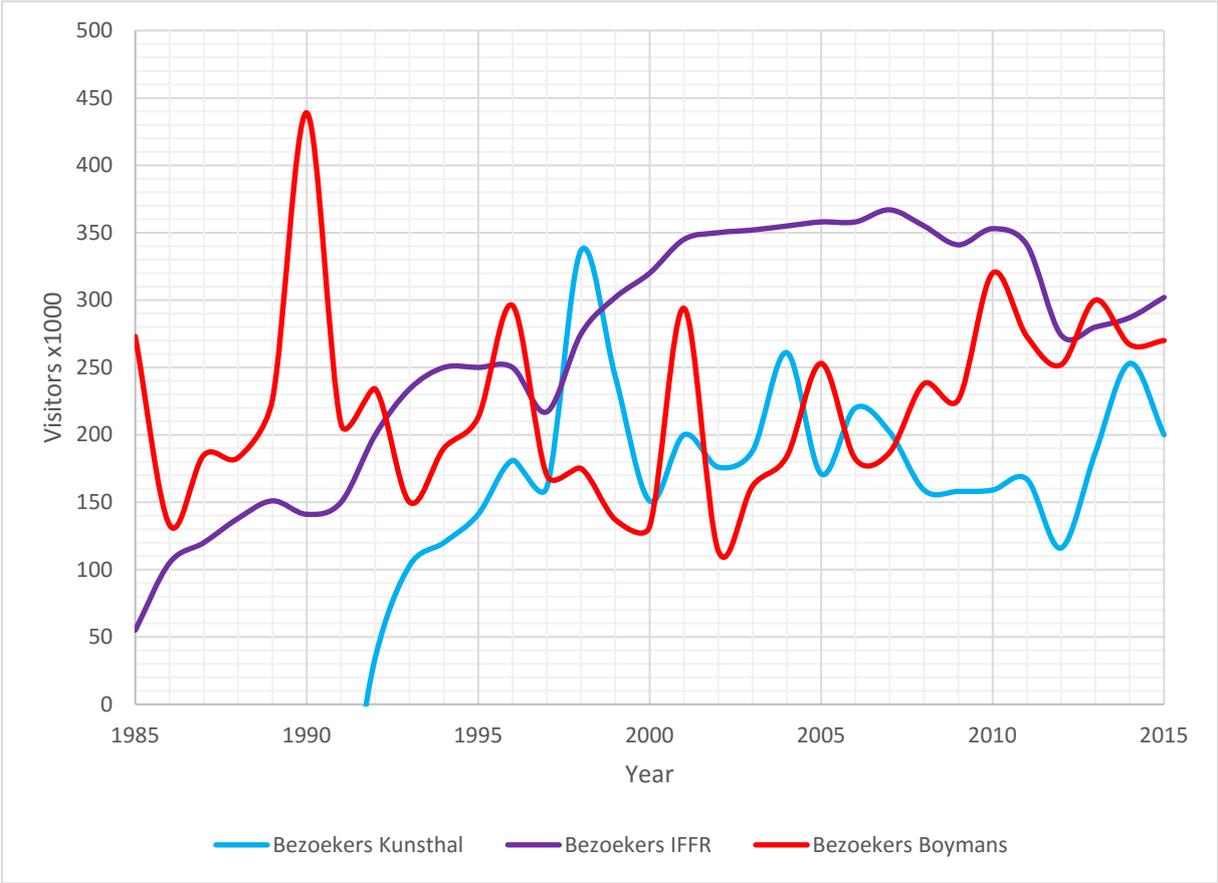
With the momentum as a given and the right ingredients present, it is now important to set a long-term objective and formulate goals. Rotterdam has become more successful as a tourist city than as a city of culture. Whereas hotel overnight stays and food service are increasing, we see stagnation in visitor numbers for cultural activities. In order to maintain the growth in tourism, investment in a stable cultural offering is essential.

Since the 1980s, we have seen a number of peaks alternating with years of stagnation. One of those moments was the virtually simultaneous opening of the IMAXtheater, Waterstad, Rotterdamse Schouwburg and Tropicana. There was a similar moment several years later with the opening of the Kunsthal, Dudok and Hotel New York. The European Capital of Culture in 2001 was another peak, and with the opening of the Markthal, Central Station, De Rotterdam and Katendrecht, we are seeing another upturn. It would be a missed opportunity to lose the current momentum and wait for the next peak to come along.

