

Remaking de Wallen

Future of the Red Light District

Red-Light District Transformation
and the Repositioning of sexwork
in Amsterdam



01 Exploring the problem | What can a transformation of a red light district look like?



Erotic Centre, Moke Architecten

01 Exploring the problem | How does this relate to the transformation of Red Light Districts?



Protests against closing windows in de Wallen



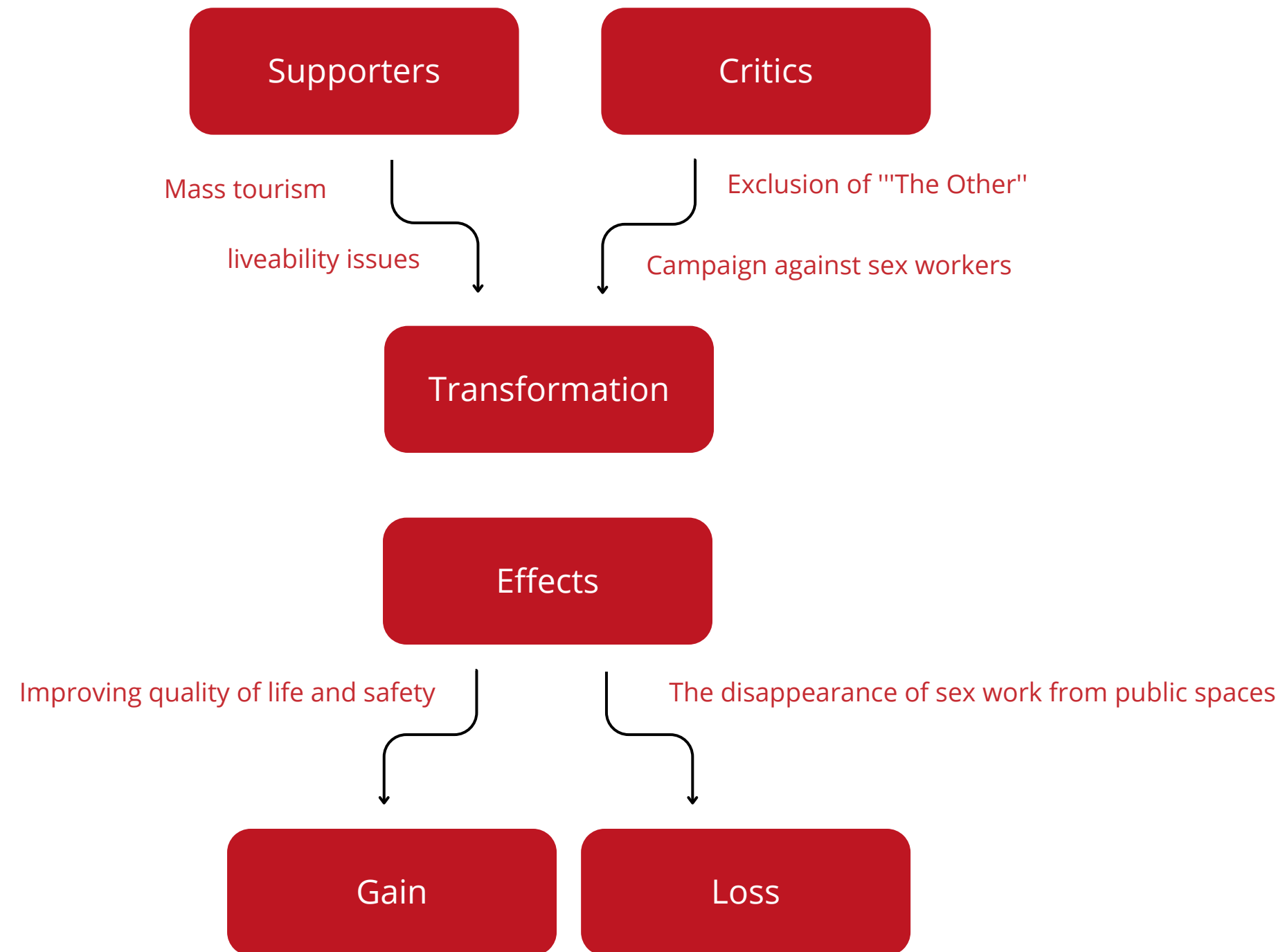
Protests against the opening of an adult entertainment centre in Amsterdam North

01 Exploring the problem | European trend in the transformation of red-light districts



Northern European red-light districts undergoing transformation.

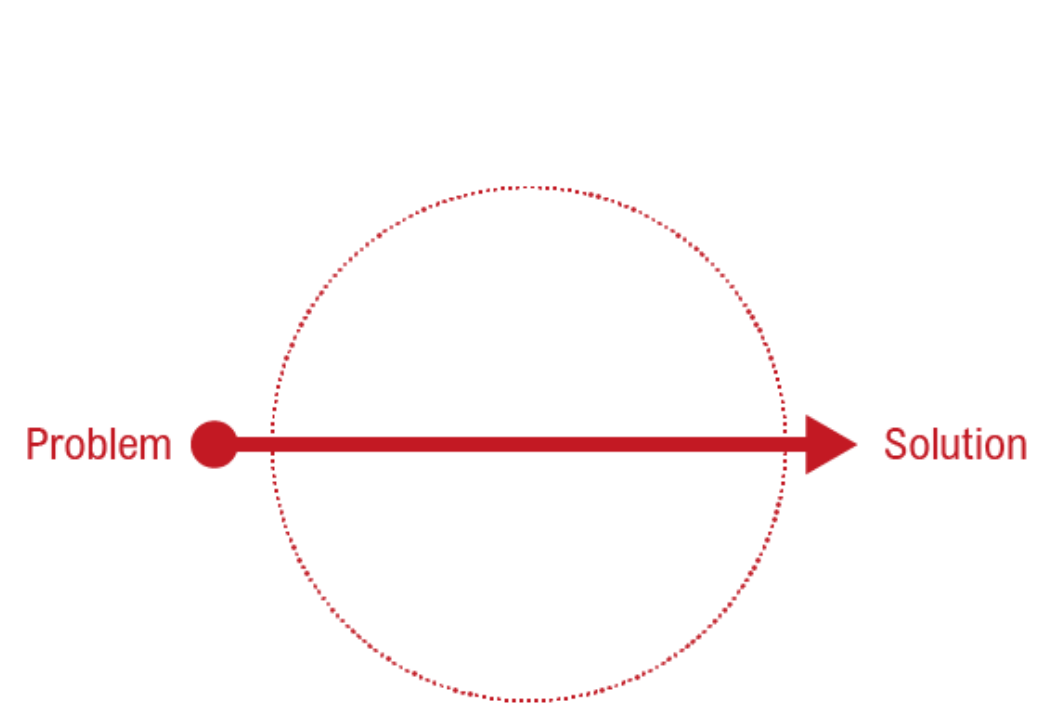
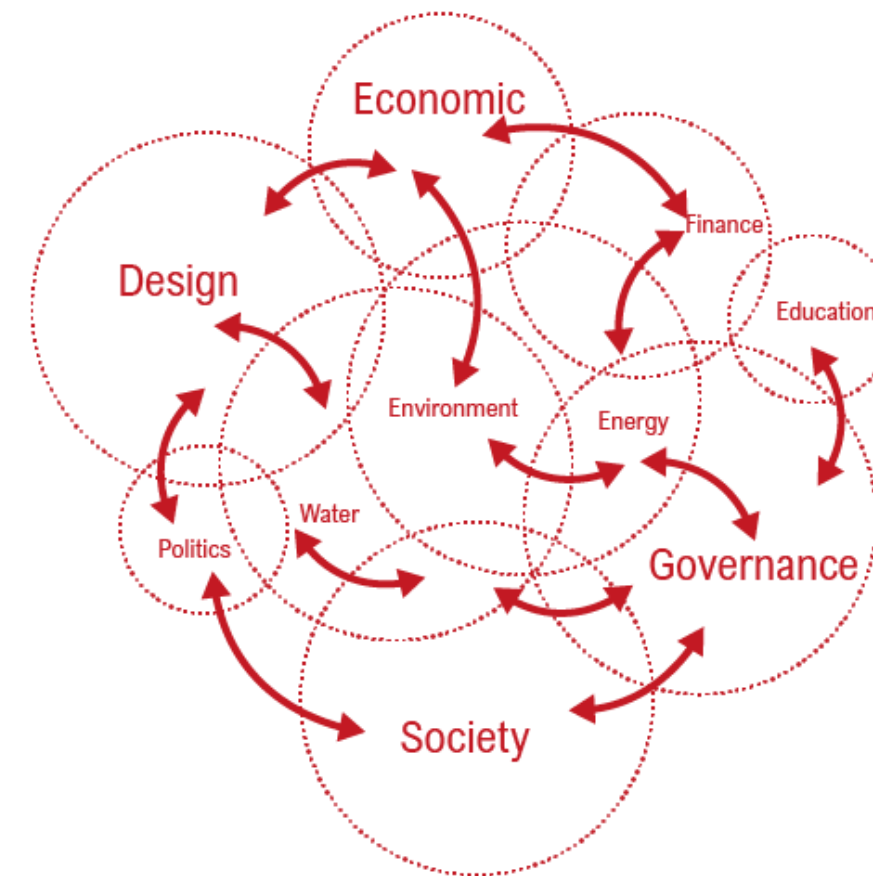
01 Exploring the problem | European trend in the transformation of red-light districts



01 Exploring the problem | Paradox of sex work in the city

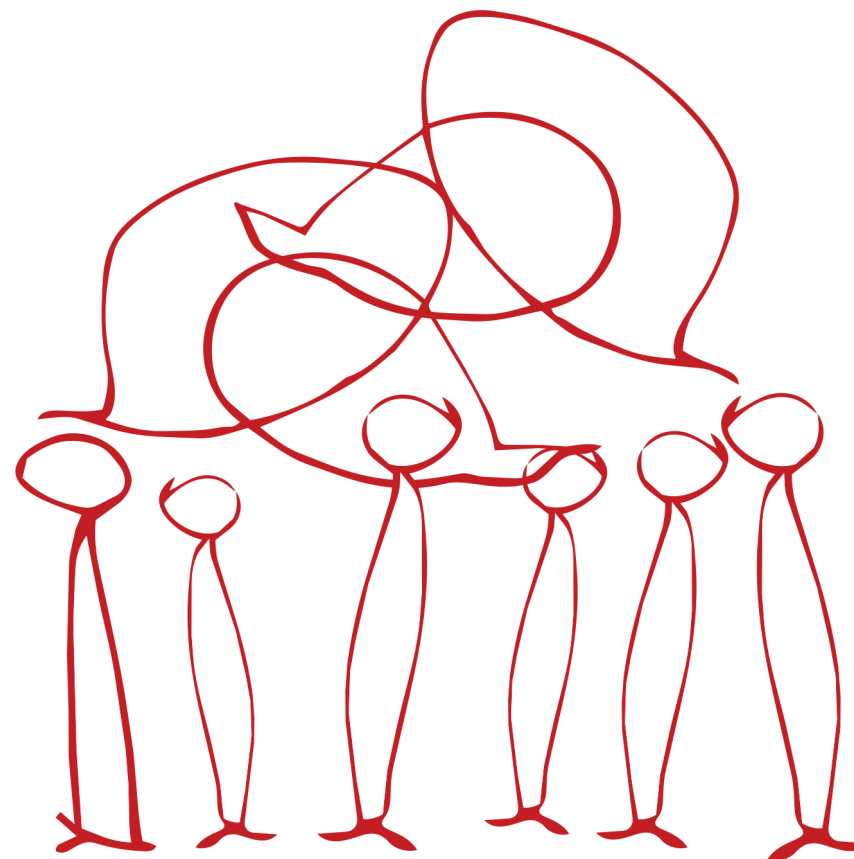


Sex workers are protesting against the disappearance of sex work places in Amsterdam.

