

CITYLAB010:

A case study investigating the inclusive, participatory, and democratic nature of a citizen initiative platform

MIRACLES OF
MUSIC

LITTLE WOTAN:
KUNSTLAB VOOR
STEDELIJKE
TRANSITIE

PLUSWHAT
PROGRAMMA



2017



SKARLOKAAL

2017



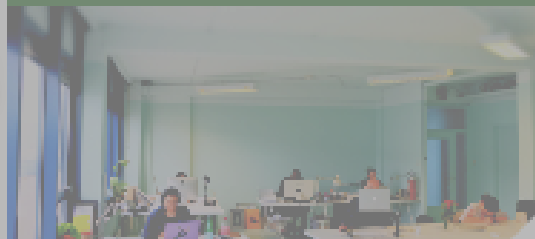
THECOMMUNE

2015

RE GENERATE

CASE STUDY

NETHERLANDS



invent

EUROPEAN INVENTORY
OF CULTURAL VALUES



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CityLab010: Investigating the inclusive, participatory, and democratic nature of a citizen initiative platform

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Abstract: *CityLab010 is a citizen initiatives program in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, through which citizens with an innovative idea or project for the city can apply to receive a subsidy from the municipality to get their initiative off the ground. This bottom-up program has a contested history and has made many changes over the past years to become a more inclusive, participatory, and democratic cultural policy tool. Through a content analysis of research reports and news articles, this case study zooms into aspects of CityLab010's journey to: 1. Illustrate how the program has made progress, achievements, and successes over the years to become the bottom-up citizen initiatives funding mechanism it aims to be; and 2. Critically evaluate, investigate, and reflect on where it falls short of this aim. In so doing, lessons for cultural policymakers, who similarly seek to design cultural policy instruments that are truly inclusive, participatory, and democratic, become evident.*

Keywords: citizen initiatives, citizen participation, inclusive cultural policy, CityLab010, The Netherlands

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1. Introduction

'Make it happen!' is the official slogan chosen to characterize the city of Rotterdam since 2014. Befitting a city that had to be rebuilt from the ground up following the bombings of WWII, the slogan characterizes its people's enterprising mentality. Simultaneously, it encapsulates the message of empowerment the municipality intends to send its citizens: We can make it happen together. In this same spirit, the city of Rotterdam facilitates multiple platforms to create positive change and innovation in collaboration with its citizens. One such platform is CityLab010.

The City of Rotterdam established CityLab010 as a 'support program with an annual budget of more than 3 million euros for initiators who want to realize their dream for Rotterdam.'¹ Citizens with an idea or project that provides societal value for the city can apply for a subsidy from the municipality to get their initiative off the ground. These citizen initiatives cover many sectors, including education, the economy, health, and public transportation. Importantly, a large number of initiatives involve the cultural sector, either directly (e.g., *Bouwplaats Brienoord* as an initiative that intends to transform an old summer campsite into a cultural hub) or indirectly (e.g., *Kunst & Dementie* as an initiative that offers art workshops for people with dementia and their relatives). As long as the initiative is taken by Rotterdammers and for Rotterdam, individuals can apply for their stake in the funding pool.

At first glance, Citylab010 thus represents a bottom-up (cultural) policy tool, granting citizens a voice and equal opportunity to identify and engage with worthwhile societal concerns and causes at the municipal level. In theory, with a program like CityLab010, the City of Rotterdam has established a solid case to 'make it happen' when fostering public-civic partnerships in cultural policy. However, a history of its execution over the years paints a picture in which, in practice, the idyllic slogan has often received a critical question in response: "Sure, let's make it happen, but *how* can we best do this?" What makes CityLab010 an intriguing case study are the many changes that the program has undergone to develop the ideal mechanism for funding citizen initiatives, starting with the switch in 2014 from its heavily criticized predecessor, *Het Stadsinitiatief* (The City Initiative), to its current yearly iterations under the new name of CityLab010.

