

From Passion to Paycheck: Financially Creative Practices among Cultural Entrepreneurs

A study on cultural entrepreneurs navigating financial challenges in the city of Rotterdam

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MA Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship

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Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Thesis

June 13th 2025

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Abstract

Cultural and creative entrepreneurs have been increasingly expected to be financially independent, adaptive, and resilient actors within the broader context of shrinking public subsidies and increasing marketization. This tension is also visible in Rotterdam, a city with socially engaged cultural practices. Yet, there is limited access to funding. This thesis sets out to investigate how cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices. It researches what cultural entrepreneurs strategize in order to sustain their work in an unstable funding environment. The central research question guiding this study is: *How do cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices, and how do these practices contribute to the sustainability and development of their artistic enterprises?* The qualitative study has ten semi-structured interviews at its core. Cultural entrepreneurs from various disciplines are included, like visual arts, design, performance, fundraising, and collective organization. The analysis within the research is framed by Teresa Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory of Creativity. The theory identifies three key components of creative action: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic task motivation. The theory provides a lens for deeper understanding of the question at hand. Understanding financial creativity within artistic practices not as survival, but as an extension of creative agency in general. The findings of this study reveal how financial creativity is present in multiple strategies. These include patchworking of income sources, engaging in space-sharing arrangements, and leveraging personal and professional networks. These practices show short-term resilience within the CCI of Rotterdam. The financial sustainability of cultural entrepreneurs is thus rooted in constant improvisation. Little time or capacity is available for strategic planning. A key finding of the research was that phenomenon that financial creativity in essence is rooted in structural limitations of the current funding systems. The current economic landscape for cultural entrepreneurs is one where there is reluctance and unknowingness about adopting entrepreneurial identities, stemming from their strong intrinsic motivations. The study concludes that cultural policy needs to support financial and organizational capacities of independent practitioners. At the same time, cultural entrepreneurs must embrace their dual role as both artists and economic agents.

Keywords: *cultural entrepreneurship, financial creativity, Rotterdam, creative industries, funding, cultural policy*

Word count: 12753

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Introduction

Urban contexts are increasingly relevant due to their role as centers of innovation, creativity, and development opportunities (Jacobs, 2016; Beall et al., 2009). Rotterdam has, through the years, flourished as a dynamic and innovative hub for creativity and therefore holds a special position in the Dutch cultural landscape. A city that is nowadays known for its resilience and resourcefulness. A turning point was the World War II bombing, whereafter it has created a space where experimentation and entrepreneurship are embraced. Within the ecosystem of Rotterdam, cultural entrepreneurs play a vital role as they are the ones currently merging artistic innovation with business. This is a significant contribution to the city's economic and cultural landscape (den Outer, 2017). However, an intersection between cultural entrepreneurship and external factors is something that needs closer examination. Important external factors revolve around financing, the influence of funding mechanisms, and policy frameworks.

As the cultural sector continues to become increasingly competitive and underfunded, this thesis introduces the concept of *financial creativity* as critical regarding the framework of understanding how cultural entrepreneurs position themselves. Building on Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory of Creativity, the study emphasizes how relying on funding structures is no longer enough. The scarcity and inaccessibility of traditional funding structures calls for cultural entrepreneurs to actively differentiate themselves throughout financial practices (Wijngaarden, Loots, & Dalla Chiesa, 2023). This research highlights three core financial strategies: income diversification, alternative financing mechanisms, and strategic collaborations. The strategies are analyzed in order to closely examine adaptive, and innovative approaches that might or might not be in place regarding the sustainability of their cultural practice.

The purpose of this study is rooted in an exploration of how Rotterdam's cultural entrepreneurs perceive and strategize their financial creativity. Creativity as a concept, thrives in environments where freedom and resources to innovate are given to individuals and organizations (Romein & Trip, 2009). However, the mechanisms that guide cultural entrepreneurs through public subsidies, private investments, or institutional grants, affect both the direction and content of creative financial strategies. On the same side, policies that are initially designed to support the creative industries can also pose boundaries or certain controlling behaviors when it comes to creative processes (Romein & Trip, 2009). This research

examines how this is the case in the context of Rotterdam. This is then done by providing insights into the lived experiences of cultural entrepreneurs of the city.

The scope of the study is centered around the perspectives of cultural entrepreneurs in various creative fields. These different ranges of voices present a nuanced representation of the interplay between funding, policy, finance, and creativity in regard to entrepreneurship. The findings shed light on both challenges and opportunities when it comes to Rotterdam's creative entrepreneurial community.

From this stems the central research question of this research:

"How do cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices, and how do these practices contribute to the sustainability and development of their artistic enterprises?"

To explore the extent to which cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices, and how these contribute to the sustainability and development of their cultural enterprises, this research will address the following sub-questions:

- What financial strategies do cultural entrepreneurs use to fund their projects?
- How do cultural entrepreneurs balance financial sustainability with artistic integrity?
- How do government policies and funding programs impact their financial decisions?
- In what ways do cultural entrepreneurs exhibit financial creativity in earning and spending money?

These sub-questions guide to uncover the diverse financial approaches within Rotterdam's creative sector and provide insight into the conditions that foster sustainable cultural entrepreneurship.

The relevance of this research is grounded in a component of Rotterdam's economic and cultural identity which is the cultural and creative industries (CCI). Rotterdam's CCI, is known to contribute to job creation, urban revitalization, and international recognition. However, it is important to know whether or not their experiences are dependent on external factors like the access to resources and overall supportive policies. Secondly, the insights from this research can be of value to policymakers, funding organizations, and other cultural entrepreneurs. In order to balance creative financial strategy, this research offers evidence-based recommendations according to the needs of the creative sector. Lastly, this research is deemed

relevant in the context of the broader discourse on cultural sustainability and innovation. With the examination of lived realities, the study joins the ongoing dialogue about what conditions are necessary for nurturing financial creativity and resilience in urban settings. Despite efforts like Dutch Cultural Fund (Fonds Podiumkunsten), the Creative Industries Fund (Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie) and the Municipality, creative entrepreneurs often face challenges in the realm of resilience. This has for example to do with the competitive nature of grant applications or the bureaucratic requirements tied to funding (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2020). The study analyzes how this plays out and what the specifics and possible positive outcomes of funding and policy can be, but also assesses alternative funding streams. Furthermore, the study aims to bridge the gap between academic theory and practice by having the creative entrepreneurs of Rotterdam at the center of the dialogue. The study uses qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews paired with thematic analysis. This is done in order to capture the complexities of the research question, thus prioritizing subjective experiences. The research recognizes that the ways in which individuals interpret and navigate external structures are as important as the structures themselves.

1. Theoretical Framework

In order to get a complex overview of the literary discourse that is already done in light of the subject of this study, the research takes three key themes as a guiding thread. These are established as Creative Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Policy, and Perceptions of Impact. This is done to slowly zoom into the specifics and qualitative nature of the study.

1.1 Creative Entrepreneurship

According to Bujor and Avasilcai (2014), creative entrepreneurship is the practice of establishing and managing businesses/organizations within the cultural and creative industries (CCI). In the CCI, people use their or other people's talents to create economic and cultural value within the industry. The sector can span across advertising, architecture, design, media, etc. (Towse, 2006; Throsby, 2001). All in all, areas where artistic innovation is blended with commercial objectives. An important remark about creative entrepreneurship is that, unlike traditional entrepreneurship, it seeks a balance between the economic sustainability of the project in combination with cultural expression. Whereas traditional entrepreneurship focuses on mere financial success, creative entrepreneurship is driven by the innovation of the cultural and creative industries. Creative entrepreneurship therefore combines creativity, production, and commercialization (Santos et al., 2021). Entrepreneurs in this field transform their ideas into products and services. By doing so, they aim to go against traditional business norms and use for example artistic works or digital solutions to introduce new perspectives. Creative entrepreneurship disrupts practices that are in place and fosters innovation intending to get industries to grow (Pisotska & Gurses, 2023).

At the cornerstone of the entrepreneurial spirit is creativity. Creativity is known to encompass personal attributes, cognitive styles, motivation, and a potential ability to innovate (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Amabile, 1983). It is these factors that enable entrepreneurs to come up with ideas, handle challenges, and deal with the notion of risk-taking. Here, both failure and success are critical parts of experimentation, growth, and discovery (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010). Efficiency and predictability are out of the question where uncertainty and bold innovation are what drive creative entrepreneurship to be what it is today. This creativity is not only visible in the direct outcome of the creations but also shapes whole new business models and markets that go way beyond product creation. Carving out unique spaces within competitive industries is

something that makes creative entrepreneurs contribute to both economic- and cultural ecosystems.

Bridgstock (2020) argues that creative entrepreneurship should be seen as a natural extension of creative practices at large. This is because in the current climate, creative practitioners need to engage with entrepreneurial skills in order to sustain and/or sell their works. Nowadays even educational programs are starting to incorporate more entrepreneurial training into creative curricula. This is needed in order to navigate the current globalized and technology-driven world we live in. Furthermore, Bridgstock (2020) states that there needs to be emphasis on fostering digital literacy and resilience within the creative industries. This is because creative entrepreneurship at large needs to deal with a rapidly evolved network economy that is shaped by the so-called “Fourth Industrial Age”. Think here of examples like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and immersive media. Phenomena like this are actively changing the way in which creative products are developed and distributed nowadays.

1.2 Financial Strategy in the Creative Sector

The financial behaviors of creative entrepreneurs are intensively being studied as the sector shifts away from stable institutional support towards more fragmented economic models. Thus cultural entrepreneurs face both financial uncertainty and the opportunity for flexible, innovative financial strategies. This section reviews existing literature on how creatives budget, earn, save, and spend.