01 Exploring the problem | **Conflicting interests in transformation processes****Tame Problems****Wicked Problems**

01 Exploring the problem | The case

Overtourism
Nuisance & safety
Residents' sense of alienation
Commercialisation
Moral decline
Unsafe living conditions



01 Exploring the problem | **The problem**

Problem: De Wallen is stuck in a cycle of conflict and misalignment with no shared vision among its users.

Goal: Spatially and socially grounded future scenarios that create just space for all

02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens



Future scenarios

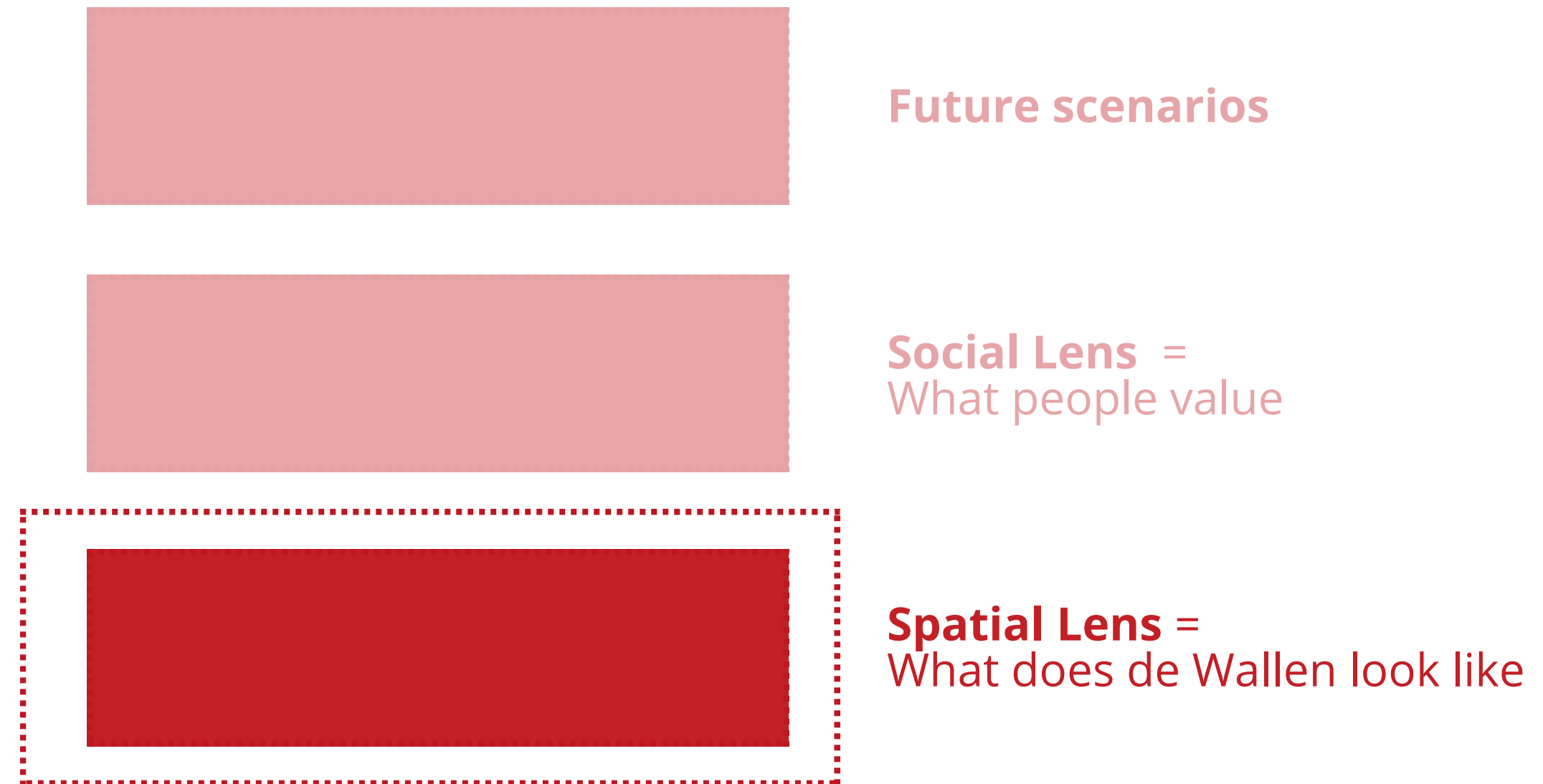


Social Lens =
What people value

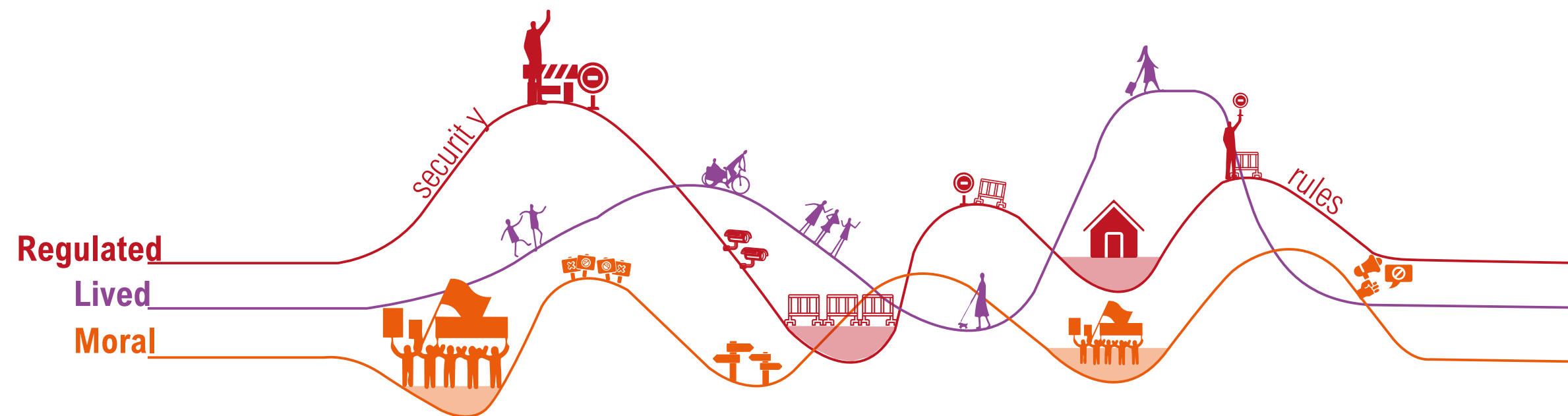


Spatial Lens =
What does de Wallen look like

02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens

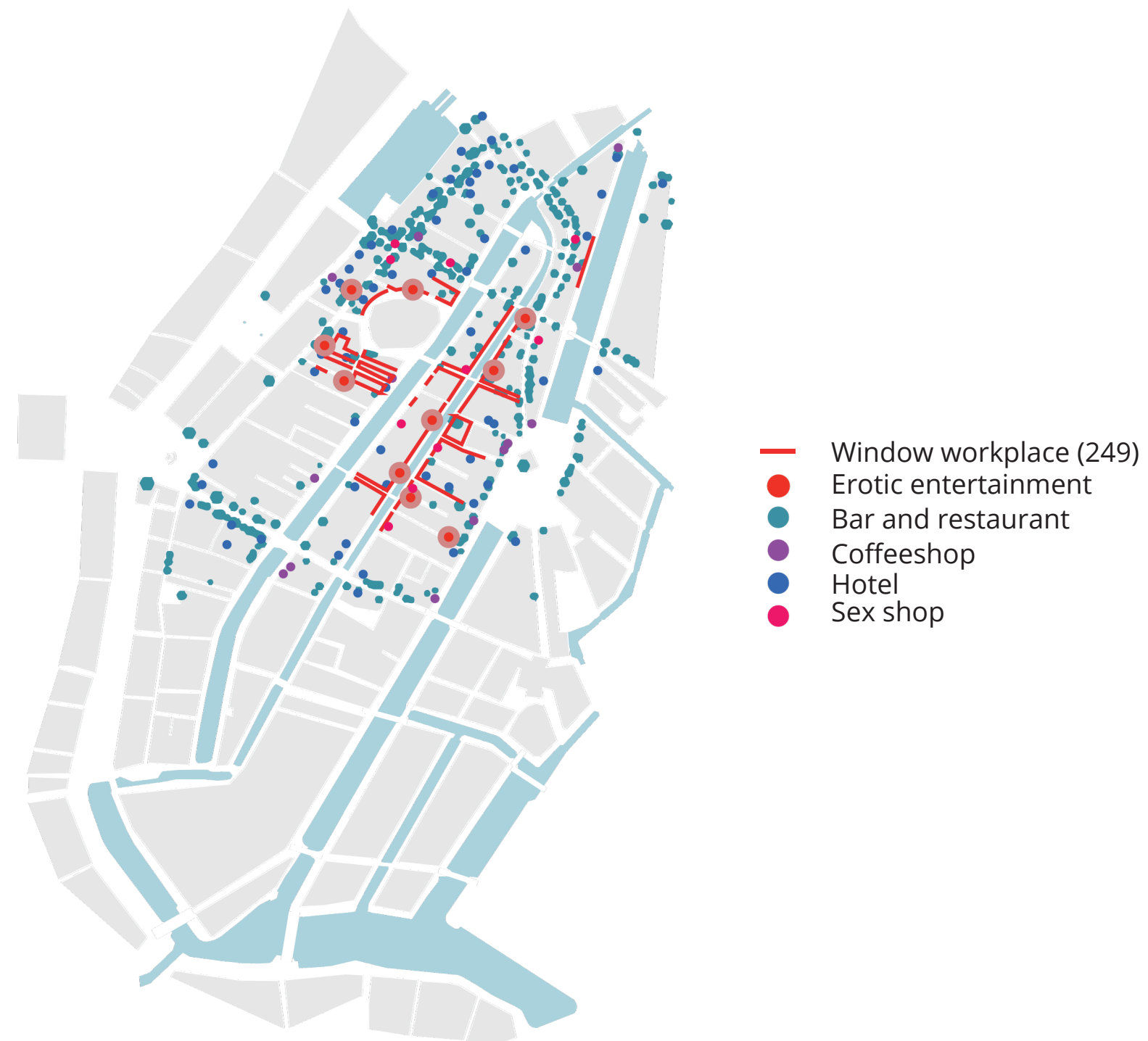


03 The spatial lens | Geographies of sex work (Hubbard 2012)



Geographies of sex work

03 The spatial lens | **Regulated landscape** and economics



The economic entertainment system in de Wallen.