In this case study, we will zoom in on aspects of CityLab010's journey to (1) illustrate how the program has made progress and booked achievements and successes over the years on its way to becoming the bottom-up citizen initiatives funding mechanism it aims to be and (2) Critically evaluate, investigate, and reflect on where it falls short of this aim. In so doing, we will identify lessons benefitting cultural policymakers, who similarly seek to design cultural policy instruments that are truly inclusive, participatory, and democratic.

¹ Translated from Dutch, more at: <https://citylab010.nl/>.

2. The background and timeline of CityLab010

Het Stadsinitiatief (2011-2014)

CityLab010, the citizen initiative program as we know it today, was launched in 2015. As its name suggests, this citizen-led laboratory for brewing up ideas to serve the city of 010 (referring to Rotterdam's dial code) intends to give many initiatives the opportunity to flourish. But before this idea of a laboratory became CityLab010, the funding program was known under a different moniker and entailed another mechanism. *Het Stadsinitiatief* (The City Initiative) is CityLab010's predecessor and came into being in 2011 under creator and councilor Jos Verveen. The impetus for its creation was to tackle the problem of going through the bureaucratic motions experienced by many socially engaged citizens wanting to accomplish a project benefitting the city. Verveen intended *Het Stadsinitiatief* to function as a bypass to the old, tedious, and politically complex system rather than putting some power and agency back into the hands of the citizens in the form of a one-time grant that can be won (Overgaauw, 2016).

Het Stadsinitiatief worked as follows: A group of city ambassadors (said to be independent of the board) was tasked with searching for and nominating a handful of citizen initiatives. Next, the board would select the finalists who were encouraged to campaign and create awareness for their project to win the majority votes of the public (de Jonge, 2014; Luchtsingel, 2014). All registered citizens of Rotterdam aged 12 and older were eligible to cast their vote. The initiative with the majority of votes would win 3 million euros. With this approach, the program aimed to introduce a more democratic nature to enacting progressive (cultural) initiatives for the city. The editorial team of public policy news outlet *Binnenlands Bestuur* stated that the innovative aspect of *Het Stadsinitiatief* lies in the possibility that all Rotterdammers vote on the spending of part of the municipal budget'.²

During the three years that *Het Stadsinitiatief* was active, two factors thwarted the sense of democracy the initiators had hoped to introduce. First, the outreach of *Het Stadsinitiatief* remained relatively small, not managing to create enthusiasm and the necessary awareness for the prospect of a new cultural improvement in the city among its people. For its last edition in 2014, *Het Stadsinitiatief* only managed to elicit the votes of a meager 4% of Rotterdam's population eligible to vote (Voermans, 2014). Suffice it to say that this small percentage is far from representing the true democratic voice and diversity present in Rotterdam's population. Second, designing the funding mechanism so that initiators' success relied on their ability to campaign well for their project allowed room for a disproportionate division of participatory power. Bigger projects from businesses with larger financial backing and access to better resources would have a higher chance of success when compared to smaller ones from individuals with more limited means.

One might argue that David can slay Goliath if it is a perfect idea. However, the program did not provide equal access and participatory equity for doing so. This resulted in a situation where *Het Stadsinitiatief* was not a competition to bring to light the good ideas of a diverse people but disproportionately those of the powerful or with a predetermined advantage. Justus Uitermark, professor of community development at Erasmus University at the time, summarized the predicament as follows: 'It is not normal in elections that millionaires have the best chance of winning. But that was the case with *Het Stadsinitiatief*' (Voermans, 2014).³

² Translated from Dutch, 2012.

³ Translated from Dutch.