1.2.1 Financial Literacy and Management Strategies

In the CCI, income is often unpredictable and fluctuates significantly from project to project. According to Throsby (2001), most artists rely on a portfolio of income sources. This includes art-related earnings (like sales, commissions, performances), non-art work (think of teaching and hospitality), and public funding. Budgeting under such circumstances therefore requires a careful balance of short-term survival and long-term sustainability. Freelance creatives often adopt so-called “patchwork” strategies, where small grants and side jobs together form a financial base (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

Furthermore, a recurring theme in arts management literature is that many creatives struggle with setting realistic budgets due to a lack of knowledge at large (no formal financial education). Bonin-Rodriguez (2012) argues that most studies outside of economics lack entrepreneurial and managerial training. This leaves creatives underprepared for the economic realities.

However, some studies suggest that those with interdisciplinary or design-based training (architecture or fashion for example) tend to be more financially strategic. Consequently, this happens because most likely because these fields integrate business education more explicitly (Bridgstock, 2011).

Financial literacy plays a critical role in shaping the trajectory of a creative career. Creative entrepreneurs with higher levels of financial awareness tend to exhibit better control over cash flow. Additionally, they are more likely to apply for funding, and make more informed investment decisions in their own practice (Beckman, 2010). However Gill and Pratt (2008) argue that creatives often view financial matters as secondary to their “real work,” which leads to a disconnect between artistic aspirations and economic planning.

Diversification is a widely cited strategy among creatives aiming for financial sustainability. This includes developing multiple revenue streams such as merchandise, online platforms, teaching, licensing, or consultancy. The gig economy has amplified these options, but also increased competition and burnout (McRobbie, 2016). Nonetheless, people who actively build hybrid career models are often more resilient during periods of crisis or funding cuts. The COVID-19 pandemic, exposed how fragile the income many cultural workers actually was. However, the period also showed accelerated new modes of monetization which included digital performances and subscription-based content (Comunian & England, 2020). These were active uses of new and innovative development.

Project-based work is a strategy that introduces both freedom and also risk. In a study of independent Dutch artists, de Kloet et al. (2013) research and explain how self-employed creatives develop highly personalized financial routines. Examples from the study show that some track income with spreadsheets, while others rely on intuition or “flow” in order to manage resources. These choices then often reflect deeper cultural values regarding money, professionalism, and artistic autonomy.

Thus, financial creativity becomes a key differentiator in these cases. It is not just about the ability to manage money, but rather to imagine new ways of generating and deploying resources. This includes various strategies like using barter systems, community fundraising, collaborations with commercial partners, or embedding in social enterprises. As scholars like Abbing (2002) point out, the myth of the “starving artist” often masks the entrepreneurial labor involved in making creative careers viable.

1.3 Financial Creativity

In an uncertain financial landscape, creative entrepreneurs are forced to engage in practices that transcend traditional business models. They are not just makers of cultural products, but also of unique financial pathways. In this sense they are seen to engage in crafting hybrid funding models, tapping into alternative revenue streams, and respond innovatively to institutional and market constraints. This behavior at large can be explained as financial creativity. Financial creativity in short means that there is the ability to generate effective financial strategies that align with artistic goals and economic survival. To further explore this concept, this section applies Teresa Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity to the notion of financial decision-making within the creative industries.

1.3.1 Amabile's Theory of Creativity

Teresa Amabile's influential Componential Theory of Creativity (1983), defines creativity as the production of ideas and/or solutions that are both novel and appropriate within a given context. The framework, see figure 1, offers three core components that she argues foster creativity within individuals.

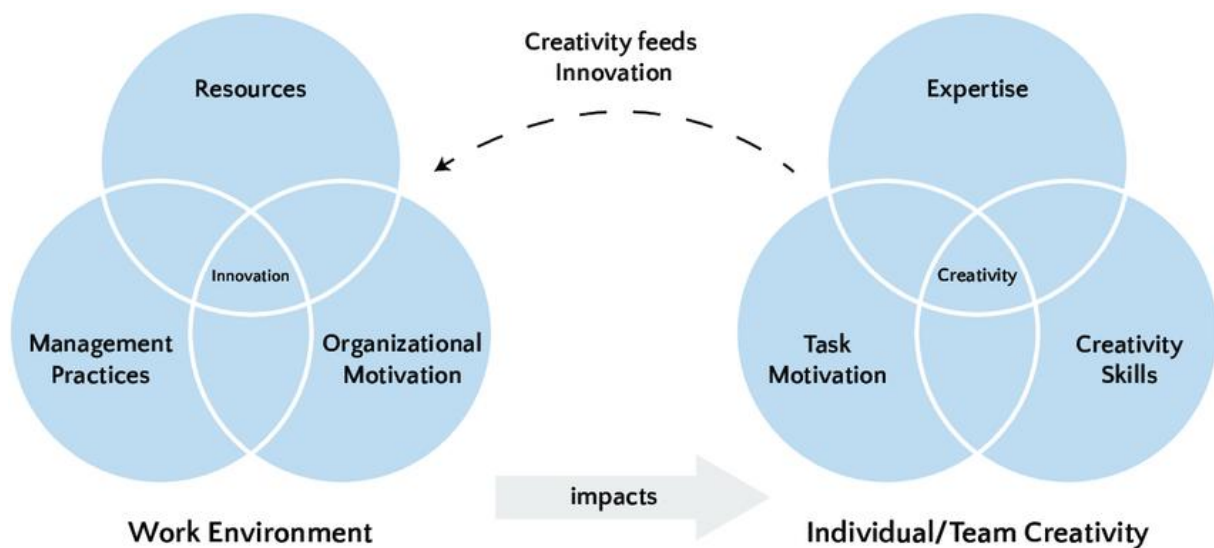


Figure 1: Teresa Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity (1983), figure obtained through ResearchGate (accessed 12th June 2025)

Firstly, domain-relevant skills can be explained as knowledge, expertise, and technical ability in a given field. Secondly, creativity-relevant processes are described as cognitive styles and personality traits that support flexible, divergent thinking. Lastly, task motivation, which is the intrinsic drive to engage with a problem or challenge. When applied to financial decision-

making, this framework helps to illuminate how certain creative entrepreneurs manage to think outside of the box and use challenges to innovate.

When applying domain-relevant skills to financial practices one can argue that this is related to financial literacy and business knowledge. Therefore, domain-relevant skills in the financial context would include understanding of budgeting, fundraising, pricing strategies, and overall income diversification. Although many working people in the CCI lack formal training regarding these notions, time can always be invested. Developing financial knowledge, through workshops, peer learning, or mentorship, CCI workers more likely to engage in financially creative behavior.

When looking for financial practices in creativity- relevant processes, there is a connection to financial improvisation and divergent thinking. As stated before, creative entrepreneurs operate within an unstable environment where they operate with funding cuts, unpredictable markets, and institutional bureaucracy. What this means is that these constraints push entrepreneurs in moving toward improvisational thinking. Routes like crowdfunding, digital subscriptions, or barter economies are more and more coming in the CCI. Here a duality emerges where creative practices also embrace a social service. Thus, financial creativity is used in order to bend toward new opportunities. This is what Amabile (1983) calls “problem-solving under constraints”. Financial creativity then is not just about novelty, but about appropriate novelty. What she means by that is the strategies that align with long-term creative goals, also solve immediate financial problems.

In regard to intrinsic task motivation, aligning money with meaning makes a relevant appearance. Amabile (1983) argues that this is the case because money in itself is not always the end goal, but merely a means to support the work that they do. Intrinsic motivation is, therefore, explained as the key driver of creativity at large. She further explains how financial decisions that are driven by intrinsic motivation are more innovative than when external pressures are involved. Thus, people working in the CCI, who are intrinsically motivated, are more likely to seek out unorthodox financial routes that protect their autonomy and values.

1.4 Government Policy & Funding Structures

Public policies have been shown to shape creative endeavors at different levels. It influences how it is nurtured, sustained, and integrated into societal and institutional practices. Creativity, as a concept and practice, is essential when it comes to innovation and development.

However, there is a complexity when policy and creativity come together. They bring both growth, but also barriers.

Nagel (2000) argues that policy and creativity together form a potential when it comes to mutually reinforcing benefits. On one side, policies that are effective and well-made can highly stimulate creativity by its resources that it provides. A possible positive outcome of this can be the encouragement of experimentation. And on the other side, creativity can aid policy-making in general. Innovative approaches have the ability to help approach complex societal issues. Nagel (2002) continues to underscore how coming to “win-win” situations is of importance. Here the author emphasizes how whenever policies support creative practices, this helps to contribute to broader public goals such as economic growth and social cohesion. An example of this is stated by Bingham (2006). The paper highlights how creative practices in schools and industries help people to think critically whilst solving problems in innovative ways. This is then where, arguably, creativity can pose as a key driver of success. However, there is also contradictions that come with policy implementation. Maclaren (2012) explains that policy rhetorically frequently emphasizes the importance on the fostering creativity. However, the actual practices and management structures that are currently in place within the institutions seem to be more often undermining creativity. Surveillance, standardized metrics, and performance-driven cultures are all contributing to feelings of stress. Therefore, little space is left for free-flowing and exploratory processes that are central in the realm of creativity (Goertzel, 2007). This is a clear distinction between policy intentions and the actual outcomes of those policies.

Within urban governance, another complexity between policy and creativity presents itself. Peck (2012) examined creativity-focused policies in cities like Amsterdam. The author found that in Amsterdam urban planners and policymakers have taken creativity as a cornerstone of cultural and economic development. The policies that these people come up with are then centered around an aim to attract creative industries together with cultural tourism. However, Peck (2012) critiques their effectiveness. This is because policies like this are often met with severe skepticism. Despite this, the policies almost always persist as an enduring believe in them to drive urban transformation remains. But a notable challenge when it comes to creative policies is having to ensure that they are inclusive and equitable. This is important in the context of potential pitfalls like gentrification and overall displacement. As policies can attract talent and investments, they can also marginalize existing communities and divide people socioeconomically.