03 The spatial lens | **Regulated landscape** and economics



Window workplace

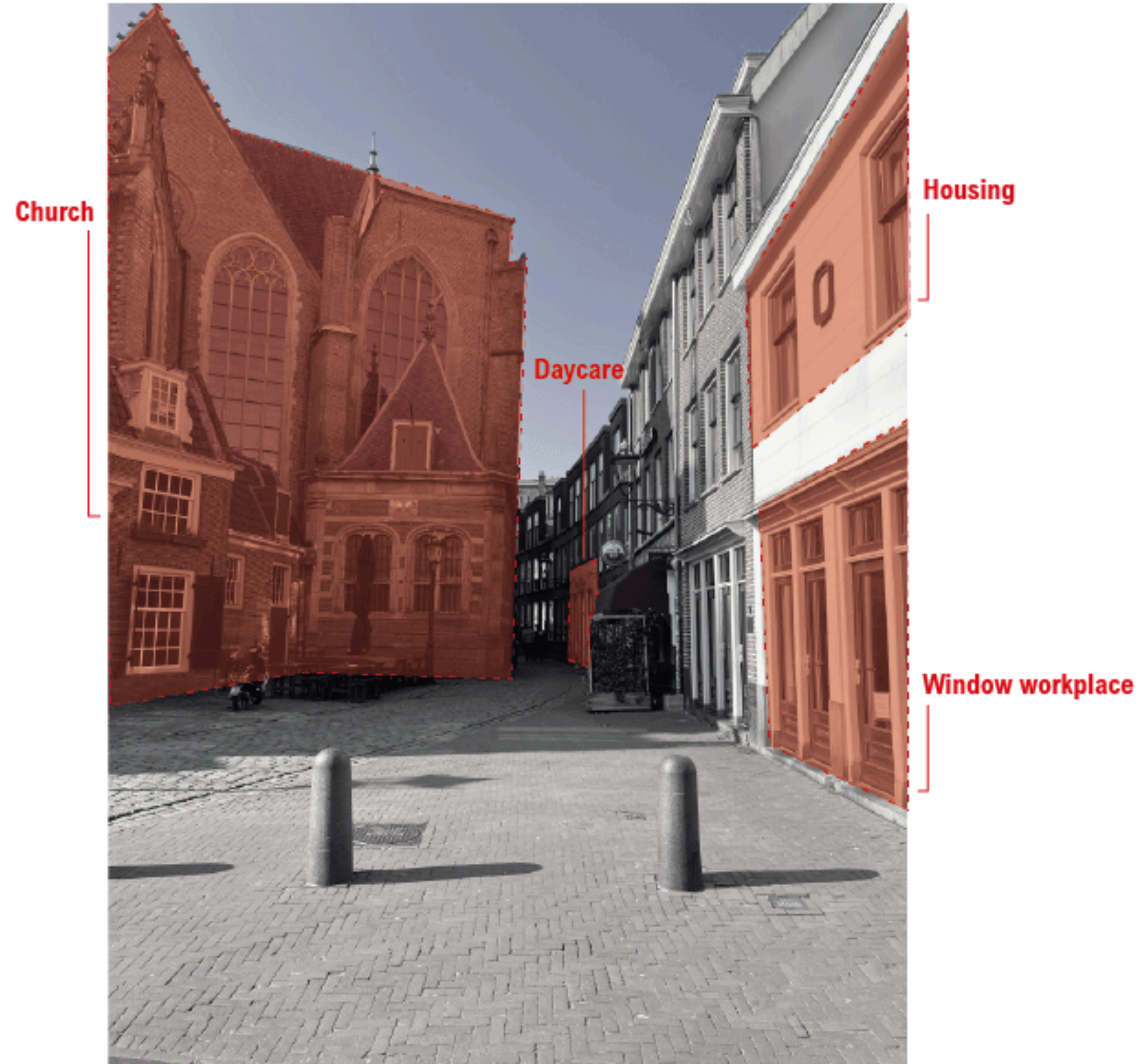


Sex theater



Sex shop

03 The spatial lens | **Regulated landscape** and mix of functions



Mix of functions on the Old Church Square.

03 The spatial lens | **Regulated landscape** and security measures



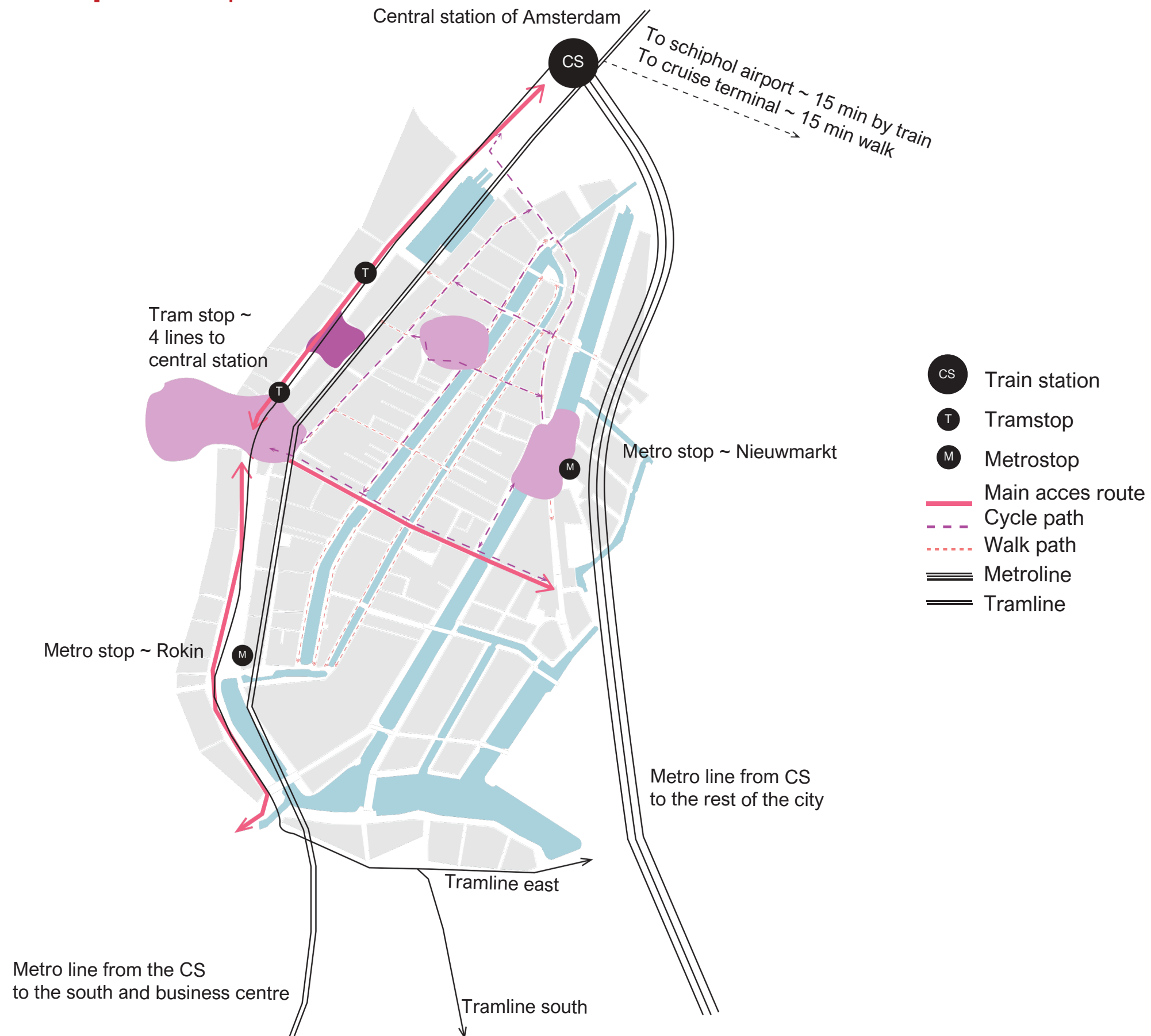
Collage of signs and CCTV cameras in de Wallen area.

03 The spatial lens | **Lived landscape** and users



Diversity of users within de Wallen.

03 The spatial lens | **Lived landscape** and spatial connection



03 The spatial lens | Lived experience



"There's so much to do around here!"

"The streets are so crowded and dirty"

"I can meet my friends easily at de Nieuwmarkt"

03 The spatial lens | **Lived landscape** and space

residential function is behind a fence to stop the unwanted ones
but what if you do not have a fence? isn't this public the public street - who is welcome here?

small signs of residents in a highly commercial street

first green in the public space, this trip

lots of demolition work, scaffolding and construction workers

first residential block with a front door on the streets

dam

nieuwmarkt

oude kerk

Spatial segregation and pressure on public space

03 The spatial lens | **Moral landscape**

Interviewee 2 And the window function is also outdated, even for women in general. Yes, from an emancipation perspective. By which I don't mean to say that women can't have that as a profession. But let's keep it a bit dignified, in a club or something. I'm fine with that. But presenting yourself like that.

Um, I wish, I wish there were ways to, to, like, educate everybody a bit more. Like I wish for example, sometimes with like the [museum]. Do you know that one? Something like that, where they have a lot of misinformation about sex work? Um, they don't want to tend to see a bit more discomfort amongst women with sex workers. They're not like the owner doesn't really care. The people who work there are nice people, but the owner doesn't really care about making sure that the stats are right. Like they have a lot of misinformation about trafficking. They have like, uh, model of a, of a window room that you can in and like stand in and take pictures of. That feels very voyeuristic, very sensationalizing to me, that that's how you make your money. So like, I can't understand why if you're a feminist, which no women are feminist, but like, I can understand you would feel uncomfortable with that. And so sex work is furthering the oppression of women and the objectification, objectification of women have all those thoughts kind of start to come right.

