



Remaking de Wallen
The future of Red Light Districts

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a few people for their contribution to my graduation project. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Yawei Chen and Vincent Baptist, for all their time, attention, support and wisdom during this period. I would also like to thank the other supervisors from the City of the Future studio, especially Joran Kuijper.

I would also like to thank the sex workers at the PIC for their time and knowledge, and for speaking with me. This also applies to all the other respondents which I had the privilege of interviewing. Without their knowledge, openness and friendliness, this would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my fellow students and friends. All their friendship, love and inspiration made this master's programme so much more special. Especially Lotte, sharing this experience with you – filled with moments of madness, frustration, and perhaps too many breaks – made the process not only bearable but enjoyable and memorable.

My final special thanks go to my sister, who is also navigating the journey of writing a thesis and with whom I have spent many of my days writing, swearing and laughing. She is crazy, like a dog, but I love her so, so dearly.

Master Thesis - A3 Report
MSC Architecture, Urbanism and Building Science - Track Management in the built Environment
Faculty of Architecture and The Built Environment
Technical University Delft

05.06.2026

Remaking The Wallen

Graduation Lab: City of The Future

Isa van der Heide
Student number: 4854861

Supervisors
First Mentor: dr. ir. Yawei Chen
Second Mentor: Vincent Baptist

Source for the cover picture: Jan Bogaerts, foto reportage "De Wallen", 1995, Archief Amsterdam

Abstract

Red-Light Districts have long been contested urban spaces where contradictory values around morality, tolerance, safety, tourism, and economic interests coexist. In many cities, these areas are increasingly subject to transformations that aim to reduce nuisance, regulate tourism, and reshape urban identities, often raising concerns about the future position of sex work in the city. This research focuses on De Wallen, Amsterdam's Red-Light District, which is currently facing renewed plans for transformation. De Wallen is a highly visible, multifunctional urban area where residential life, tourism, consumption, and regulated sex work intersect, yet remains characterised by persistent tensions related to liveability, safety, overcrowding, and deeply conflicting interpretations of its identity. Using a qualitative single-case study approach combining policy analysis, literature review, semi-structured interviews, and scenario planning, this research examines how the spatial characteristics of De Wallen and the value conflicts among its actors can inform future scenarios for the district. The findings demonstrate that every proposed transformation involves unavoidable trade-offs: interventions that improve liveability tend to reduce the visibility, safety, and economic security of sex workers. Future scenarios for De Wallen are therefore only possible if these trade-offs are made transparent, marginalised voices are structurally included, and policy-makers explicitly acknowledge that spatial interventions always encode choices about whose values are prioritised.

keywords: Red-Light District transformation, De Wallen, value conflicts, scenario planning, Sex work

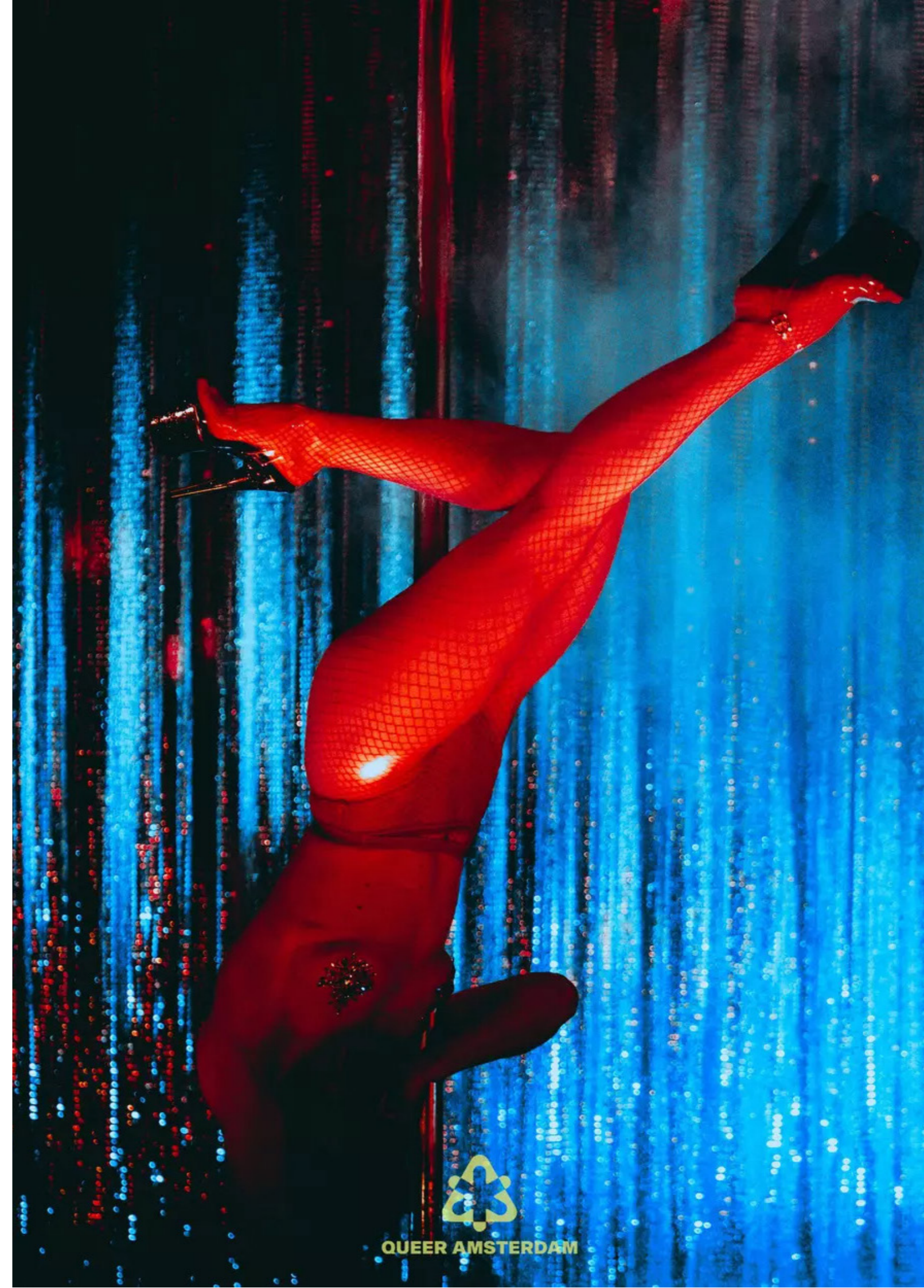


Table of contents

Acknowledgements	4	4.1.11 Experiences of everyday life	87
Abstract.....	5	4.1.12 Field work and street interviews	90
Motivation	9	4.1.13 Field work	91
Positionality	10	4.1.14 Street interviews	97
1.0 Introduction		4.1.15 conclusion on fieldwork and street interviews	105
1.1 Context and background.....	13	4.1.16 Everyday experiences of public space	106
1.2 Problem statement	17	4.1.17 Conclusion lived landscape	110
1.3 Research questions	18	4.1.18 The moral landscape of sex work	111
1.4 Relevance and goals	19	4.1.19 Moral Landscape spectrum	113
2.0 Literature review		4.1.20 Moral landscape conclusion	121
2.1 Red light Districts.....	24	4.2 Actors and value	126
2.2 Transformation of Red Light Districts	28	4.2.1 Perception of the problem	130
2.3 Value and conflict in transformation	34	4.2.2 Value framework	137
3.0 The approach		4.2.3 Value perception	139
3.1 Methodological framework	42	4.2.4 Value conflict	143
3.2 Research method	43	4.3 Future scenarios	141
3.3 Data collection	45	4.3.0 The future	143
3.4 Data synthesis	48	4.3.1 Trends	145
3.5 Ethical issues	50	4.3.2 Scenario building	146
4.0 The findings		4.3.3 The themepark	149
4.0 Reading guide	54	4.3.4 The moulin rouge	154
4.1 Spatial Characteristics	55	4.3.5 The clean up	157
4.1.1 The regulated landscape of sex work	57	4.3.6 The quiet Wallen	160
4.1.2 Expert interviews on regulated sex work sector	59	4.3.7 The sexy Wallen	163
4.1.3 The regulated economic system of de Wallen	65	4.3.8 Comparison	166
4.1.4 Housing, land-use mix and heritage.....	70	5.0 The ending	
4.1.5 Security regulations in de Wallen	73	5.1 Conclusion	171
4.1.6 Observation on the regulated landscape	77	5.2 Discussion	174
4.1.7 The safety in numbers	79	5.3 Future research	177
4.1.8 Conclusion regulated landscape	81	5.4 Recommendation	178
4.1.9 The lived landscape of sex work	83	5.5 Reflection	180
4.1.10 The people of de Wallen	87	6.0 Sources and appendix	

Motivation

I was sitting in front of the Bushuis in Amsterdam with my friend. She came to visit me during my study break at the university. We were talking about the city and what was happening around us, about how Amsterdam was becoming increasingly exclusive and gentrified. “Did you hear about their plans for the Wallen? Insane!” my friend said. “They are going to remove everything” I asked her what she meant, and she told me about the municipal plans for the new erotic centre. I looked around and was struck. Even though I was not deeply familiar with this part of Amsterdam and its culture, it felt like a confirmation of the direction the city was heading, the very direction we had just been discussing. “And what will be left? More Negen Straatjes??” she said.

This brief conversation, in September 2025, became the starting point for this research. The question had, however, been forming for longer. Since reading *Smooth City* by Rene Boer, the concept had stayed with me describing a city driven by an increasing desire for perfection, efficiency, and control, one that becomes sanitised, where urban life is made smoother at the cost of everything marginal, complex, and diverse. Alongside this, I became aware of the place of queer and erotic culture within Amsterdam. Besides other things, represented these spaces for me the kind of diversity and complexity that the Smooth City logic tends to put under pressure.

This tension became the foundation of this research. Rather than focusing solely on critique, however, this thesis is oriented toward the future: toward understanding what alternative urban visions might look like, and what role spaces of erotic culture and sex work might play within them. It is guided by a belief that the city can be otherwise.

Hope you enjoy reading it!

Positionality Statement

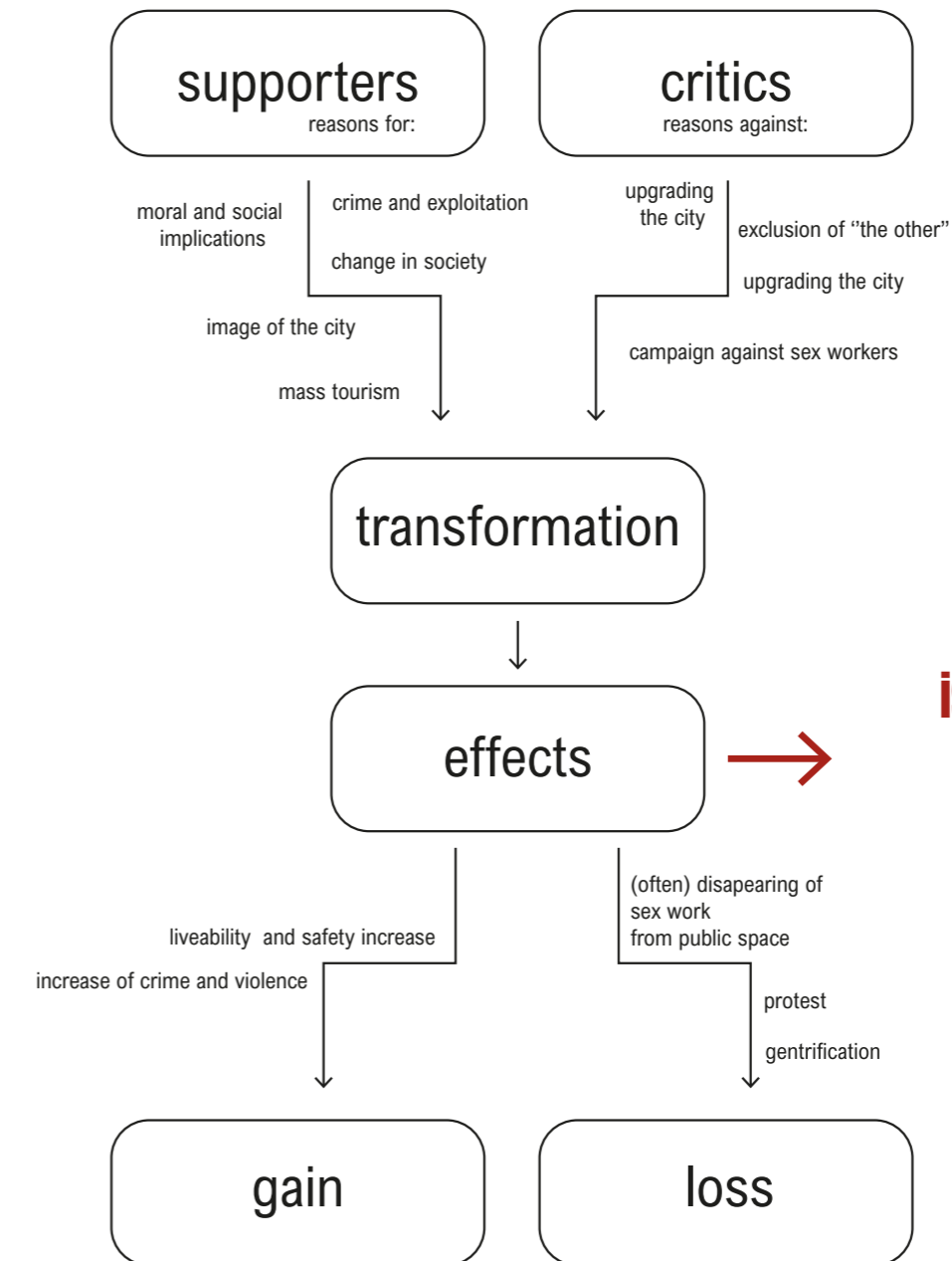
As a researcher, I write from a position that is different from that of the people that use the space that I study. And while I bring care and critical attention to this work, I am not a sex worker, nor have I lived the realities that shape the lives of those I write about. I am an outsider to this community, and I approach this research with the awareness that my social position, including my race, class, and professional status, insulates me from the stigma, violence, and marginalization that sex workers navigate daily. Therefore, I cannot fully know their experiences, and I do not claim to speak for them. Rather, I try to listen carefully, represent their perspectives with honesty and respect, and try to remain accountable to the limits of my own standpoint.

1.0 introduction

1.1 Context and background

Red Light Districts have long occupied ambiguous and paradoxical places within cities. Red Light Districts are urban areas with a concentration of commercial sex or erotic activities. This concentration of sex work into one district has been a common urban trend since the 19th century (Fiolka et al., 2022). They are spaces that are simultaneously “marginalised and romanticised, avoided and frequented, opposed and cherished” (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020). Burgers (2000) and Singelenberg & Van Gent (2020) describe Red Light Districts as a function of everyday consumption and as praised spaces associated with excitement and misbehaviour. (Hubbard, 2012) characterises such areas as places where contradictory values coexist: “noise and stillness, the sacred and the profane, repression and tolerance” (Hubbard, 2012, p. 195). In relation to contradictory values, (Mörk & Brandellero, 2024) point out yet another contradiction. The visible character of Red-Light Districts is argued to contribute to social tolerance and the normalisation of sex work. On the other hand, this same characteristic causes many researchers and policymakers to raise moral and social concerns.

Among other reasons, these moral and social concerns about sex workplace Red Light Districts in cities as a matter of debate in recent decades. As cities are dealing with changed, debates about the place of sex work in the city have intensified (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020). The reasons for the changes can vary greatly, for example, it no longer fits the image of the city, or it attracts too much crime (Hubbard, 2004). Another reason for debates, according to critics, is the attempts to “clean up” RLDs, removing “undesirables” to make way for new investments, middle-class residents, and new consumption spaces (Sanders-McDonagh et al. 2016). Across cities in the world, formerly notorious sex work areas such as Times Square in New York, Place Pigalle in Paris, Surabaya in Jakarta and the Reeperbahn in Hamburg have undergone substantial spatial and functional transformations since the 1990s, sometimes completely removing sex work as urban function. These shifting geographies of sex work have attracted sustained scholarly attention, particularly in relation to the effects of the transformation in relation to liveability, displacement and gentrification (Loopmans & Van den Broeck, 2011). Most of these transformations of Red Light Districts were followed by protests as they did not always result in the desired outcomes for sex workers (Setyawan et al., 2024). Sex workers and other marginalized groups in Red Light Districts have historically had limited influence on policymaking. Their voices are often underrepresented or overshadowed by dominant narratives from government, media, and residents associations (Mörk & Brandellero, 2024). In addition, the transformation of red-light districts often involves many contradictory values and conflicts among the residents, business owners and



But?
WHO is affected,
HOW are they
affected and
is everybody affected
equally or is there
POWER ASYMMETRY?

Figure 1: Problem visualisation

governing bodies, making it a contested urban space. Understanding the future of the Red-Light Districts therefore requires a shared understanding of actors and their values, focusing on marginalised voices and power asymmetries.

The Case | This research focuses on de Wallen, Amsterdam’s historic Red Light District, a globally recognised urban area characterised by a dense historic street pattern, thirteenth-century buildings and canals, where sex work has been spatially embedded since the city’s origins as a harbour town (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012; Mörk & Brandellero, 2024). The legalisation of sex work around 2000 formalised a long-standing culture of tolerance by recognising sex work as legitimate labour, resulting in a highly visible and regulated form of window sex work that has shaped a distinctive adult-themed urban landscape alongside bars, coffee shops, hotels and other tourist-oriented functions (Hubbard, 2012). While this visibility has enabled regulation and a degree of worker safety, it has simultaneously contributed to de Wallen’s commercialization and economic value as a tourist destination. As well as intensified moral, social and spatial tensions.

Today, the area faces persistent liveability challenges, including overtourism, pressure on public space, nuisance, perceived insecurity and a growing sense of alienation among residents of the city, with municipal research indicating that nearly 80 percent of Amsterdam residents actively avoid the city centre (rapport_binnenstadsenquete_2024, z.d.) (Couzy, 2019) These pressures affect not only residents of de Wallen but also sex workers, who experience overcrowding, disruptive tourist behaviour and reduced control over their working environment (Van Liempt & Chimienti, 2017). De Wallen’s international visibility and symbolic role within Amsterdam’s global image further complicate governance, positioning the area within global circuits of tourism and mobility rather than solely local urban dynamics (Hubbard, 2012). Functioning simultaneously as a residential neighbourhood, a consumption and leisure zone and a site of sexualised commerce, de Wallen embodies what Mörk & Brandellero (2024, p. 674) describe as an ‘intersection of residency, consumption, recreation and sexuality’, generating everyday frictions between users with competing claims to space. These tensions are amplified by conflicting interpretations of the district’s identity, ranging from moral decline to cultural heritage, which underpin ongoing debates and protests involving residents, sex workers, business owners and the policy makers over whose values should guide the area’s future development (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012; Fiolka et al., 2022).