1.4.1. Entrepreneurs' responsiveness to policy

Entrepreneurs' perception of policies and funding reveals interactions which directly influence entrepreneurial activity. Understanding how entrepreneurs respond to policy and funding environments is therefore of importance. Brännback and Carsrud (2008) argue that there is a misalignment between policymakers and entrepreneurs when it comes to assumptions and goals. For policymakers, entrepreneurial activity is often viewed and encouraged in the context of investment in technology. However, the authors argue that these investments in technology is not enough to spark entrepreneurial activity. This apparent disconnect shows how policymakers have a sort of tunnel vision regarding the importance of technology. On contrast, there is diverse motivations and contexts that drive innovation and entrepreneurship. For entrepreneurs, a multitude of external factors influence their practices. Think for example of market conditions, cultural influences, and personal aspirations (Alexandre-Leclair, 2014). If policy does not support this, then usually there is no place for entrepreneurs to act free and innovatively.

However, there is also the aspect of subjectivity when it comes to perceptions of impact. Kor et al. (2007) emphasize this in relation to the entrepreneurs' perceptions of opportunities and their firms' performance. The authors argue that entrepreneurs possess cognitive frameworks and experiential knowledge that shape how they view certain market signals and influence their strategic decisions in general. It is then these insights that make them identify and exploit opportunities. Smallbone (2010) provides insight on policies that directly affected entrepreneurship. It became apparent that areas like economic growth, innovation, taxation, and regional disparities were most prominent. Although certain policies' measures can have positive effects, they are reliant on contextual factors. These are local economic conditions and industry dynamics.

1.5 Alternative funding

Recent literature has explored innovative and alternative financing models within the CCI. The traditional reliance on government and institutional funding is shifting due to decreasing governmental support and financial constraints (Tachibana, 2018; Darbyshire et al., 2005). Moving beyond traditional, institutional funding models, we see a rise in new approaches. One of these is the phenomenon of match funding. This funding structure combines crowdfunding with institutional support. It has emerged as a promising approach for supporting underserved artists and promoting community engagement (Loots et al., 2023). This strategy of acquiring

funding aligns with an overall broader shift towards collaborative funding mechanisms like crowdfunding, incubators, and tokenized funding.

Other noteworthy developments are the rise of trust-based finance and impact investment. Trust-based finance at large revolves around funding relationships that are rooted in mutual respect, transparency, and reduced bureaucratic oversight. This is different from traditional grant strategies as it specifically prioritizes long-term relationships over mere transactional control. In essence, it is offering unrestricted funding which allows the recipients to allocate resources freely (Leat, 2016; Villanueva, 2021). Impact investment follows a similar philosophy but in a different format. They are direct investments made with the goal of financial return and measurable impact. This impact can be both social or cultural. Unlike philanthropy, impact investors are looking to make investments into project that have alignments with broader societal values. Consequently, this is the reason why the model is particularly relevant for cultural entrepreneurs with social missions (Nicholls & Pharoah, 2008; Barman, 2016).

Overall, these developments nudge towards an upcoming funding paradigm that slowly blurs the lines between public and private interests. As technology based solutions are slowly embraced, financial challenges are handled in a less traditional sense (Loots et al., 2022).

2. Methodology

This research engages in a qualitative research design to explore perceptions of the creative entrepreneurs of Rotterdam in regard to funding and policy influence on their financial creativity. The approach emphasizes that subjective experiences, together with contextual factors are critical in order to address the research question at hand. Thus, qualitative research methods are deemed relevant in this case. Qualitative analysis provides a way to deep-dive into personal insights where funding and policy play into creative finance. This research design, therefore aligns with the goal of uncovering lived perspectives. These lived-experiences give an in-depth exploration of the challenges at hand and provide a level of detail that cannot be uncovered and analyzed with statistical analysis (Bryman, 2016).

2.1 Data Collection

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews present themselves as a primary data collection method in order to let participants have freedom in their responses and stories. This open-ended approach is guided by an interview guide that structure the discussions and help cover key themes that are discussed previously. The semi-structured format is in place to ensure that all essential aspects of the topics are addressed properly whilst allowing other relevant themes to freely emerge during the interviews (Bryman, 2016). The interview guides used, both Dutch and English, can be found in Appendix A. All interviews are held either via Microsoft Teams or in person.

2.2 Sampling

This research takes on a purposive sampling strategy that ensures the selection of participants and their contributions are relevant to the research. This purposive sample criteria are centered around requiring participants to be active as an entrepreneur in the cultural and creative industries, and be based in Rotterdam. This is needed to ensure the relevance in relation to their lived experiences with the local policy and funding contexts as well as their financial creativity in this context. The sample size ranges across 10 cultural entrepreneurs and experts that directly work with them, as this is the required general range to get thematic saturation of a qualitative research. Eight respondents work as cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam, one respondent works as a freelance fundraiser for institutions and organization, and one respondent work as an accountant to cultural entrepreneurs. An effort is made in order to ensure a certain diversity amongst the different creative sectors, but also when it comes to demographic backgrounds. The sample therefore ranges in interviewees with different ages, gender, and

years active in the field (Bryman, 2016). All information regarding the participants within the sample can be found in Appendix B.

2.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of this research is rooted in thematic analysis, which is relevant when interpreting patterns within textual data. Thematic analysis entails the method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns. These patterns of meaning within qualitative data are thus explained as themes within thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding of the documents involves analyzing statements and pieces of text with valuable information. The codes obtained are grouped into broader themes which uncover narratives within the research. The themes act as an identifier of insights about the interactions between funding/policy frameworks, financial strategy, and creative entrepreneurs in Rotterdam (Bryman, 2016). The complete code tree with codes and categories can be found in Appendix C. The translation of the interview guide and direct quotes from the interviews is done using AI. Furthermore, the interviews themselves are transcribed using AI and Microsoft Teams' transcribing tool. The AI declaration can be found in Appendix D.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Verbal informed consent was gathered from all participants regarding the recording of the data collection. They also got the informed consent form which can be found in Appendix E. This is done in order to ensure that everyone is aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Participants are also protected through confidentiality measures, like the anonymization of the transcripts obtained. Thus, all respondents have been given a pseudonym that aids readability in addition to protecting their identity. As a researcher, I am aware of my own positionality within this research. My positionality is shaped by my personal background and upbringing as well as my academic background within Erasmus University Rotterdam. I acknowledge that being born and raised in Rotterdam as well as working within the cultural sector of the city might pose inclination to biases. However, I remain mindful of potential biases regarding the creative industries and certain preconceptions shaped by my academic focus and experiences.

3. Findings

3.1 Profile of cultural entrepreneurs

The interviewees in this research are all self-employed in Rotterdam's CCI. The range of professional fields within the sector span widely. Included in the study is representation from design, fashion, fine arts, performing arts, fundraising, cultural finance, and collective cultural spaces. However, multiple interviewees take on multiple roles within the cultural sector. This is portrayed both in the form of entrepreneurs having a second job, but also within their own practice. Sarah26 explains: "You're not just an artist, you're also your own manager, marketer, and sometimes even your own technician" (Interview, Sarah26).

The age of the participants ranges from 25 to 62 years old. Therefore both emerging and established cultural entrepreneurs are represented in the study. Within this diversity in age, there is a shared educational background. All participants have a formal education in the arts and humanities, on either a HBO or WO level. This shaped the formation of unique hybrid cultural spaces as explained by Claire27: "I studied arts and economics... but I missed a place for those of us in between—between cultures, or between subcultures" (Interview – Claire27). Thus, educational and personal backgrounds are relevant in the trajectory of how cultural places come to be. The motivations amongst the interviewees also show a consistent trend in intrinsic value. 8 out of 10 respondents emphasized their importance regarding their passion and most importantly, artistic autonomy. This further ranged into comments on community engagement and cultural activism over financial gain. "It's never been about profit," states a founder of a cultural space in Rotterdam. "For us, it's about having a space where we are the host, not the guest, and we can represent our own narratives" (Interview – Claire27). April18 emphasized: "I have actually always made work, not from an economic interest, but simply from what I really found important." (Interview – April18)

3.2 Current financially creative practices in use

The current strategies used by cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam are vastly versatile and different amongst the respondents. While crowdfunding is occasionally used, the respondents did not praise the method of securing income. This was mostly due to its labor intensity, uncertain return, and short-term essence. Anna23, who is a freelance fundraising expert within Rotterdam's CCI, explains: "Crowdfunding... they all find it very complicated... There is often a lack of manpower and time and money for it" (Interview – Anna23). Claire27 agrees, as she does state that match-funding helps in increasing the visibility and support for a project, it still remains time-consuming: "Takes a lot of time" (Interview – Claire27). Other

respondents argued that they might consider it in the future for specific projects, this is for them however tied to if the project has a strong community sense or goal attached to it. 7 out of 10 respondents argue that they do not/will not rely on crowdfunding as a form of finance that is part of their budget plan.

Hybrid funding models is something that was common amongst the respondents. This came afloat in the form of mixing subsidies, tickets sales, educational work, freelance gigs on the side, and more. Jaap21 states: “And I know that I simply have to work, so I focus on sources of income that I can really rely on and that offer stability in the long term. Funding is a form of income in itself, but my regular income comes from teaching – which is where most of my time is spent at the moment. I simply cannot do without that income.

