



City of
Amsterdam

Making culture accessible
to everyone, and everyone
part of culture

ACCESS

Integrated
Action Plan
2022



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introduction

“Arts and culture make our lives richer. You will never forget that one performance that moved you, or that exhibition that challenged you to look at something from a new perspective. A film in which you can recognize yourself feels like coming home. All these experiences arise from imagination. That has a place on stage, in a museum or in a neighborhood theater. Every Amsterdammer has a right to that imagination. Arts and culture are essential in our daily lives, wherever you live in the city.” Touria Meliani – Deputy mayor of Arts and Culture Amsterdam

Amsterdam is a world city for culture, but a lot of stories in our city are still untold, unrecognized or undervalued. Access to culture is not always assured for everyone. The city of Amsterdam wants to broaden and diversify arts and culture in the city.

With the delivery of the Plan of the Arts 2021-2024 (cultural strategy of Amsterdam), the City of Amsterdam committed to making inclusion a key part of its cultural policy. All cultural institutions funded by the city must create their own action plans on inclusion, to be delivered and executed over the four years of the plan. Many cultural institutions are already working to reach new audiences and make their content more inclusive. The city is also investing in new cultural centers in peripheral neighborhoods of Nieuw-West, Noord and Zuidoost.

Making culture in Amsterdam accessible to everyone, and everyone part of culture in the city. Two strongly connected ambitions which however come with their own set of methods and underlying challenges. How will Amsterdam know if its

ambition to make culture more inclusive has been successful? What changes will need to take place within its cultural and creative sectors, in its funding, in the city culture department to ensure that culture is more inclusive both now and sustainably for the future?

Since 2019, City of Amsterdam has been a leading partner in a network of European capital cities – the ACCESS network – addressing this challenge together. Amsterdam participation in ACCESS is being used as an accelerator to achieve the city’s goals for cultural inclusion and to ensure a sustainable approach to this agenda.

This plan is the result of this ambition, delivered with a network of partners within the city and across Europe. It will have diversity and inclusion at its core, both in what we want to achieve and in the ways in which we will work.

context

Amsterdam is a city of minorities. Approximately 180 different cultures live side by side. With over 165 funded institutions and even more institutions that are not funded Amsterdam has a very rich infrastructure when it comes to arts and culture.

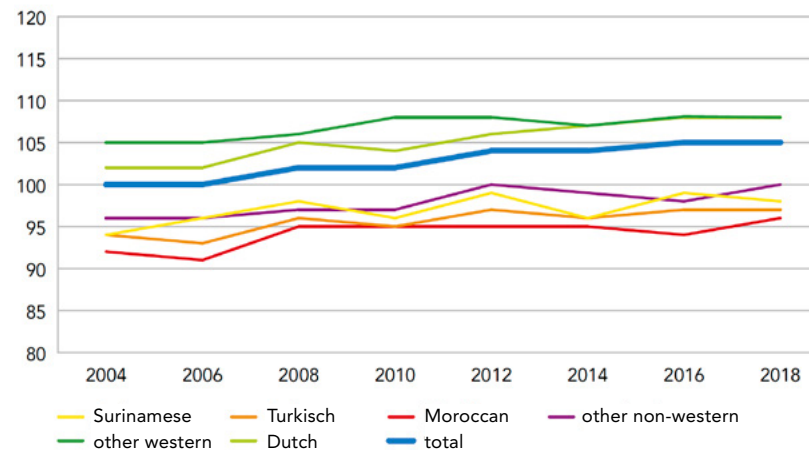
Amsterdam is richly diverse, yet this diversity is not reflected in the cultural offers and participation in our city.

This images provide us a picture of how people are doing objectively. The level of well-being is measured on the basis of their position in various (participation and living) domains. When we look at these scores of living situation in our city we can see that the quality of life is not equal for everyone. Background, age, education level and area of living does effect these scores as well.

Behind the diversity in our city lies inequality. Image 1 and 2 are giving us an inside of the life situation scores based on a city-wide survey sorted by migration background and city's different areas.