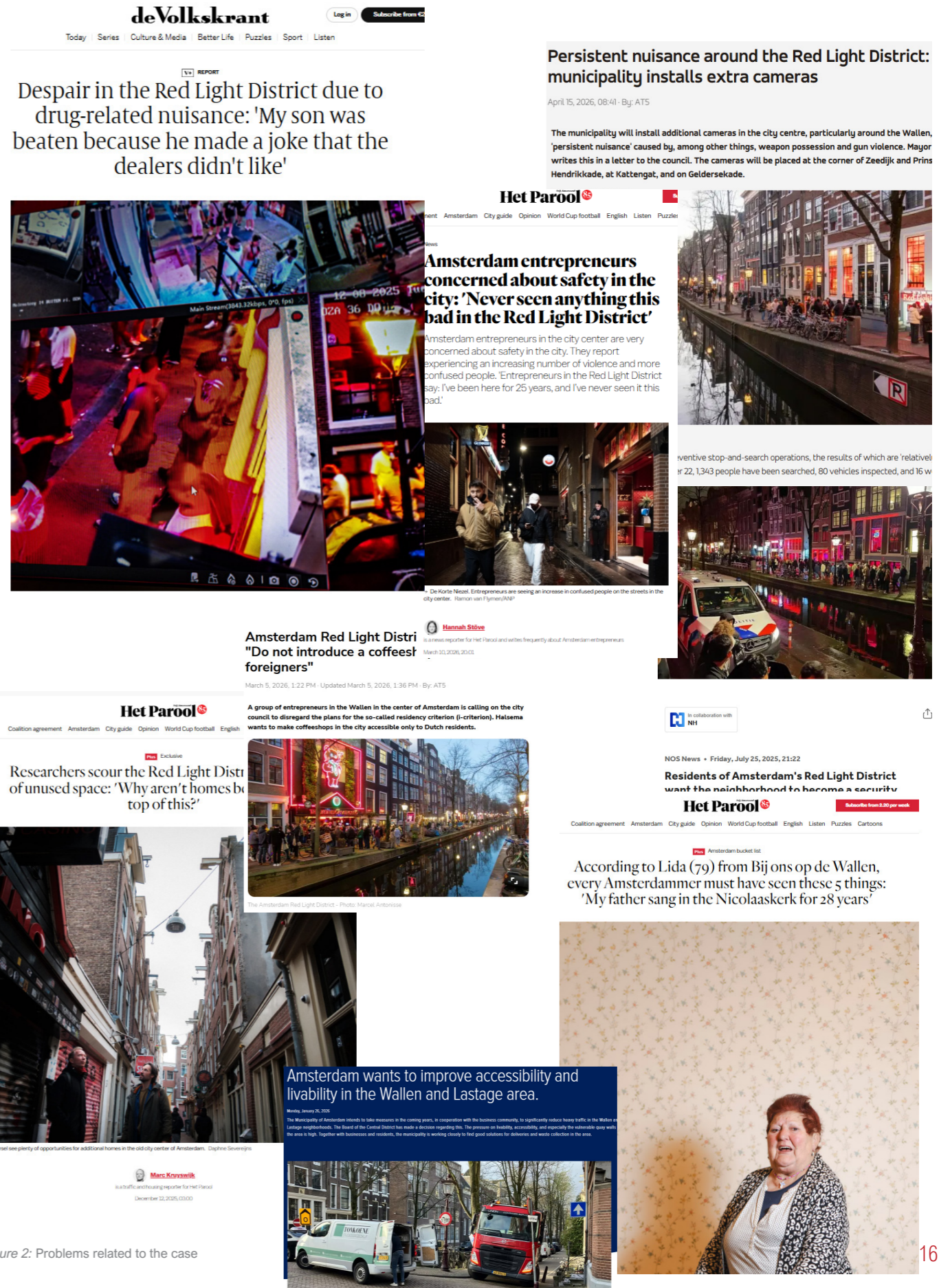


Figure 2: Problems related to the case

1.2 Problem statement

Problem statement | The future of the sex work landscape of de Wallen in Amsterdam remains highly uncertain. Despite previous policy interventions, the area remains a highly contested urban space characterized by persistent challenges. Conflicting values and recurring spatial conflicts has led to the current misalignment among users (e.g. residents, business owners, sex workers, and municipal authorities) regarding both the nature of the challenges facing de Wallen and the desired direction for its transformation. This lack of a shared vision hinders efforts to create a future for the neighbourhood. Existing policies often prioritize reducing visibility, nuisance, and change of the image, while insufficiently engaging with the everyday spatial and social realities of sex work and the multifunctional urban space. Such approaches risk only displacing existing problems rather than resolving them, potentially increasing the vulnerability of sex workers and spatial inequalities. Consequently, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of the existing challenges and potentials, spatially and socially, and the development of future scenarios to envision alternative futures that provide just space for all actors.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question guiding this research is:

“How can the spatial characteristics of de Wallen and the conflicting values among its actors inform the development of future scenarios for the future of sex work in Amsterdam’s Red-Light District, de Wallen?”

To answer this question, the following subquestion are formulated:

- *SQ1. What are the spatial characteristics and functions, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?*
- *SQ2: “How do different actors perceive and value de Wallen, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?”*
- *SQ3: “What future scenarios can be developed for the transformation of De Wallen?”*

This thesis is structured to move from theoretical grounding toward empirical analysis and normative reflection on the future of De Wallen. The theoretical framework establishes the conceptual lenses used throughout the research. It introduces the three landscape frameworks, regulated, lived, and moral. Then it then narrows toward Red-Light Districts as urban phenomena, examining how such districts have been historically understood, governed, and transformed. The framework concludes by addressing the values associated with Red-Light Districts. The methodology explains the research design, justifies the three landscape frameworks as analytical tools, and describes how spatial analysis and value mapping were combined to produce the four future scenarios that form the core output of this research.

The results are presented in three parts. The first maps the spatial characteristics of De Wallen across the three landscapes. The second presents the actor analysis, examining how different users perceive and value the area and where their values conflict. The third presents the four future scenarios, each representing a different configuration of spatial and social priorities with its own trade-offs. The thesis closes with a conclusion directly answering the main and sub-questions, followed by a discussion of broader implications, a reflection on the academic contribution, an account of the research’s limitations, and finally a set of recommendations for policy-makers, planners, and future researchers.

1.4 Relevance and goals

Academic significance | This research contributes to a growing body of research on Red Light Districts and transformation of these areas. Current research focuses mostly on safety, policy and the moral side of sex work. There is a lack of knowledge on the integration of sex work in the city landscape. In addition, there is a particular focus on sex work as an illegal activity and on public space, with less attention paid to regulated red light districts and what their position in the city should be. It is important to focus on this because there are many Red Light Districts in Europe and their transformations are often determined by legislation and policy, but not by a broader urban vision of red light districts as part of the city (Weitzer, 2014). This research identifies and analyses conflicting values and spatial characteristics of the Red-Light District. To eventually create scenarios for the future and attempts to answer the question of what the sex work landscape will look like in the Red Light District. The aim is to ultimately present a possible strategy based on the scenarios, considering the voices of sex workers, residents and business owners. This could potentially provide guidance for policy or area development.

Scope | This study examines the spatial and social challenges and potential at the Red Light District, de Wallen in Amsterdam, to subsequently design possible scenarios to relating to these challenges. It analyses challenges in the social and spatial realm to get a better understanding of the different values of different actors on de Wallen. Due to time restraints, the transformation of Red light Districts is only considered in Amsterdam, not focusing on other cities. That makes this research a qualitative research based on a single case study. Additionally, the perspectives of social and spatial are chosen for this research, so others are not within the scope of this research. The reason for these variables is because of the assumption that these variables shape future of de Wallen the most.

This study involves qualitative data-gathering methods, including semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in de Wallen and scenario planning. While the focus is on participatory methods for urban development, this research does not cover design aspects related to urban development projects. Another important notion, this research rejects the idea that sex work is by definition exploitation. Sex work is work. However, exploitation does exist; this is mainly due to criminalisation, uncertain residence status and policy, lack of rights and protection.

2.0 literature review

2.0 Literature review

This chapter examines three central concepts; Red Light Districts, values in RLDs, and RLD transformations, through a review of relevant literature, structured in line with the sub-questions of this research.

The first section addresses Red Light Districts, focusing on their spatial characteristics and functions. It draws on literature concerning the geographies of sex work and explores broader trends that are reshaping RLDs, including De Wallen.

The second section examines values in RLDs, with particular attention to different user groups, their perspectives, and the conflicts that emerge between them.

The third section focuses on RLD transformations, discussing various forms of transformation, the diverse visions that underpin them, and the conflicts that arise in the process.

Each concept is analysed in relation to broader theoretical frameworks, and the chapter critically engages with key debates on RLD transformations and the relationship between spatial change and place value. This analysis ultimately informs the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework.

2.1 Red light Districts

Spatial characteristics | Red-light districts are areas in cities or towns that are themed around commercial sex (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). They consist of clusters of activities or individuals that are characterised by sex work. However, some districts have few or no visible sex workers and consist of entertainment or other services. The combination of sex work into one district has been a common urban trend since the nineteenth century (Fiolka et al., 2022). These processes worked over time by fostering a space where actors knew commercial sex was more of a secure option because of lighter enforcement of regulations and policing. Some Red Light Districts are single-use, largely consisting of only sex related businesses. Others are more multi-functional, located in the city centre amongst many other functions (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012; Mörk & Brandellero, 2024). This can be a mixture with functions associated with leisure activities, bars, restaurants, hotels, gambling arcades, strip clubs, and porn shops.

In some case Red Light Districts have mixed functions that have nothing to do with sex and the leisure industry, like residential or retail functions (Weitzer & Boels, 2015). As Mörk and Brandellero (2024, p. 674) describe RLD as an 'intersection of residency, consumption, recreation and sexuality'. While this multifunctionality contributes to urban vitality, it also generates everyday frictions between users with competing needs, expectations and claims to space. RLD also vary in terms of spatial characteristics, some exist only of sex and strip clubs while others, like in this study, are more linked in window sex work. The presence of sex workers behind large glass windows creates a unique urban landscape in which sexual services are openly displayed within public space. As a result, these areas have been described as a highly commercialised adult-themed environment (Hubbard, 2012). Because red light districts are often located in historically dense inner-city areas, their spatial rigidity limits possibilities for functional separation. This intensifies conflicts between residential, commercial and sexualised uses of space, making these districts particularly sensitive to debate and transformation.

Regulated, lived and Moral landscape | To understand the spatial and social dynamics of red light district such as de Wallen, this research adopts a threefold landscape perspective from Hubbard (2012) : the moral landscape, the regulated landscape, and the lived landscape. These three dimensions help capture how the area is framed, governed, and experienced in everyday life.

Regulated landscape | The regulated landscape draws attention to the extent to which urban space is actively shaped and controlled by political and institutional forces, rather than by market demand or informal social acceptance alone. In red light districts, sex work is not simply permitted or prohibited, but managed through a combination of legal frameworks, licensing systems, zoning regulations, and enforcement practices. This regulated landscape determines where, how, and under what conditions specific activities can take place, as well as how visible or hidden they are within the city.

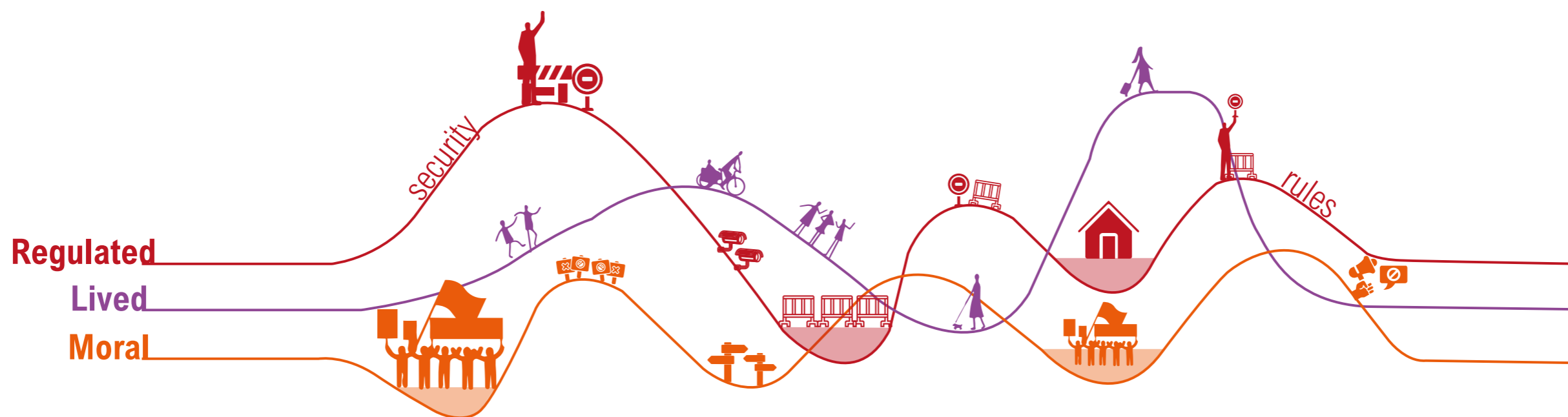
Hubbard (2012) shows that regulation of sex work has shifted from direct forms of control—such as criminal law and police repression—to more indirect mechanisms, including spatial planning, bureaucratic procedures, and the management of “tolerated zones.” In this sense, the regulated landscape is not only about restricting behavior, but about organizing the spatial configuration of sex work in ways that align with broader urban governance objectives, such as tourism, safety, and real-estate development. Government interventions thus leave a material imprint on the district’s form, while simultaneously shaping the social and legal conditions under which sex workers operate.

Lived landscape | The lived landscape shifts the focus from abstract moral categories and formal regulations to the everyday experiences, practices, and experience of the people who inhabit or use the area. This perspective emphasizes that urban space is continuously produced through movement, interaction, and social behavior, rather than given once and for all. Red light districts are shaped by the presence and actions of diverse actors, including sex workers, clients, tourists, residents, and visitors, whose everyday practices co-construct the district’s character.

The lived landscape is not only about what happens in the district, but also about how it feels: the atmosphere, sensory impressions, and changing moods at different times of day and night. People perform roles, negotiate encounters, and navigate safety, stigma, and pleasure, all of which contribute to the experiential texture of the place. In this way, the lived landscape highlights the agency of users and residents, showing how they actively reshape space through their routines, interactions, and emotional responses. By bringing together the moral, regulated, and lived landscapes, this framework offers a nuanced lens through which to analyze the spatial complexity and social life of red light districts.

Moral landscape | The concept of the moral landscape refers to the way different parts of the city are assigned distinct moral meanings and values. In this perspective, certain areas come to symbolize what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behavior, thereby shaping the boundaries of social normativity. Red light district such as de Wallen have historically been framed as a space of “immorality,” where activities such as sex work are tolerated yet socially set apart from what is regarded as normal or respectable. According to Hubbard (2012), by concentrating these activities in a specific district, the city defines a contrast to mainstream morality, making the district a visible boundary of what is deemed deviant.

At the same time, this distinction is becoming less clear-cut. Rather than standing entirely outside of “normal” moral values, red light district such as de Wallen increasingly reflect broader social and economic transformations, in which intimacy and sexuality are shaped by commercialization and exchange. In contemporary consumer culture, sex is not only linked to relationships and reproduction but also to ideas of choice, efficiency, and pleasure as commodities. The red light district thus does not merely represent an exception to everyday norms, but reveals internal contradictions and ambiguities within prevailing moral frameworks.



Red Light Districts in Flux | Aalbers & Sabat (2012) describe red light districts as urban landscapes that are in a state of change, driven by three developments: digitisation, globalisation and tourism. Firstly, the rise of the internet has radically changed the spatial logic of sex work. It has become less dependent on visible street or window locations and can move to online platforms, causing physical red light districts to lose some of their central function. Secondly, globalisation plays an important role. The globalisation of the sex industry has led to increasing international mobility of sex workers and the emergence of a transnationally organised sex industry (Loopmans & Van Den Broeck, 2011). Another result of globalisation is migration, which places red light districts within global circuits of mobility (Hubbard, 2012). In some cases, this has resulted in changing labour relations and new forms of regulation (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). Thirdly, the growth of tourism contributes to the transformation of red light districts. The Red Light District is increasingly positioned as a tourist attraction, with sex work becoming part of an urban spectacle. At the same time, this tourist function clashes with policy goals relating to quality of life, safety and image (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). These global processes are made possible in part by low-cost airlines and the Schengen zone (Loopmans & Van Den Broeck, 2011). The result is a red light district in flux: an area in which sex work continues to exist, but is constantly being reformed, relocated and renegotiated under the influence of broader urban and global processes.



27 *Figure 4: Former sex workers in Dolly District, source: ("Indonesia Takes On 'Dolly' Red-light District", 2014)*

2.2 Transformation of Red light Districts

In recent decades, red light districts have been urban areas subject to significant change. Literature on the transformation of red light districts has identified different types of transformation, differing in pace, governance tools, and impacts on users in red light districts. The following types can be identified: the closure of sexual activities in red light districts, the gradual transformation of red light districts, and the transformation of the function of red light districts into creative or craft functions. In the following chapter, these three types are described based on various case studies.

Closed down | The first type of transformation involves the complete closure of Red Light Districts, typically enforced by state authorities. A prominent example is the Dolly District in Surabaya, Indonesia, which was officially closed by the government in 2014 (Setyawan et al., 2024). The closure aimed to improve safety, reduce crime and transform the area's image and economic activity, converting former sex work establishments into craft-focused businesses, such as the Dolly Saiki Point. Help programs were implemented to support former sex workers in accessing alternative livelihoods, including social, economic, and religious initiatives. Despite these efforts, Setyawan et al (2024) present negative outcomes. A decade after the closing, former sex workers continue to face economic insecurity, relying on informal or precarious employment; social exclusion, due to ongoing stigma and discrimination; and administrative marginalisation, reflected in unequal access to social services and legal labour protections (Kanto et al., 2018; Setyawan et al., 2024). Many former workers resort to hidden or online forms of sex work, highlighting that closure can function more as a displacement strategy than a genuine eradication of sex work and the criminality around it. These findings demonstrate the effects of abrupt RLD closure, where formal interventions fail to provide sustainable alternatives. It also shows that the success of RLD closure should not be measured solely by the disappearance of visible sex work, but by the long-term socioeconomic inclusion and empowerment of affected populations.

Gradual displacement | The second type of transformation is the gradual change of red light districts through urban policy, without formally banning sex work. Three examples are Montreal, Paris, and London. In Montreal, sex work wasn't explicitly banned but was deemed incompatible with the city's new image (Fiolka et al., 2022). Urban planning tools—like zoning changes, public-space redesign, and fast-tracked development—helped shift the area's focus to culture and real estate (Frank, 2019). These were paired with increased policing and surveillance to limit street-based and informal economies (Stein, 2019). London's Soho underwent a similar shift. Policies targeted "undesirable activities" to attract wealthier residents and investors (Singe-

lenberg & Van Gent, 2020). Zero-tolerance policing, stricter licensing, and the closure of sex-related properties, along with social housing privatisation, turned Soho into a more upscale neighbourhood (Hubbard, 2004). Paris's Pigalle also changed gradually: regulation, rising rents, and enforcement pushed out brothels, sex shops, and bars, replaced by cafés, hotels, and boutiques for a young, middle-class, and tourist crowd. The visibility of the sex industry depends on government policies at all levels (Strickland & Gravari-Barbas, 2025). This process is often called gentrification, referring to the gradual displacement of sex work through policy, market forces, and symbolic change, rather than outright prohibition (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020; Strickland & Gravari-Barbas, 2025.; Van Liempt & Chimienti, 2017).