This natural yet unequal access to resources was present for the contested initiative *De Hef* during the last edition of *Het Stadsinitiatief* in 2014. The *De Hef* initiative entailed a plan to create a restaurant and entertainment venue, including a climbing attraction, at the monumental site of De Hefbrug (an old railway lift bridge). It became clear that Dura Vermeer, the established construction company behind the *De Hef* initiative, had a clear agenda to secure the prize money when it began pumping its capital into advertising and sending promotion teams into the city to raise awareness and gather votes. What exacerbated the issue and citizens' dissatisfaction was the discovery that a commissioner of Dura Vermeer was part of the judging board of *Het Stadsinitiatief*, appointed by the municipality. This was seen by many not just as a mere conflict of interest but as a corrupt political ploy to enact top-down power under the pretence of a supposedly bottom-up citizen-led program. *Het Stadsinitiatief* came under fire for this execution. Political parties, engaged citizens, and the media heavily criticized the program, calling it 'a farce' and 'a democratic sham' (Voermans, 2014).

In the years 2011–2014, three city initiatives received the grant: The *Luchtsingel*, a pedestrian bridge connecting different parts of the city; *De Schaatsbaan*, an ice-skating rink for sports and recreation; and *RIFO10*, a water sports recreation venue with simulated waves for surfing. However, due to criticism and low engagement rates, *Het Stadsinitiatief* ended. Most parties agreed that the mechanism was not fit to continue, but a plan for a different mechanism was not yet on the horizon. Socially engaged citizens feared that they would have to resort to old-fashioned bureaucratic ways if they wanted to make a difference in their city.

CityLab010 (2015 – present)

Just one year later, in 2015, the idea for an innovative citizen-initiatives program was reborn from the ashes in the form of CityLab010. To be an improvement over its predecessor, the program introduced a much-needed re-design of its funding mechanism. The 3-million-euro budget is no longer given to one initiative but divided among several initiatives (around 45 on average) of varying sizes covering various sectors and themes.

The new mechanism attempts to level the playing field and lower the stakes on votes and campaigning power. Rather than having the everyday Rotterdammer cast their vote among a handful of initiatives sought out and selected by the municipality, CityLab010 encourages and challenges the everyday Rotterdammer to come up with an initiative for the city, no matter if big or small, and make their appeal to win part of the funding budget. Anyone can apply based on the specific themes the municipality wishes to address with its budget that year.

While pre-existing businesses may still apply and participate, CityLab010 focuses on the individuals representing new initiatives. At the launch of Citylab, councillor Pex Langenberg was quoted as saying that the municipality will maintain, for the most part, a laissez-faire attitude regarding which initiatives apply. The only requirements they set are 'that the plans come from Rotterdammers, that they improve the city, and that they are capable of standing on their own two feet'.⁴ CityLab010 intends to make a more holistic assessment of the initiatives submitted through a transparent evaluation by a representative jury appointed by the municipality. Ultimately, its value to the city is the decisive factor in funding an initiative.

In so far as the lifespan of a program can be said to be indicative of its success, CityLab010, which

⁴ Translated from Dutch, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 2015.

saw its 8th edition in 2022, has been far more successful than *Het Stadsinitiatief*. In its opening year, 2015, CityLab010 managed to supply 44 initiatives with a starting budget for realizing their dream for the city. Since then, the program has grown in popularity, generating and supporting a steady stream of applications and initiatives. More in-depth markers of success or failure are discussed below, but overall, its public reception has been a step up compared to its forerunner.

3. Questions and the method of analysis

The background and timeline sketched above establish CityLab010 as an intriguing work in progress to achieve its goal of being a bottom-up cultural policy tool for encouraging citizen initiatives. With the drastic rebranding and revision of its funding mechanism in 2015 and the overall positive public reception thereof, CityLab010 appears to have tackled most of the participatory issues at its core head-on and seemingly overcome the weaknesses of *Het Stadsinitiatief*. This makes it all the more interesting to investigate whether the new mechanism is actually more inclusive, participatory, and democratic than its first iteration.