Image 1: Behind diversity lies inequality

Living situation by migration background, biennial numbers 2004 t/m 2018 (by index numbers, 2004=100, rounded numbers)



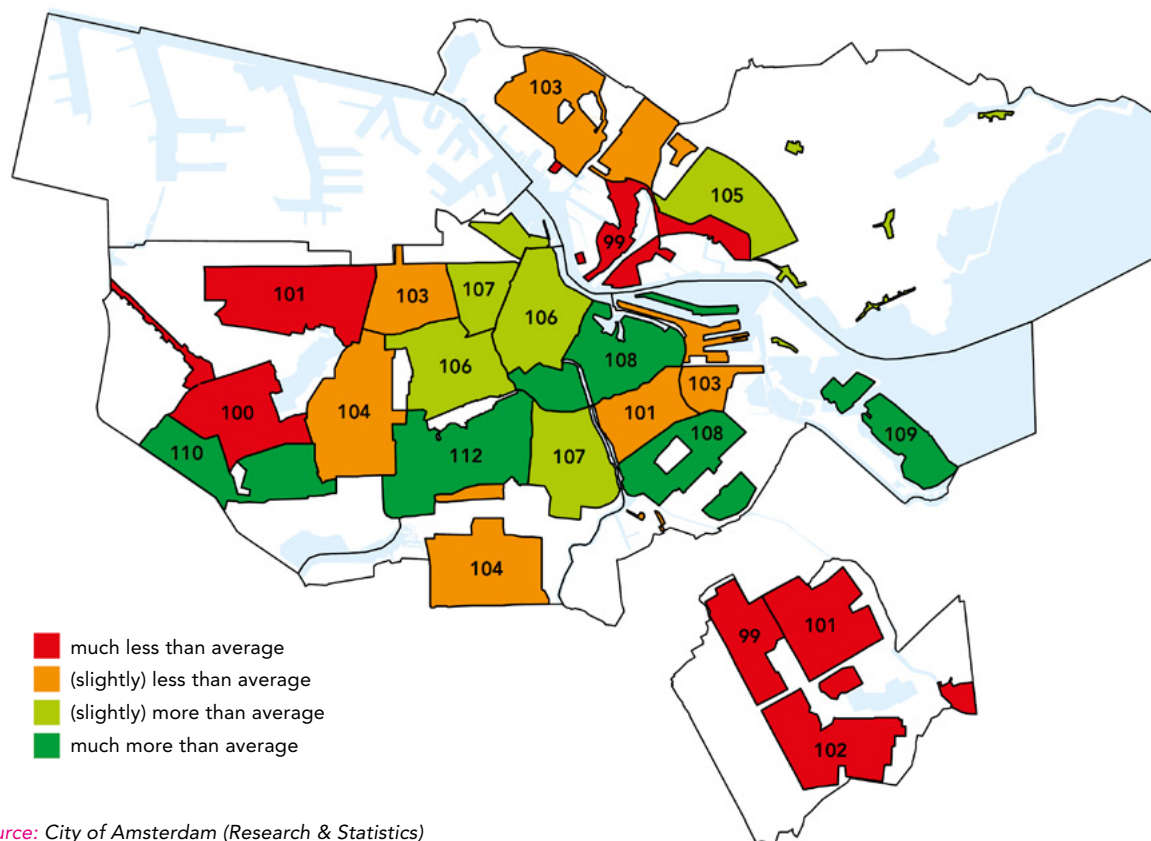
Source: City of Amsterdam (Research & Statistics)

When spreading this information over the city map of Amsterdam, we can see contrast in quality of life across the different areas of the city. The scores are higher in the city center and lower in the peripheral areas of the city, mainly in the districts of Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord. These districts have a higher population of citizens with an ethnic background and a lower income. From these images (image 1 and 2) we understand that the quality of life also has a connection with the area where people (can afford) to live.

“The challenge is not to just to build new cultural infrastructure, but also to think about the specific needs of these citizens.”