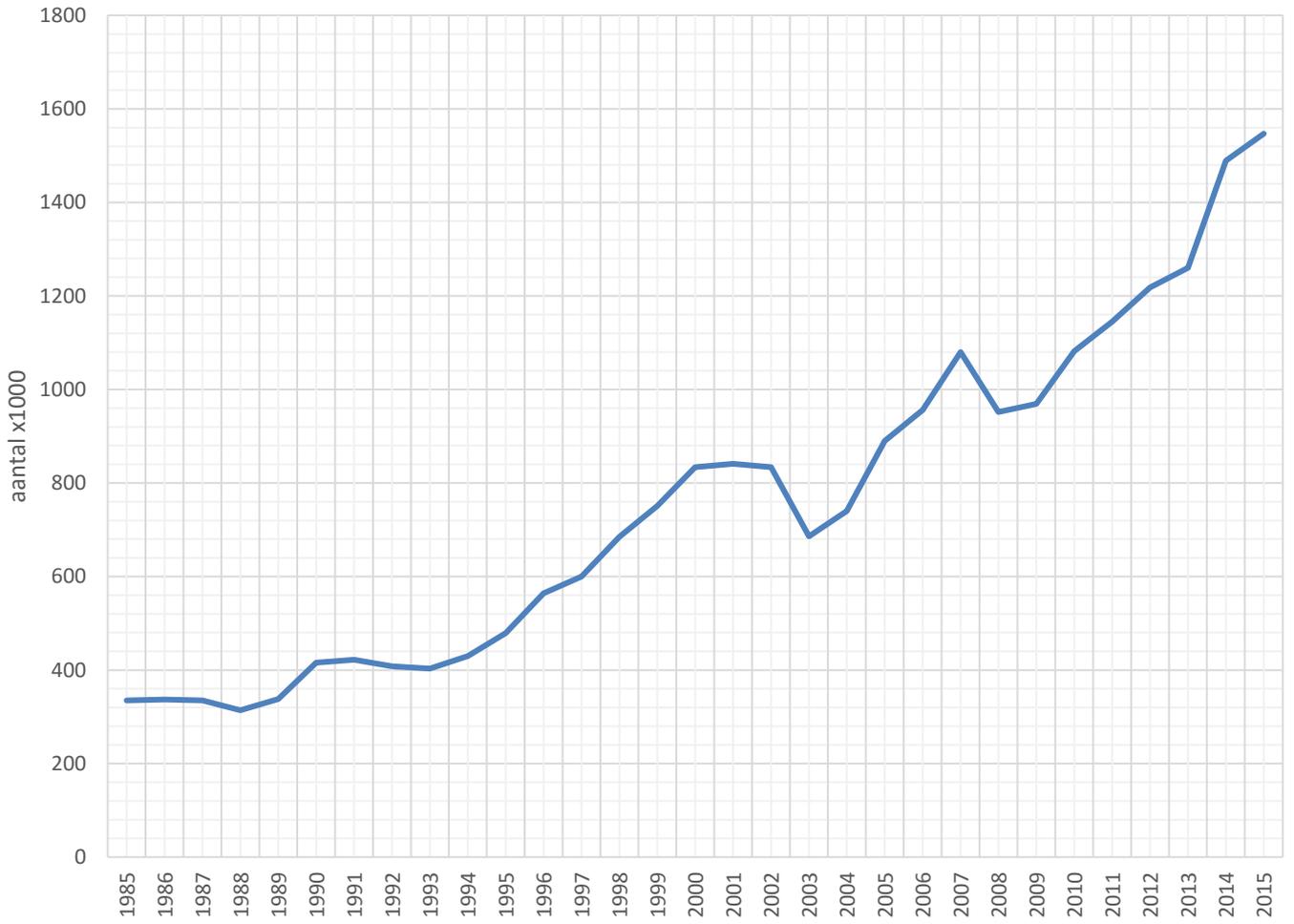
By learning from the past, by basing ourselves on the strong brands and character of the city and by making use of the current positive momentum, Rotterdam can take the next step, in particular by connecting these elements together in an enduring way. When architecture, the Maas and for example film or the RPhO come together, something typically Rotterdam can emerge which is internationally distinctive and attracts interest and visitors.

The following points are therefore relevant for a future policy that makes Rotterdam distinctive, authentic and enduring in terms of international cultural tourism:

1. The Maas is the city's flowing capital; embrace the river and the port
2. Rotterdam is a city of modern architecture
3. Use the enormous potential of private patrons
4. Rotterdam is not a city of workers but of newcomers
5. Turn the IFFR into the best art-house film festival in the world
6. Regularly organise top international exhibitions
7. To this end, create a revolving fund for cultural tourism
8. Prioritise long-term over one-offs
9. Because getting onto lists is easier than staying on lists
10. In Rotterdam, the zoo will always be more popular than museum}s



Overnight hotel stays



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