All three cases produced major consequences. In London, property prices rose, the sex industry declined, and small-scale businesses disappeared while high-end clubs remained under strict regulations. Sex workers experienced workplace loss, uncertainty and relocation to less safe locations. Entrepreneurs outside the sex industry welcomed increased safety and commercial value, while residents were divided: new residents appreciated reduced sex work visibility and rising values, but noted lost identity and cohesion (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020). Hubbard (2004) emphasises that while Soho became “neater”, sex worker safety deteriorated. Pigalle saw similar effects: rising prices, changing composition, and reported loss of identity and exclusion as it transformed from a space for marginalised groups into a curated consumer space with aesthetically preserved but functionally eroded history (Strickland & Gravari-Barbas, 2025).

A key feature of this transformation is using the district's sexualized past in redevelopment, referencing Red Light history through branding while physically excluding sex work and sex workers (Fiolka et al., 2022). This creates symbolic continuity with the past, but erases its material reality; sexual histories are commodified while current sex work is cast as undesirable. Pigalle, once known for sex work and nightlife, is now a tourist and residential area that markets its sexual heritage as “naughty but nice,” with icons like the Moulin Rouge disconnected from real sex work (Strickland & Gravari-Barbas, 2025). Brothels and sex shops have been replaced by cafés, boutiques, hotels, and restaurants for a young, middle-class, and tourist clientele. These cases show that displacement is achieved through layered policy and design, not outright repression. Sex work isn't eliminated, but pushed into hidden, precarious spaces. Urban renewal and economic growth benefit new residents and investors, but marginalize sex workers, who lose visibility and stability. By turning sexual heritage into cultural capital while excluding contemporary sex work, these gradual changes create curated consumption spaces and obscure the social costs of displacement.



Figure 5: Flag with Save Soho, source; Sim (2015)



Figure 6: The Moulin Rouge, in Pigalle source; Sim (2015)

ne-cho (Yokohama), sex work is terminated or severely reduced, after which creative production, craftsmanship and culture are deployed as an alternative economic and symbolic foundation. In Surabaya, the Dolly Area (Setyawan et al., 2024), was completely shut down in 2014. Following this closure, a large part of the local community lost its livelihood, not only sex workers, but also supporting businesses such as hotels and restaurants. The economic cycle of the area changed and many businesses disappeared. In response, creative repurposing through the batik industry was pursued by state initiative. The traditional batik craft industry was revived as an alternative income model for former residents. This approach was explicitly linked to empowerment: residents had to be supported in changing professions, developing entrepreneurship and adapting existing ideas about income and labour. Training and guidance played a central role in this. The transformation of Kogane-Cho, studied by

Sasajima (2013), shows a different model of creative repurposing. Here, the red-light district was actively transformed into an arts district, driven by state control and municipal policy. The transformation came about through the interaction between residents' movements against sex work, large-scale police operations and creative city initiatives by the municipality. Sex work was eliminated in a short period of time, and former brothels were replaced by art studios and cultural facilities. These cases show the transformation of Red-Light Districts with a different purpose than commercialisation and touristification.

In both cases, the approach was generally seen as desirable. However, the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) shows that this transformation had both positive and negative effects. Although the batik industry offered new economic opportunities, it also brought social and ecological tensions. The Surabaya case shows that creative repurposing does not automatically lead to sustainable inclusion but depends on long-term support and realistic economic prospects. The research above from Setyawan et al (2024) also showed precarious living situations for former sex workers. Although the neighbourhood was improved in appearance, no organic or vibrant creative environment emerged. Artistic practices remained heavily dependent on institutional support and were temporary and isolated from the broader urban context. Kogane-Cho shows that creative repurposing, when driven top-down, can lead to a sanctioned cultural enclave in which creativity functions primarily as a policy tool rather than as an autonomous urban process.

Although this approach is generally seen as desirable, innovative and forward-looking, it also raises questions about inclusion, sustainability and power relations. This was also said over a 2008 initiative called Red-light Art Amsterdam, which was launched in Amsterdam's Red-Light District. Red Light Art Amsterdam was part of a series of municipal programmes (Red-Light Art, Red-Light Fashion, Red Light Design) in which former window sex work buildings were temporarily repurposed as studios and presentation spaces for artists and designers. The plan was developed in collaboration between the municipality of Amsterdam, housing associations and cultural institutions. The aim was to add cultural quality to Red Light Districts and activate vacant workspaces, and according to Serino (2012) also to disconnect them from their previous functions. Serino (2012) describes how cultural programmes such as Redlight Art, Redlight Fashion and Redlight Design function as transitional instruments in gentrification: they redefine the symbolic meaning of the space and increase its market value. At the same time, they place artists in an ambiguous position, in which critical artistic practices are embedded in municipal policy.

Type of transformation	Vision / function	Spatial Outcome	conditions	Illustrative Cases	Involved parties	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Closure	Eradication of visible sex work; moral value, safety value and identity value change	Sex work removed	state power, political will, moral/religious pressure	Dolly District, Surabaya	Government, sex workers, NGOs, religious organisations	Alternative employment through support schemes, crime reduction	Displacement rather than elimination; long-term economic precarity of former sex workers; social stigma; administrative marginalisation
Gradual Displacement	Rebranding and upgrading of the district; sex work framed as incompatible with new users and urban image ; liveability value, identity value	Gradual reduction of visible sex work; transformation into consumption-oriented urban space	Zoning tools, market pressures, policing, investor interests	Soho (London), Pigalle (Paris), Montréal	Local authority, investors, new residents, sex workers, small business owners	Rising property values, improved safety, commercial growth	Loss of workplaces; increased insecurity for sex workers; rising property values; social homogenisation; symbolic preservation of sexual past alongside functional erasure
Creative-city	Replacement of sex work with creative production, new economic and symbolic base;	Conversion into art districts, studios, or craft hubs; cultural branding of former red light areas	Collaboration between the local authority, cultural institutions and housing associations; resident protests as a catalyst	Kogane-cho (Yokohama), Dolly Area (Surabaya), Red Light Art Amsterdam	Local authority, housing associations, artists/designers, former sex workers, cultural institutions	New economic opportunities (e.g. batik), cultural revitalisation of vacant spaces	New opportunities but continued precarity for former sex workers; dependence on institutional support; creativity as policy tool rather than autonomous urban process

Figure 7: diagram types of transformations

2.3 Value discussion and conflicts in the transformation of red-light districts

Herzog et al (2024, p. 1328) state the following about values in urban space: “Past and present development projects demonstrate that pluralistic values of various stakeholders often lead to conflict about the planning of urban space (McAuliffe and Rogers, 2019). A key challenge for planners and decision-makers is to identify and address these diverse and often competing values of citizens and other stakeholders (Van der Wal et al., 2015).” As described before, transformations of Red-Light Districts can be seen as contested processes, with actors expressing feelings of loss and displacement, but may also resist, be relieved by, or adapt to changing circumstances (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020). RLDs are therefore inherently linked to competing values and conflicts that can arise as a result. Understanding these values is essential for the transformation process and for mitigating the conflicts that may arise (Herzog et al., 2024; Kuitert et al., 2023). This chapter first discusses various values in RLD, followed by a discussion about users, and then an explanation of value conflicts.

Value in RLD | Urban space is continuously shaped by social practices (Lefebvre, 1991). In this process, different actors attribute diverse meanings and values to the same piece of space economic, cultural, symbolic, affective, and moral (Birdsall et al., 2021). These values are not fixed but emerge from everyday use, power relations, and sensory experiences. In Red-Light Districts, understanding these overlapping value regimes is crucial, because transformations often focus narrowly on economic upgrading or spatial order, while overlooking the relational, emotional, and moral dimensions that make the area meaningful for different groups (Bazelmans, 2013; Basak & Van Liempt, 2025).

To make these values analytically usable, this thesis combines Birdsall et al.’s (2021) typology with two practical frameworks: the value-based approach of the Veldacademie and the Just City Index. The Veldacademie operationalises urban values as tangible qualities of the built environment, such as inclusivity, social cohesion, health, safety, and environmental comfort, by focusing on how spaces enable meeting, playing, learning, cooling, and everyday liveability (Veldacademie, n.d.; 2021). The Just City Index, in turn, offers a participatory list of 50 values, such as equity, inclusion, participation, and safety, that communities can select and prioritise to define what “justice” means in their specific neighbourhood (Just City Lab, n.d.; Mayors’ Institute on City Design, 2025). Together, these frameworks allow the research to move beyond economic indicators and instead examine how different actors assign, negotiate, and prioritise a range of economic, cultural, affective, moral, and political values in relation to the district’s transformation.

Value	Sub Value	Source
spatial experience Value	Visibility	De Veld Academie
	liveliness	De Veld Academie
Cultural Value	Cultural expression	De Veld Academie
	Cultural offer	De Veld Academie
	History	De Veld Academie
	Leisure	De Veld Academie
economic Value	affordability	De Veld Academie
	suitable employment	De Veld Academie
	local economy	De Veld Academie
	innovation	De Veld Academie
	neighborhood oriented economics	De Veld Academie
Healthy development Value	Sense of Security	De Veld Academie
	Meaning	De Veld Academie
	Personal Growth	De Veld Academie
	Exchange of Knowledge	De Veld Academie
Democracy Value	Proper education	De Veld Academie
	Voice	TJC Index
	Protest	TJC Index
	Debate	TJC Index
Identity Value	Conflict	TJC Index
	Vitality	TJC Index
	Pride	TJC Index
	Character	TJC Index
	Beauty	TJC Index
Acceptance Value	Authenticity	TJC Index
	Inclusion	TJC Index
	Respect	TJC Index
	Tolerance	TJC Index
Spatial experience	Trust	TJC Index
	Accessibility	TJC Index
	Reachability	TJC Index
	Quality of living	TJC Index
	Traffic safety	TJC Index
	proximity to amenities	TJC Index
	Diversity	TJC Index

Figure 8: Value framework

Users in RLD | To continue the discussion about the value of red-light districts, it is important to outline the different users and their value. Herzog et al (2024) confirm this, suggesting that mapping stakeholders can help make different values visible and support the identification and understanding of potential value conflicts (Herzog et al., 2024).

Sexworker & erotic entrepreneurs | Sex workers and erotic entrepreneurs are an obvious user of Red-Light Districts, however their say is not always included in decision-making processes. Sex work is a form of labour in which sexual services are provided in exchange for money or other resources. It is a highly heterogeneous field of work consisting of street work, window sex work, escorts, online work, clubs, etc. It is embedded in migration, gender, class and radicalisation (Maciotti & Geymonat, 2016). The sex industries around the world are associated with serious forms of marginalisation, violence, exploitation, and even forced labour. Generalizing, sex workers value safe and visible workplaces, autonomy and stability (Basak & Van Liempt, 2025). A safe and legal working environment, respectful treatment, being recognised and having a say (Mörk & Brandellero, 2024). They want to be protection from criminality and violence from the police and from clients (Maciotti & Geymonat, 2016). Another user group consists of business owners in red-light districts. Their interests lie in economic viability, accessibility and visitor flows. They want diversity in functions, predictability of policy and participation (Basak & Van Liempt, 2025).

Residents | Another user, who is not always part of red-light districts, but nevertheless a prominent and important stakeholder, are residents. They want safety, cleanliness, social cohesion and lively neighbourhood functions. In some cases, Red Light Districts are described as having a big influence on the liveability in the neighbourhood and lacking quality of life. However, it is also argued that there is internal diversity among residents (Basak & Van Liempt, 2025), whether sex work can exist in the neighbourhood. On the one hand, residents indicate that it can create a close-knit community, but others believe that there are many safety issues and that it is no longer appropriate currently. (Mörk & Brandellero, 2024).

Policy makers | The organisation, which is also an important stakeholder, are policy makers, whose main task is to ensure safety, care for residents and, in this case, reduce crime and human trafficking. (Mörk & Brandellero, 2024). Policy makers believe that there has been a decline in the quality of life in the city centre and a spread of economic monoculture over the years, which is deemed unfavourable. They want a quieter, cleaner and more manageable city centre. Combating monoculture and overtourism (Basak & Van Liempt, 2025). Studies on the liveability in Amsterdam's Red-Light District show that different groups (residents, sex workers, businesses, municipality) hold conflicting perceptions of values, and policy participation mechanisms often privilege some voices over others. This is directly usable to theo-

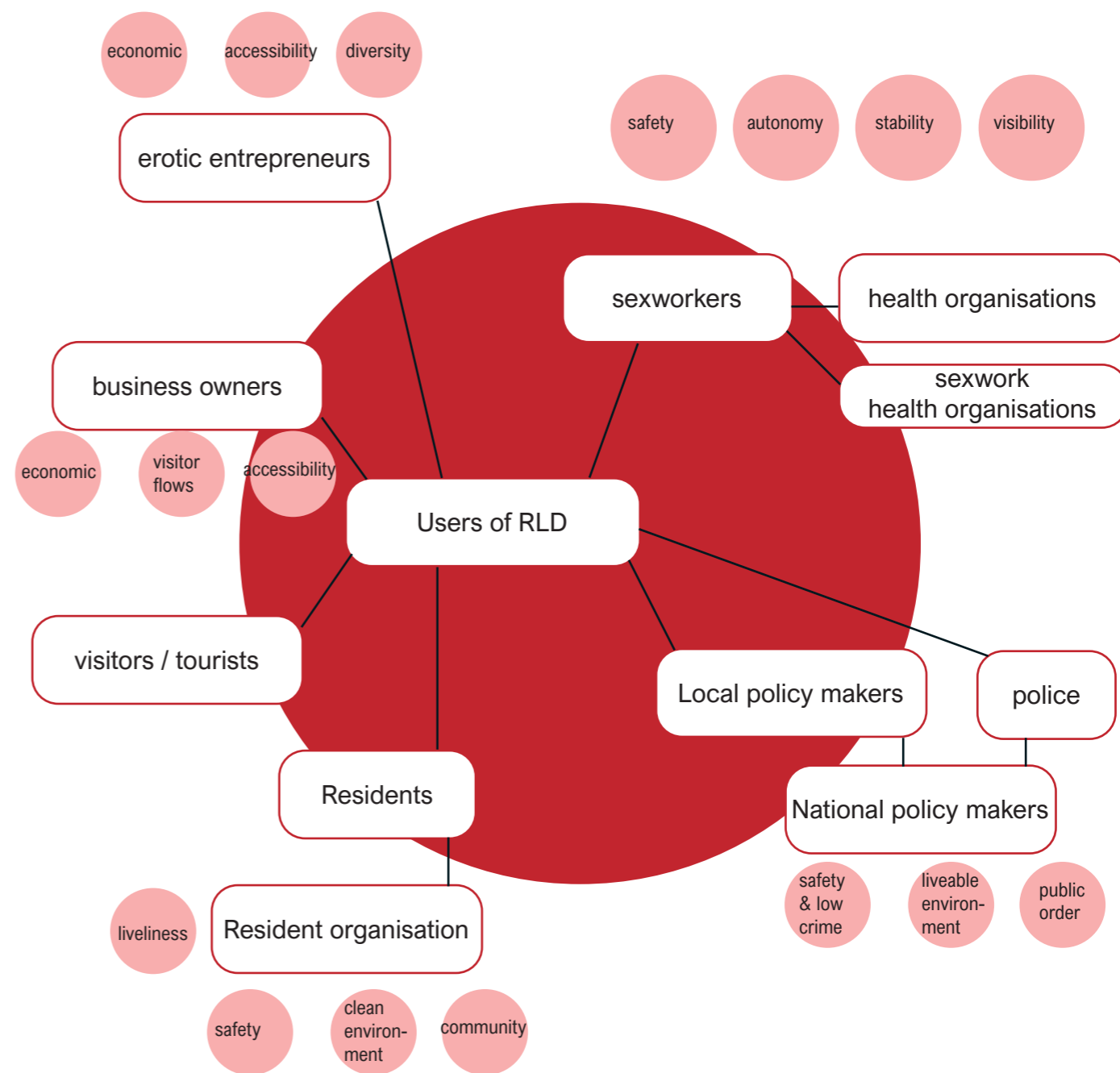


Figure 9: Value framework per users

rise whose values count in transforming a red-light area. Participation is not neutral, but reproduces existing power relations, giving some views structurally more weight than others. Specifically in the red-light district, sex workers are involved, but their concrete interests are not always considered. Similar for less vocal residents, who do not have the time or space to participate in participation processes, are also often overlooked (Basak & Van Liempt, 2025). However, research explicitly foregrounds sex workers and residents as knowledge holders and political actors, challenging state “reform and rehabilitation” projects (Patnaik, 2023). Centring voices from communities allows for an acceptance of their realities and reduction in stigmatization (Maciotti & Geymonat, 2016).

Conflicting value | In Red Light Districts, value conflicts become particularly visible because spatial interventions aimed at improving safety, liveability or urban image frequently undermine the working conditions, autonomy and security of sex workers. Conflicts materialise where the realisation of one value impairs another and are continually changing over time and space. Value conflicts in urban transformation cannot be understood merely as disputes over resources, such as space or money. As Herzog et al (2024) argue, such conflicts originate from differences in orientations, concerning what actors consider legitimate, desirable, or morally appropriate. Value conflicts, therefore, extend beyond pragmatic disagreement and reflect deeper disputes over societal themes. Often covering social, economic and ecological aspects (Campbell, 1996) and mostly also involving a liveability aspect (Godschalk, 2004). Classic planning debates frame core tensions between economic growth, social equity, environmental protection and liveability, including gentrification conflicts where equity and liveability clash (Herzog et al., 2024). Coppens et al. (2011) also state that value conflicts are frequently rooted in ethical commitments or identity-based beliefs, which actors are generally unwilling to compromise. These conflicts, therefore, extend beyond technical or policy disagreements and reflect competing visions of what urban life should be and whose values should guide urban development.

When such deeply held values collide, they result in persistent tensions and dilemmas that are difficult to resolve through conventional decision-making approaches. Paradox theory provides a useful analytical lens in this context, as it explains how conflicting yet equally legitimate values can coexist simultaneously, creating situations in which no single option fully satisfies all concerns (Greco et al., 2024). Rather than seeking to eliminate conflict, scholars argue that the inherently conflicting nature of values should be acknowledged and managed. This requires embracing value conflict, adopting a paradoxical perspective, and aiming to optimise the balance among competing values (Steenhuisen, 2009). To actively adopt an incommensurable perspective on value pluralism, conflict must therefore be embraced rather than avoided. In Red Light Districts this paradox becomes particularly visible, as attempts to improve liveability for residents often simultaneously undermine the safety and autonomy of

sex workers. Attempts to solve conflicting values through displacement or sanitisation do not eliminate value tensions but merely shift them elsewhere in the urban system.