OK, and what do you think about walking through those little streets with sex workers? Interviewee: Yeah, during the day I do walk there sometimes. And it's not so busy on that street then. So I always a bit more aware of it then. I look around a bit more. Even and then I do find myself thinking... Oh, right, OK. You're standing. Right. But... I never actually walk right through that street or anything. So you see them for just a moment, but well... It really doesn't take more than a minute to walk past. interviewee Would you prefer to see this and like, because with women, it's a lot more like mirroring that goes on. Yeah. Uh, they can identify a bit more with the girl behind the windows. They can like see themselves there. It's like an option for them, right? Whereas with men, it's not so much like that. They engage with the red light district in a different way. With women, it's a lot more confronting, I think.

What do you think this place – or rather, the sex work here – offers to people who don't live here but want to visit Amsterdam? Interviewee: They're a bit hesitant about it. And they find it scary too, because they've heard all sorts of scary stories.

And because my parents had this idea that [the Red Light District] was really dangerous. They'd read all sorts of things about it in the papers.

workers to be more involved in policy making about sex work. Like policies that affect them are often they're often made without consulting sex workers at all, and they're often made with a lot of like, moral kind of impetus. Like it's a lot of people with moral judgments about sex work, making certain choices about it. Um, and that's something we want to try and put an end to as much as we can because it's really bad, inherently oppressive, inherently exploitative, all those things and making policy from those judgments that don't come from like a nuanced place. And in general, just with sex work, like especially with policy law, things like that, sex work should be approached as like a commercial phenomenon, as work, as a job. Of course, you need to consider the sexual aspect of it, but people focus more on the sex rather than they do on the job part, usually.

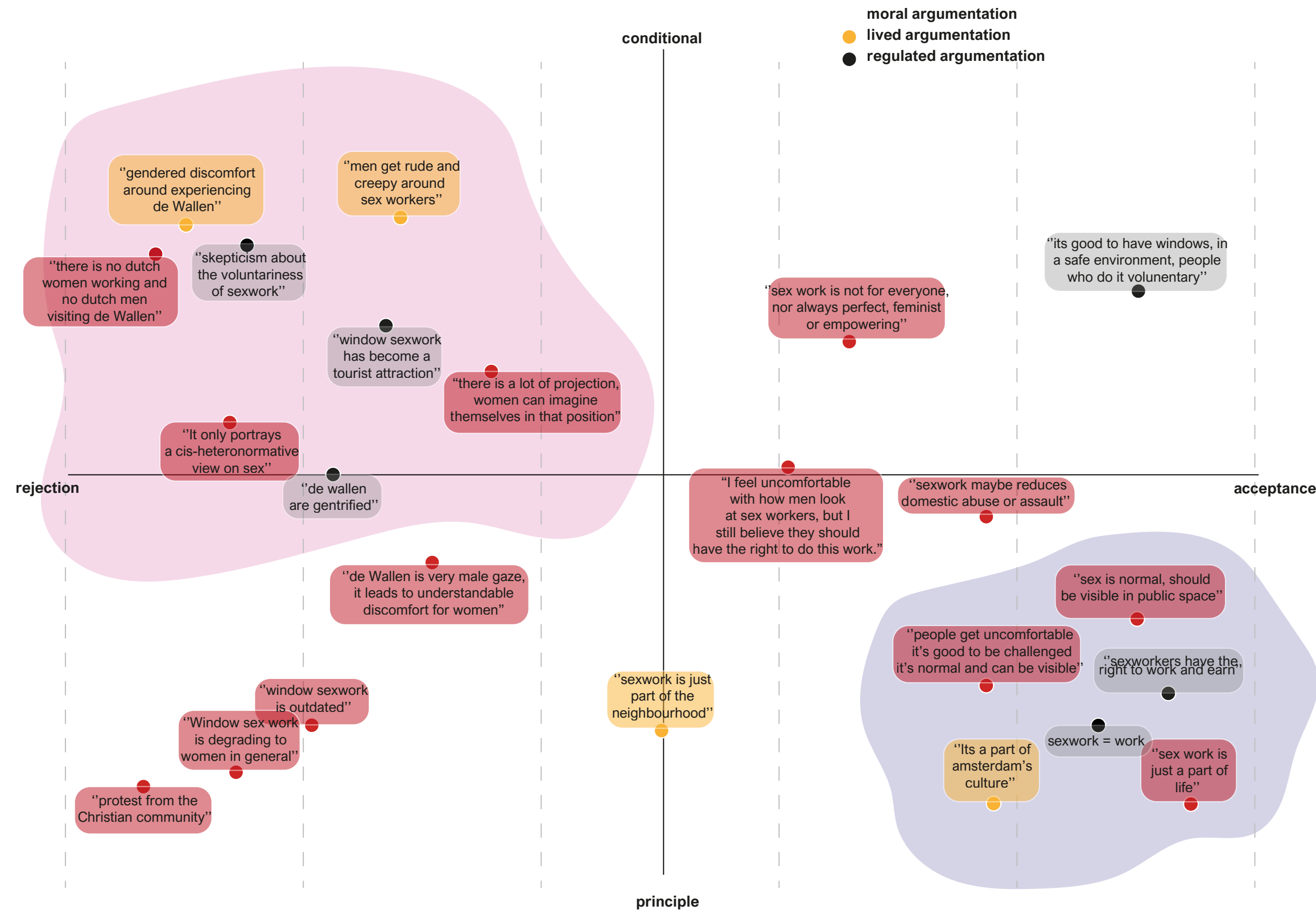
mind and I walk through the district, it doesn't make me feel better. Um, so it's a complicated thing. It's, but I still think those women should have the right to like, do that work and make that money, you know, even if it makes me very uncomfortable. Separate things. Yeah. So it's like a complicated thing. It's complex. Um, you have to be able to hold space for multiple especially with sex work. Yeah, yeah. All right.

Why do you feel unsafe sometimes then? Interviewee: I think it's a sort of instinct or something. You do think... It's mainly men walking around here. They're a bit tipsy in the evening. Or have taken something. Yes, then I think as a young woman you can quite easily start to feel unsafe. It's never that I think, 'Oh, I'm going to take a different route' or anything. It's just more that I'm a bit more alert when I'm walking there. But I'd rather walk there, so to speak, than somewhere in a forest all on my own. I'd feel more unsafe there.

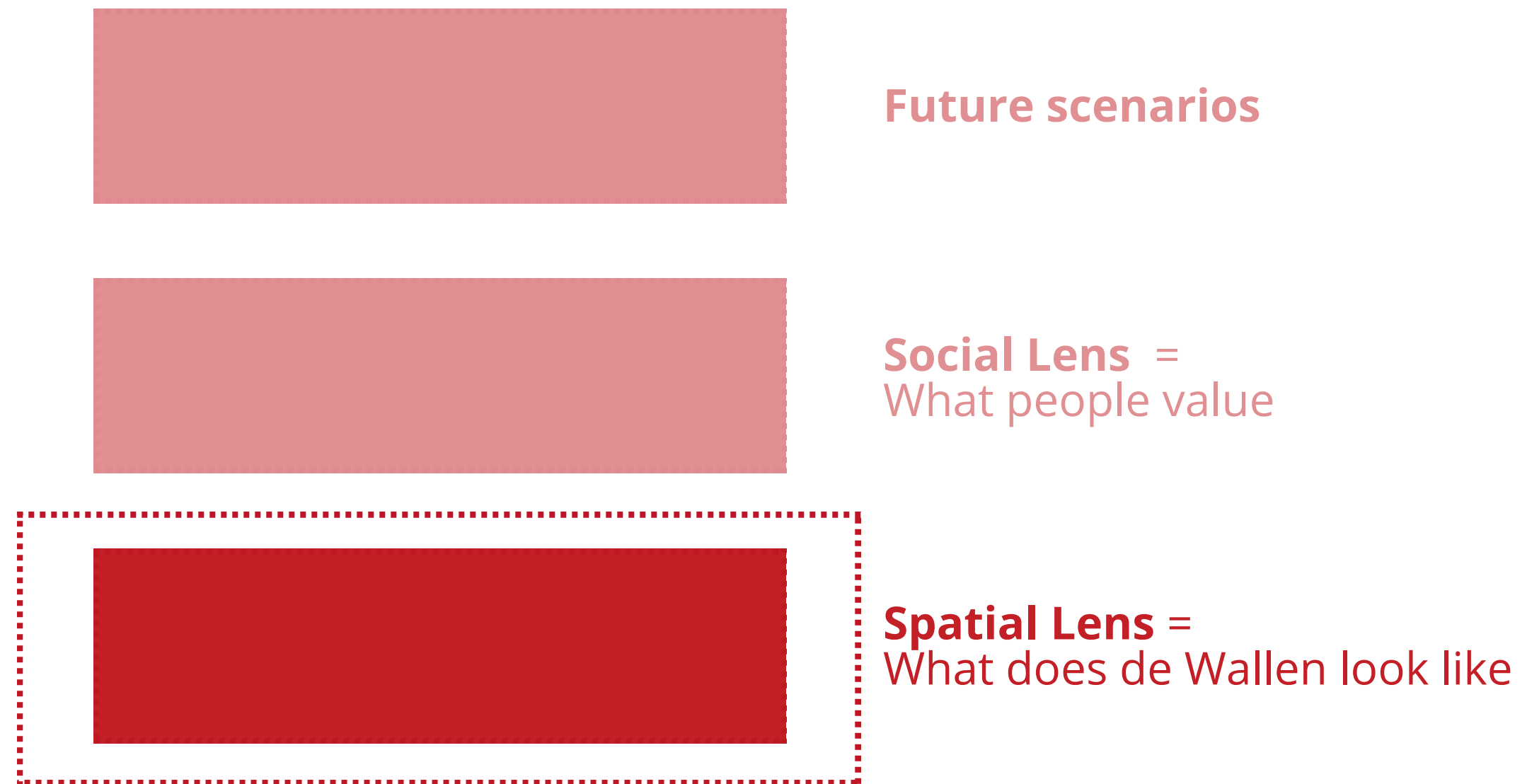
They all feel that the councillors and society see them as willless victims. And I always say, 'Yes, OK,' but the fact that you're sitting here talking to me means that you don't actually belong to that group.