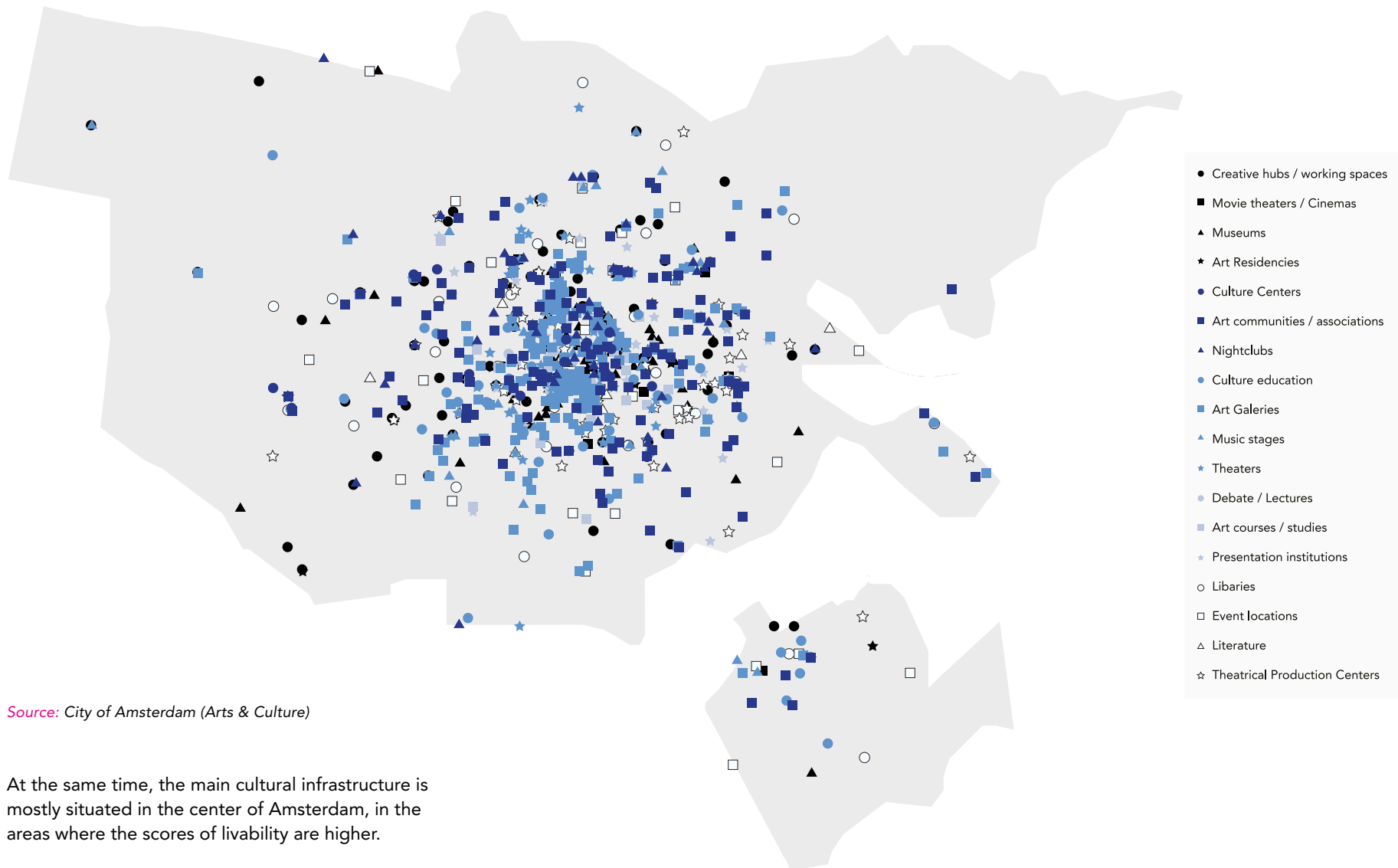
Image 2: Inequality across the city

Living situation by areas, 2018 (by index numbers, 2004=100, rounded numbers)



Source: City of Amsterdam (Research & Statistics)

Image 3: Rich Cultural Infrastructure



Source: City of Amsterdam (Arts & Culture)

At the same time, the main cultural infrastructure is mostly situated in the center of Amsterdam, in the areas where the scores of livability are higher.