Of course, I also want to spend time on my own projects, but that is only possible to a certain extent. Even if I were to receive a fund, it is often temporary – usually for half a year or a year. So then the question arises: should I stop my regular income to work on a project for six months? That is a difficult decision.” (Interview – Jaap21). April18 agrees regarding teaching as she said: “I could make enough money in one day to spend the rest of the week... creating my own work.” (Interview – April18). This approach thus often refers to the previously stated term *patchwork* that is used to “patch” revenue streams together in order to make a living. Sarah26 puts it as: “It’s a puzzle. Every day I’m thinking about that... if I am covert until September and then it’s a black hole.” (Interview – Sarah26).

Bartering was something that remained quite niche amongst the respondents, however, it did make an appearance as a real option. Claire27 describes non-monetary exchange: “You see, we borrow things in a kind of exchange... now you can have this from us and then later we that from you.” (Interview – Claire27). However, she does emphasize that this is just cultural spaces helping each other out. For direct income she mentions renting out spaces. Claire27 states: “An important source of income will also be renting out.”, this includes not just space rental but also workshops and café events: “Workshops around programs... by larger institutions... which then pay for most of our costs.” (Interview – Claire27).

Many respondent stated that they rely heavily on their personal network in order to secure either affordable or unpaid labor. Pam19 stated: “But yes, you just have to email some people... Just asking people, can I borrow something?, or can I show something for free here? That, yes.” (Interview – Pam19). Eric25, an accountant for cultural entrepreneurs, said: “I see the same

thing with creative entrepreneurs...doing what they are used to and especially looking for opportunities around them, they network a lot.” (Interview – Eric25).

3.3 Outcomes of financial strategies

The current financial strategies employed by cultural entrepreneurs that took part in this research enable project continuity and short-term survival through creative means. However, these solutions are often not substantial enough to guarantee long-term sustainability. Anna23 argues: “It's not substantial. It's not for the long term...look, with those 4-year plans I am of course busy with that. With that structural subsidy, but in principle, I do everything on a project basis and that is of course also something.” (Interview – Anna23). The respondents state that they keep their operations afloat in the present, but are missing a stable foundation for future growth. Sarah26 states: “What it's like an employee with a fixed contract in a in a dance company is like an employee in a finance firm...They are in peace with themselves. They wake up in the morning, take a coffee, do breakfast, go ballet class...They are not entrepreneurs... For now, they are just employees, not more than that...But if you are a freelancers and you are seeking for projects, you are an entrepreneur and you know very difficult position...Because it's the the, the, the art and cultural sector is very undefined, very blurry...there are less opportunities out there and the court of people that are seeking opportunities so big and chances are so small.” (Interview – Sarah26).

Multiple respondents claim that online visibility and community support play a crucial role in maintaining relevance and securing small-scale backing. Isa22 gave an example about when she started out as an artist: “I have ***. He gave me a kind of advance...Then I did a series of very small works.” (Interview – Isa22). However, one respondent that works in education on the side had another answer regarding online visibility: “I myself make a bit of sexually tinted work and then I think, yes, I also find it very difficult...Yes, I can't completely not have Instagram or my online presence like that of sex and then in the meantime still go to class...they always find it...But I do understand that you have to think about that or that you want that. Yes, a lot of people find that strange, Oh but you are going to censor yourself.” (Interview – Jaap21). Regarding online visibility Sarah26 said the following: “I see a lot of potential in data...that connects with digitalization...more about the methodology of creation and approach to the system...where I should, I want to distribute my my creation and in a way, what are my creations?” (Interview – Sarah26). Regarding online visibility and community support, there is still highly diversified income and difficulty reinforcing financial precarity. The strategies add to a greater professional autonomy regarding control over their artistic direction. However, they

often do not scale beyond the individual or small collective level. Therefore, broader impact remains limited. Additionally, from half of these interviews can be derived that the pursuit and management of such strategies demand a significant amount of emotional labor.

However, respondents do show a cautious but growing interest in the engagement with more commercial work. Mike20 gave an example: “But for example, I happened to have €10,000 lying around, because I received a very large order and I invested €1,000 of it. I had 30 blankets made in China and I was going to sell them again...but then the risk is extremely low. Say, I only have to. What is it? Sell 10 of the blankets and then I'm already out of debt.” (Interview – Mike20). This was a recurring strategy where investments were made where break-even was the target, a profit was just a hope. Multiple entrepreneurs were open to further explore commercial opportunities, and 6 of the respondents already have done commercial deals or strategies. However, all always done under the condition that their artistic integrity and autonomy remain intact.

3.4 Networks and partnerships

The respondents showed a strong reliance on informal networks within the CCI in Rotterdam. These networks are in their responses vital for gaining visibility. But more than that, they also argue that it helps to share opportunities and receive support from their peers. Isa22 argues: “As an artist, you're simply doing your thing — and I believe more people should seek out connection. So, when we talk about how to reach and support all the artists based in and around Rotterdam, I think the first step is to bring people together in a meaningful way. When I think about what I can offer young artists...there's potential for this to be much more organized.” (Interview – Isa22). There was even one respondent who made a cultural organization out of his network, he stated: “It started as a network or a community where we said, “Hey, the connecting factor within this network is talent development.” However, it has developed into the realization that we do not only want to support young entrepreneurs and young creative individuals — we also want to facilitate connection on other levels. Now, it is really more about friendships, about people helping and supporting one another, and about the desire to contribute to the community as a whole.” (Interview – Mark24). Cultural accountant Eric25 gave an Example: “For example, I had a client who was very active in networking, and that was really important to them. They put a lot of effort into maintaining their network — they would regularly send out corporate gifts, for instance. Of course, you need to be thoughtful about how you approach that, but I remember thinking, “Wow, in that particular sector, it really is essential to keep those connections warm and ongoing.”” (Interview – Eric25). But from

actors within someone's network there is also institutional interest that arises, Claire27 explains: "Organizations respond strongly to each other, so if they see, for example, that one fund has done something with you, they will likely do the same." (Interview – Claire27). Thus, reputational signaling within networks can open up collaborative opportunities. Claire27 goes on to explain how this is different than for example engaging in local partnerships: "Institutions want you to always do something with them or for them to gain your audience. And that is not always sustainable." (Interview – Claire27). Emphasizing that these type of collaborations are driven by shared values in combination with visibility, rather than monetary gain.

But networks also pose the power of acting as a safety net. The above mentioned strategy of selling blankets as an alternative way of generating income is possible because of a demand from the consumer side. Another example of a strategy like this is posed by Isa22: "The book was about a very large amount. It cost €50,000 to make... Then I created a series of very small works — not multiples exactly, but an edition specially made for that book. I sold them individually at a lower price than my regular work... The edition was 70 copies, which is quite a high number... I didn't lose anything, but I also didn't earn anything yet. It basically comes down to a publisher spending your money." (Interview – Isa22). Another way in which networks are safety nets is the aforementioned crowdfunding phenomenon. Claire27 explained that crowdfunding helps communicate legitimacy and community support: "You show the support of your community." However, the limitations of this model are clear: "It takes a lot of time. In the end, it might raise about 15,000 euros...but it is definitely not a replacement for grants." (Interview – Claire27).

Struggles with funding applications were mentioned in all 10 interviews. However, it was not only due to their administrative burden but also because they place peers in direct competition. Mike20 emphasizes this imbalance: "You are competing with people who have had exhibitions in major museums — so, as a young artist, you are competing with the entire spectrum. And once you're in, you tend to stay in...I recently saw a grant application from someone who's been part of the system for a long time...His application was just three or four pages, with only something like "I want to continue." Just three sentences per question..." (Interview – Mike20).

Another example of how your network can play a role in your financial strategy is explained by Mark24. The interviewee stated that his organization has an international audience and is therefore becoming more internationally oriented. Thus, he also is able to – and applies to – European grants. He explains: "Solidarity Corps (fund)... within Europe, there are various programs that align with what we do...It is about a group of at least five young people doing

something on a voluntary basis, driven by solidarity. And for us, that fits well, because we are not a profit-driven organization. Everyone is involved either because they enjoy it or because they find value in it for themselves.” (Interview – Mark24). Translocal networks, in an international context, offer promising funding routes.

3.5 Barriers and challenges

As briefly stated before, the recurring issue amongst the respondents regarding finance was surrounding the lack of structural, long-term funding. Many interviewees emphasized that the current system is too reliant on project-based subsidies, making it hard for them to plan ahead. Claire27 states: “If you cannot offer your team any certainty, they will start looking elsewhere for other jobs...competing for time and energy in all kinds of areas...The stability that secure funding provides really makes it possible to build something. Right now, it feels more like surviving.” (Interview – Claire27). Sarah26 argues: “It’s like being in a constant state of war — always ready to run. Like, “Oh, okay, I’ve got this project... tomorrow I have to go to France.” It’s crazy...It's it's, really hard to keep on going.” (Interview – Sarah26). This uncertainty in cash flow creates inconsistencies amongst cultural entrepreneurs which makes them unable to have stability and strategic planning. In addition, large-scale subsidies and institutional grants have trends of going to major institutions according to several interviewees. The respondents deem this unfair as large institutions have full time staff dedicated to working on funding applications. Claire27 explained: “We are asked to submit the same requirements as Boijmans, where they have multiple people working full-time on grant applications.” (Interview – Claire27). Anna23 had the following to say regarding the current funding landscape: “So basically, what you received four years ago, you get again now...even though the world has changed drastically. The challenges are completely different, some organizations have started performing less, while others have grown... none of that is taken into account.” (Interview – Anna23).