In this case study, we will zoom in on the following questions:

Has CityLab010 indeed managed to level the playing field? Do commercial businesses still hold an advantage to succeed, or has CityLab010 introduced ways of ensuring participatory equity and equal access to resources for all socially engaged Rotterdammers with an idea for a good initiative? To represent the voice of the people of Rotterdam, how does it strive to be inclusive of all its diversity, stimulating a diverse group of initiators and initiatives?

Furthermore, to what extent can CityLab010 truly be considered a bottom-up democratic tool? Or, in other words, how much power resides with the people as opposed to the municipality and its top-down agendas? How do they ensure and maintain a representative and objective jury for choosing the winning initiatives, and how do they avoid conflicts of interest? Is Citylab010 more effective than the old-fashioned bureaucratic way of organizing citizen initiatives it intended to improve?

In the case of CityLab010, the critical questions are plenty, and we are certainly not the first to pose them. Many interested parties have sought the answers to these questions over the years. Initiators, political parties, news media, independent research organisations, and the municipal ombudsman alike have watched CityLab010's development critically following the fiasco with which its forerunner ended. In its early years, CityLab010 conducted multiple in-house studies on initiator satisfaction and reported on the impact of the initiatives on the city. The year 2018 saw another wave of criticism of the program at the hands of the news media, and in 2020, two independent and external research organisations brought out reports investigating the effectiveness of citizen initiative programs (including CityLab010) and the municipality's role in this.

To answer these questions, we analysed these studies and investigations, in-house reports, and news media articles. This analysis aimed to bring to light the checks and balances a program like CityLab010 has developed and put in place to advance and safeguard inclusivity, citizen engagement, and democracy. The following sections will present our key findings and an assessment of the elements which make CityLab010 a cultural policy success story and the aspects it would need to improve to realize its full participatory potential.

2018

MULTIFORM

2018

STICHTING KUNSTBUS

2018

KUNST & DEMENTIE (BIJ KUNSTUILEEN ROTTERDAM)

2018

MIRACLES OF MUSIC

2018

LITTLE WOTAN: KUNSTLAB VOOR STEDELIJKE TRANSITIE

2018

PLUSWHAT PROGRAMMA

2017

SKARLOKAAL

2017

THECOMMUNE

2015

RE GENERATE

2016

FLOW

2017

BUNKBED

2017

VERNIEUWENDE VERTELVORMEN VOOR JOURNALISTIEK

vers beton

2016

FROM BLACK SPOT TO SWEET SPOT

2016

MEDIARING: 'ROTTERDAM IN BEELD'

2016

DANCEFORHEALTH, INTERNATIONAAL CENTRUM DANS&GEZONDHEID

2016

EEN GRANNY'S FINEST CLUB IN IEDERE WIJK VAN ROTTERDAM

2016

BOUWPLAATS BRIENENOORD

2016

5 FAIR DESIGN LABS

2015

CULTUURWERKPLAATS

2015

HACKERSPACE PIXELBAR

2015

CLIQ - CONNECTING CULTURE & BUSINESS

4. Citylab010 as a participatory cultural policy tool

From the outset, CityLab010 aimed to give a voice to the citizens of Rotterdam and involve them in cultural policies that suit them and add real societal value to the city and its inhabitants. In short, the policy instrument set out to work with and for the creativity and innovation of the people. To what extent has it achieved this goal?

The insights of this case study can be organised along the axes of two understandings of what it means to be 'of the people.' The first axis explores whether CityLab010 is of the people in terms of lowering barriers to participation so that it is inclusive of a diverse group of initiators but also that it represents the interests of a diverse group of people through various initiatives. The second axis explores whether CityLab010 is of the people in terms of the democratic power it affords them to enact change and its effectiveness as a program with a bottom-up perspective.

Of the people: opportunities for inclusive participation

With the introduction of its new mechanism, CityLab010 allowed and encouraged more people to participate. While in the early 2010s, city ambassadors sought out and filtered a handful of ideas fit for a nomination, as of 2015, anybody could apply and receive part of the funding budget. This amendment, on its own, has been a first step towards more inclusion.