Our main cultural infrastructure reflects only one part of the city's cultural offers. Many stories do not have a stage yet, they exist but not everyone can hear and see them. In the peripheral districts there is in fact fantastic cultural activity but it is not visible (for everyone) or there are not enough resources. The challenge is not just to build new cultural infrastructure, but also to strengthen existing infrastructure and think about the specific needs of these citizens. How do they define culture and are there other or new ways of artistic expression that need to be discovered?

The city districts of Nieuw-West, Noord and Zuidoost have been identified as priority areas for the Plan of the Arts 2021-2024, as well as for our work in ACCESS and this Integrated Action Plan. They have high levels of socio economic disadvantage, are ethnically diverse and situated on the edge of the city with limited built infrastructure for culture. However, Nieuw-West for example is also a vibrant area whose residents proudly see it as the center of the city. Its local talent in urban arts, production and marketing are already being sought out by major cultural institutions. A similar dynamic can also be found in Noord and Zuidoost.

context
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challenges for Amsterdam

In summary, we defined the challenge of cultural inclusion in Amsterdam in five key points:

1. Arts and culture are not accessible for every inhabitant of Amsterdam.
2. There is an unequal distribution of places for arts and culture; in the peripheral districts there is less infrastructure per inhabitant than in the city center.
3. The definition of arts and culture is too narrow.
4. Less funding goes to the city districts Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord.
5. Not every inhabitant of Amsterdam recognizes themselves in the offering of (funded) arts and culture.

These five challenges will be addressed in the new Plan of the Arts in 2025-2028. This plan contains how we will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders to prepare and address these challenges.

Amsterdam in focus

Opportunities

- Inclusion prioritised and integrated in the city's cultural strategy
- Funded cultural organisations create their own action plans on inclusion
- City is investing in new cultural centres

Focus IAP

- Culture for and with all residents (cq. humans in Amsterdam)
- Create an inclusive approach to culture across the city
- Dissemination of cultural infrastructure with a focus on the the City districts of Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord

Challenges

- How to measure success?
- How to ensure sustainability of our work?
- What changes are needed in the cultural and creative sector, funding and the City's Culture Department to ensure inclusivity?

To learn

- Detect, strengthen and develop cultural infrastructure in the priority area's
- Learn from residents about their cultural needs and ambitions
- Reconnect policy makers with delivery 'on the ground'
- Involve residents and use their input for actions





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The development of this plan

The development of the plan had been funded by URBACT, the EU programme that supports cities to come together to find sustainable solutions to shared challenges. We have shared learning with colleagues from Dublin, Lisbon, London, Sofia, Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius.

To develop this plan, we have worked with a network of local stakeholders. Our ACCESS local network met every two/three months to workshop different ideas, knowledge and perspective around cultural inclusion and how this could be improved in Amsterdam. We

discussed, we mapped, we walked, we gathered data, we explored ideas from our own and other cities.

Our ACCESS local network included residents from each of the districts Nieuw-West, Noord, and Zuidoost; artists cultural producers, neighborhood representatives and other NGOs; City of Amsterdam colleagues from departments of Education, the city districts, Data&Innovations and our city's marketing and research partner amsterdam&partners. A full list of participants is given on [page 15](#).

Guiding questions:

- What can the city of Amsterdam do to enable and develop culture in the districts Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord?
- How can we create an inclusive approach to culture across the city?
- What data do we need and who should we share it with?
- How can we involve local residents and stakeholders in policy making?
- How can we ensure the sustainability of our work?
- How can we make sure that all residents are (equally) represented in the cultural offers?
- How will Amsterdam know if its ambition to make culture more inclusive has been successful?
- What changes will need to take place within its cultural and creative sectors, in its funding, in the cities culture department and the development of cultural infrastructure to ensure that culture is more accessible and inclusive both now and sustainably for the future?
- How can we find support for our work in the city with residents, local stakeholders and local, national and international politics?
- What structural changes do we need in our organization, policymaking and funding structures to ensure sustainability of our work.

Working towards our IAP we...