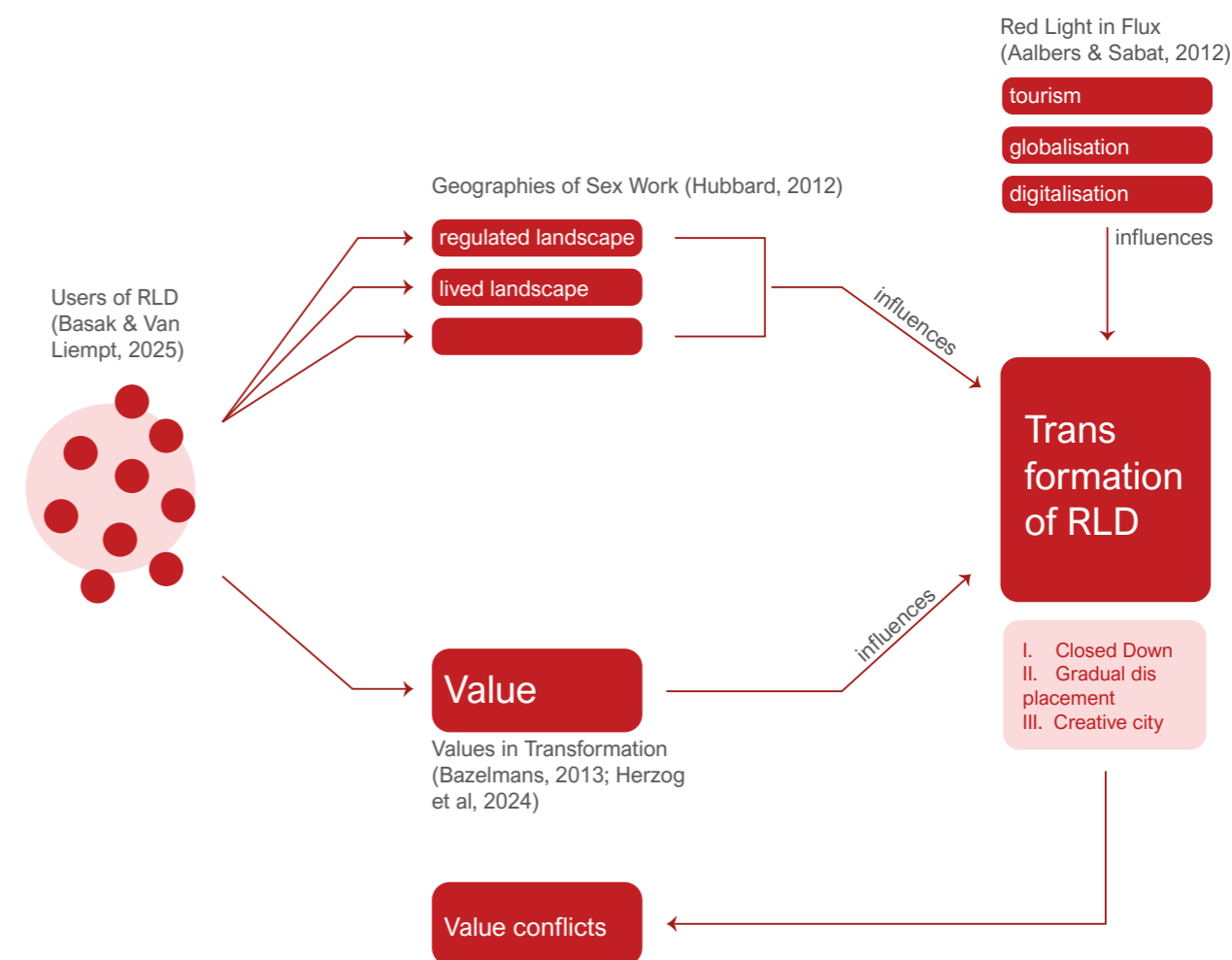


Figure 10: Conceptual framework

3.0 The approach

3.1 Methodological framework

Type of research | For this study, a qualitative exploratory research approach was selected since it most closely matches the current state of the research topic. The goal of exploratory research is to gain a better understanding of a subject, issue, or phenomenon that is still little understood or poorly characterized. It is especially helpful in the early phases of study, when the main goal is to develop a basic knowledge that may direct future exploration rather than to extract definitive results. In fields including the social sciences, business, and urban studies, this method is frequently used to investigate new problems, new concepts, or difficult problems where the body of knowledge is incomplete or dispersed (Mbaka & Isiramen, 2021). It is appropriate to do qualitative exploratory research to examine the viewpoints, place values, and future-oriented thoughts of important stakeholders in light of this research gap. Because of its intrinsic flexibility and open-ended nature, exploratory research frequently uses qualitative techniques like focus groups, interviews, literature reviews, and case studies to gather a variety of viewpoints and insights (Olawale et al., 2023).

The methodology for all sub-questions is explained. The synthesis in SQ3 is conducted through scenario development, using the key spatial characteristics identified in SQ1 and the actor values and tensions identified in SQ2 as framework. These elements are combined to construct a set of contrasting future scenarios that reflect different priorities, governance choices, and spatial outcomes. The outcome of this sub-question is a number of well-define scenarios that can support reflection and discussion among policymakers and other stakeholders. In this way, SQ3 contributes to an understanding of possible futures for de Wallen, without prescribing one definite solution.

The case | This research is a qualitative single case study focusing on De Wallen. De Wallen is selected as a case study because it is a real-world context that is currently facing transformation plans. It is also a location where sex work has been legal and established for a long time. The area involves many different actors who are relatively open about their interests and objectives. In addition, de Wallen has been the subject of extensive academic research and receives significant media attention, which makes it more accessible for research purposes. The case includes a wide range of perspectives, resulting in multiple possible approaches to addressing the issue. This diversity clearly illustrates the challenges surrounding the transformation of a red-light district and provides space to explore different solutions. Moreover, it is a location where no single, clear solution exists, making it particularly suitable for investigation and critical discussion on the transformation of Red-Light Districts.

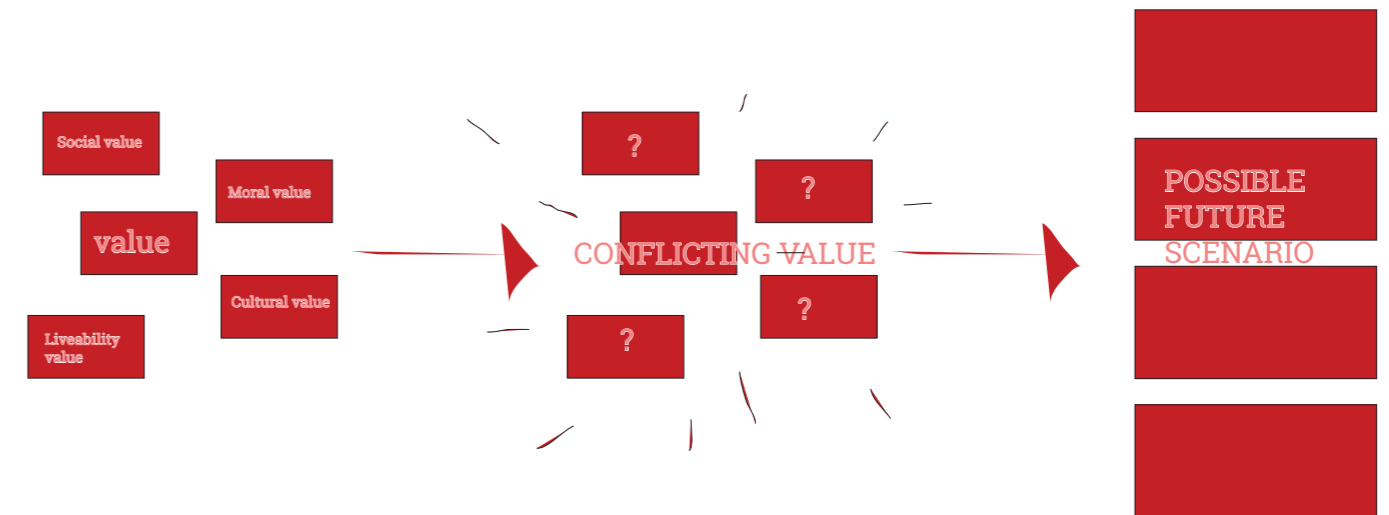


Figure 11: Methodological concept

3.2 Research Method

The methodological framework outlines the various research methods that were used in this study, illustrating the interconnections between the research questions, methodologies, outputs, and outcomes.

SQ1 | Sub-question 1 examines the spatial characteristics and functions of De Wallen, with a focus on how different actors interpret and assign value to the area. Data for this part is collected through field observations in De Wallen, spatial analysis, and semi-structured interviews with residents, policymakers, sex workers, and cultural institutions.

SQ2 | Sub-question 2 investigates how these actors perceive the value of De Wallen, specifically in relation to sex work. Emphasis is placed on capturing diverse perspectives across stakeholder groups. Data is primarily derived from semi-structured interviews with residents, policymakers, sex workers, and cultural institutions.

SQ3 | Sub-question 3 constitutes a synthesizing step that integrates findings from the first two sub-questions. It combines spatial interpretations with actor-based valuations to explore potential future directions for the transformation of De Wallen. This analysis draws on the results of the previous sub-questions, supplemented by relevant policy documents from the Municipality of Amsterdam.

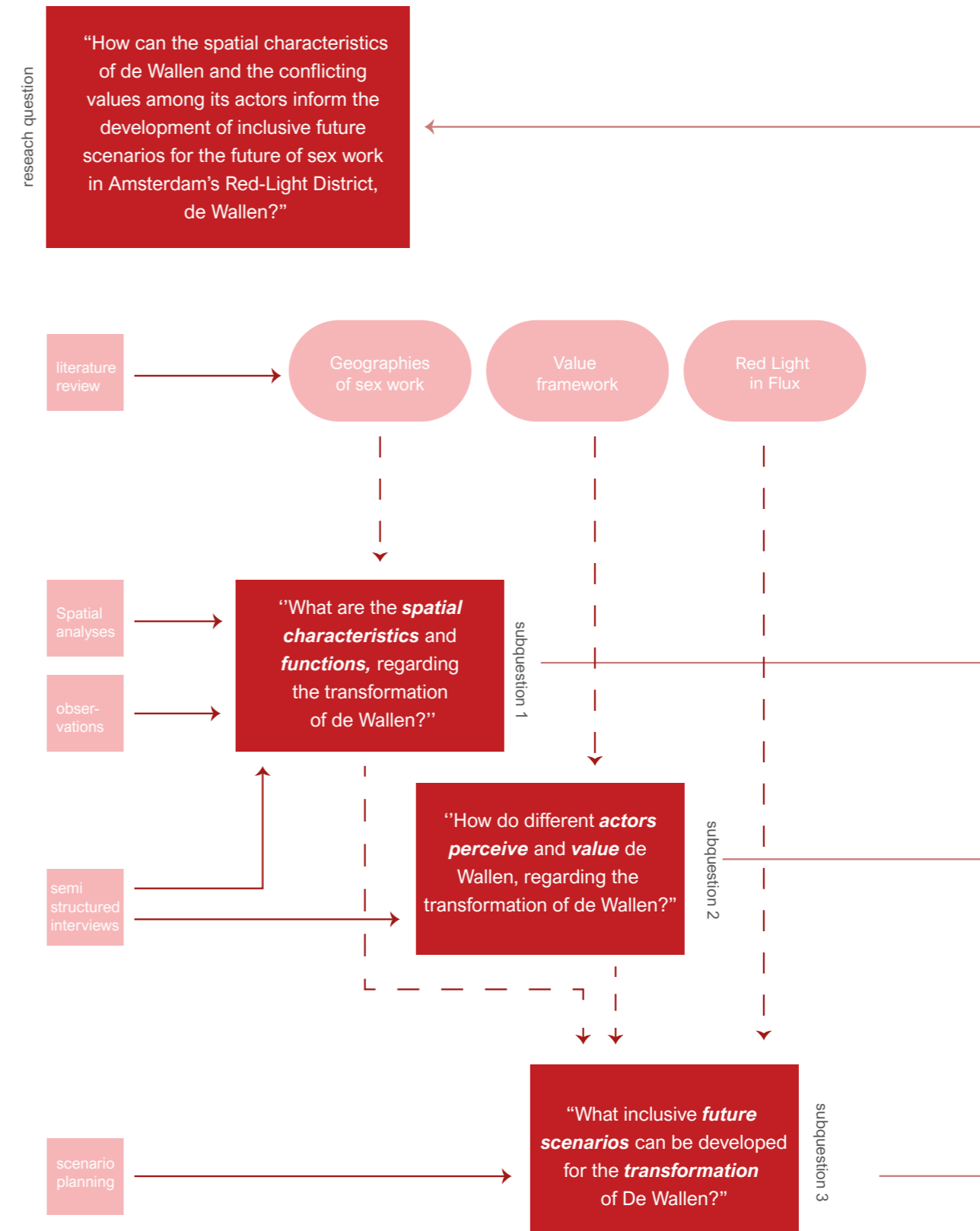


Figure 12: Methodological framework

3.3 Data collection

This research uses qualitative data to investigate the future of the sex work landscape at de Wallen from multiple users' perspectives. The spatial and social values of de Wallen are analysed and brought together in different future scenarios. The research design shows that all sub-questions have a different data collection method, which will be explained below.

Literature review | For the literature review, academic articles, relevant publications, and master's theses related to the central concepts of this research were systematically examined. These sources were accessed through a range of academic databases and libraries, including Scopus, WorldCat, the TU Delft Library archive and repository, the TU Delft Architecture Library, as well as Google Scholar. The key insights derived from this literature are analyzed and synthesized to identify connections between concepts within theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.

Field observations | Field work will be conducted between March 2026 and April 2026 at de Wallen in Amsterdam. The site was paid four visits, conducted at different times of the day and on different days of the week, including weekday daytime, weekday evening, weekend daytime, and weekend evening. The variations in visiting moments are tented to capture differences in use, activity patterns and social interactions. The focus of the observations is the area around the Oudezijds Achterburgwal. Sex work is spatially concentrated in this area and interactions between different actors are most apparent.

These observations aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the current physical and spatial characteristics of the area from the researcher's perspective, and to examine the various ways in which the space is utilised. De Wallen is a contested space and this research method grounds the research in the lived reality of de Wallen. Observations focus on identifying spatial characteristics, activity patterns and social interactions. The observational summary from Roulston (2017) is used for the observations. This includes a description of social situations as comprised of place, actors, and activities (Spradley, 1980), along with the observation question from Miles and Huberman (1994).

In addition to observations, informal street conversations are conducted with individuals present in the area, such as café owners, shop employees, visitors, and local users of the space. These informal interactions serve an exploratory purpose, offering preliminary insights into neighbourhood attachment and perceptions of change. Where appropriate, participants may be invited to take part in semi-structured interviews at a later stage of the research.

Semi-structured interviews | Semi-structured interviews are a frequently used method for qualitative research (Creswell and poth, 2023). This method has several advantages, like the balance between structure and spontaneity (Creswell and poth, 2023). Guidelines and questions will be prepared for the interview but there will be room for new questions based on the response or situation. Next, using semi-structured interviews adds to the validity of the data, as participants can clarify and elaborate themselves. This provides a more accurate view of the participant's standpoints (Creswell and poth, 2023). Key actors, including sex workers, local residents, and policy representatives, are interviewed to explore how these actors interpret spatial qualities, how actors value de Wallen, how they perceive current transformation processes, and how they evaluate the role of sex work within the area.

Peer/expert interviews | Purposive sampling is applied for the selection of participants in the expert interviews. This sampling strategy involves the deliberate selection of interviewees based on criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. It allows for the inclusion of participants with specific expertise, professional experience, or institutional knowledge related to the topic under study. As a result, purposive sampling increases the likelihood that the collected data is relevant and valuable. Expert interviews exist of with employees of the municipality of Amsterdam and experts in the field. The Municipality employees should be either working with the case of the erotic centre or as policy maker for de Wallen. Their knowledge will be important as case specific and professional experience. As for the field experts, they should be expert in the topic of transformation of red-light districts, not specifically to a region or city. The contribution of the experts lays mostly in the professional and experience knowledge. For the experts and employees, the interviews involve questions about the current situation at de Wallen as well as the future. All interviews will be conducted using the same semi-structured interview guide to ensure consistency and allow for comparative analysis across expert perspectives.

Citizen interview | For the citizen interviews, residents, sex workers and business owners of de Wallen are interviewed. The residents will not be selected on specific characteristics besides living at de Wallen. Residents will not be further filtered based on other characteristics; any residents can participate when wanted. Sex workers and Business owners will be picked through purposive sampling. This has the same reason as described above. As for the experts, the interviews involve questions about the current situation at de Wallen as well as the future. Sex workers can mostly be found through the organization of sex workers in de Wallen. There are various organizations that represent the interests of sex workers. Interviewees will be found through these local centres. The same goes for residents, they will be contacted through one of the many active local community centres. Once a small group of interviewees has been recruited, more can be reached through snowballing.

3.4 Data synthesis

The collected data is analysed comparatively to identify similarities and differences between actors' interpretations of spatial and social values. The results are synthesized in a stakeholder value map, which visualizes differing valuations, conflicts, and alignments between actors. This analysis provides insight into social tensions and contested meanings surrounding the transformation of de Wallen and forms an essential input for the scenario planning.

Transcripts coding | The interviews with experts and citizens are audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts are then analysed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software that supports systematic coding and thematic organization of textual data. Atlas.ti will help with a structured analysis of the transcripts the identification and comparison of recurring themes across interviews. This is done with the help of inductive coding. These codes will be formed by the data and applied to mark different themes. The coding process is conducted in two stages. In the first stage, broad descriptive codes are assigned to the transcripts. These codes consist of problem, value, future vision and landscape codes. In the first round, a generic value code is applied, such as 'cultural', 'economic', 'social', etc. For the landscape code, 'moral', 'regulated' and 'lived' each have their own code. In the second round of coding, the value codes are specified such as 'meaningful connections' and 'safety' and conflicts are also coded. All the value codes are derived from the value framework from the literature and the landscape codes are from the Hubbard's (2012) framework.

Interpretation of coding | To analyse the data from atlas.ti, a co-occurrence table was created per stakeholder, plotting the specific codes and the stakeholder group. The quotes were then analysed to identify which aspects were important to which users. This was done for both problem perception and values. For the landscapes, ATLAS.ti was used in a different way. The quotes for each landscape were analysed, but not transcribed verbatim. These were incorporated into diagrams and drawings. Only for the regulated landscape were literal quotes used.

Stakeholder mapping | Stakeholder mapping functions as an overarching methodological step that structures the selection of actors and perspectives for multiple sub-questions, rather than as a method tied to a single analytical outcome. To identify relevant actors and their positions, a stakeholder mapping is conducted as an initial analytical step. This map distinguishes between primary and secondary stakeholders, including sex workers, residents, policymakers, and local entrepreneurs. The stakeholder map functions as a structuring tool to ensure that a diversity of perspectives is included in the analysis and to reveal potential power asymmetries between actors.

	Rol in the neighbourhood
1	Resident
2	Resident
3	Resident
4	Resident
5	Resident
6	Resident
7	Sexworker
8	Sexworker
9	Employee at cultural institution
10	Municipality employee
11	Municipality employee
12	Municipality employee
13	National government employee
14	Researcher
15	Researcher
16	Researcher

Figure 13: List of interviewees

Scenario thinking | The interviews with experts and citizens are audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts are then analysed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software that supports systematic coding and thematic organization of textual data. Atlas.ti will help with a structured analysis of the transcripts the identification and comparison of recurring themes across interviews. This is done with the help of inductive coding. These codes will be formed by the data and applied to mark different themes. The coding process is conducted in two stages. In the first stage, broad descriptive codes are assigned to the transcripts. In the second stage, more fine-grained and interpretative codes are added for more contextual depth and analytical meaning. Recurring codes are subsequently grouped, and patterns of co-occurrence are examined to identify relationships between themes.