Moral opinion on sex work in de Wallen

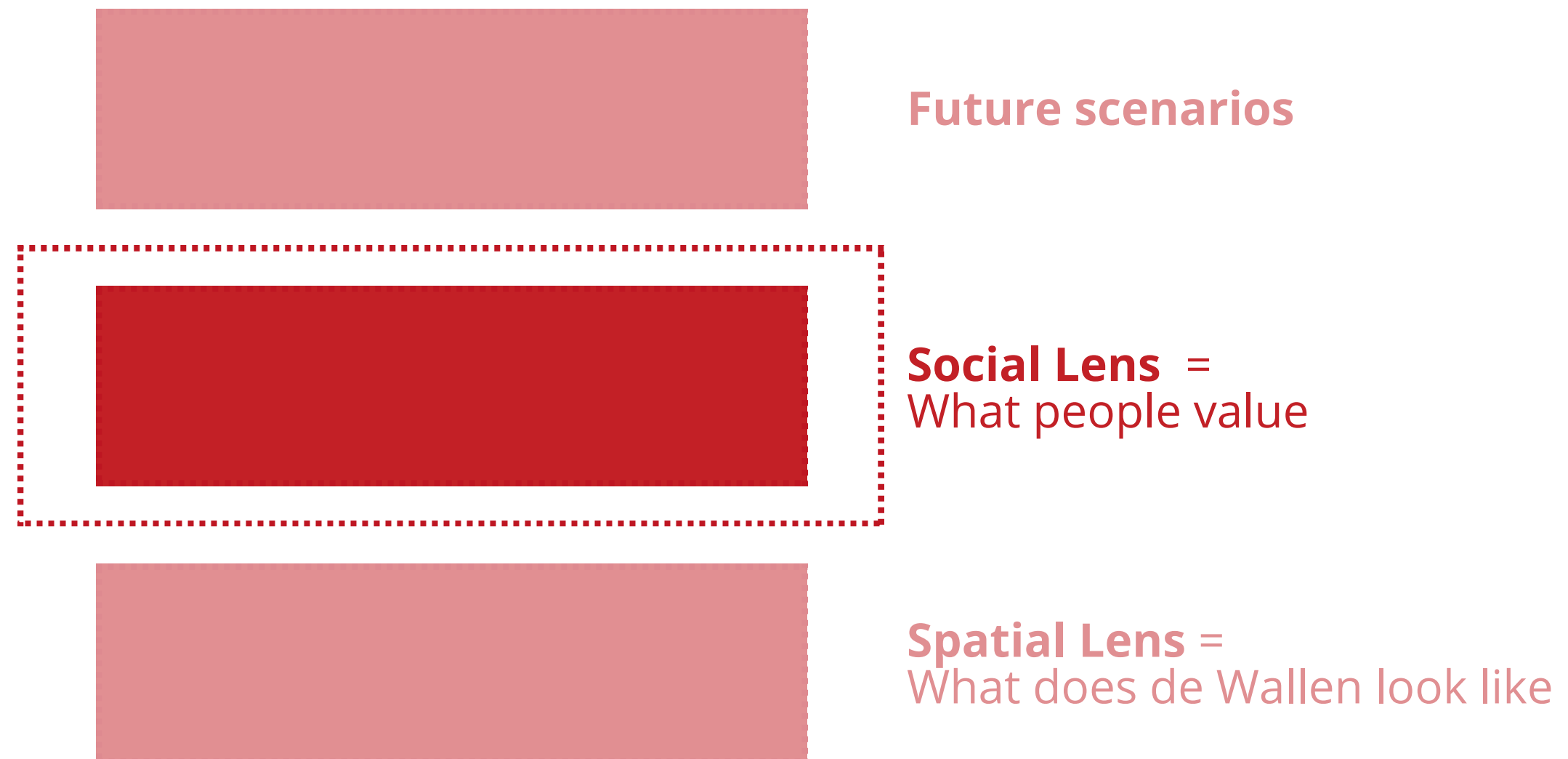
03 The spatial lens | **Moral landscape spectrum**



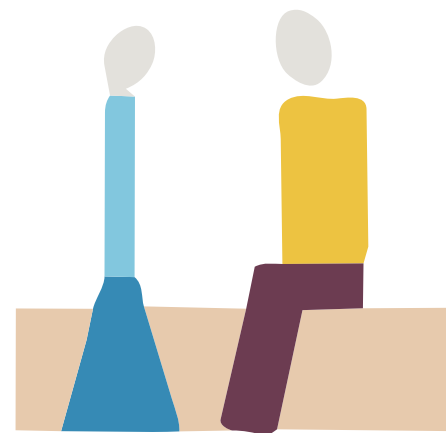
02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens



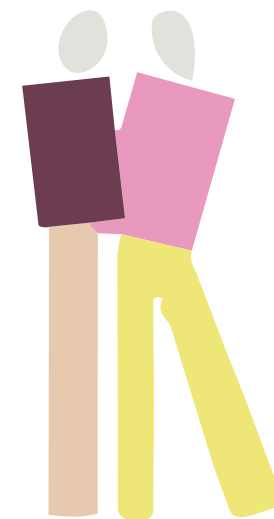
02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens



02 The research approach | Users and interviews



1 Cultural institution



7 Residents



3 Sex workers



4 Policy makers

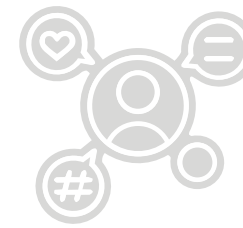
04 The social lens | The value framework



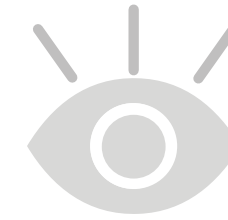
cultural / historic



community



informal social networks



visibility



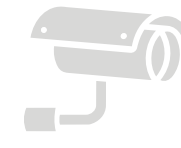
economic



autonomy



acceptance



safety



spatial concentration



heritage



liveliness



mix of urban functions



care



clean environment



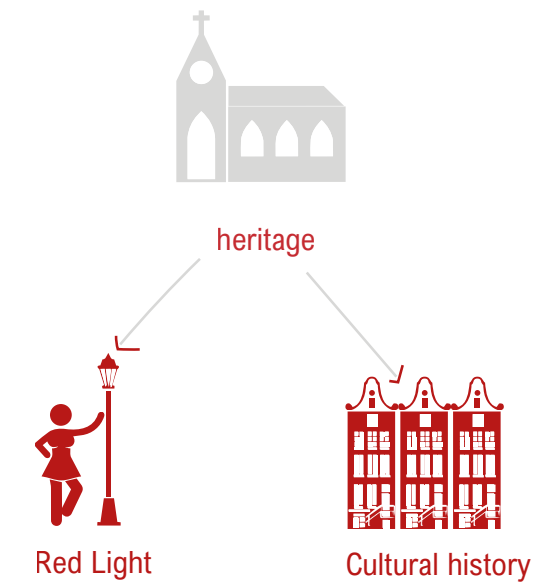
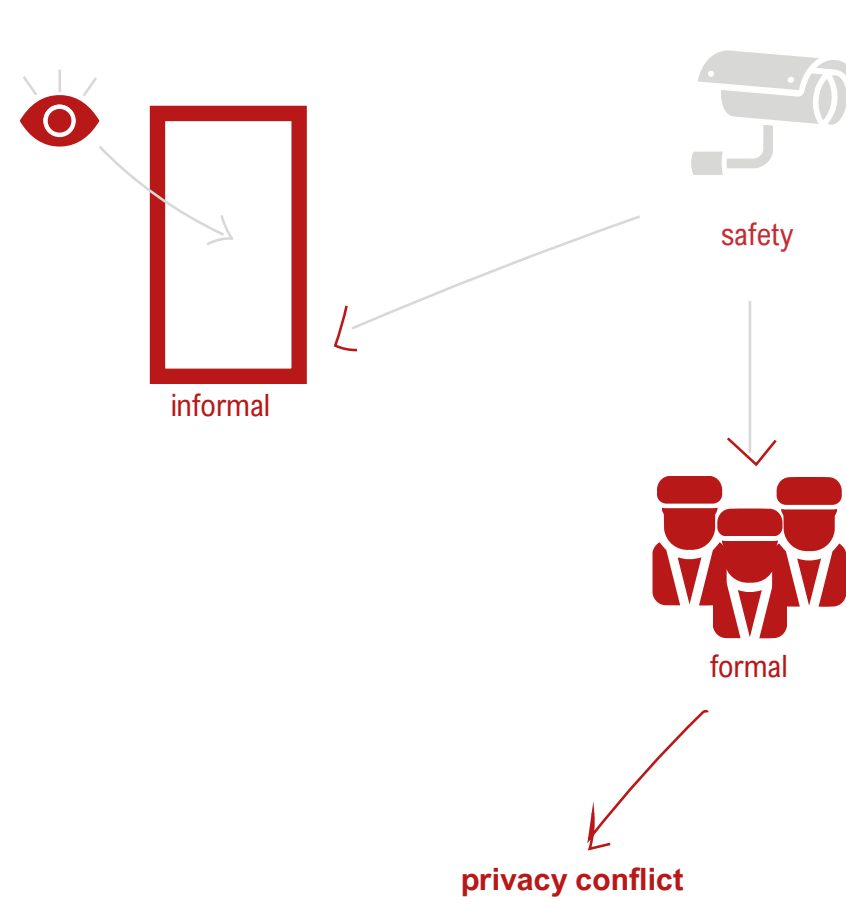
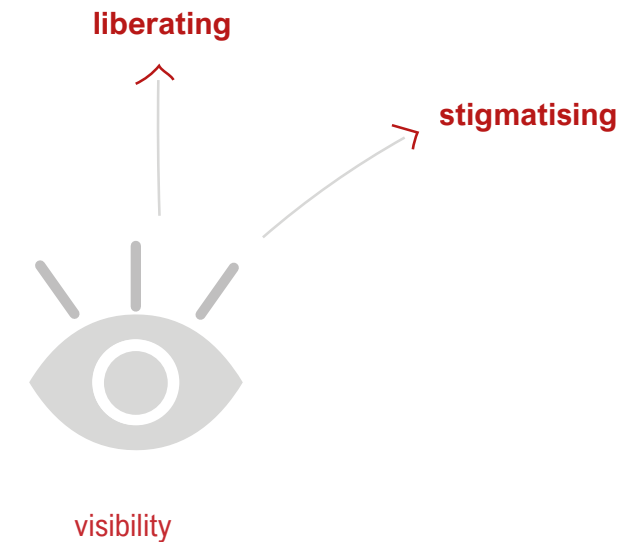
identity