Another barrier that came forward from numerous interviews is the exclusion of some entrepreneurs from funding and finance regarding their interdisciplinary nature of their work. Mike20 explains: “...in the Netherlands, we’ve created a kind of template for what is considered good work, but it’s a form template, not a content template...We are in a very strange bubble, where we uphold incredibly high standards but as a country, we do not look around to see what the rest of the world is doing.” (Interview – Mike20). Jaap21 has a direct experience regarding this and states: “I started applying, but it’s especially difficult to know how things work. And what’s very clear with the Stimuleringsfonds and the Mondriaan Fund

is that, by choosing one of the funds, you're already choosing a direction for your artistic practice. So the difference between being a designer and an artist... I didn't actually know that." (Interview – Jaap21). Thus, cultural practices that fall outside of sectorial definitions are more prone to falling through the selection process.

Furthermore, there was a trend where in 9 out of 10 interviews it was mentioned that there is little to no direct connection between policymakers, funding institutions, and cultural entrepreneurs. Frustration was voiced regarding blatant rejections and the lack of feedback. This absence of dialogue is what various entrepreneurs stated as one of the main problems in today's CCI. Aril18 argues: "Well, even if there were just an open call, simply asking the question: what would artists themselves like to contribute to public space and to the city?... Just having them send in a single A4, you know something simple, without a budget. That would give the city a sense of, "Oh right, this is what's going on among artists, and this is what they want to contribute and what they're capable of."" (Interview – Aril18). Mark24 also argued in favor for more connection between different layers of acquiring finance: "More personal contact...right now, you submit a plan and then you get a response. But if you were to give a presentation at their office, for example, I think that would make it easier for them to ask questions, and it would help you move forward more effectively." (Interview – Mark24). This absence of dialogue leads to a feeling of disconnect amongst the interviewees. The cultural entrepreneurs feel unseen and unheard by institutions that are meant to support them.

There were also comments on the actual procedure of applying to funds and subsidies. 7 out of 10 respondents argued that the process of applying is not only time consuming but also requires language and professionalization that they have no training in. An example of this is being able to quantify the cultural or social impact of their projects. Sarah26 explains her personal experience: "You may completely make up a theme. Because of the what they are asking in the subsidy application...So on an educational level on the talent development level, which are labels that are attached to you by the government." (Interview – Sarah26). Anna23 gives us an example of a situation with a recent project that she did the funding for: "And then you end up with a Creative Europe application, because it's about international collaboration. But then I say, "You're simply organizing an exhibition that you want to tour," and that doesn't qualify at all for such a program and he just doesn't understand that. And then he almost gets angry with me, so to speak." (Interview – Anna23). These examples highlight that the alignment with bureaucratic expectations can be a challenge.

However, these challenges do not only come forward as a bottom-up critique towards institutions and governments. Because underlying to these issues is also a lack of formal education in general entrepreneurship and overall business management. Multiple interviewees mentioned not having learned any basic administrative skills. Think of budgeting, navigating tax systems, or writing business plans. Eric25, who is accountant for cultural entrepreneurs, says the following about cultural entrepreneurs and their finances: “With clients in the creative sector, you often notice that they want to hand everything over, they really do not want to think about it at all. Whereas entrepreneurs, say a plumber or someone like that, tend to be a bit more involved and invested. So I think that’s probably the biggest difference, yes.” He continues: “They do not have a business plan or anything like that — definitely not.” (Interview – Eric25). Mike20 explains a lack of knowledge regarding finance: “For example, I was a photographer for myself for a long time, but I was also a photographer for the theater. So yes, I had equipment and all sorts of things for both, and it was always self-financed. I often think about it now, because I really had no idea. In school, they never properly explained what the possibilities were, like the Mondriaan Fund and things like that.” (Interview – Mike20). The absence of familiarity or interest in entrepreneurial thinking leads to gaps in knowledge surrounding legal, financial, and operational aspect of running a business (even if it is non-profit). Eric25 gives another example: “Yes, for example, one thing that often comes up is simply costs that they forget to include, even though they are actually deductible...Sometimes they do not think, “Hey, maybe this could be deductible.” They are not constantly thinking, “This might be smart from a tax perspective,” so those are often the kinds of things that come up...And then they often say, “Yes, that’s true — I didn’t know you could include that.”” (Interview – Eric25). This lack of knowledge again, is another layer of exclusion that makes it harder for culturally driven initiatives to thrive.

Thus, the interviews show that the challenges faced by cultural entrepreneurs do not just stem from a lack of financial resources; the dialogue is more complicated than that. The interviews highlight the vast complexity of cultural entrepreneurship and needs further analysis.

4. Discussion

4.1 Key findings

At the beginning of this thesis, the study set out to research to extent to which cultural entrepreneurs in the city of Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices. Additionally, the study aimed to examine how this contributed to both the sustainability and development of their projects/organisations. As stated above, the findings show what a precarious and highly competitive environment these entrepreneurs operate. One that ask for constant adaptation. Within this economic landscape that they find themselves, the cultural entrepreneurs show various financially creative strategies. These range from patchworking income streams and engaging in informal barter systems to leveraging personal and professional networks for material, visibility, and labor. However, it has become clear that whenever these strategies appeared, they were done out of necessity rather than active choice. Additionally, these strategies were for financing short-term projects and with a clear end goal in mind. It showed survival, not long-term financial stability establishment.

One of the most prominent findings was the vast presence of patchwork strategies amongst cultural entrepreneurs. They reported the combining of several income sources ranging from freelance work, teaching, public funding, small grants, commissions, and event-based earnings. All to piece together a living. For example, cultural entrepreneurs Jaap21 and April18 highlighted how teaching provides them their means to live and sustain a livable wage. Meanwhile, their artistic project remained underfunded and intermittent. This aligns with previously mentioned literature on hybrid professional models within the cultural and creative industries (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; McRobbie, 2016). This is thus also present in Rotterdams CCI, where entrepreneurial labor presents itself as being highly fragmented and for most not a primary income source. The reliance on these patchwork strategies does however highlight immense intrinsic motivation in combination with entrepreneurial thinking. Whilst these strategies pose high levels of flexibility, which can be seen as a positive, it has also been shown that it requires constant time, energy, and planning. Respondents expressed how they are constantly in a state of looking for financial improvisation. Thus, long-term planning is not a priority as creative energy is put into managing a day-to-day survival ethos. This constant juggle between resources and deadlines poses its main point of uncertainty.

The reality of this entrepreneurial landscape has resilience at its core. Cultural entrepreneurs are undoubtedly resourceful and creative. However, their strategies do come at the cost of their own emotional and physical well-being. As the term *surviving* kept being used in the interviews,

it suggests that the entrepreneurs do not experience just material scarcity of resources but also psychological fatigue. It reflects a deeper condition that goes against a certain romanticized image of being an autonomous creative entrepreneur. Consequently, cultural entrepreneurs are experiencing a blurring of boundaries within their professional roles. As a cultural entrepreneur, you take on every hat of a traditional organization; you are your own artists, but also project managers, fundraisers, marketers, and service providers. This multitasking allows for flexibility within their practices but it mostly adds vast invisible labor to every day operations. This phenomenon shows that financially creative practices are a testament to innovation and adaptability. However, at the same time it reflects a systematic responsibility that is pushed down on a single individual.

4.2 Financial creativity within artistic practices

Financial creativity in this study, emerged as a coping mechanism in response to financial precarity. However, it does bring innovation acts and strategic decision-making making properties with it. The findings of the study reveal that financial creativity is used to continuously reconfigure financial behavior. This is done under the motivation that financial behavior needs to align with artistic values but also needs respond to changing external factors. These practices therefore strongly resonate with the above mentioned framework from Amabile (1983). Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory of Creativity defines creativity as the intersection of three core elements: *domain-relevant skills*, *creativity-relevant processes*, and *intrinsic task motivation*. When applied to the financial domain of cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam, it offers a lens through which we can understand their decisions in constrained but creative environments.

First, *domain-relevant skills*. These are in this study unevenly developed cases (across the sample) of financial literacy, budgeting ability, and strategic fundraising. Some respondents had indeed required skill through practice and experience, but others lacked a basic understanding of administrative and planning qualities. However, all managed to secure funding or finance in some way. This reveals an emerging gap. Whilst financial literacy is increasingly recognized as crucial within the CCI (Beckman, 2010), formal entrepreneurial training remains largely absent from arts education and professional development. This lack of foundational knowledge limits sustainable decision making and in turn reinforces a dependency on short-term improvisation.

Second, is the analysis of *creativity-relevant processes*. These were strongly visible in Rotterdams CCI. Examples of recurring themes were informal labor exchange, intuitive risk

taking, and non-linear budgeting. These are actions that Amabile (1983) refers to as "problem-solving under constraints", which is creative thinking. The study showed that this was mostly used as a strategy to keep artistic autonomy, in addition to their ability to help with solving logistical or financial challenges.

Lastly, *intrinsic task motivation*, which was also vastly present. Across all interviews, the study showed and immense passion, community responsibility, and the desire for artistic freedom as their primary drivers to continue running their entrepreneurial endeavor. The study showed that these phenomena far outweighed overall financial gain. This again aligns perfectly with Amabile's (1983) claim that intrinsic motivation overall creates more meaningful and original creative output. However, there is also concerns to be raised regarding intrinsic motivation. With chronic instability, cultural entrepreneurs continue to operate even if this threatens their own well-being. In this sense, intrinsic motivation rather delays necessary shifts towards sustainability. Formalizing business structures or rethinking the balance between creative and administrative labor are examples of actions that need active and thoughtful consideration from an individual.

Another core tension derived from this study is a dissonance between practice and identity. This signals a key limitation regarding the overall entrepreneurial mindset in the CCI. The study shows that financial creativity alone is not sufficient for economic sustainability. Financial creativity needs to be paired with intentional planning, administrative structure, and some level of business thinking. Amabile (1983) explains that creativity requires both originality and "appropriateness". In this case, it means that financial strategies at large should not only align with artistic values but also need to secure economic stability. When creative processes stay reactive regarding their economics, long-term "appropriateness" is compromised. This calls for a form of entrepreneurial education where financial creativity is not reduced to aesthetic improvisation. Rather, it involves strategic entrepreneurship rooted in both vision and viability.