Matrix | The 2x2 matrix is a scenario planning method that reduces a complex set of driving forces to two variables considered most uncertain and most impactful. By plotting these two variables against each other on opposite axes, four distinct scenarios emerge, each representing a different combination of conditions. The method is valued for its clarity and communicability — it makes uncertain futures tangible and comparable for a range of stakeholders (Jaoude & Carlow, 2022). In urban planning contexts, the 2x2 matrix is particularly useful in exploratory phases, where the goal is not to predict a single future but to map a range of plausible ones. A limitation of the method is that reducing complexity to two axes inevitably simplifies causal relationships and may exclude important combinations of factors (Avin & Goodspeed, 2020). This research acknowledges that limitation and addresses it partly through the addition of a fifth scenario developed using a different method

What if | The What If method approaches scenario planning from a different starting point. Rather than mapping external trends and uncertainties, it poses a normative question: what if a specific condition, need, or value were placed at the centre of the future? This makes it suited to planning contexts where the goal is not only to explore what is likely but to consider what is desirable from the perspective of a specific group of actors (Cai et al., 2020). In this research, the What If method was used to develop a fifth scenario centred on the needs of sex workers, a perspective that does not naturally emerge from trend-based matrix planning, but that is relevant to the research question.

Spatial Analyses | The spatial analysis of the Red Light District was carried out using Hubbard's (2012) *'landscapes of sex work'* framework, comprising three landscapes that formed the basis of the analysis. Data was collected through four methods: Map data was sourced from the Municipality of Amsterdam (data.amsterdam.nl),

including datasets on heritage sites, designated areas, real estate, land ownership, risk zones, safety and nuisance reports, implementation plans, and retail areas. This was supplemented by field observations conducted through walkthrough observations and street interviews in the Red Light District during March and April. Photographic documentation was self-collected during fieldwork visits. Google Street View imagery was additionally used for supplementary visual reference of specific locations.

3.5 Ethical issues

Ethical Considerations | To address ethical considerations, the researcher completed a Human Research Ethics Checklist (HREC). This was required because external experts and citizens, including sex workers, were contacted for interviews. Because of the collection of specialized person information about sexual behaviour of subjects, the HREC was used to identify potential ethical risks participants might face, such as reputational harm, re-identification, legal or policy-related consequences, or negative effects resulting from expressing opinions that differ from those of more influential actors. These risks are particularly relevant due to the sensitive and regulated nature of sex work and the small, highly recognisable study area.

To mitigate these risks, strict pseudonymised measures are applied. Only occupation and geolocation of participants are published in this thesis, and before using it for the thesis, feedback on quotes and transcripts will be asked from participants. Identifiable data is deleted after completion of the research. Prior to participation, all interviewees receive clear information about the research purpose, data use, and their rights through an Informed Consent form. Participation is fully voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time or decline to answer questions without consequences.

Data Management Plan | A Data Management Plan (DMP) was developed and will be applied as part of the ethical review process. The DMP outlines how data is collected, processed, stored, and protected throughout the research. Interviews are audio-recorded solely for transcription purposes, after which recordings are deleted. Transcripts are fully pseudonymised, and any non-pseudonymised versions are removed. The pseudonymisation key will be password protected. Directly identifiable information, such as names or contact details used for administrative purposes, is stored separately and securely.

All data is stored on the Project Storage space with access restricted to the researcher and supervisors. Identifiable administrative data is deleted one month after completion of the research, while fully anonymised data may be retained for up to ten years in accordance with institutional guidelines. By applying the DMP in combination with the HREC and ICF, the research demonstrates careful consideration of ethical data management and the protection of participants throughout the research process.

4.0 The findings

4.0 Reading guide

This chapter consists of three parts that relate to each sub question in this research. The first part will relate to the spatial characteristic regarding de Wallen. And this will be explained alongside the landscapes of sexwork from Hubbard (2012). The part will consist of observations, expert interviews, street-interviews and spatial analyses. To answer the question, *“What are spatial characteristics and functions, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?”* The methods used for this section of the chapter are interwoven. It is a combination of expert interviews, lived experiences and observations. The aim is to highlight the diversity and complexity of the subject matter. In addition, questions are posed throughout the text. These are questions that arose during the research and were deemed important to include.

The second part of this chapter will relate to the place values of de Wallen and will consist of analyses of interviews with various stakeholders about their value in relation to de Wallen. Afterward conflicts between and within these values are analysed. The goal is to answer the question, *“How do different actors perceive and value de Wallen, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?”*

The third of this chapter will consist of future recommendations for de Wallen again structured alongside the landscapes of sexwork from Hubbard (2012), to answer the questions *“How can insights from spatial characteristics and actors value conflicts inform future scenarios for De Wallen?”*. This will be done by looking at the trends surrounding red light districts and looking at the future.

4.1 Spatial Characteristics and Functions [SQ1]

- Regulated Landscape
- Lived Landscape
- Moral Landscape

4.2 Value framework and conflicts [SQ2]

- Problem perception
- Value framework
- Perception of value
- Value conflicts

4.3 Trends and future scenarios [SQ3]

- Trends
- Scenario building
- Scenarios
- Comparison

4.1. Spatial characteristics of de Wallen

4.1.1 The regulated landscape of sex work

The first part of this chapter focuses on the regulated landscape of De Wallen. As Phil Hubbard (2012) argues, the location and form of sex work are strongly shaped by regulatory forces. The concept of a regulated landscape refers to how urban space is actively organised and controlled by governments through laws, policies, and planning practices.

In De Wallen, sex work is therefore not simply permitted or prohibited, but carefully managed through a combination of legal frameworks, licensing systems, and zoning regulations. Over time, these forms of regulation have shifted from direct control primarily through policing and criminal law to more indirect mechanisms, such as spatial planning and administrative procedures. As a result, the regulated landscape is not only concerned with restricting behaviour, but also with structuring where, how, and under what conditions sex work can occur, while simultaneously influencing its visibility within the urban environment.

To analyse this, this section draws on expert interviews, spatial analyses, and field observations. These methods are used to examine key regulatory dimensions, including the spatial distribution of sex work and zoning policies, and how regulation affects accessibility, visibility, and everyday use of space.

For this research, the concept of the regulated landscape is applied broadly to include all regulated aspects of De Wallen. This means the focus is not limited to policies directly related to sex work, but also includes the broader regulatory framework that shapes urban life. In particular, attention is given to the socio-spatial context, including housing characteristics (e.g., WOZ values and the proportion of social housing), heritage regulations, future development plans, and the presence of mixed urban functions. Together, these elements help explain how different regulatory choices shape the physical appearance, accessibility, and overall character of De Wallen.

moral landscape of sex work
lived landscape of sex work
regulated landscape of sex work

4.1.2 experts interview on regulated sex work sector

For this part of the research, experts related to the regulated landscape were asked to reflect on the regulated landscape of De Wallen and how different stakeholders engage with it. In addition, they were asked what changes they consider necessary. The two interviewees operate at different governance levels: one at the municipal level and the other at the national level.

Regulated sexwork landscape at the national levels | The regulated sex work landscape in the Netherlands is highly decentralised, with municipalities acting as the main regulators and developing their own policies. There is no uniform national system, resulting in what can be described as *“a patchwork of regulations across the country”*. For example, in some cities, home-based sex work is allowed, while in others it is prohibited or requires a permit. This means that sex workers operating in different cities must comply with different rules, making regulation highly place-specific and uneven. Although municipalities, sex workers, and other organisations have expressed a desire for clearer national legislation, this has not yet been achieved: *“people, including sex workers, want clarity about what to expect, but this has not yet been realised.”*

Local Level | In Amsterdam, sex work is divided into a licensed and an unlicensed sector. The licensed sector includes venues that offer sex work legally with a municipal permit, such as window sex work, sex clubs, escort companies, and sex theatres, such as those found in De Wallen. Importantly, *“sex workers themselves do not need permits; only businesses do”*. These businesses operate under permit regulations, including rules on opening hours, location, and working conditions. Permits, therefore, determine where sex work can take place, under what conditions, and who is allowed to operate within the sector. The unlicensed sector consists of sex workers operating in places without a permit, including home-based work, independent escorts visiting clients, work in hotels or rented spaces, massage salons, and street-based sex work (Bleeker & Van den Braak, 2021). Importantly, sex work itself is legal in the Netherlands; illegality arises from working without legal authorisation to work in the country, similar to any other job. There is currently no room for additional sex work establishments; a freeze policy is in place via local planning regulations regarding the establishment of new sex work businesses. Also, it is not permitted to solicit clients online (Bleeker & Van den Braak, 2021).

Aim of the regulated landscape | At the national level, the government does not directly regulate daily practices but instead supports municipalities through information and guidance. The focus is on three main goals: *“ensuring safety in the sector, supporting municipalities, and strengthening the position of sex workers.”* However, *“the main responsibility lies with municipalities, which set rules, choose locations, and issue permits.”* Local regulation is structured around three core aims: protecting sex workers, creating a safe and regulated sector, and combating abuse, including

57

exploitation and human trafficking. Regulation is therefore justified as a way to reduce harm and risks: *“sexwork policy focuses on a good position for sex workers, a safe regulated sector, and preventing abuses such as exploitation.”* Another aim of the regulated sex work sector is to act as a barrier against exploitation and abuse. According to one of the experts, a *“healthy, safe, regulated sex work sector”* is one of the most important weapons against abuse. The licensed and unlicensed sectors are, in fact, so closely intertwined that they form *“communicating vessels”*, in which changes in one domain affect the other. This interconnectedness complicates governance, as interventions in the regulated sector may unintentionally drive activities into less visible and more precarious forms.

Tensions within regulations | At the same time, regulations create tensions. There is a constant balancing act between protection and safety on the one hand, and control and restriction on the other. Some sex workers argue that excessive regulation increases their dependence on operators and may heighten vulnerability: *“rules make us dependent on operators and more vulnerable to exploitation.”* This dependency becomes particularly acute when local authorities close licensed workspaces. *“This leads to a shortage of venues and operators can ask higher prices”*. In contrast, policymakers emphasise that regulation is necessary to protect those most at risk: *“My role is to support those who are vulnerable and reduce risks where things could go wrong.”*

Another key challenge is the sector’s limited visibility. Policymakers often only encounter the extremes, meaning they *“mainly see the outer edges of the sector.”* This includes both those who work independently and successfully, as well as those in highly vulnerable or exploitative situations: *“either people who work independently and want fewer rules, or those working illegally and in vulnerable conditions.”* As a result, a large part of the sector remains difficult to capture, and it is often unclear how large the sector actually is.

Policy measures are also perceived as a source of problems. While sex workers often acknowledge the intentions behind regulations aimed at reducing nuisance, they emphasise the unintended negative consequences for sex workers. For instance, restrictions on alcohol sales and earlier closing times are described as significantly reducing income, particularly for night workers: *“Most customers used to come after 2 a.m., and now there’s no one.”*

In summary, the regulated landscape of sex work in the Netherlands is defined by its decentralization, with municipalities holding primary regulatory authority and developing varied local policies. This has led to significant regional differences and a lack of nationwide clarity for both sex workers and businesses. While the underlying aims of regulation are to protect sex workers, ensure safety, and prevent abuse, the resulting framework also introduces tensions—balancing protection with control, and visibility with privacy. Stakeholders agree on the need for clearer, more consistent national legislation to address the inconsistencies and vulnerabilities present in the current system. Moving forward, a more unified approach could help strengthen the position of sex workers, enhance safety, and create a more transparent and equitable regulatory environment.

58

4.1.3 the regulated economic system of de Wallen

This part of the chapter will analyse the regulated economic system in de Wallen.

Window Work | Shown are the erotic functions right now on de Wallen. Window sex work is primarily concentrated along the Oudezijds Achterburgwal and its adjoining side streets. Additional clusters can be found in the immediate surroundings of the Oude Kerk. Within these areas, two distinct spatial configurations can be identified. In some locations, the windows are directly oriented towards the public street, making sex work visibly integrated into the urban streetscape. In other cases, more enclosed configurations exist, such as semi-internal alleyways (e.g., Boomsteeg), where the activity is more spatially contained. In total de Wallen has 249 window work spaces.

Beyond window work, De Wallen hosts a variety of other erotic establishments. These include sex theatres, sex clubs, and strip clubs, which represent more formalised, indoor entertainment venues. In addition, there is a growing presence of sex-themed attractions aimed at tourists, such as the 5D porn cinema, the Red Light Secrets Museum, and the “Sexy Loo.” These functions shift the focus from sex work itself towards commodified entertainment and experience. The area also contains a wide range of retail outlets related to sexuality. These shops sell products such as sex toys, clothing, and fetish-related items, but also include a significant proportion of goods tailored to tourism, such as novelty items and souvenirs.

Experts on economic system and safety | Policymakers stress that the economic model depends on centrality, scale and mixed functions: “People come to De Wallen because it is in the centre of the city... to make a window prostitution area work properly, you need a certain volume.” They describe an offer-driven model, where tourism, nightlife, coffee shops and erotic entertainment jointly generate demand: “People come for other functions... and then transition to a sex worker... If I remove all hospitality from the area, fewer people will come to De Wallen, and that will affect the earning model for window sex workers.”

Safety in window work is ensured by mandatory safety measures, including managers, emergency personnel, and alarm buttons in the rooms: “*there are alarm buttons in the rooms, etcetera.*” This safety framework is not only considered important for sex workers themselves, but also for clients. Clients are described as actively choosing the licensed system because they “*know it is controlled,*” which creates a sense of safety when visiting a sex worker. Another note worthy aspect is the relatively stable composition of the workforce: contrary to the perception of constant turnover, the respondent notes that “*over 80% of the window workers have been working on the Wallen for many years.*”



Figure 14: Sex and erotic businesses



Figure 15: Window workspaces

4.1.3 the regulated economic system of de Wallen

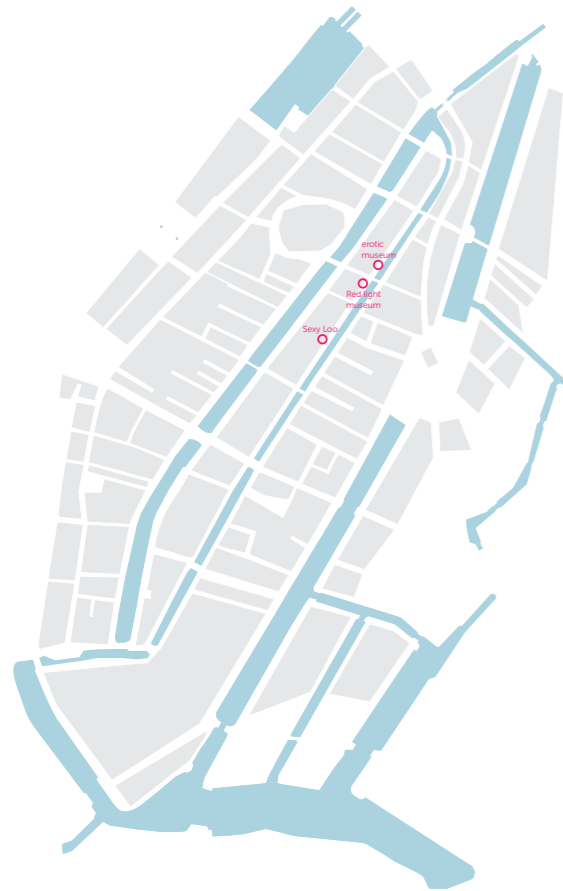


Figure 16: Erotic themed entertainment



Figure 17: Sexshops

Economic system | The figures illustrate the economic system surrounding sex work at De Wallen, as described by one of the policymakers related to this economic system. Rather than considering sex work in isolation as an economic function, the respondent highlights its reliance on closeness to other bar and entertainment functions. Tourists come for the nightlife, coffee shops, and adult entertainment, and end up seeing a sex worker as well. The respondent explicitly frames this as an “offer-driven model”, in which the presence of multiple urban functions creates spillover effects that sustain the sex work sector.

Hotels and Bars | De Wallen currently offers a wide range of these other entertainment functions. There are currently 6,790 hotel beds in the neighbourhood, and it also has the highest number of cafes per neighbourhood in Amsterdam, with a total of 111 cafes and 139 restaurants. Furthermore, the density of coffee shops is also highest, with a total of 12 coffee shops. In addition, 19% of all establishments in de Wallen are tourism-oriented, totalling 464 businesses. Moreover, 5,012 people work in the tourism sector in the Red Light District (data Amsterdam).



Figure 18: Bars

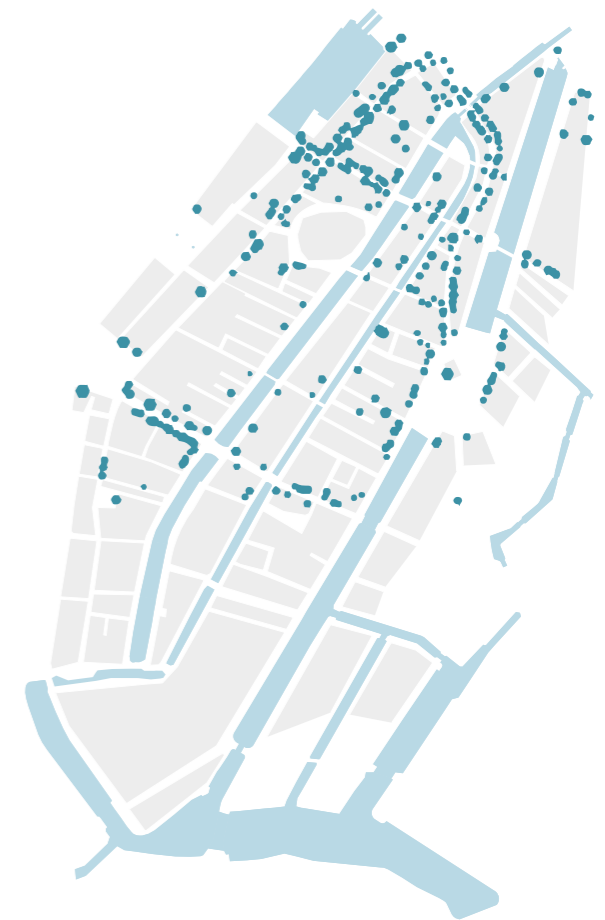


Figure 19: Hotels

4.1.3 the regulated economic system of de Wallen



Figure 20: Coffeeshops

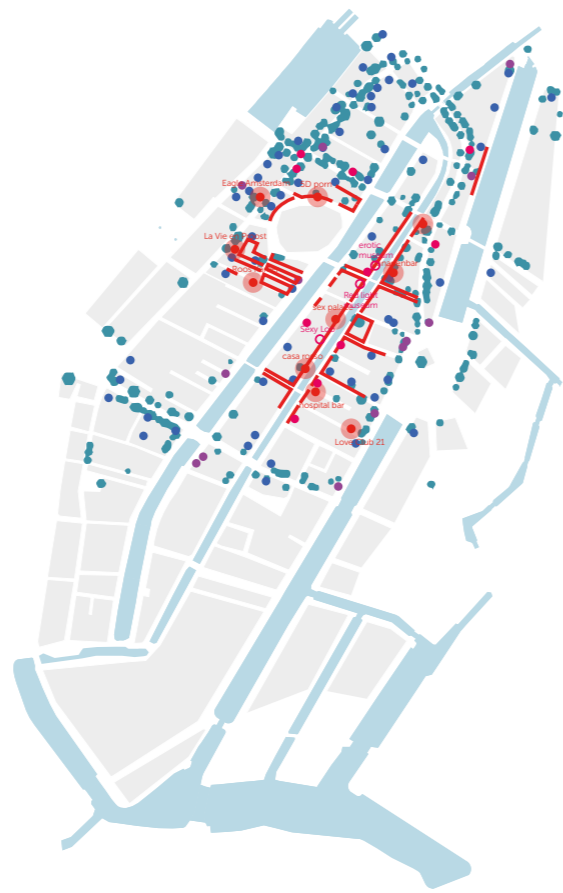


Figure 21: Total Economic system in de Wallen

Other functions | The neighbourhood also has functions not focused on adult entertainment or leisure. 24% of all establishments are in the creative sector. Figure 22 shows the number of cultural institutions and galleries in de Wallen. Compared to the rest of Amsterdam, this figure is around the city's average. In addition to entertainment-related businesses, the neighborhood also has community services, such as an elementary school, a family doctor, and a daycare center. In terms of healthcare facilities, the neighbourhood scores below the city average, particularly for young people, under 15.