authenticity

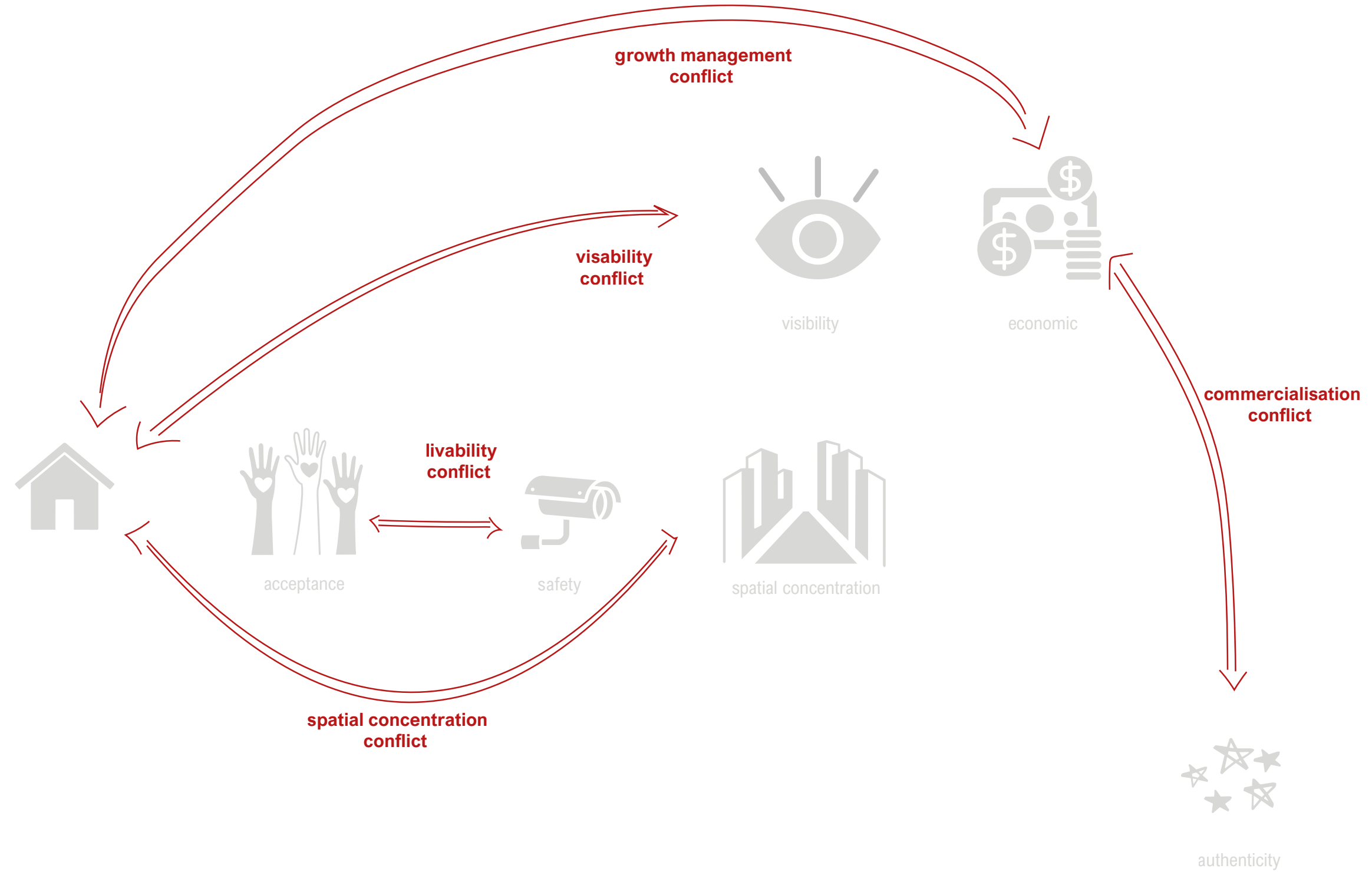
Value framework with 16 core values identified from the interviews.

04 The social lens | Value and interpretation



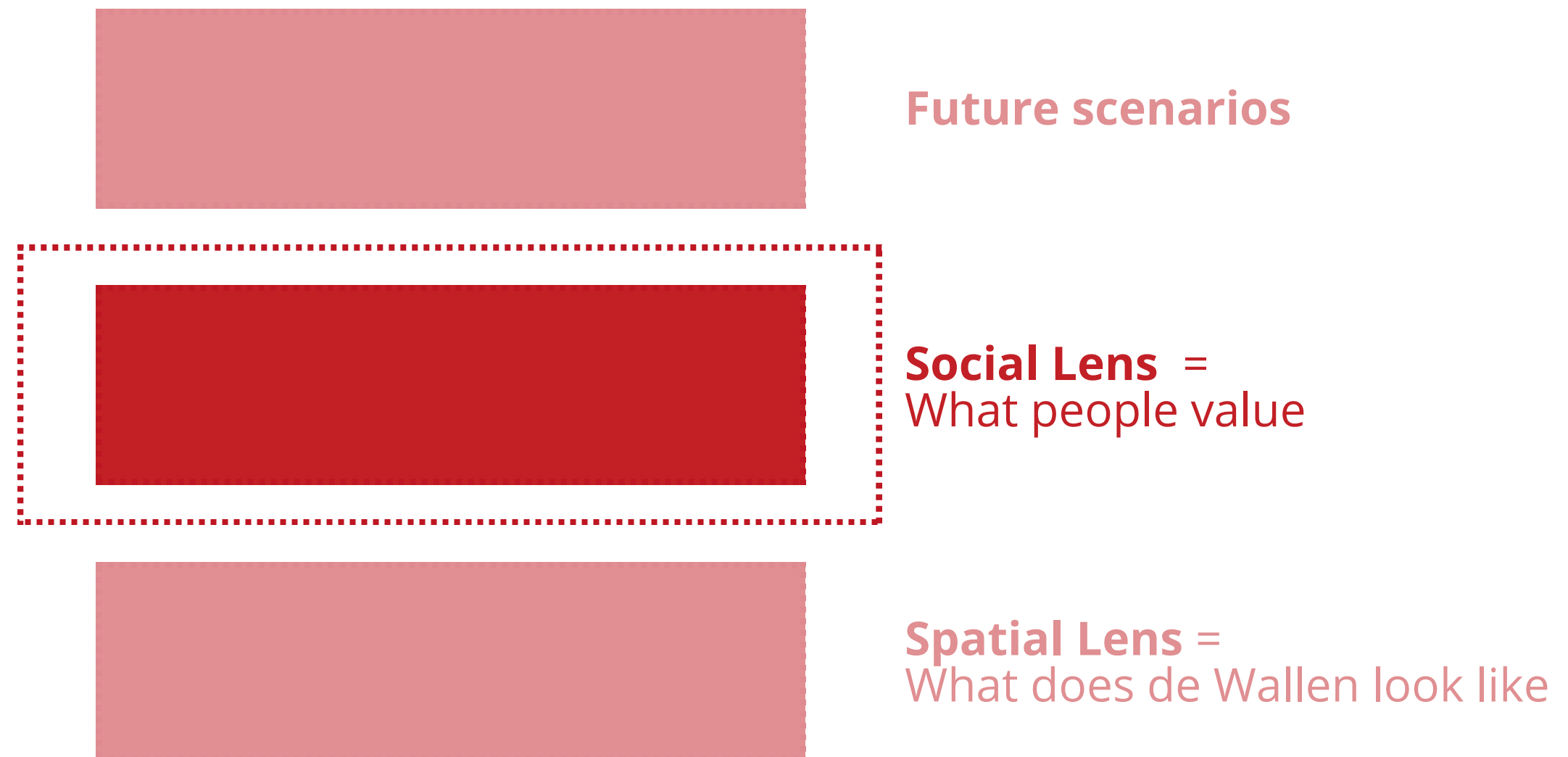
Values with different interpretations.

04 The social lens | Value and conflict

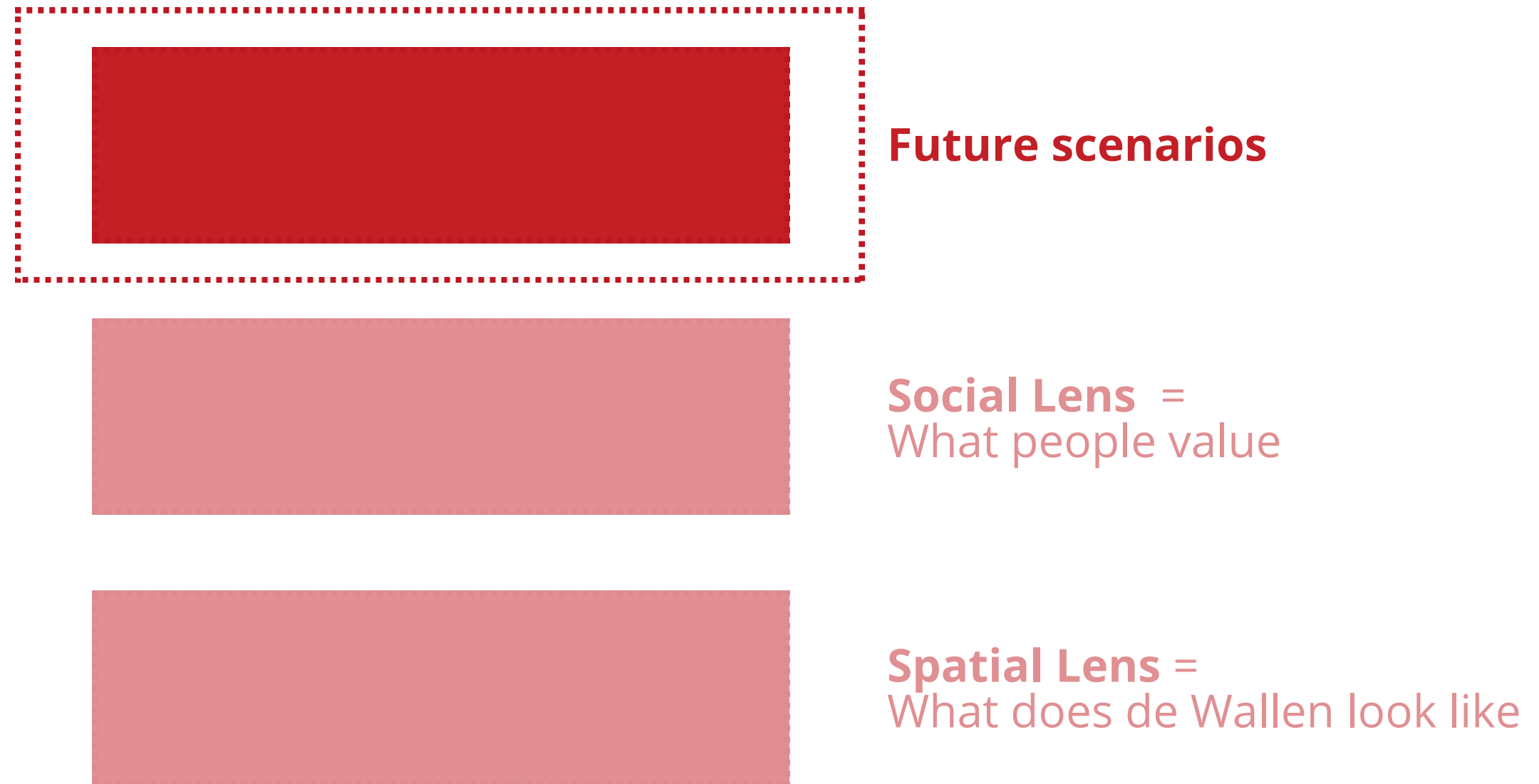


Conflicts between values.