4.3 Implication of cultural policy and current support structures

The findings from this study show that there is a feeling of disconnect between cultural entrepreneurship and the institutional frameworks meant to support it. Cultural entrepreneurs repeatedly mentioned how difficult it was to navigate within this funds and subsidies landscape. This is regarding both access and language specifics. Application procedures are often experienced by these entrepreneurs as relying on highly technical and bureaucratic vocabulary. This has to do with a barrier that is experienced regarding the translation of artistic intent. This

needs to be translated into metrics, KPIs, or policy-relevant vocabulary, which is not at all related to the intrinsic motivation that is so present in cultural entrepreneurs.

Another structural phenomena that presents itself in the study is the competitive nature of the funding landscape. Cultural entrepreneurs have found themselves asking the same resources as large, well-established institutions that have dedicated staff and years of relationship-building behind them. This imbalance creates a scenario where innovative and experimental actors are consistently marginalized. Sector-specific funding structures further complicate this funding landscape. With funds being specifically targeted towards specific disciplines or types of creative production, respondents of this study who work hybrid or cross-sectional defy these categorizations. Thus, it further limits their funding opportunities as eligibility regarding criteria is not met.

The concept of financial creativity that is central to this thesis, is showed by this study to have been shaped by this institutional positionality. In this sense, financial creativity is arguably not an empowered choice. From this study can furthermore be derived that there is a distinction to be made between being “supported” into financial creativity and being “forced” into financial creativity. In this case, “entrepreneurship” arguably starts to lose its opportunity driven connotation. Ultimately, cultural policy should aim to foster innovation, equity, and sustainability. But not in the way that it has been doing now. Rather, it must invest in the conditions that allow financially creative practices to be financially creative. Cultural policy needs to do more than fund artistic outcomes and output. Think of support mechanisms such as mentoring, advisory services, and educational programs on skills you need as an entrepreneur.

4.4 Generalizability of the findings

The findings of this study cannot be understood in isolation from their place specific dynamics. Rotterdams cultural, social, and political climate shapes how cultural entrepreneurs sustain and organize their practice within the navigation of financial insecurity. Rotterdam is known for young and experimental cultural sector where grassroots thrive. This reputation has created a space where emerging artists and subcultural scenes have cultivated (Hitters & Richards, 2002). Thus, as shown in this study, this ethos in the city has offered space for informal networks, bottom-up initiatives, and collective spaces.

While the respondents of this study did appreciate the presence of a funding paradigm, they also criticized its uneven distribution. Rotterdam specific long-term funding structures, through for example Cultuurplan and CBK Rotterdam, remain concentrated amongst larger institutions.

In figure 2, is visible how in the Cultuurplan 2025-2028, the 8 largest institutions get €52.746.800 worth of funding. However, the total budget that is available for this four year period stands at €101.252.346 . This means indeed that the 8 largest cultural institutions get over 50% of the municipal funding that is available. The total number of subsidy applications for Cultuurplan 2025-2028 was 140 (Gemeente Rotterdam, September 2024). A 5,71% of the application takes 52,09% of the available municipal budget.

Instelling	Rotterdamse Culturele Basis						Beeldende Kunst en Vormgeving			
	Huidig bedrag PP 2024	Aanvraag 2025-2028	Advies bedrag	Financiële verdeling voor korting	Dekking impulsregeling	Financiële verdeling na korting	Huidig bedrag PP 2024	Aanvraag 2025-2028	Advies bedrag	Financiële verdeling
Concert- en congresbouw De Doelen	6.016.000	6.868.000	nvt	6.016.000	35.000	5.926.000				
Kunsthal Rotterdam	3.628.000	3.903.000	nvt	3.628.000	35.000	3.559.900				
Luxor Theater Rotterdam	3.272.500	3.636.000	nvt	3.272.500	35.000	3.207.700				
Maritiem Museum Rotterdam	6.039.000	6.548.000	nvt	6.039.000	35.000	5.948.800				
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen	10.812.000	10.811.000	nvt	10.812.000	35.000	10.677.900	80.000	80.000	80.000	80.000
Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest	8.464.500	8.464.500	nvt	8.364.500	130.000	8.158.700				
Theater Rotterdam	10.236.300	10.236.000	nvt	10.236.300	35.000	10.107.400				
Theater Zuidplein	4.278.500	5.614.125	nvt	4.378.500	35.000	4.303.500				
	52.746.800	56.080.625	-	52.746.800	375.000	51.889.900	80.000	80.000	80.000	80.000

Figure 2 : Rotterdam Cultural Basis (Gemeente Rotterdam, September 2024)

In addition to this, respondents also described how there is no dialogue between cultural entrepreneurs and authorities. The feeling of a lack of transparency and feedback reinforced the perception of disconnect between initiatives and the monetary support system that they rely on. This has also been observed in other European cities. Other studies back up the claim that policy structures which emphasize output and quantifiable impact often misalign with the values of smaller, process-based practices (Comunian, 2009; O'Connor, 2015).

Social networks within Rotterdam have also been shown to be valuable. These cultural networks offer peer support and resource exchange, they are however also saturated and competitive. Formal and informal connections within the CCI foster precarity when access to funding is reliant on an individuals network and relation to certain scenes or institutions. Thus, it reflects previous findings from other studies that researched urban cultural economies. Broader findings agree with the argument that relational capital in the CCI is crucial but unevenly distributed (Scott, 2000; Markusen, 2013).

A different urban or national context would most probably produce different findings. For example, cities with stronger philanthropic sectors or commercial art markets (London or Berlin). Cultural entrepreneurs in this context might rely more on private sponsorship and less on public funding. On the other side, regions with less infrastructure or demand for cultural output might be even more restricted. Pratt & Jeffcutt (2009) argue that creative

entrepreneurship is sensitive to urban cultural ecology. This is relevant as its embedded in various aspect of society like real estate markets, institutional legacies, symbolic branding, etc. Therefore, the study's findings are deeply rooted in the context of Rotterdams CCI and its entrepreneurial climate.

4.5 Economic vs. artistic goals

Another central theme that emerged from the research was the balancing act between the maintenance of artistic integrity and financial viability. This signals value-driven entrepreneurship where economic decisions are made in service of creative autonomy and never in opposition to. Respondents of the study expressed clear boundaries between what they would be willing to adjust for regarding financial resources and what remains non-negotiable. Selective omissions and the overall scaling back of implementation is where concessions happen when resources are scarce. This came forward as a deeply ingrained ethical value within Rotterdams CCI. Authenticity is valued over expansion, and integrity is valued over exposure.

This form of entrepreneurial behavior aligns with the concept of the *double bottom line*. This framework is usually used in order to describe organizations that prioritize social impact (in this case artistic) in combination with financial stability (Dees, 1998). The cultural entrepreneurs from this study do not showcase direct interest in financial goals. They do, however, actively subordinate them to artistic (or social) objectives. This principle thus differentiates financially creative entrepreneurship from overall commercial practices. As stated before, this does bring certain limitations on the long-term as it hinders structural sustainability of a practice (Austin et al., 2006). The lack of organizational growth and institutional positioning creates an atmosphere where practices are vulnerable to funding cuts/shifts, burnout, market pressures, etc. From the findings of this study can be derived that in this case, the double bottom line is present but it is in imbalance. Artistic value dominates over financial foundations that remain fragile.

Consequently, it raises questions on how cultural policy can aid in reinforcing models of entrepreneurship that do not target profit maximization. In the realm of accepting that cultural entrepreneurship is not about profit, but rather it is about sustaining independent cultural production. Funding structures must change and accommodate slow growth, qualitative impact, and target practices that operate with a mission.

4.6 Limitations

The research provided insight into cultural entrepreneurship in the city of Rotterdam and their financially creative practices. Several limitations must be acknowledged, relating to the scope, methodology, and interpretative nature.

The sample size of this study consisted of ten semi-structured interviews with 8 cultural entrepreneurs and 2 people that directly work with them. There is much more diversity and scale amongst cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam. The city's cultural field also includes people working across various disciplines, career stages, and institutional positions. Active thought went into including a range of voices in terms of age, artistic discipline, and scale of operation. However, this still reflects only a portion of this ecology. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this research remain indicative.

The qualitative essence of this study fostered highly nuanced stories and experiences within the CCI of Rotterdam. However, comment must be made about their subjective nature. These experiences are personal to the respondents of the study and thus the data relies on these self-reported experiences. This creates a space where we have to be aware of people's personal perceptions and narratives that are influenced by notions like individual positioning, memory, and framing. Thus, both on the part of interviewees and researcher, there is potential for bias. This is especially important to be aware of in researching a phenomena where identity, emotion, and values play a significant role.

Then there were time constraints imposed by academic calendars that limited the scale of research. A longer research period might have allowed for additional interviews and the inclusion of interviews with policy actors and audiences. A more comprehensive analysis and understanding of the overall ecosystems would have been mapped in that sense.

Lastly, the place specificness of Rotterdam can raise questions about its generalizability. The study showed that Rotterdam's cultural scene is shaped by factors like its municipal funding structure, its urban identity, and its reputation for experimentation and subcultural expression. The concepts of for example tension between autonomy and precarity, may also resonate in different contexts. However, they are still specific concepts of financial creativity that might translate different in another city and its own dynamics.

Therefore, it is important to note that the research adds to an ongoing conversation, rather than providing definite answers. The findings open space for further inquiry.