- talked and worked with our ACCESS local network
- talked with the colleagues from the city districts
- talked with colleagues from our own department
- participated in the small scale actions
- assigned the students from the Free University of Amsterdam whom did impact studies of our small scale actions and made an inventory on the culture and need for culture in the city districts

key findings

- **Trust** is key and takes time to establish.
- Make sure you **give something in return** and make sure it is useful to your partner(s)/ stakeholder(s).
- Make sure there is **commitment** and **involvement** from the partners and stakeholders. This also means that **you report back to them**.
- Give trust by daring to **'give away the keys'**. This also means knowing what the partner needs in order to succeed. Find the **reciprocity** in the co-production/collaboration.
- The **importance of collaboration**. There is a lot of collaboration between partners, but it could be more. For example; between city districts, between small starting organizations and also between the city and partners.
- Arts and culture are difficult subjects to start the conversation; therefore start small and build up from there.
- There is more culture than we know or see. **Visibility** is essential in bringing all the stories of Amsterdam to the surface and towards funding.
- A solid **Network** is essential for new ways of working. Know the partners and stakeholders and **invest in relationships** and **maintaining** a network.
- The **definition** of arts and culture should be representative for the whole city.
- Don't be afraid to experiment and to say: **we do not have the answer yet**.
- Building up a network and maintaining it should be one of the priorities. This network should not only be consulting but are **part of the 'workforce'**.
- People who consume the most culture live in the city center. People with a different need for culture in de districts: Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord. We learned that vicinity is a very important aspect in why people visit less culture.
- There are a lot of **different ways to let people participate**.





trial and error (small scale actions)

Based on our questions and learnings during ACCESS, we carried out three pilot projects (Small Scale Actions) in 2020 and 2021, one in each city district. To address the most important challenges, we had a brainstorm with our ACCESS local network to come up with small interventions that would help address the challenges.

1. De Kunstkar (The ArtCart) in Nieuw-West

This was an actual cart stacked with art. People could contribute to the cart (which travelled through the entire district) could look at the art, but mostly: have a conversation. It turned out that the ArtCart was also a great place to let people know what happened in the neighbourhood and to invite people to gatherings, inform them about clubs and so on. At the end of the project the cart was filled with flyers of local groups and clubs.

2. Documentary about entrepreneurship and arts & culture in Zuidoost

This documentary was launched during a conversation about art in Zuidoost. This was meant as a public meeting, but due to Covid19 people could only watch and participate via livestream. It raised awareness of the rich culture in Zuidoost of entrepreneurs and cultural makers. The heart and soul of Zuidoost was very well described and gave visibility to this part of Amsterdam.

3. Open conversation about arts, culture and feeling at home in Noord

Meant as so much more, but due to Covid19 became an online conversations of four hours. Verdedig Noord (Defend North) led a chat with activist, students, inhabitants and cultural makers. From Amsterdam and beyond, where they talked about identity, feeling at home and the definition of arts and culture.

“The heart and soul of each district became very tangible throughout the implementation of the small scale actions.”

To execute these pilots we assigned project leaders. From the ACCESS local network and/or from the districts. With this approach we intended to 1) give away the keys 2) give and build trust and 3) work in a reciprocity way.



Surround Sound at Plein '40-'45

Besides these three we executed a fourth pilot: The artwork Surround Sound on square '40-'45 in Nieuw-West. This was a special opportunity, because the Bloomberg Philanthropies, New York wanted to work with us. The goals fitted nicely together and we decided to take some extra learning from this. What makes this project different compared to our other small scale actions, was the fact that the idea for an artwork did not come from the community. They said they wanted more color on the square, but not an artwork per se. The other ideas and project leaders came from the community's and were therefore more bottom up, this was more top down approach. We addressed the assignment to Street Art Museum Amsterdam (SAMA) with the strict condition to make this into a participatory project.

“The most important lesson we learned during these pilots was that people know best.”

This was a very meaningful process and we learned a lot. Because of the more top down approach it was harder to create commitment. At one point there was so much resistance from the citizens, mostly from the entrepreneurs, we decided to take a step back, stopped the project temporarily and sat down with the people. We talked, we listened. We knew upfront where there was space for change and where was not. That helped: people knew what they could expect, felt informed and where was space to influence the process/project. After this we made posters of the square with the artwork. People could vote to which part of the square should stay empty.