Conclusion | the social-spatial analysis shows that De Wallen can be defined by diversity of functions, blending window sex work, erotic entertainment, tourism, retail, creative industries, and community services within a single neighbourhood. Rather than existing in isolation, sex work and related activities are interconnected with the broader urban economy, drawing on the vibrancy and spillover effects of surrounding nightlife, hospitality, and tourism.



Figure 22: Galleries and Art institutions



Figure 23: Care institutions

4.1.4 Housing, land-use mix and heritage Regulations

This section of the study examines regulations that shape the city centre in different ways. These include housing, other functions, and heritage regulations. These are illustrated using various maps. At the end, a conclusion would be drawn from all the analyses. The distribution of housing types (social rent, owner-occupied, and private rent) reveals that De Wallen has a relatively low share of social housing compared to the Amsterdam average. Within the Wallen area, approximately 15% of the housing stock is social rent, 20% is owner-occupied, and 65% is in the private rental sector.

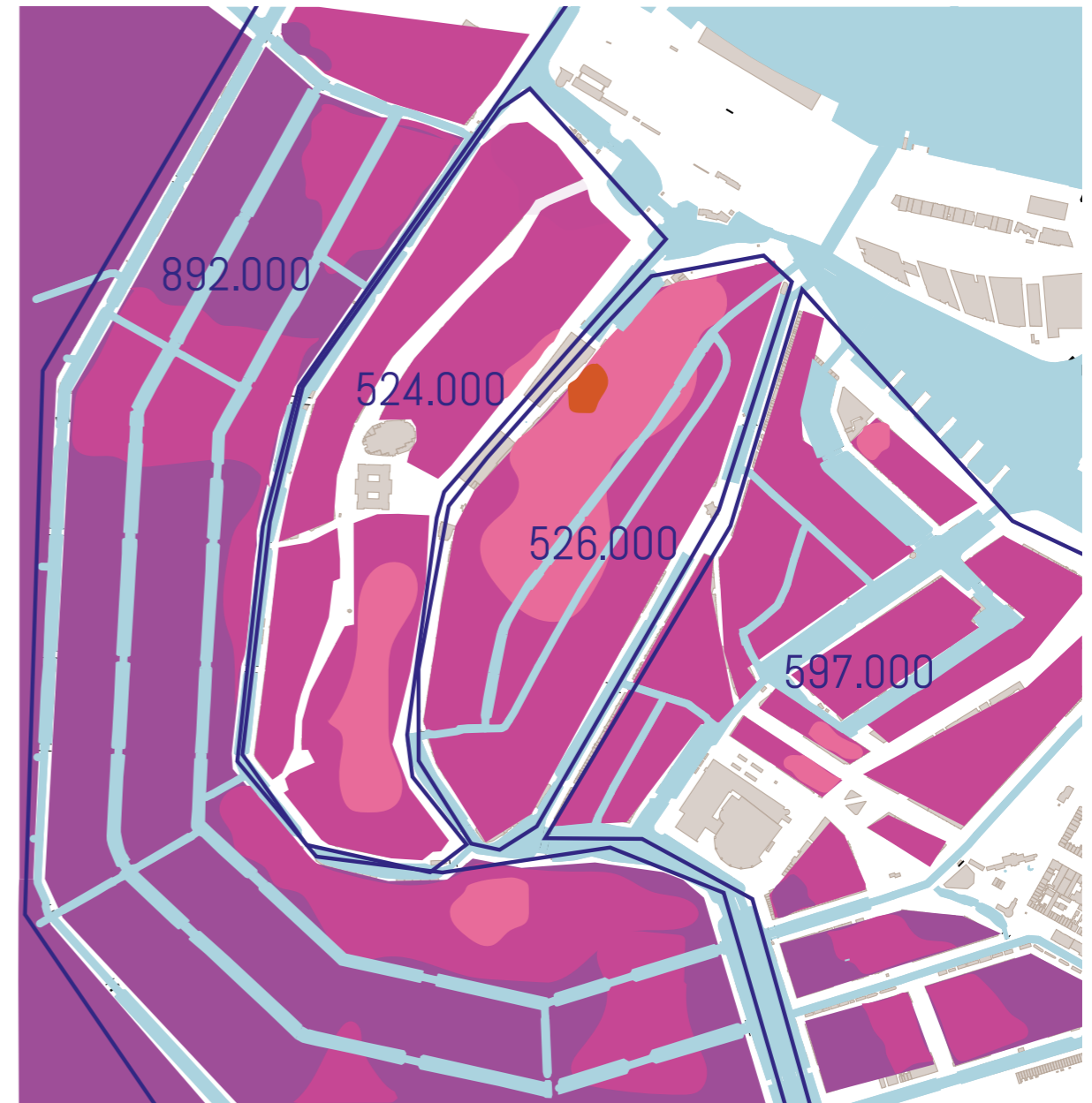
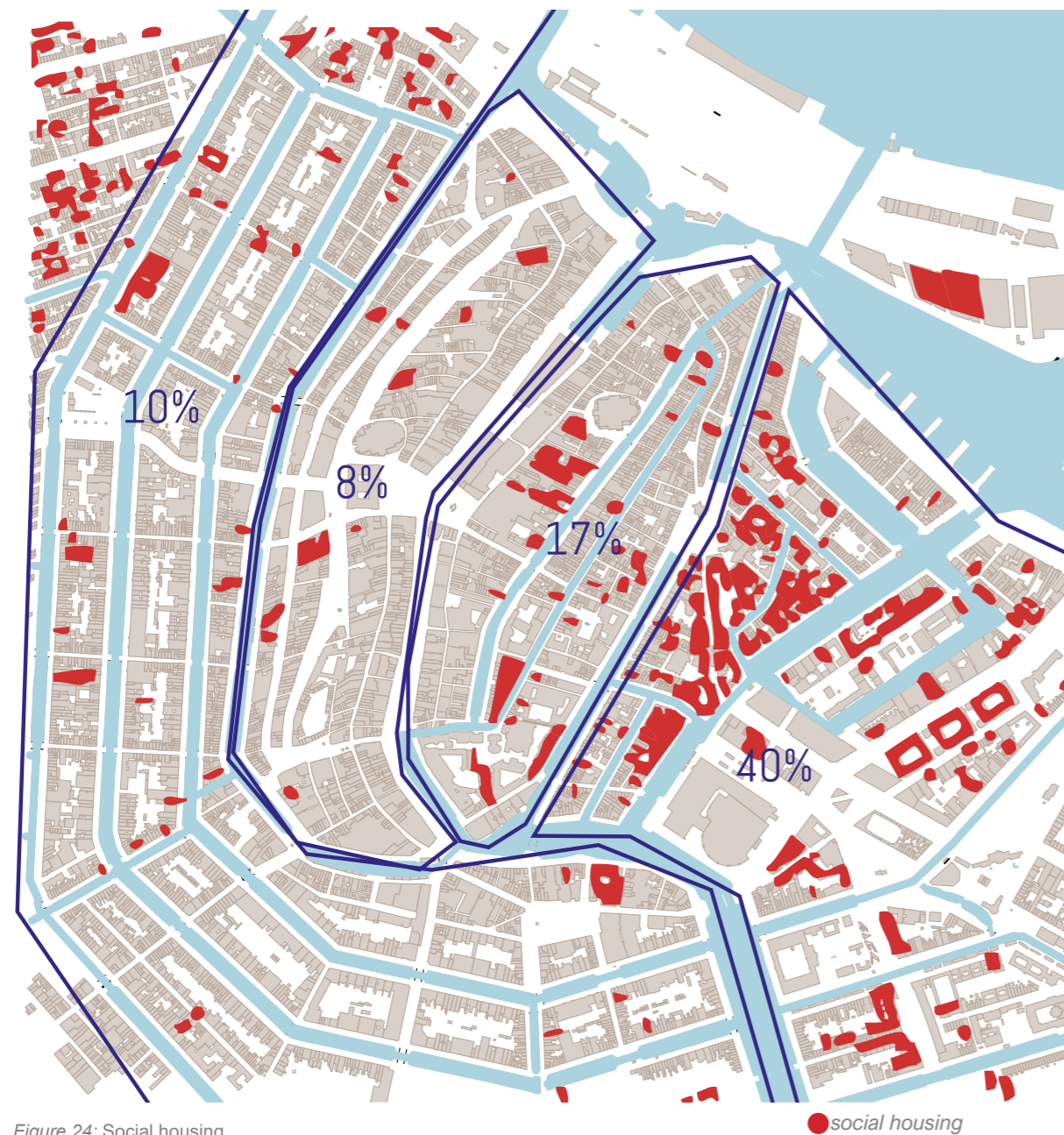
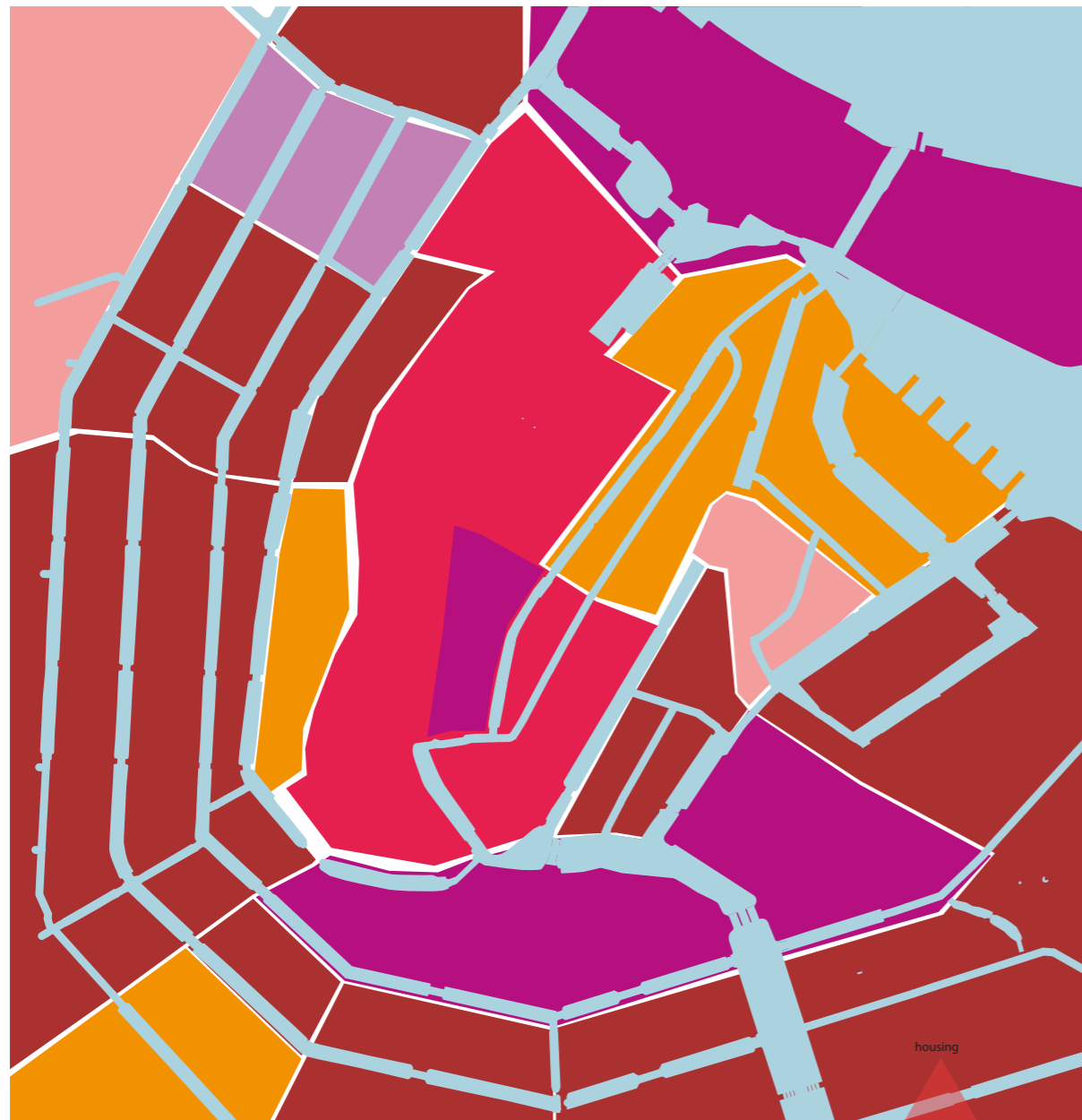


Figure 25: Woz Value

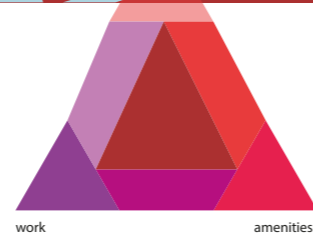
This contrasts with the Amsterdam average, where social housing accounts for roughly 40% of the total stock. However, compared to its immediate surroundings, De Wallen occupies an intermediate position: neighbouring areas to the west have as little as 9% social housing, while areas to the east reach up to 40%. Property values further illustrate the area's socio-economic positioning. The average WOZ value in De Wallen is approximately €526,000, which is slightly above the Amsterdam average of €518,000. However, this figure is significantly lower than in adjacent western neighbourhoods (€892,000) and remains below that in eastern areas (€597,000). This suggests that, despite its central location, De Wallen remains relatively more accessible than some high-value parts of the inner city, although affordability remains limited.

4.1.4 Housing, land-use mix and heritage Regulations

The functional mix of De Wallen highlights the dominance of non-residential uses. In most parts of the area, commercial and amenity uses outweigh residential uses. The average of De Wallen is 22% housing, 65% amenities, and 13% work, reflecting its character as a mixed-use area. Future development plans indicate limited but targeted housing interventions, primarily in the areas around the Oude Kerk, Warmoesstraat, and Nieuwmarkt. Notably, most planned developments fall within the higher-end rental or owner-occupied segments, suggesting a continued trend towards upmarket housing rather than an expansion of affordable stock.



67 Figure 26: Mix of functions



landscape — regulated ● lived ● moral — value — scenario

Finally, the spatial development of De Wallen is strongly constrained by heritage regulations. The area lies within the buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed canal ring and is designated as a protected cityscape. In addition, a large proportion of buildings are listed as national or municipal monuments. These protections significantly limit large-scale spatial transformations but help preserve the existing urban fabric.

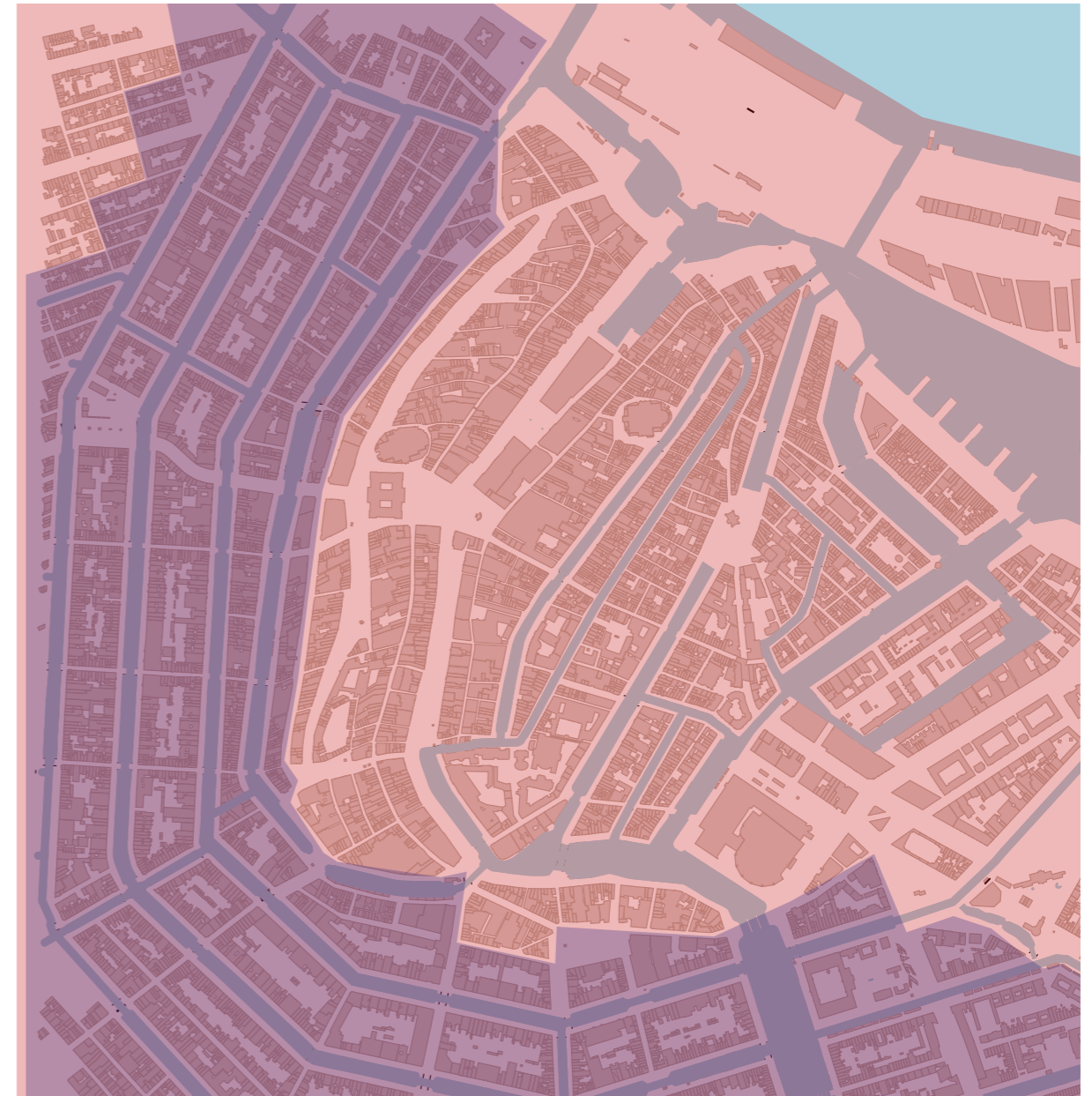


Figure 27: Heritage regulations

● protected city landscape
● Unesco status

4.1.5 Security regulations in de Wallen

The next part of this chapter focusses on security regulation in the streets of de Wallen. The focus will be on rules, surveillance, camera's, sign's and security people. At the end of the analyses, a section on the lived experience of these securities will be described.