4.7 Recommendations

The findings of this study point towards a need for structural reform regarding cultural policy but also a shift in the self-positioning of cultural entrepreneurs. Financial creativity can be a valuable skillset, but in its current form it is not a sustainable one. The shift from survival to sustainability must therefore come from institutional actors as well as the creative community.

Policy makers and funders must recognize that the entrepreneurial aspect of the CCI is a specific one. As profit maximization is not a driving factor support is needed in order to uphold these small-scale cultural practices. This could be done by designing funding schemes that are more accessible to people who work outside of institutional practices. Current funding systems, as participants emphasized, often favor well-established organizations. Simplifying language, transparency, and feedback can aid in the creation of a more level playing field.

Additionally, there is a need for support instead of force when it comes to financial creativity. Ways to achieve this could be surrounding the creation of educational and advisory services. Offering workshops, toolkits, or mentorships could lower that barrier between acquiring resources and cultural practices. This all with the incentive to budgeting, business modeling, and alternative finance methods (such as match funding or social investment). It could aid cultural entrepreneurs in becoming more entrepreneurial and making more informed financial decisions. In addition to this, it might help regrading an overall recognition as artistic labor being viewed as valid or valuable.

At the same time, responsibility also lies with cultural entrepreneurs. They need to position themselves more as entrepreneurial actors. Data from this study revealed how adopting an entrepreneurial identity was not so important even though the cultural entrepreneurs already engaged in entrepreneurial activity. While this resistance is rooted in critique of market-driven values, it can also limit long-term resilience. In order to remain autonomous, cultural entrepreneurs thus must learn to frame their practice on economic and organizational terms as well. This would involve spending time on financial literacy, setting long-term goals, and actively seeking knowledge around business planning, taxation, and funding strategy. Entrepreneurship in this sense takes away isolation and in turn serves in the strengthening of creative freedom at large.

Peer learning and community-based support might be helpful in establishing this entrepreneurial behavior, rather than top-down training models. Horizontal learning

environments like co-learning spaces or rotating resource-sharing models may be more aligned with the ethos of Rotterdam's creative field. Empowering cultural entrepreneurs to see themselves as both artists and economic players is a critical step towards a more resilient creative ecosystem.

5. Conclusion

From the beginning, this thesis set out to examine financially creative practices of cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam and see how these practices influence the sustainability and development of their practice at large. In order to analyze this, the following research question was used.

"How do cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam engage in financially creative practices, and how do these practices contribute to the sustainability and development of their artistic enterprises?"

This research was motivated by the precarity that is happening in the CCI. The research put focus on understanding how entrepreneurial individuals in the arts creatively navigate a funding landscape which turned out to be characterized by short-termism, intense competition, and institutional complexity. Through qualitative interviews with ten respondents, and through the lens of Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory of Creativity, the study has shed light on the ways in which financial creativity is exercised. The findings of the study revealed complexity within a system where cultural entrepreneurs engage in multiple roles where they get income together through a patchwork means. All in order to protect and uphold their artistic autonomy.

Drawing on Amabile's (1983) framework, the research found all three components of her creativity in the respondents. Their behavior showcased domain-relevant skills (e.g. fundraising), creativity-relevant processes (e.g., improvisation, collaboration, risk-taking), and intrinsic task motivation (e.g., passion, autonomy, values). Therefore, financial creativity is embedded in an essence as to how cultural entrepreneurs maintain independence and visibility in the field. However, the study also showcased that financial creativity rarely guarantees long-term strategies. The temporary aspect of project-based grants, the precarity of freelance work, and the emotional labor involved, has put a strain on the individual cultural entrepreneur. Thus, there is a contradiction between resilience and burnout. Participants voiced exhaustion of being in a constant state of improvisation.

The research furthermore revealed barriers between cultural entrepreneurs and the systems that support them. These include administrative burden of applications, the difficulty of articulating artistic or social impact in fundable terms, and the limited access/interest to financial literacy or business education. These fall on top of the already competitive landscape in which cultural entrepreneur with small-scale businesses or organizations, have to take it up against bigger and

well-established organizations. All within the same limited pool of public resources. The feeling of exclusion in the economic landscape was voiced regarding the nature of their practice. But this feeling is also aroused by bureaucratic language used in applications, ambiguous eligibility criteria, and opaque decision-making processes. Cultural entrepreneurs learned the language of funders through the years, but mostly through trial and error. For others this stagnates at alienation and feelings of disengagement. They are the cultural entrepreneurs that pursue alternative financial strategies that revolve around survival and project to project funds. However, this also ties to the finding that a sheer desire for artistic control wants to be upheld. Even if it means that work is done on a smaller scale or income is forgone. Financial creativity was, in light of the findings, used not to maximize profit but to preserve artistic integrity. Concessions were never made at a content level. Rather, they took place by reducing the scale of projects, working unpaid hours, or foregoing other professional opportunities. This furthermore indicates that sustainability in this study came out as economic terms aligning with personal and artistic values.

The findings of the study also pose a deep embeddedness in Rotterdams local context and CCI. The city provides both opportunities and limitations for cultural entrepreneurs. The openness of the field and overall presence of funding bodies creates a fertile ground for new initiatives to start. The problem is however found in the maintenance and upscaling of initiatives that are already existent. Rotterdam's institutional infrastructure therefore remains uneven, and long-term funding remains concentrated among a small number of larger organizations.

Access to resources and recognition is shown in this study to have been highly related to the institutions and social networks you are in and connected to. Emphasizing the vast importance of networks and networking within Rotterdam CCI. This phenomenon can be both empowering and exclusive as it creates a strong sense of community but it also reinforces certain forms of gatekeeping. The city's fragmented funding landscape thus makes stability and long-term planning difficult. The structural challenges that are identified in this study (dominance of project funding, the invisibility of informal labor, the symbolic devaluation of administrative work) are shared across many urban cultural contexts (Pratt & Jeffcutt, 2009; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Thus, the case of Rotterdams CCI adds to the ongoing discourse on dynamics within the European cultural economy.

The thesis ended with a set of recommendations aimed to address the current gaps between cultural entrepreneurs and funding structures. From a policy perspective, greater transparency

and flexibility in funding mechanisms are needed. This would allow cultural entrepreneurs to learn as they go and improve their strategies. Additionally, they could freely decide if a fund is for them or not based on feedback and direct dialogue. Institutions must go beyond funding outcomes and invest in capacity-building. Here, structural support could be given in supporting financial creativity as a proactive tool rather than a reactive necessity.

But there is also a responsibility to be shifted regarding cultural entrepreneurs themselves. This is regarding findings that suggest a need to take on more of an entrepreneurial mindset. This is not regarding traditional market-driven ambition, but rather strategic competencies that can support artistic freedom at large. Even though cultural entrepreneurs showed that they did embody this entrepreneurial mindset to some extent (managing teams, creating revenue models, navigating risk), this is in the current economic climate not enough to be able to have a sustainable practice. Bridging and filling this identity gap with knowledge and tools, could help build a more resilient cultural sector. All with the goal to autonomously shape the economic conditions of their practice. This shift thus needs support from all angles of the CCI and its structures. Educational institutions, funding bodies, and peer-led initiatives can all aid in contributing to overall financial literacy, grant-writing, and business planning. An important factor here is still courses on entrepreneurial behavior in arts education. The tools should be specifically targeted to the CCI, emphasizing sustainability over scalability, collaboration over competition, and creativity over compliance.

In conclusion, financial creativity has shown to be essential but often invisible. It represents a strategy regarding maintaining autonomy. While the findings of this study showed it as improvisation or resistance, it also offers a powerful lens through which to reimagine sustainability in the arts. However, financial creativity alone cannot induce sustainability and development in cultural entrepreneurship. Without institutional recognition, equitable support, and educational access, it risks becoming another burden. The challenge that is ahead is getting to a point where there is mutual support. This entails a cultural ecosystem that values and supports financially creative work as a legitimate part of artistic practices. The lived experiences of Rotterdams cultural entrepreneurs offered critical insight into the pressure that weighs on their practices' innovation, resilience, and integrity. They remind us that creativity is not limited to just a space, it also lives in the way artists protect the overall conditions of their work.

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Appendix A

Interview guide – Nederlands

Introductie

- Kun je iets vertellen over jezelf en jezelf als culturele ondernemer?
- Hoe ben je in Rotterdam actief geraakt?
- Hoe zou je jouw werk in de creatieve sector omschrijven?

Subvraag: Welke financiële strategieën gebruiken culturele ondernemers om hun projecten te financieren?

- Op welke manieren financier je je projecten meestal? (bijv. subsidies, verkoop, opdrachten, neveninkomsten)
- Wat voor strategie of routine gebruik je voor het beheren van je inkomsten en uitgaven?
- Heb je een begroting of financieel plan? Hoe stel je die op?
 - Zijn er bepaalde inkomstenbronnen waarop je liever vertrouwt?
- Heb je je aanpak door de jaren heen veranderd?
 - Zo ja, hoe?
 - Zo nee, waarom heb je nooit gevoeld dat verandering nodig was?

Subvraag: Hoe balanceren ondernemers financiële duurzaamheid met artistieke integriteit?

- In hoeverre beïnvloeden financiële overwegingen de inhoud of vorm van je werk?
- Heb je wel eens concessies moeten doen aan je artistieke visie om financieel rond te komen?
 - Zo ja, wat voor invloed had dit op je?
 - Zo nee, hoe heb je gezorgd dat dit nooit hoefde?
- Waar ligt voor jou de grens tussen ‘commercieel denken’ en trouw blijven aan artistieke waarden?

Subvraag: Hoe beïnvloeden overheidsbeleid en subsidieregelingen hun financiële beslissingen?

- Maak je gebruik van subsidies of gemeentelijke ondersteuning? Waarom wel of niet?