It showed us that top down is not per se bad, but it takes more time in explaining what you do and why, in terms of managing expectations and more time

to keep people informed and to make (more) space for participation. Besides this you should check if the solution you find is most fitting to the problem (in this case a grey square) is indeed the right one (in this case an artwork).

People know best

The most important lesson we learned during these pilots was that people know best. You need stakeholders to at the least have the change to participate. But more involvement leads to better results. Even though you are very involved and engaged as a civil servant, it is impossible to reflect all the different opinions and feelings. Involvement is an ongoing process; you need to keep your stakeholders informed and let them participate throughout the process. We saw that success was accomplished mostly when we worked with local organizations, inhabitants and cultural makers.

Besides the important lesson that people know best, we came to understand some important conditions we need to keep in mind when working with networks and stakeholders towards are next Plan of the Arts. To start: the importance of recurring meetings and events. To build trust and to build up a network and to keep people involved with your organization, but more important with the process, you need to make sure the things you do aren't a onetime only matter. Recurring events, meetings are therefore key in earning trust, building a foundations and are also important for us to keep a good grip on what is going on with the people and the neighborhood. Members of the local network told us that this was a good start, but to really create impact, this is only the beginning, we need to follow up. This leads to the importance of (structural) budget and time (formation). With a small amount of budget per district you can do a lot, but you have to reserve some budget in order to get things going. Otherwise it will be a continuous

struggle to get things done. Same goes for formation (people); you have to organize formation and time to make sure this part of the job gets the attention and focus it needs to bring it forward.

A lot of insights and learned lessons were gathered by impact studies exceeded by the Free University of Amsterdam. This was very helpful for us to get another and more objective perspective on our work and the impact of the small scale actions. Since the research is in Dutch, this will not be included in the attachment, we however used there insights in this action plan.

what will we do?

After analysing the work, evaluating with the project leaders, colleagues from the districts and our local network, we have formulated five objectives for addressing cultural inclusion:

1. Develop a new approach to policy making for the Plan of the Arts 2025-2028 (involve residents and stakeholders).
2. Gather more insight in participation, perception and definition of Arts and Culture in the districts Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord by the start of the Plan of the Arts in 2024/2025 with the Free University of Amsterdam.
3. Redefine the definition of arts and culture in a way that is more representative for the cultural sector in Amsterdam by 2024/2025.
4. Keep investing in locations for arts and culture in Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord.
5. Enhance our knowledge and insight on audiences by researching further development of the pilot 'Cultural Segmentation Model' ([amsterdam&partners](#)) in 2022-2023.

We addressed actions to each objective, which you will find on [page 16 till 18](#).



Our ACCESS local network

Name	Organization and/or function
Karlijn Driessen	amsterdam&partners
Anouk Wieleman	City of Amsterdam, Chief Technology Officer Department
Laurine van der Wiel	Van Gogh Museum
Dolores Heide	Gemeente Amsterdam, District Zuidoost
Marysé Jansen	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Marja van Nieuwkerk	City of Amsterdam, Arts&Culture
Martijn Peschke	amsterdam&partners
Martin van Engel	Senior advisor diversity and inclusion
Gonca Yalciner	Amsterdam Museum
Richard Kofi	Bijlmerparktheater, artist, curator, podcaster
Otmar Watson	Director Untold
Fouad Lakbir	Storyteller, key-figure district Nieuw-west
Chris Keulemans	Verdedig Noord, writer, journalist, moderator, expertise of district Noord
Massih Hutak	Verdedig Noord, rapper, activist, writer, inhabitant of district Noord
Claire van der Mee	Artist
Renee Scheenaard	City of Amsterdam, District Nieuw-West
Femke Awater	Amsterdam Museum
Annemiek Geel	Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds
Barbe Bock	City of Amsterdam, District Zuidoost
Jacobien Sierts	City of Amsterdam, District Nieuw-West
Alies Veul	City of Amsterdam, Space & sustainability Department
Sharon Amritpersad	Amsterdam Funding for arts, Culture Scout
Louis Pirenne	City of Amsterdam, District Noord
Beer Boneschansker	Founder De Uitvoerders (buro on physical inclusion)
Ellen de Ruiter	Founder De Uitvoerders (buro on physical inclusion)