However, lifting the existing pre-selection filters or limiting the number of initiatives that have a chance to participate does not suffice. A 2016 municipality-commissioned research report on citizen initiatives at large raised the vital question of whether citizen initiative programs can counteract the social inequalities in society. The question was if they managed to do that or only served to highlight inequalities by falling victim to the Matthew effect, i.e., the rich became richer, and the poor became poorer (Bronsveld, 2016). The study investigated whether citizen initiatives were more likely to be developed in affluent neighborhoods by initiators of a specific demographic (predominantly white, higher-educated males) than by initiators residing in less affluent neighborhoods. The study found that it was not an educational or ethnic background that inspired an active civic approach but rather the length of stay or the community spirit in a particular neighborhood (Bronsveld, 2016). Active citizen participation is less hampered by a lack of competencies but rather by a lack of favorable conditions, granting some initiatives and their initiators an unfair advantage (cf. Van der Zwaard and Specht, 2013).

This is reminiscent of the unfair advantage of the *De Hef* initiative from Dura Vermeer during the *Het Stadsinitiatief* funding scheme because of its more significant financial resources. Furthermore, since the new mechanism does not prohibit commercial businesses from participating in CityLab010, it begs the question: What has been done to level the playing field?

Acknowledging that the key to participatory equity lies in inclusive conditions, CityLab010 began providing equal access to resources beyond the mere chance of obtaining financial capital. They also introduced a [start-up program in](#) which all initiators could participate. The program offers workshops and inspiration sessions and educates initiators on designing a good project plan for their application. CityLab010 also started collaborations with organisations like Rabobank, Rotterdam Business School, Ploum Law Firm, and GreenChoice as part of their [partner program](#), offering initiators legal and business advice on how their project can stand on its own two feet. While campaigning is no longer necessary to solicit votes to win, CityLab010 provides initiators with a [promotion tool kit](#) of logos and other branding materials they can use for their marketing. Access to these resources should help socially engaged citizens move from a small idea to a reputable initiative

with a more substantial chance of being among the projects securing a starting budget.

Results of an in-house impact analysis run by CityLab010 in 2018 affirm that this more inclusive approach created more employment and increased a sense of cohesion, connectedness, and pride in the city. It also fostered a diverse community where socially engaged citizens could network, share knowledge, and challenge each other (CityLab010, 2018). Over time, highlighting the diversity and possibilities of a program like CityLab010 has allowed others to contribute to the city and create an initiative to represent their sub-communities. For instance, Granny's Finest hosts knitting and crafting events for older women who suffer from loneliness, bringing not just one but multiple generations together. Another initiative called Multiform addresses the subject of diversity and inclusion in society through sports and games.

CityLab010 tries to safeguard diversity in the budget, sectors, and scope (niche vs general appeal) by working with various themes in its annual rounds. Previous themes related to culture include 'Culture as an Innovative Force,' 'Tourism and City Culture,' 'Equal Opportunities,' and 'Living Together.' Additionally, CityLab010 has introduced three 'Wildcards' for funding initiatives that do not fit into one of the categories set for that year but are incredibly innovative and promising nonetheless.

Despite all these positive achievements and improvements CityLab010 has implemented to become more 'of the people' in providing opportunities for inclusive participation, the news media has remained critical, arguing that some initiatives that receive a subsidy are too niche or lack proper proof of concept. They suggested that, in trying to be inclusive and accommodating to all, the municipality is not selective enough about the initiatives that hold value for the city and have the potential to succeed (van Heel, 2018). The following section will discuss the instrument CityLab010 uses to evaluate initiatives and the effectiveness of winning projects to enact change.