Rules | This map visualises the range of regulations that apply specifically to De Wallen, in addition to general municipal legislation. These measures primarily focus on controlling behaviour in public space and have a direct impact on how the area is used, experienced, and managed. The regulatory framework consists of several overlapping measures, which can be grouped into three categories:

Behavioural regulations tell how people should behave in the public space of de Wallen

- Alcohol prohibition zones, where it is forbidden to consume or carry alcoholic beverages in public spaces.
- Cannabis (blowverbod) zones, restricting the use of soft drugs in public spaces.
- Begging prohibition zones, where soliciting money or goods is not permitted.
- Street performance restrictions, limiting or prohibiting street artists in certain locations.

Tourism regulations target tourist pressure directly. The behavioural regulations also target tourists but also apply to any other visitor.

- Group cycling bans, prohibiting activities such as beer bikes.
- Guided tour restrictions, including bans on tours passing window sexwork sites.
- Regulated closing times within the core Wallen area, where hospitality and sex work venues must close at 02:00, with no new visitors allowed after 01:00.

Surveillance regulations show how the space is monitored.

- Designated alcohol sales areas, regulating where alcohol can be sold.
- Enhanced camera surveillance areas, where additional monitoring is implemented.

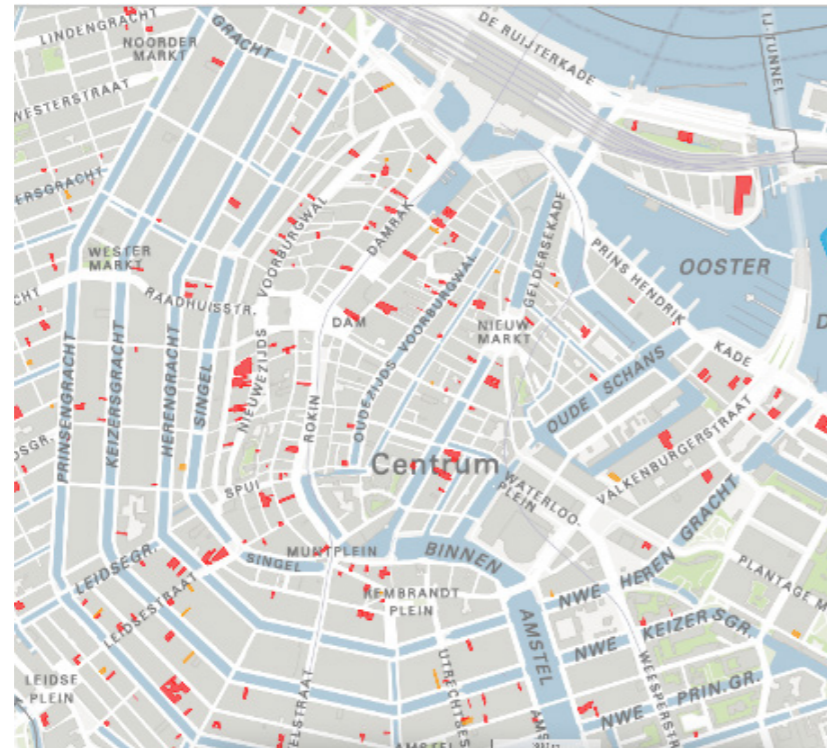


Figure 28: Future housing projects (Data Zoekresultaten op Locatie - Data en Informatie, z.d.)

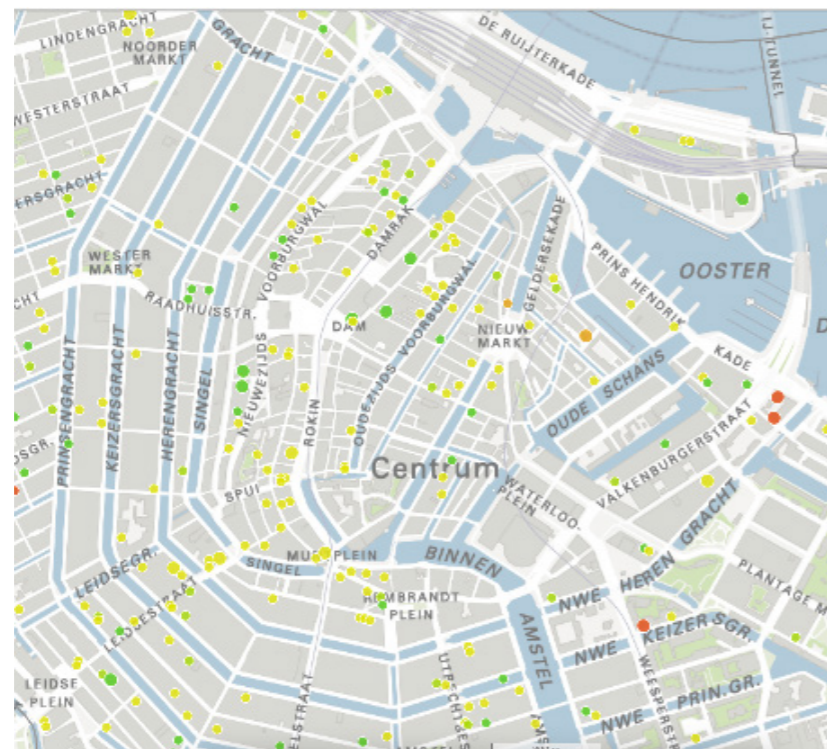


Figure 29: Price range of future housing projects (Data Zoekresultaten op Locatie - Data en Informatie, z.d.)

Surveillance and camera's | Surveillance plays a central role in the regulation of De Wallen. A wide network of cameras is present in the area, operated by different actors, including the municipality, police, and private operators. Municipal cameras are used for multiple purposes, such as monitoring crowd density, enabling selective access control, and managing waste-related issues. Many of these systems process personal data. Police-operated cameras are primarily aimed at addressing street-level crime, such as drug dealing and public disorder. In addition, operators of sex work venues are required to install cameras at entrances and windows, further extending the surveillance network into semi-private space.

Security personnel | Beyond technological surveillance, there is also a strong presence of human enforcement. This includes:

- Hosts (street stewards), identifiable by red jackets, with approximately 15 pairs active during weekend days.
- Municipal enforcement officers (handhaving), particularly active during evenings and weekends.
- Police presence, especially during nighttime hours.
- VTH (Licensing, supervision and enforcement) personnel, ensuring compliance with regulations.

Where regulations define what is permitted, surveillance and enforcement determine how these rules are monitored and enforced in space.

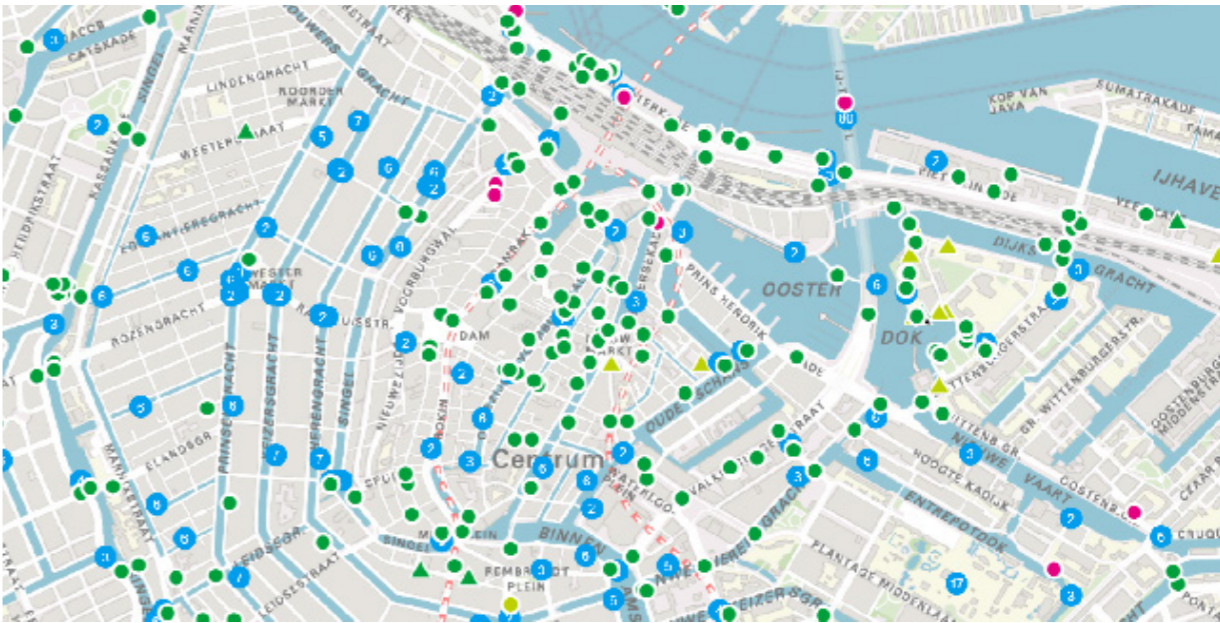


Figure 31: Camera's in de Wallen (Data Zoekresultaten op Locatie - Data en Informatie, z.d.)

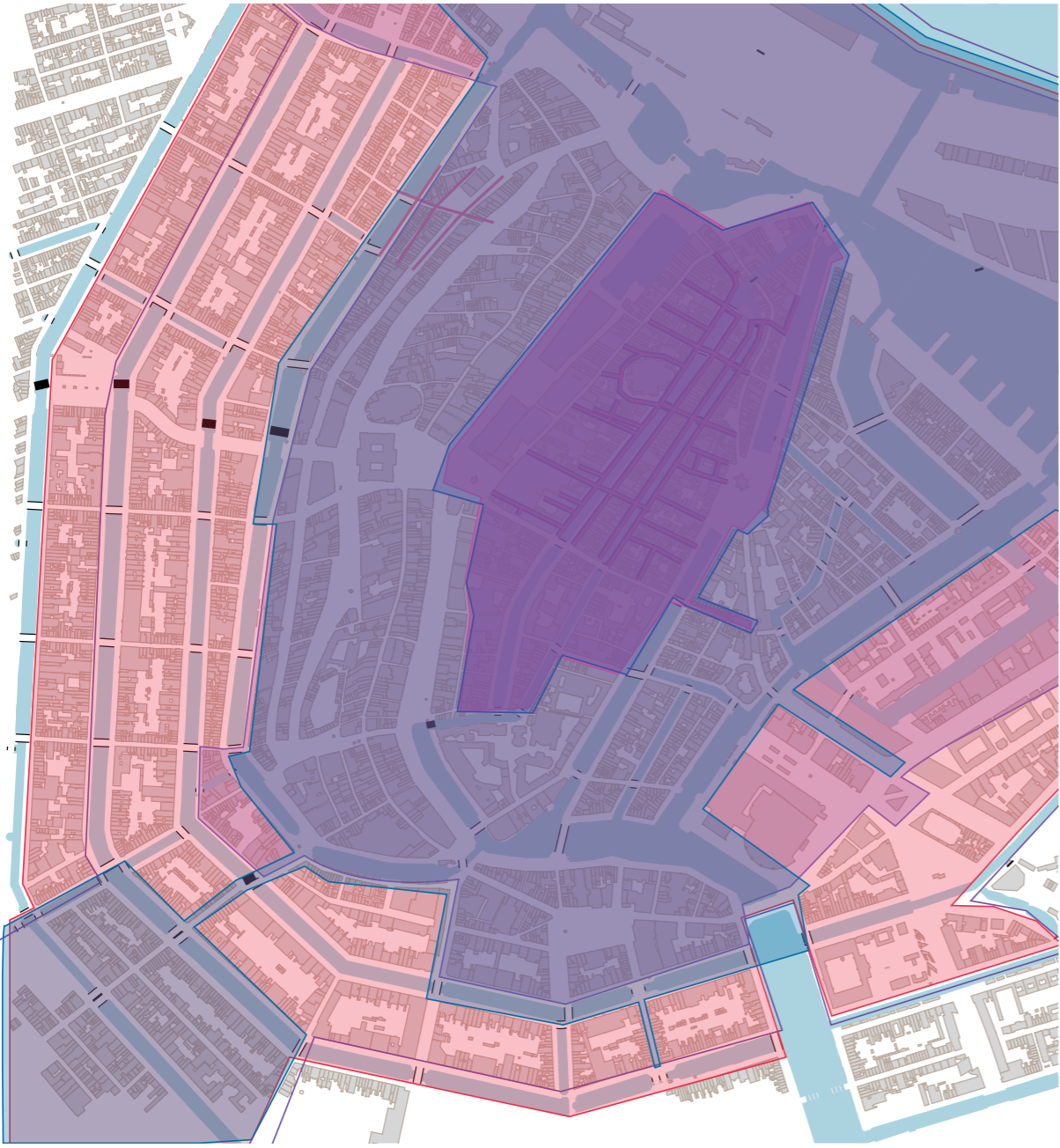


Figure 30: Regulations on the map

- Camera surveillance
- Area prone to nuisance
- Alcohol ban
- Ban on the sale of alcohol
- Ban on "blowen"
- ban on begging
- ban on guided tours
adjusted opening hours

4.1.6 Observation on the regulated landscape

observations: one during the daytime and one during a week-end night

period: March and April

it is striking that there are no "guidelines" or signs on how to behave towards sexworkers

police car patrolling the streets



signs tell visitors and others how to behave on de Wallen



police camera and motion censor



paradoxically: you are not allowed to take pictures of sexworkers



private camera aimed at the public street. passerby's are filmed constantly



'verboden te blowen' signs, next to the coffeeshop

Figure 32: Observations on regulations

4.1.6 Observation on the regulated landscape



Figure 33: Collection of signs in de Wallen

To better understand how regulation manifests in the urban environment, a series of field visits was conducted, including one specifically focused on surveillance and regulatory measures. The methodology consisted of on-site observations, supported by photographic documentation and field notes. The field observations provide insight into how this regulated landscape is experienced in practice, revealing how rules and surveillance materialize in the streetscape and influence everyday use.

Two visits were carried out: one during the daytime and one during a weekend night. During the daytime, the area appeared relatively calm. People were walking, sitting on terraces, and engaging in everyday activities. However, regulation and control were highly visible in the streetscape. Cameras and signage were present on nearly every corner, often indicating prohibited behaviours or informing visitors that surveillance was taking place.

Two observations stand out. First, despite the omnipresence of cameras, there are also explicit signs prohibiting the photographing of sex workers. This creates a tension between surveillance and privacy. Second, there is a notable absence of behavioural guidelines specifically addressing how to interact with sex work, suggesting that regulation focuses more on controlling visitors than framing ethical engagement.

The abundance of signage and surveillance infrastructure contributed to a sense of artificiality, resembling a controlled or staged environment rather than an organically functioning urban neighbourhood. During the nighttime visit (weekend), the atmosphere shifted significantly. The area became crowded, with a lively and often intoxicated public. While the streets directly containing window prostitution appeared relatively calm, the connecting streets were highly congested.

Although crowd control measures such as barriers were not observed on this occasion, there was a constant presence of surveillance personnel and police. This produced an ambiguous experience: on the one hand, their presence suggested safety and control; on the other, it created a sense of underlying tension, as if intervention might be needed at any moment.

Additionally, the spatial conditions, narrow streets, high density, and limited lighting, made the area feel difficult to fully regulate. The environment appeared simultaneously over-regulated and beyond complete control. The distinctive red lighting further contributed to this atmosphere, creating a visually unique but also somewhat disorienting environment.

4.1.7 The safety in numbers

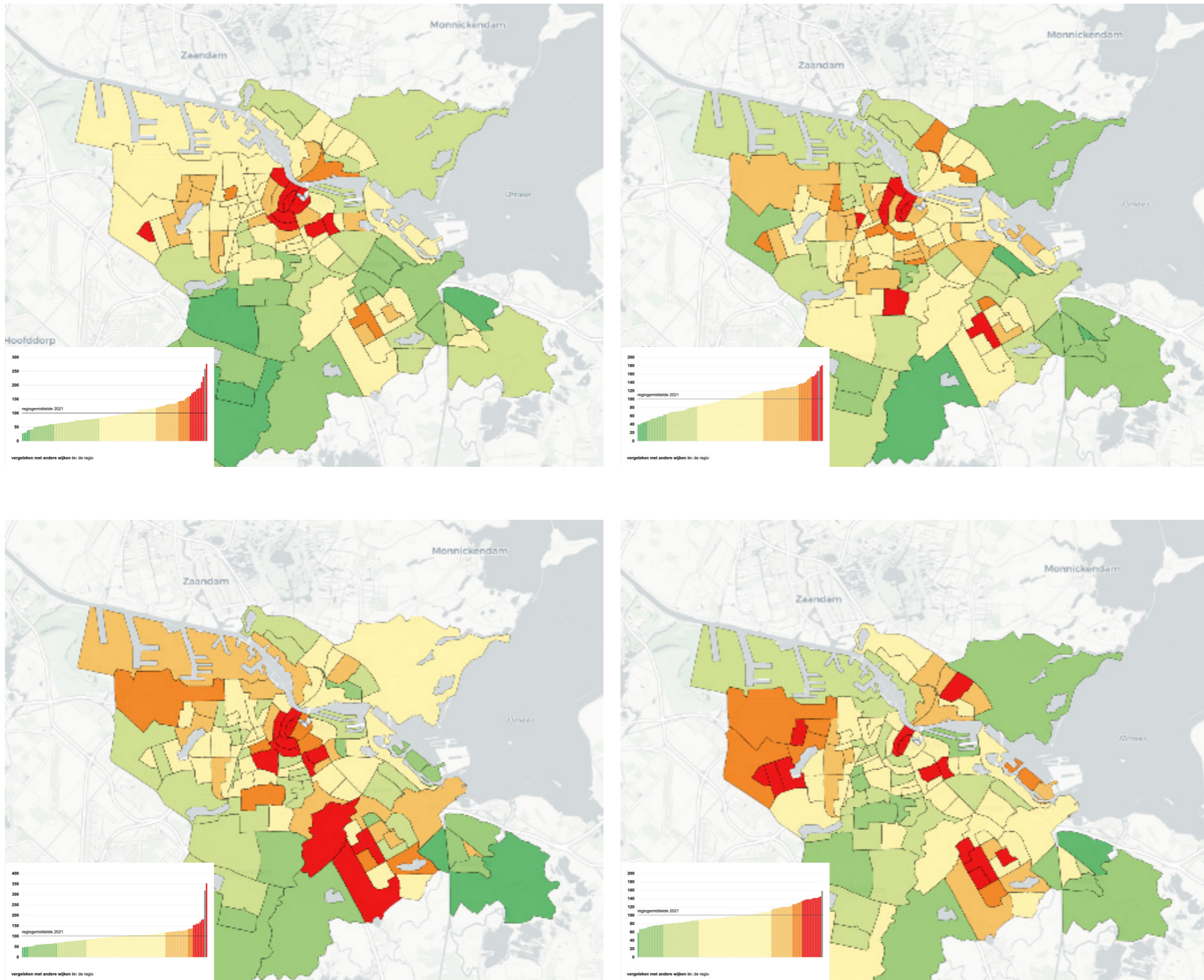


Figure 34 illustrate the state of safety and the sense of safety in de Wallen. They also illustrate experiences with nuisances and the perception of insecurity. In all four categories, de Wallen ranks highest or second highest. This indicates that there is a high sense of insecurity and nuisance among residents. According to figure on recorded crime, de Wallen also ranks second highest with 258 cases in 2025. These figures show that, on the one hand, it is very understandable that there is a high level of regulation and surveillance in de Wallen. On the other hand, they may also indicate that all this regulation does not necessarily always reduce crime, but it may well increase the sense of safety.