action table

Theme 1	Objective	Proposed Action	Lead orgs	Timeline
Develop a new approach to policy making for the Plan of the Arts 2025-2028	Stimulate and strengthen collaboration between City and different sized cultural institutions and individual cultural makers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Host quarterly roundtable discussions on cultural inclusion for local stakeholders for networking and exchange. Learn from Dublin Tea and Chat. 2. Use the 'bring a friend principle'. Every guest should bring a new perspective to the table (snowball effect) 	City of Amsterdam	2022 - 25
	Explore and identify new methods (of working, collaboration etc.)	Deliver two experimental collaboration projects lead by cultural professionals	City of Amsterdam	2022 - 23
	Explore ways to Strengthen connections and engagement with communities who's voice and influence on cultural policy is under-represented	Learn from London; On how to use the Citizen Led Engagement model to generate insights were we can learn from insights in communities daily life and needs	City of Amsterdam together with amsterdam& partners	2022 - 25
	Explore the possibility to use role models/ ambassadors	Together with the network discuss further the option of role models/ ambassadors	City of Amsterdam	2022-2028
	Explore together with Amsterdam Fund of the Arts ways to offer more space for experiment and failure	Add this topic to the roundtable discussions	City of Amsterdam in close collaboration with the Amsterdam Fund of the Arts	2022-2025
	Explore the possibility of expanding the role of culture scouts in the city districts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look into providing additional resource and support for culture scouts to identify and network existing talent 2. Set up a feedback loop to the city so that usefull information is gathered 	The Amsterdam Fund of the Arts, together with the City of Amsterdam	2023-24



Theme 2	Objective	Proposed Action	Lead orgs	Timeline
There is an unequal distribution of places for arts and culture, with less infrastructure per inhabitant in the peripheral districts than in the city center	Gather more insight in participation, perception and definition of Arts and Culture in the districts Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver field research project that explores the impact of cultural inclusion project in these neighbourhoods 2. Explore wishes inhabitants 3. Build upon the research which was already done by the Free University of Amsterdam 	Knowledge institutions, for example the Free University of Amsterdam (City of Amsterdam as client)	2022 - 24
	Map out cultural participation, definitions, needs, and perceptions across the city	Review cultural participation survey by Amsterdam&partners for evidence of inequality and/or change	amsterdam&partners	2023
	Keep investing in locations for arts and culture in Nieuw-West, Zuidoost and Noord this period	Develop cultural centres for each neighbourhood	City of Amsterdam	2022 - 25

Theme 3	Objective	Proposed Action	Lead orgs	Timeline
The definition of arts and culture is too narrow	Redefine the definition of arts and culture in a way that is more representative for broad cultural practice which is representative for the population of Amsterdam	Research project on perceptions of arts and culture, which builds upon the research already done by the Free University of Amsterdam	Knowledge institutions, for example the Free University of Amsterdam (City of Amsterdam as client)	2023

Theme 4	Objective	Proposed Action	Lead orgs	Timeline
Not every inhabitant of Amsterdam recognises themselves in the offering of (funded) arts and culture	Enhance our knowledge and insight on audiences by researching further development of the pilot 'Cultural Segmentation Model'	Evaluating the pilot and finding partners and find ways to connect this to the wishes of inhabitants (see also theme 2)	amsterdam&partners	2022 - 23
	Improve diversity of leadership and content in funded organisations	Require funded organisations to have inclusion plans, monitor and share learnings	City of Amsterdam	2022 - 25

risks & resources

Risk	Likelihood	Potential impact	Mitigation
Changes in political leadership create new policy; plan no longer supported	Low	High	Plan aligns with long-term vision for Amsterdam and is evidence based. Work with broad network and engage wide range of stakeholders to ensure long-term commitment
Insufficient funding available to deliver plan	Medium	Medium	Key funding resources committed by City of Amsterdam in line with its Plan of the Arts 2021-2024. Majority of proposed activities require commitment not additional financial resource
Insufficient time and people to deliver the work	Medium	Low	There are plans for an expansion for the department of Arts and Culture, if not we have to rethink the actions and adjust them
Lack of a support base internally and externally	Low	High	We established a foundation within the ACCESS project. From there we have to build it up, using opportunities such as the Plan of the Arts and international project KIC to perpetuate the work done the last three years