Of the people: Bottom-up empowerment to enact change

The intentions for *Het Stadsinitiatief* and later CityLab010 have always been to put some power back into the hands of the citizens and to hear their voices when it comes to designing cultural policies from the bottom up. Before, the municipality determined from a top-down perspective which initiatives were up for nomination and let the citizens' voice be the ruling, bottom-up power that decided which initiative was chosen by way of a voting system. Once the top-down advantage of the Dura Vermeer case was revealed, the new mechanism of CityLab010 shifted that democratic power and organised it differently. Now, the citizens' voices are heard through the initiatives put forth, and the deciding power for which initiatives get selected lies with the municipality.

Regarding a democratic system wherein citizens' voices are decisive for the allocation of grants, CityLab010 appears to be taking a step backward. However, to keep itself in check, in 2019, the municipality introduced a new instrument for assessing initiatives: the *Stadsjury* (the City Jury). The *Stadsjury* is a panel of 12 people responsible for evaluating the many initiatives submitted annually and making their recommendations to the municipality while keeping the citizens' best interests in mind. As these 12 people decide to a significant degree which initiatives receive a starting budget for their project, it begs the question of who they are and how they came into this position of power. The members of the *Stadsjury* are, first and foremost, regular citizens who have a passion for the city of Rotterdam and display a socially engaged attitude within their field of work. Through the *Stadsjury*, these citizens assume a municipal position in some capacity, in the sense that they function as a liaison between the city and the municipality.

From inspecting the member profiles on the [Stadsjury page](#) of the CityLab010 website, we learn that they form a diverse body in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, field of expertise, and the neighbourhoods they hail from. The youngest and oldest age groups appear less well represented. One of its members, Dwight Krolis, mentions diversity and the citizen-led approach as one of his reasons for joining the *Stadsjury*, saying, 'It used to be that a certain group of people rated the submitted ideas. In the new setup, that assessment comes from the city itself, from the City Jury. I thought I want to be part of that myself.'⁵

Members like Krolis come to join the *Stadsjury* by applying for the vacancy advertised by the municipality when a new position within the *Stadsjury* needs to be filled. It is unclear whether citizens of Rotterdam can vote or influence who becomes part of this jury. Members do receive a small compensation for their efforts, but the *Stadsjury* position remains voluntary under Dutch Law (CityLab010, 2022). While the judging body that is the *Stadsjury* is not entirely independent of the municipality, CityLab010 has made a good move towards increased transparency and displayed a desire to be representative and better informed of the diverse people and interests of the city. This level of transparency is also present in their reporting about the evaluation. Every year since 2019, the *Stadsjury* has drawn up a jury report and score overview detailing how they have decided which projects to grant or deny a subsidy. These [reports](#) are public and made available on their website.

Despite all of this, there has been a critical sentiment from the news media and independent researchers alike that many projects that have received a starting budget struggle to get their initiative off the ground, even several years after receiving the grant. In 2018, journalists reported, upon speaking with initiators, that many projects run into issues down the line. Some note a lack of cooperation and support from the municipality, inefficient internal communication, and delays due, for example, to needing a license from a different department within the municipality (Kooyman, 2018a). In response, a spokesperson from CityLab010 maintains that given the experimental and 'laboratory' nature of CityLab010, some initiatives are bound to flourish, and some do not become a reality or are not particularly successful (Kooyman, 2018b).

As recently as 2020, two organizations researched the cooperation between the municipality and several citizen initiative programs. CityLab010 was one of these. The municipal Ombudsman conducted the study. Looking into the treatment of initiators by the municipality, it finds that, at times, initiators feel as though they are only sometimes taken seriously. While securing the subsidy through CityLab010, initiators are received enthusiastically. However, they are often met with resistance and disinterest by different municipal officials and get sent from pillar to post. Other initiators note that the municipality sometimes usurps initiatives that align well with their pre-existing, favored plans. This can go to the point where initiators feel they no longer have control over the vision, and their project becomes different from what they had once intended (Zwaneveld et al., 2020)

This paints a critical picture of the municipality's lack of continued involvement and support, mixed with convoluted communication and particular interest. *Rekenkamer Rotterdam*, an independent research organization, investigated the outcomes and societal value of citizen initiatives and the municipality's role. They find that the municipality does not keep up with the initiatives beyond granting the subsidy. It does not look critically at what value the initiative yields for the city (Rekenkamer Rotterdam, 2020). The shift in democratic power and seemingly limited empowerment

⁵ Translated from Dutch, CityLab010, 2022.

to enact real change will be reflected in the conclusion below.