02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens



02 The research approach | The spatial and social lens



05 Future scenarios | The drivers for the future

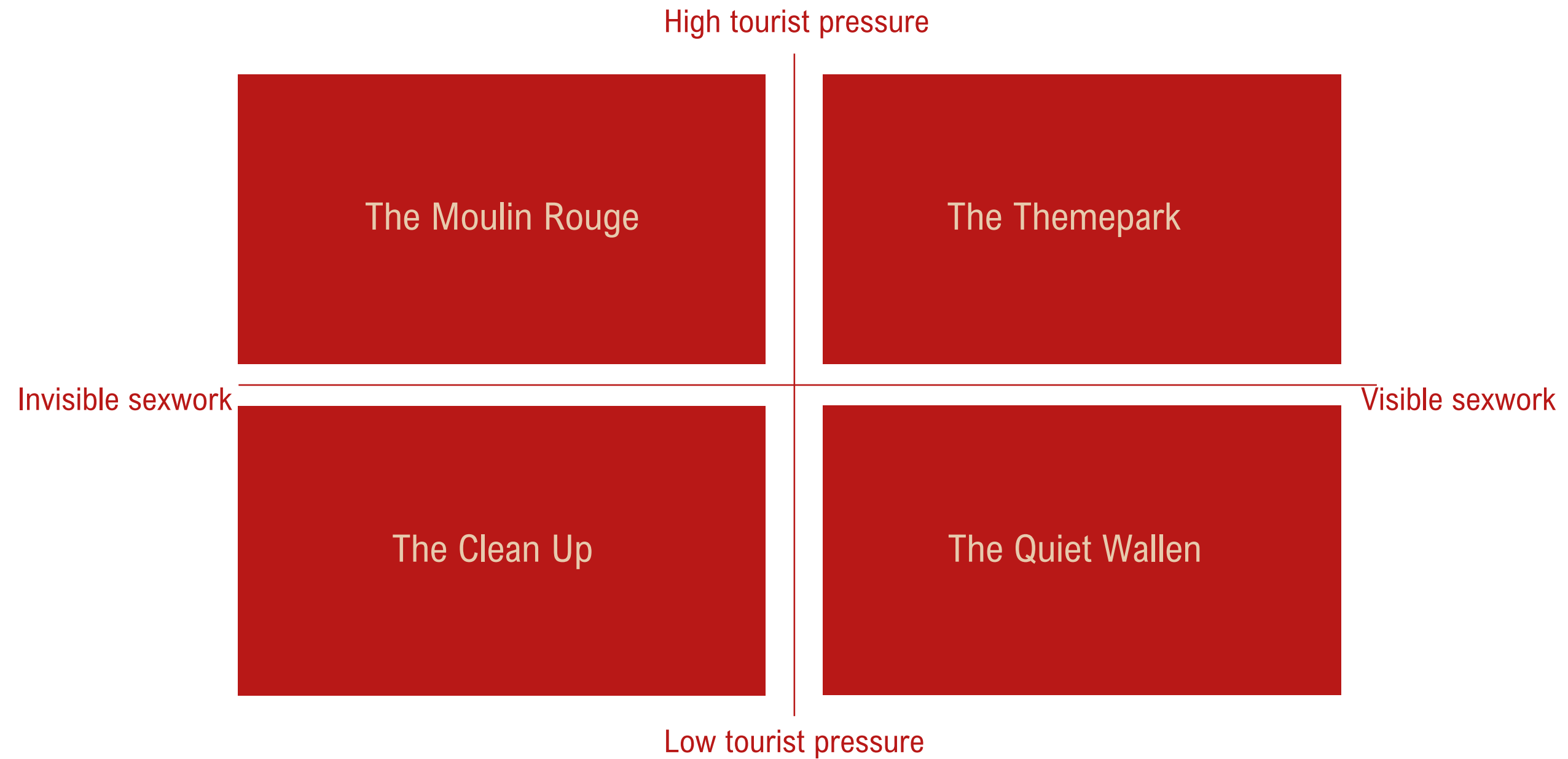
Digitalisation

Globalisation

Tourism

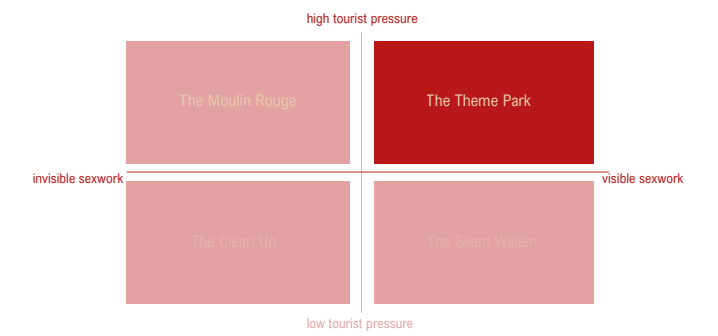
Future trends for red-light districts (Sabat, 2012).

05 Future scenarios | Scenario building

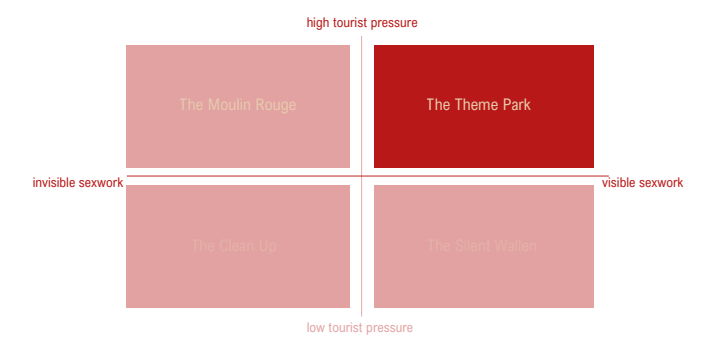


Scenario matrix

05 Future scenarios | The Themepark



05 Future scenarios | The Themepark



05 Future scenarios | The Themepark



1. Exploring the problem

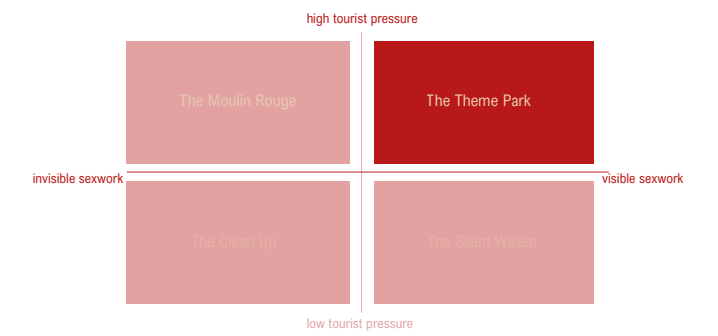
2. The research approach

3. The spatial lens

4. The social lens

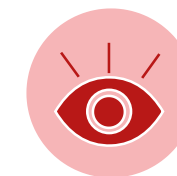
5. **Future scenarios**

6. Conclusion

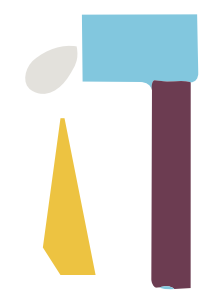


What shapes this future?

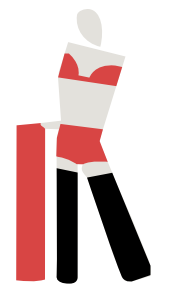
Who is in the picture?



Business owner

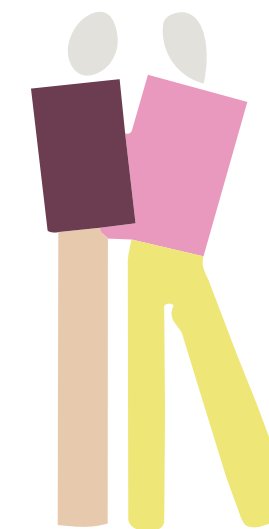
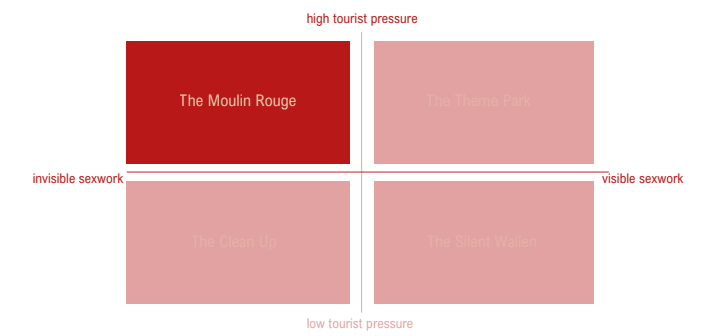


Tourist

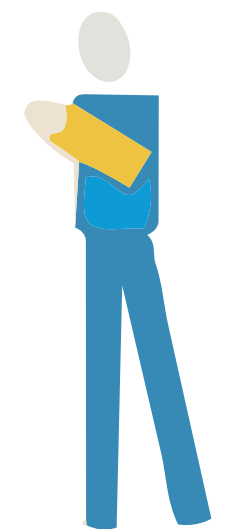


Sex worker

05 Future scenarios | The Moulin Rouge

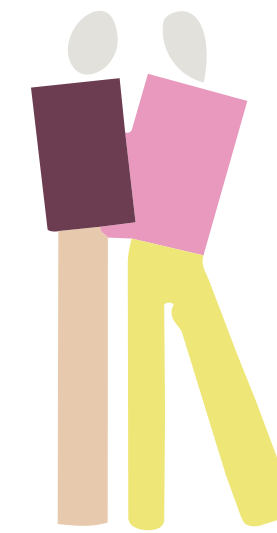
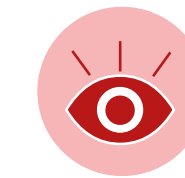
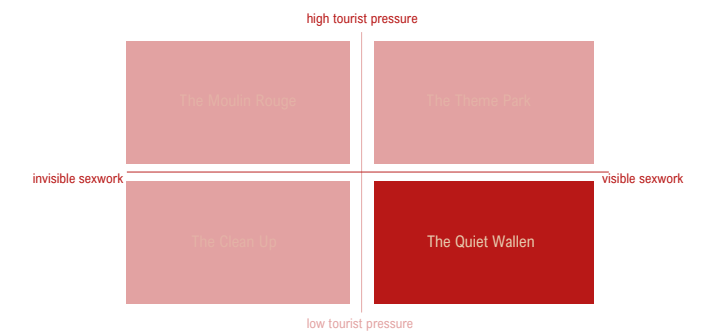