Resource	In place?
Commitment from wide range of local stakeholders to values and goals of this plan	This plan has been evolved through the commitment of a wide range of stakeholders across 3 years. The group will continue to meet – and expand – across delivery of this plan. We will however keep our Deputy Major informed so that we also keep the political engagement which is needed
Commitment and collaboration with other departments	In the network we also added direct colleagues of different departments, such as different city districts and the department Diversity. We will continue to work with them and keep them informed
Budget commitment from lead delivery organisations	We will to work towards continuing the legacy of ACCESS in our Plan of the Arts 2025-2028. The participation of the City of Amsterdam in the international project KIC will provide us with new resources of continuing our plan. The KIC is a consortium where diversity and inclusion will play a big part. The learnings from ACCESS will be used in continuing the learning and developing a new way of working in Amsterdam
Data and evidencing	We will continue to work with the Free University of Amsterdam and explore working with other knowledge institutions of Amsterdam and amsterdam&partners (see also action table)



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framework for delivery

In order to make sure our plan works, or to leave space for adapting/changes (monitoring) we need to make sure to have a framework for delivery. This framework is for implementing the Integrated Action Plan and will consist of a couple of core principles.

- Each of the actions mentioned in the action table has a lead organization, whom is responsible for execution.
- The actions will be included in the annual planning and budgeting process of the city of Amsterdam.
- The Arts and Culture department will make sure to integrated this way of working in a wider context of the city of Amsterdam, such as education, transport and health.
- The ACCESS network, even though it has formally ended, will find ways of keep sharing lessons learned and reflections.

The monitoring and evaluation of our actions will go along with the evaluation of the Plan of the Arts 2025-2028, since our actions will be part of our next cultural strategy.

We will also keep on sharing knowledge and collaborate with our local (stakeholders) and international network (ACCESS partners and World Cities Culture Forum) to have a sounding board for our process and monitoring.



acknowledgements

This plan was not possible without our partners, stakeholders and colleagues. We want to thank all our partners, but mostly our ACCESS local network. They challenged us, dared to criticize us, pushed us and inspired us. Because of your input, drive and expertise we made a foundation on which we can build a more inclusive sector in Amsterdam.

During our final event we mentioned that sometimes it was challenging to be criticized. Someone of the Dublin team said that this is actually the first step in

“We want to thank all our partners, but mostly our ACCESS local network. They challenged us, dared to criticize us, pushed us and inspired us.”

gaining trust. Because if someone is willing to speak their mind, to be critical, they feel there is room and space for conversation and debate. That in itself is a step onwards in really gaining trust. We felt this was a very true and uplifting observation.

Thanks to all our partners: London, Dublin, Lisbon, Sofia, Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn for all the lessons, reflections and inspiration.

Thanks to our partner in crime: our Lead Expert Rebekah Polding. Whom is always sharp, always willing to help and the best listener.

Thanks to URBACT for making ACCESS possible, this was an essential step in making the necessary change that will be sustainable because we had time to listen, learn, fail, adapt and try again. Special thanks to Céline Ethuin who was always there and supportive, Laura Collini for your wise words and leads and Tako Popma who's reflection and feedback helped us to make this plan more than just paper.

And last but not least, thanks to our wonderful Amsterdam team for supporting us: thank you Araf Ahmadali, Karin Borst and Rob Bakker and all others who helped us in the last three years. And we want to thank our deputy Mayor, Touria Meliani, for believing in ACCESS and supporting our ambitions.

Thank you!

Corynne Oude Avenhuis
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