- Hoe ervaar je het aanvraagproces en de criteria van subsidies?
- Heb je het gevoel dat beleidsmaatregelen ondersteunend of juist belemmerend zijn voor je praktijk?
- Welke ervaringen heb je met andere instellingen zoals fondsen of de Gemeente Rotterdam?
 - Welke werken het beste voor jou in de praktijk?
 - Waarom werken deze beter voor je dan anderen?

Subvraag: In welke mate tonen culturele ondernemers financiële creativiteit in inkomsten en uitgaven?

- Heb je voorbeelden van momenten waarop je creatief moest omgaan met financiën?
- Wat betekent ‘financiële creativiteit’ voor jou?
- Gebruik je alternatieve financieringsvormen, zoals crowdfunding, barter, of samenwerking met commerciële partijen?
 - Waarom wel of niet?
 - Zo ja, wat zijn je ervaringen met deze financieringsvormen?
 - Heb je bewust strategieën ontwikkeld om financieel flexibel of innovatief te blijven?

Link met duurzaamheid van het ondernemerschap

- Hoe zie je de toekomst van je praktijk op financieel en artistiek niveau?
- Wat zou er volgens jou nodig zijn om als creatieve ondernemer in Rotterdam te kunnen blijven bestaan?
- Heb je directe suggesties voor beleidsmakers of fondsen om beter in te spelen op de behoeften van ondernemers zoals jij?

Afronding

- Is er iets wat je graag nog zou willen toevoegen dat we nog niet besproken hebben?
- Mag ik bij onduidelijkheden of vervolgvragen later nog contact met je opnemen?

Interview guide – English

Introduction

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your identity as a cultural entrepreneur?
- How did you become active in Rotterdam?
- How would you describe your work in the creative sector?

Sub-question: What financial strategies do cultural entrepreneurs use to fund their projects?

- In what ways do you usually finance your projects? (e.g. subsidies, sales, commissions, side income)
- What kind of strategy or routine do you use to manage your income and expenses?
- Do you have a budget or financial plan? How do you create it?
 - Are there specific income sources you prefer to rely on?
- Have you changed your approach over the years?
 - If so, how?
 - If not, why have you never felt the need to change?

Sub-question: How do entrepreneurs balance financial sustainability with artistic integrity?

- How do financial considerations influence the content or form of your work?
- Have you ever had to make compromises to your artistic vision to stay financially afloat?
 - If so, what kind of impact did this have on you?
 - If not, how have you ensured this was never necessary?
- Where do you draw the line between "thinking commercially" and staying true to your artistic values?

Sub-question: How do government policies and subsidy schemes influence their financial decisions?

- Do you make use of subsidies or municipal support? Why or why not?
- How do you experience the application process and criteria for subsidies?
- Do you feel that policy measures are supportive or rather obstructive to your practice?
- What experiences have you had with other institutions such as funds or the Municipality of Rotterdam?
 - Which ones work best for you in practice?
 - Why do these work better for you than others?

Sub-question: How do cultural entrepreneurs demonstrate financial creativity in income and expenses?

- Do you have examples of moments when you had to be financially creative?
- What does "financial creativity" mean to you?
- Do you use alternative forms of financing, such as crowdfunding, bartering, or collaborations with commercial partners?
 - Why or why not?
 - If yes, what are your experiences with these forms of financing?
 - Have you consciously developed strategies to remain financially flexible or innovative?

Link with the sustainability of entrepreneurship

- How do you see the future of your practice on a financial and artistic level?
- In your opinion, what is needed to be able to continue existing as a creative entrepreneur in Rotterdam?
- Do you have any direct suggestions for policymakers or funds to better respond to the needs of entrepreneurs like you?

Conclusion

- Is there anything you would still like to add that we haven't discussed yet?
- May I contact you later in case of uncertainties or follow-up questions?

Appendix B

Sample matrix: Cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam

Pseudonym	Age	Nationality	Field of work	Years active in that field
April18	51 years old	Dutch	Textile	Over 25 years
Pam19	25 years old	Russian	Film	1 – 5 years
Mike20	40 years old	Mexican	Fine arts	15 – 20 years
Jaap21	30 years old	Dutch	Fine arts and fashion design	5 – 10 years
Isa22	62 years old	Dutch	Fine arts	Over 25 years
Anna23	61 years old	Dutch	Fundraising	Over 25 years
Mark24	28 years old	Dutch	Community and network event organization	1 – 5 years
Eric25	26 years old	Dutch	Accountant in the cultural sector	1 – 5 years
Sarah26	30 years old	Italian	Dance and performance art	5 – 10 years
Claire27	35 years old	Dutch	Cultural spaces for subcultures	10 – 15 years

Appendix C

Code tree matrix: Cultural and creative entrepreneurs in Rotterdam about financial creativity

Category	Subcategory	Code	Frequency
Profile of Cultural Entrepreneurs	Motivations	Intrinsic motivation (autonomy, passion, community)	10
	Roles	Multi-role engagement (teaching, organizing, performing)	10
Current Financially Creative Practices	Income Strategies	Teaching / side jobs	19
		Project-based freelancing	62
		Patchwork / multiple income streams	8
		Renting out living space (subletting)	2
		Unpaid labour in job acquisition	9
	Resource Allocation	Self-financed production costs	4
		Bargaining for housing in exchange for labor	4

		Spending on networking (e.g., travel to shows/auditions)	14
Barriers and Challenges	Financial Compromises	Accepting low-paid work out of financial need	2
		Lowering performance standards	3
		Choosing jobs based on income, not artistic alignment	2
	Institutional Barriers	Frustration with government subsidies	2
		Strategic language in applications	11
		Lack of structural support for freelancers	7
		Access barriers to career-change funds	3
		Favoring artists with full-time contracts	5
		Need for expert intermediaries	1

Networks and Partnerships	Informal Networks	Networking to pre-emptively secure work	12
		Leveraging reputation	13
Financial Creativity as Agency	Strategic Action	Non-standard application tactics	5
		Anticipating employers' needs	3
	Daily Flexibility	Continuously evaluating opportunities	9
		Using intuition to avoid exploitative situations	14
		Diversifying offers (performance, teaching, projects)	6
Adequacy of Funding Landscape	Policy Critique	Subsidy dependence shaping content	2
Artistic vs. Economic Goals	Value Alignment	Staying true to artistic integrity	11
		Desire to switch between commercial / non-commercial work	13

		Perceived barriers to commercial work	3
Future Outlook and Needs	Systemic Change Desires	Call for basic income for artists	2
		Policy recognition of freelancers as entrepreneurs	10
		Advisory infrastructure between artists and funders	5
	Career Reorientation	Desire to move into data/art/science hybrid	26
		Detachment with theatre system	2

Appendix D

Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Course Assignments

Student Information

Name: Zoe Koopmans

Student ID: 614623

Course Name: Master Thesis

Instructor Name: Dr. Ellen Loots

Assignment Title: From Passion to Paycheck: Financially Creative Practices among Cultural Entrepreneurs

Date: June 13th

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works with limited user input.

GenAI use could include, but is not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Quillbot)
- Writing improvements, including grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL)
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding, debugging code, Gemini Deep Research)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books. (e.g. Perplexity AI)
-

For any GenAI task, 1) it must be permitted by the course and 2) you are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the outputs used in any submission. Improper use of sources obtained from GenAI could constitute academic fraud.

Also, 3) the requested prompts/logs (under Extent of AI Usage below) may be either screenshots or textual copies. The appendix can be included as part of the main submission or submitted as a separate document. Check with your lecturer.

☒ I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically Chatgpt-4.5 and Microsoft Teams transcription tool, in the process of creating parts or components of my course assignment. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of the assignment.

☐ I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: 

Date of Signature: June 12th 2025

Extent of AI Usage

☒ I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the assignment were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of my GenAI tool use in an appendix.

Ethical and Academic Integrity

☒ I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if

required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: 

Date of Signature: June 13th


Chatgpt-4.5 and Microsoft Teams was used regarding transcriptions and translations. The prompts for these inquiries were: “translate to English”. Microsoft Teams has a function that you can turn on which automatically transcribes the meeting which was used.

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title and version	From Passion to Paycheck: Financially Creative Practices among Cultural Entrepreneurs
Name of Principal Investigator	Zoe Koopmans
Name of Organisation	Erasmus University Rotterdam – Erasmus School of History, Culture, and Communication.
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted in order to research the behavior of cultural entrepreneurs in the city Rotterdam. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about the financial management strategies of cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam. The purpose of this research project is to map these lived experience in order create visibility, a voice, and bring possible challenges of being a cultural entrepreneurs in the current economic climate to light.
Procedures	<p>You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked questions about your lived experience as a cultural entrepreneur yourself or the entrepreneurs that you work with on a daily basis.</p> <p>You must be at least 18 years old.</p>
Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Potential Benefits	<p>Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating you may better understand the economic climate for cultural entrepreneurs in Rotterdam.</p> <p>The broader goal of this research is to analyze strategies and research where possible challenges lie and why.</p>
Sharing the results	Your plan for sharing the findings with the participants should be provided. If you have a plan and a timeline for the sharing of information, include the details. You may also inform the participant that the research findings will be shared more broadly, for example, through publications and conferences.

Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p> <p>As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researchers password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.</p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zoe Koopmans: 614623zk@eur.nl or zoe.koopmans.zk@gmail.com</p>
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>For research problems or any other question regarding the research project, please contact the coordinator of the Bachelor Graduation Project, Dr. Débora Póvoa (povoa@eshcc.eur.nl).</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>
Audio recording (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have my interview audio recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>
Secondary use (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
Signature and Date	NAME PARTICIPANT	NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Zoe Koopmans
	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE 
	DATE	DATE May 11 th 2025