Tourist

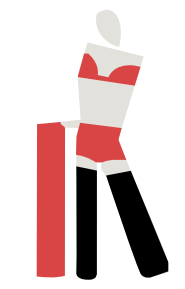


Business owner

05 Future scenarios | The Quiet Wallen

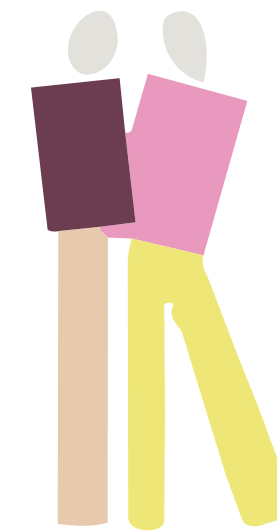
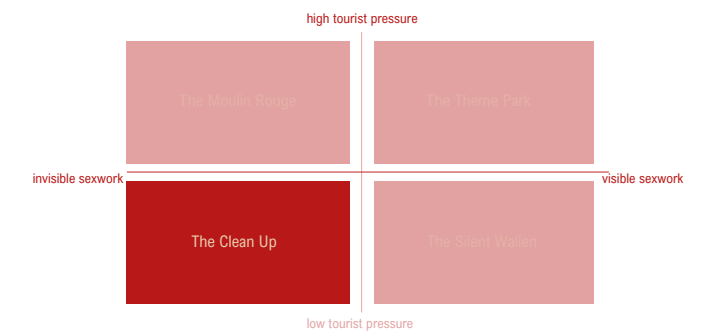


Resident

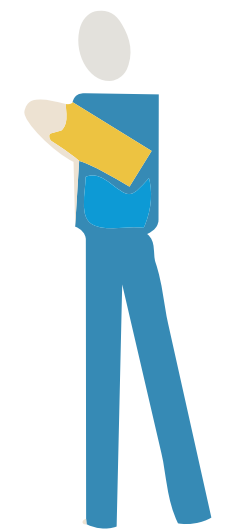


Sex worker

05 Future scenarios | The Clean up



Resident



Business owner

05 Future scenarios | Scenario building of **contra** scenario

SEKSWERKER manifest de toekomst van SEKSWERK IN amsterdam

Sekswerkers zijn hardwerkende, empathische, creatieve en veerkrachtige mensen. Wij belichamen de waarden waar de stad Amsterdam voor staat en we willen ons werk doen met autonomie, vrijheid, veilig en in goede gezondheid. Zonder gediscrimineerd te worden, niet alleen vanwege ons beroep maar ook vanwege kenmerken als (lichamelijke) beperking, ras of etniciteit, gender en seksualiteit of een het hebben van een migrantenstatus. We staan voor diversiteit, niet alleen in de verschillende vormen van sekswerk maar ook wat betreft onze achtergrond en ervaringen.

Omdat we allemaal anders zijn is het noodzakelijk dat er meerdere benaderingen zijn om sekswerkers te beschermen en te ondersteunen. Helaas worden sekswerkers regelmatig respectloos of discriminerend bejegend, zowel op persoonlijk vlak als in contacten met instanties. Te vaak worden sekswerkers met beperkingen, migranten van buiten de EU en LGBHTI+ personen aan hun lot overgelaten.

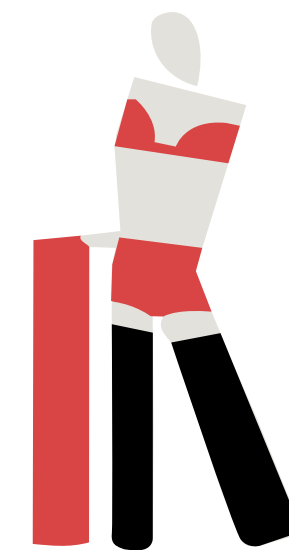
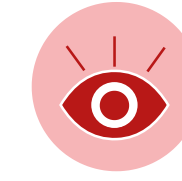
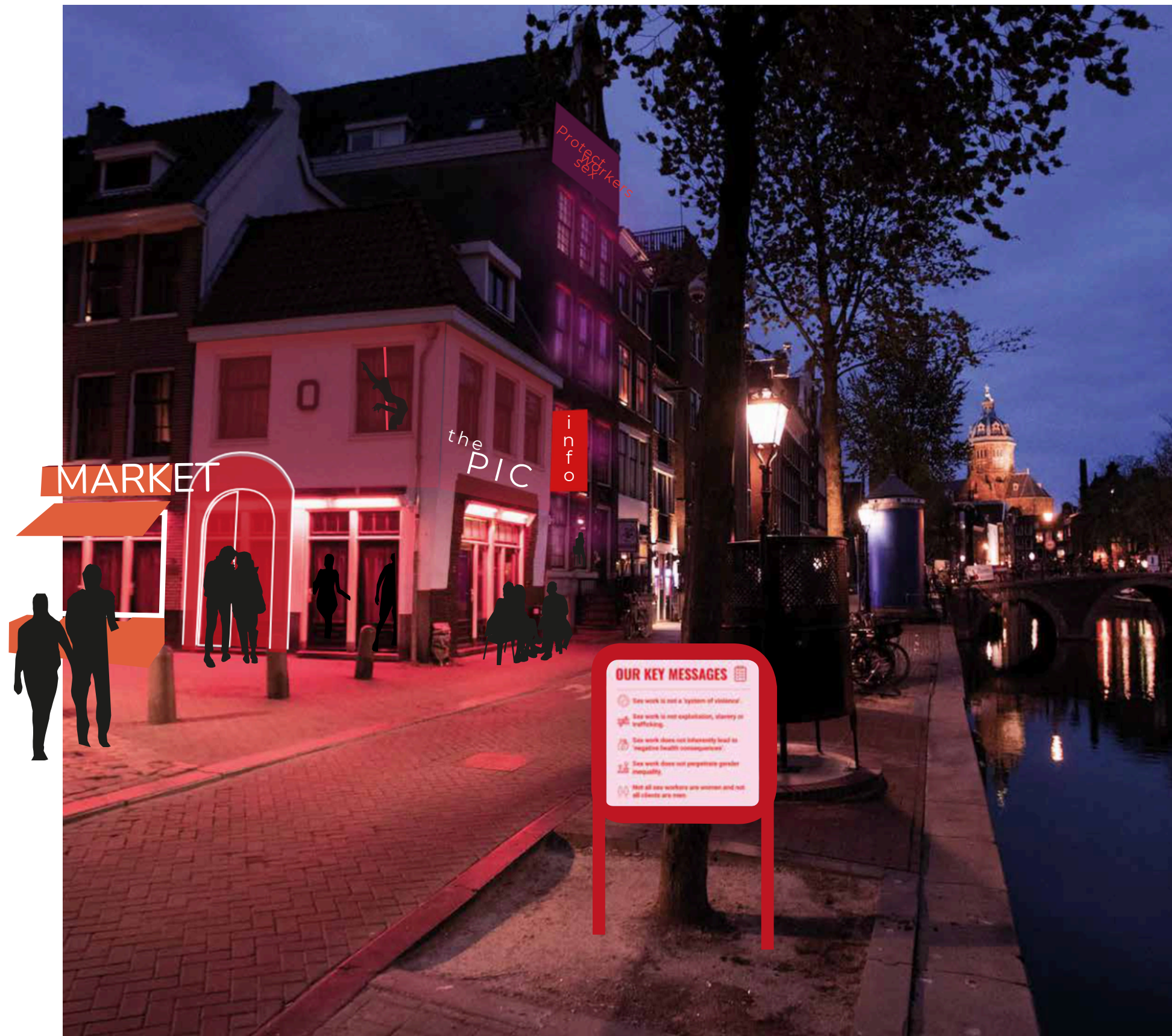
Velen van ons hebben het gevoel dat politieke besluitvorming omtrent sekswerk buiten ons om gaat en onvoldoende rekening houdt met de behoeften en rechten van sekswerkers.

Daarnaast ligt de focus van de discussie over sekswerk in Amsterdam met name op het raamwerk op de Wallen, terwijl de meeste sekswerkers elders werkzaam zijn. Mannelijke sekswerkers hebben nauwelijks toegang tot de vergunde werkplekken in Amsterdam, nu de laatste vergunde werkplek voor deze groep gaat sluiten. Transgender sekswerkers ervaren discriminatie en minder toegang tot veilige en vergunde werkplekken. Dit heeft tot gevolg dat velen noodgedwongen onvergund werken, wat leidt tot een grotere kans op uitbuiting en chantage. Maar onvergund werken leidt er ook toe dat men zeer huiverig is om de politie of andere instanties te benaderen als er hulp nodig is.

Het is tijd voor een andere aanpak. Met de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen in zicht willen ook wij gezien en gehoord worden. Dit manifest biedt concrete voorstellen om de benadering van sekswerk te veranderen van controlerend en beperkend, in een aanpak die zich richt op de rechten van sekswerkers. Vermeerderen van het aantal vergunde werkplekken en bijvoorbeeld het legaliseren van thuiswerken zal als gevolg hebben dat sekswerkers minder afhankelijk zijn van – soms malafide – eigenaren van bordelen, clubs of privéhuizen en versterkt hun onderhandelingspositie. Ook zal dit de vertrouwensrelatie tussen sekswerkers en de politie bevorderen, met name voor degenen die nu, door de regels, geen andere keuze hebben dan onvergund te werken. Beter luisteren naar de sekswerkers bij het nemen van besluiten, zal leiden tot betere regelgeving.

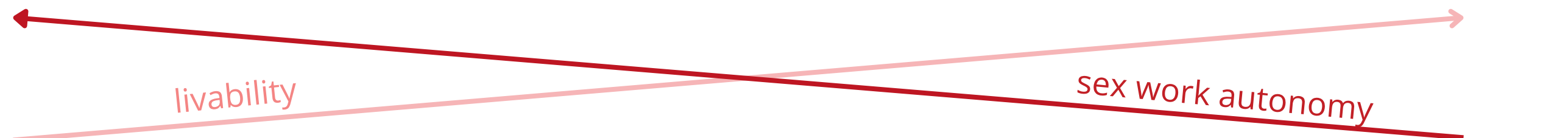
Manifesto written by sex workers in Amsterdam.

05 Future scenarios | The Sexy Wallen



Sex worker

05 Future scenarios | Overarching pattern in the scenarios



06 Conclusion | Main answer

De Wallen **cannot** be solved through **a single spatial** intervention.

Every transformation involves **unavoidable trade-offs**
and **no** intervention is **neutral** in its **consequences**.

Central question is therefore not **whether costs** are incurred,
but **who** bears those costs,
and which **values** we as a society **choose** to protect."

06 Conclusion | Recommendations for policy

1. Sex workers must be included in decision-making, not just consulted.

2. Approach with openness and discomfort. Sex work is not for everyone, nor always perfect or universally empowering, but that does not justify denying sex workers the right to do the work.

06 Conclusion | Recommendations for spatial interventions

Spatial interventions

1. Minimise commercialisation – review the zoning system.
2. More social functions – strengthen the residential character.
3. More housing – in areas where there is scope for building upwards.
4. Community-based property.
5. Truth-telling about sex workers.
6. (Thoughtful) redistribution of street-front working spaces.
7. Celebrate Amsterdam's freedom and diversity.
8. Greater safety — with a focus on sexual harassment.

06 Conclusion | Reflection

During the fieldwork, a sex worker mentioned how often they are asked to tell their story.

Thank you!