5. Conclusion and implications

This case study shows that CityLab010 is a work in progress towards ‘making it happen’ as a successful citizen initiative program. For ten years, CityLab010 has played with the question of how this can best be organised, implementing changes that bring it closer to its goal of becoming a truly inclusive, participatory, and democratic policy tool. In this illustrative case study, the failures, achievements, and challenges have come to light. Namely, following the failed *Het Stadsinitiatief*, the city’s funding mechanism has been redesigned to allow for a much more inclusive approach. The introduction of the start-up program, which offers resources and guidance from partners, has facilitated more equal opportunities for participation, which can certainly be considered an achievement.

The pillar of democracy, particularly the democratic power it affords the citizens, still poses a challenge for CityLab010. With the introduction of the *Stadsjury*, they have shown efforts to prevent a conflict of interest and remain objective for the people. However, the shift in democratic power is one in which it moved from a flawed participatory democracy under *Het Stadsinitiatief* in which the people, in theory, had direct power and influence through their vote, to a representative democracy under CityLab010, where citizens’ power is indirect and lays mostly in their ideation and representation embodied in the *Stadsjury*.

The problem with the latter is that the citizens lack the power to elect who represents them; the municipality chooses the *Stadsjury*. While the voluntary efforts of members of the *Stadsjury* appear genuine, the nature of this representative body is also fleeting. The jury does not help beyond the initial evaluation, after which initiators are left to bump up against the top-down power and agendas the municipality holds. The challenge here is that CityLab010 risks falling back into the tedious bureaucratic motions it once tried to solve. To this end, the Municipal Ombudsman and *Rekenkamer Rotterdam* have made recommendations for improvement in their reports, primarily changing the subsidy and collaboration structure to allow for more longitudinal support (Zwaneveld et al., 2020; Rekenkamer Rotterdam, 2020). Moreover, if there is one thing that CityLab010 has proven adept at, it is adapting and improving. As described, it is learning from its mistakes and maintaining an open attitude toward constructive criticism to improve the program.

Finally, we would like to conclude this study by giving some recommendations for cultural policymakers based on the implications of this case.

A first lesson from CityLab010 is that introducing a bottom-up initiative tends to go hand in hand with top-down involvement. Something that appears to be bottom-up at first glance might be different. The bottom-up and top-down forces rely on one another, and their success lies in finding the balance where these two meet in the middle. However, it should ensure that the people are genuinely empowered to enact change and not just introduce a feigned bottom-up approach.

A second lesson illustrated in this case is the importance and value of transparency. By introducing checks and balances for holding oneself accountable, one is more likely to earn the general public’s respect and opens up and invites sources from which one can learn and improve. For policymakers wishing to stimulate participation from various citizens, being transparent and open to consulting criticism from independent research and the media is crucial.

A third lesson is one of improving effectiveness. As seen in the case of CityLab010, introducing a more bottom-up citizen participation competition is one thing, but seeing these initiatives become successful and actualizing their worth for the city is something different. One should consider reevaluating the time and money spent empowering citizens' voices. That is, helping fewer initiatives overall but investing in helping them more thoroughly so they bear fruit and bring societal value. Finally, the case illustrates the importance of keeping sight of the value citizen-led programs bring to society. Inviting citizens to develop ideas does not necessarily mean that every such enthusiastic initiative can yield positive value in the long run. Instead, it pays to be critical. This is a shared responsibility between bottom-up and top-down forces.

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