So the answer to the earlier questions is actually: no all the security measures do not simple provide safety feeling, the sense of security is still under serious strain.....

Figure 34: Figure of crime, safety and perception of safety (Veiligheid in Beeld | Website Onderzoek en Statistiek, 2022). Crime: high-impact crime (such as robberies, street muggings and threats) and common crime (such as pick-pocketing, bicycle theft and drug dealing)

4.1.8 conclusion regulated landscape

The regulated landscape of De Wallen involves a complex system of control that combines regulations, surveillance, and enforcement to influence both behavior and the character of the area. The neighborhood serves several purposes, including housing, tourism, local businesses, and sex work, but the focus leans more toward managing tourism and public order than supporting residents. Although it is more affordable than other parts of the city center, residents have limited access to affordable social and healthcare services, and current plans do not suggest changes to this situation.

Many behavioral restrictions address alcohol and drug use, group activities, and tourist conduct, showing a strong emphasis on reducing nuisance and controlling visitors. This is supported by surveillance carried out by municipal authorities, police, and private actors in public and semi-private spaces. Despite this, the narrow streets, dense layout, and heavy tourist traffic make it difficult to enforce full control. This creates a situation where the area feels both over-regulated and only partly controlled.

Regulation here is not only practical but also visible. Cameras, signs, and security staff constantly remind people of monitoring, influencing how the district is experienced. This visibility creates tension around privacy, especially for sex workers, where strict rules against photography exist alongside widespread surveillance.

This situation raises important questions about the impact of these controls, particularly on safety, privacy, and the role of sex work.

Several important questions arise from this analysis:

- What impact do the strict regulations have on the actual sense of safety in de Wallen?
- Are the checks, signage, and actions of security personnel effectively achieving their intended goals?
- How do the numerous regulations affect the privacy of individuals within the district, especially sex workers?
- Is sex work considered part of the local amenities or simply labor, and how does this classification affect policy?
- How many sex workers are actively operating in De Wallen, and how does this data influence regulation and support services?
- What are the long-term effects of surveillance on the community's trust and social cohesion?
- To what extent does the regulated environment affect the economic viability of local businesses, tourism and sex work?



Figure 35: Collection of camera's

4.1.9 Lived landscape of sex work

The second part of this chapter focuses on the lived landscape of De Wallen. The concept of a lived landscape refers to how a place is experienced, used, and felt in everyday life by the people who are present there. It emphasises daily practices, social interactions, atmosphere, and the emotional and sensory dimensions of urban space.

The lived landscape refers to how space is continually shaped by everyday practices and encounters. In De Wallen, this means examining how different groups use and perceive the area in their daily routines. The district is not a fixed environment but is continuously reconfigured by flows of people, social interactions, and patterns of use that vary over time. Its character is shaped not only by what happens there, but also by how it feels, including atmosphere, sensory impressions, and shifting moods throughout the day and night. People actively shape this lived landscape by performing different roles within it. Sex workers, tourists, residents, and others each contribute to how the area functions and is experienced. Their behaviours, interactions, and presence influence how the space is used, how it is perceived by others, and how it changes over time.

To analyse this, this section draws on a combination of literature review, street interviews, and field observations. These methods are used to map which groups use De Wallen and how they use the space. Particular attention is given to identifying different patterns of use and potential clashes between user groups. In addition, the analysis considers the atmosphere and spatial layout of different streets and public spaces.

Furthermore, attention is given to organised activities and events in De Wallen, as they also shape how the area is experienced. A short diary fragment is included to capture personal, embodied experiences of the space, complementing the more analytical observations. In addition, several street interviews with visitors provide insight into how the area is perceived and experienced by different users. Together, these approaches offer a comprehensive understanding of how De Wallen is lived and experienced.

moral landscape of sex work
lived landscape of sex work
regulated landscape of sex work

4.1.10 The people of de Wallen



Figure 36: People of de Wallen

4.1.10 the people of de Wallen

The previous map provides an overview of users of de Wallen, including residents, workers and tourists. These categories are based on numbers from the City of Amsterdam, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and data gathered from interviews. Whilst these categories are stereotypical and exaggerated, they are used to illustrate the extremes among users. The actual users are far more diverse and individual; they are real people and would not necessarily fit neatly into these stereotypes.

Residents | There are 4,683 people living in de Wallen, the largest group being aged 25-45 (47%). The smallest group is aged 9-15, accounting for 4%. A total of 710 students live in the neighbourhood (15%). 66% of residents live in single-person households, and the average length of residence is 6.1 years. 80% of residents in the neighbourhood are unmarried. Of those living in de Wallen, 44% were born in the Netherlands, 30% in Europe, and 26% outside Europe (*Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024*)

Visitors | An interesting statistic for de Wallen is that 87% of people in public spaces are visitors. The number of overnight stays in Amsterdam for 2026 is estimated at 26.4 million per year. The number of day visitors to Amsterdam as a whole is estimated at 28 million in 2026. This would mean that 76,000 day visitors come to Amsterdam every day. It is not known exactly how many of these visit de Wallen.

However, it is known that, as well as being the most famous tourist hotspot (*Gemeente Amsterdam, 2025*). In 2023, tourists spent 21 billion in Amsterdam (*Amsterdam Tourism Statistics - How Many People Visit? (2024), z.d.*)

Amsterdam Central Station sees 150,000 passengers arriving and departing daily (*Reizigersgedrag | NS Dashboard, z.d.*). This includes commuters, day trippers and tourists. In addition, De Wallen neighbourhood is adjacent to the North-South line, which carries 25,000 passengers a day, with Rokin station, which borders the area. Then there is the Nieuwmarkt, which attracts a further 10,000 visitors <https://maps-vervoerregio.nl/nsinuitstappers/>. Finally, between 200,000 and 300,000 visitors arrive in the city centre from the cruise ships at the Piet Hein Kade (*Hielkema, 2024*).

Companies | There are 2,480 business premises in de Wallen neighbourhood. The largest share of these premises is in the hospitality and hotel sector. This is followed by retail. In third place are service and leisure businesses. There are 10,792 people working here (*Bedrijven op de Kaart, z.d.*).

During my observations, I identified where streets were particularly busy and mapped several regular and crowded routes. This resulted in the map next to this text. Cross sections of these streets are in the appendix.

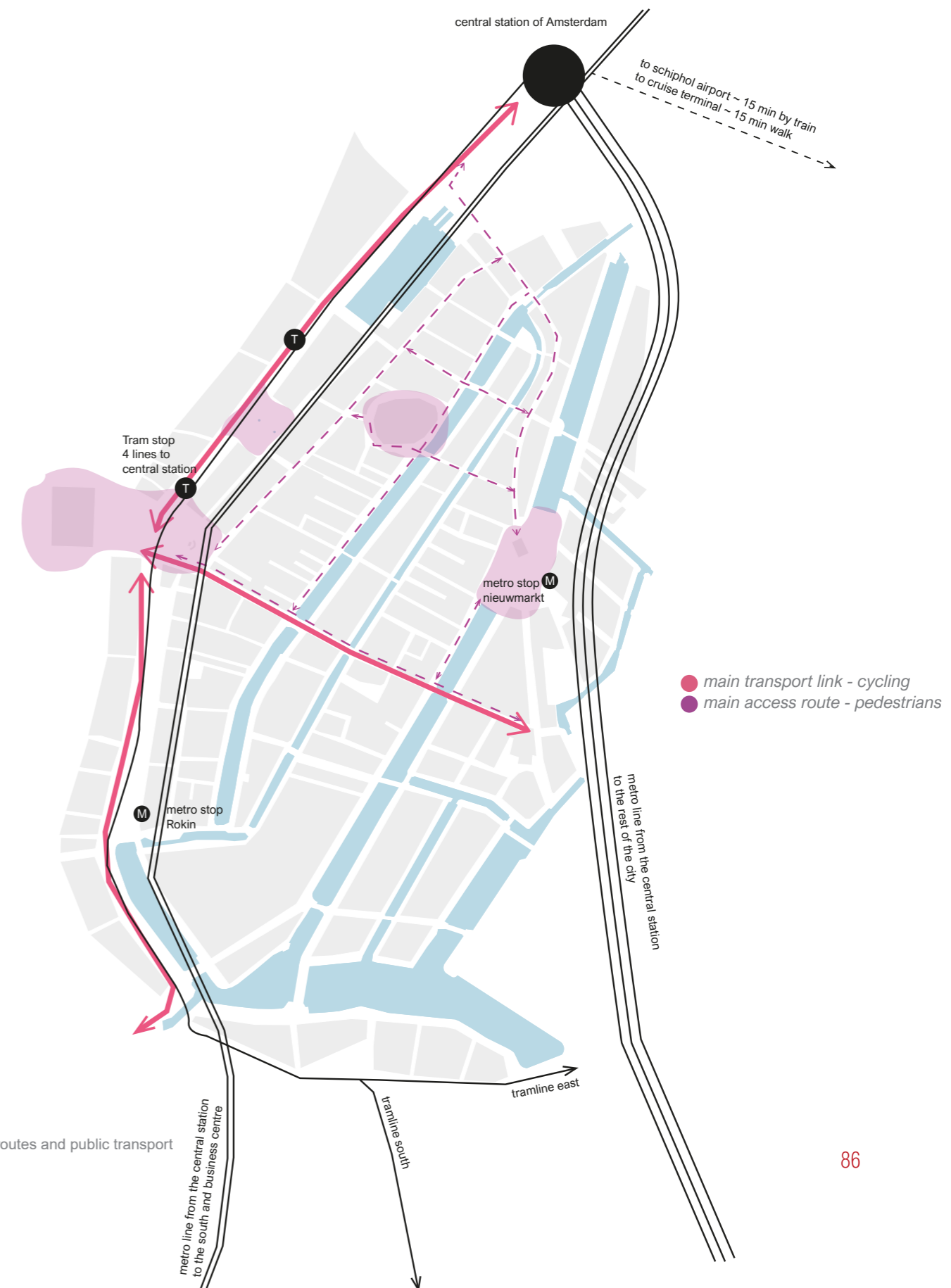


Figure 37: Accesroutes and public transport

4.1.11 experiences of everyday life

Figure 39a: Everyday experience of resident



The routes and these events are based on responses from the interviews. They show how residents experience the neighbourhood and what they do in a day. They demonstrate that the neighbourhood is vibrant and has a close-knit community. But they also reveal feelings of frustration, as well as feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. And a certain resignation: residents are learning to live with it.

One of the key points in everyday experience is the community space of the Wallenbuurt, which shares a location with a local residents' organisation. This space functions as a meeting point for neighbourhood initiatives and residents. The visit provided insight into how local actors organise themselves and create spaces for community interaction within De Wallen. One of the goals of this neighbourhood is to bring residents together and organise events. They strive to actively involve residents who may find it harder to get involved in the neighbourhood, such as older adults or people who don't speak Dutch and don't immediately feel at home here.

Figure 39b: Everyday experience of student



The other route is also based on one of the respondents and on observations made during field visits. It depicts the life of a student who lives in the neighborhood. Many students live in the Red Light District; for example, some of them attend the university located in the southern part of the district. The neighborhood is described as an exciting, lively area with many social spaces and features.

In addition, the thoughts and experiences that arise while moving through the neighborhood are described. One of the most important observations was that the interviewee sometimes felt unsafe while walking through the Red Light District, although this was more often due to the clients than the sex workers themselves.

4.1.12 Field work and Street interviews

To understand the lived landscape of De Wallen, a series of field observations and informal street interviews was conducted. Observations were conducted at 4 times (11:00, 15:00, 20:00, and 00:00) across multiple days, following similar routes to allow for comparison. The field work was conducted between March and April. In addition, informal conversations were held with tourists, workers, and passersby. The aim was to gain insight into how different users experience and use the area in everyday practice.

The interviews were conducted at three locations: the Old Church, Oudezijds Voorburgwal and Damstraat. During the initial exploratory site visit, it was clear that all three were busy locations with a wide variety of users. The exact locations are shown on the map opposite. These specific locations were chosen because they are busy thoroughfares and are situated next to areas with various functions within de Wallen. This made it possible to observe as many different users and interactions as possible.



Figure 39c: Everyday experience of Sexworker



Figure 40: Location of street-interviews

4.1.13 Field work

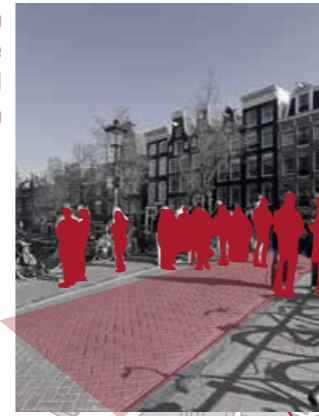


Figure 41: Observations surrounding de Damstraat

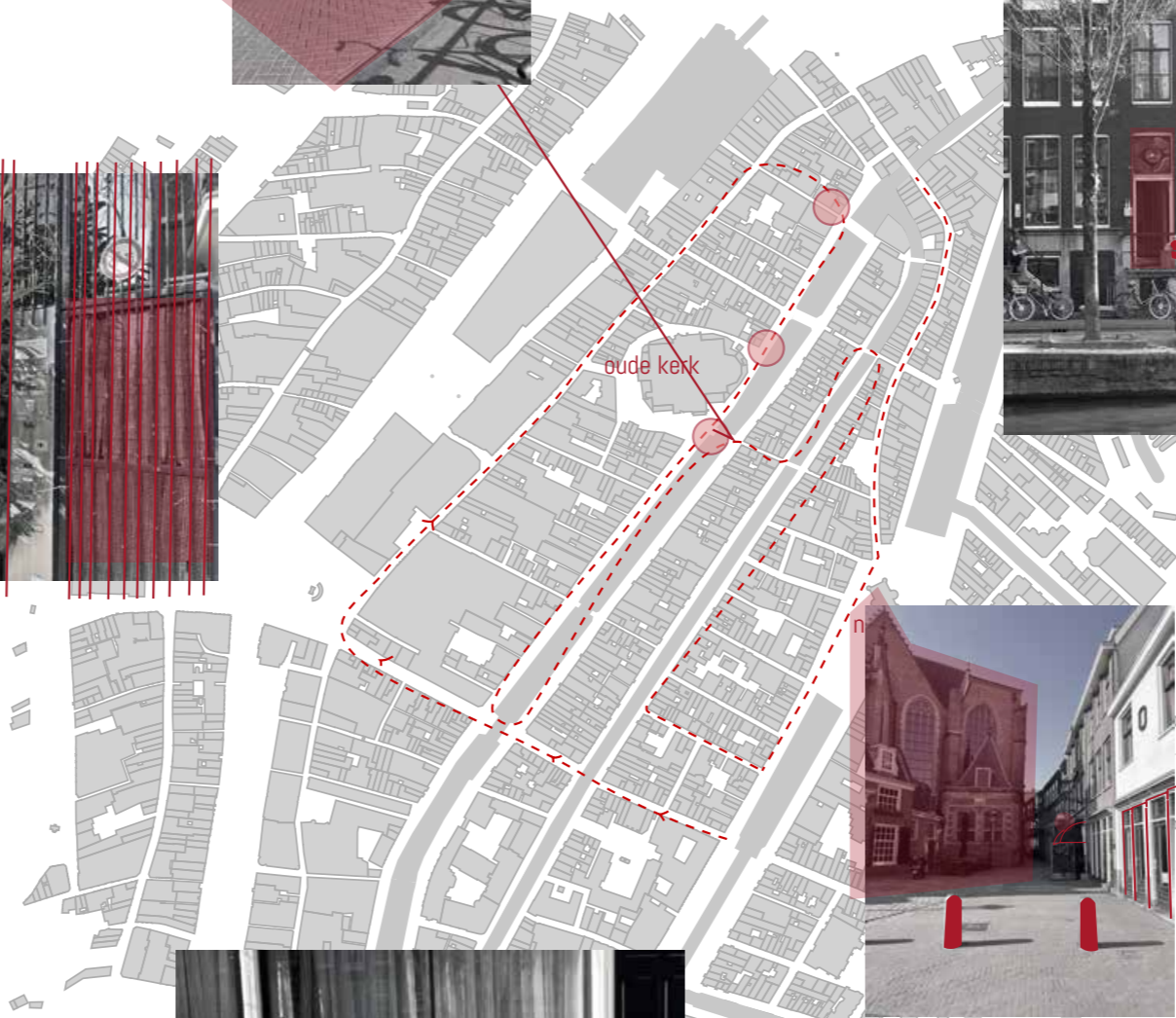


Figure 42: Observations surrounding de Warmoestraat

The bridge near the old church was crowded with people taking pictures and tourists all afternoon



Entrance from streets to in gardens are closed of with a high fence -



Residential and erotic function, next to each other. Resident enjoying coffee in the sun

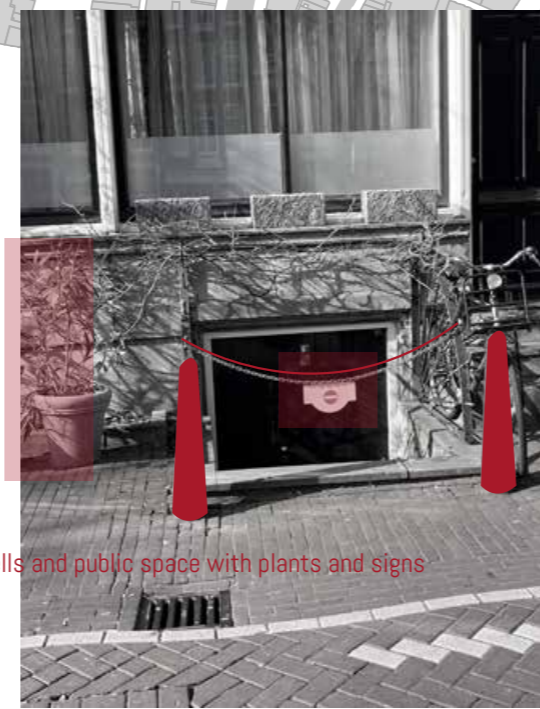


mix of functions: erotic, bar, culture /church

bollards prevent cars from driving onto the square

no public furniture

where to sit if you do not have a home? or money for a cafe



appropriating stairwells and public space with plants and signs

Figure 43: Observations surrounding de Warmoestraat

4.1.14 Street interviews

OBSERVATIONS & STREET INTERVIEWS
tourism
monday 23 2026 between 12.30 - 13u
general: Very sunny and busy Monday morning

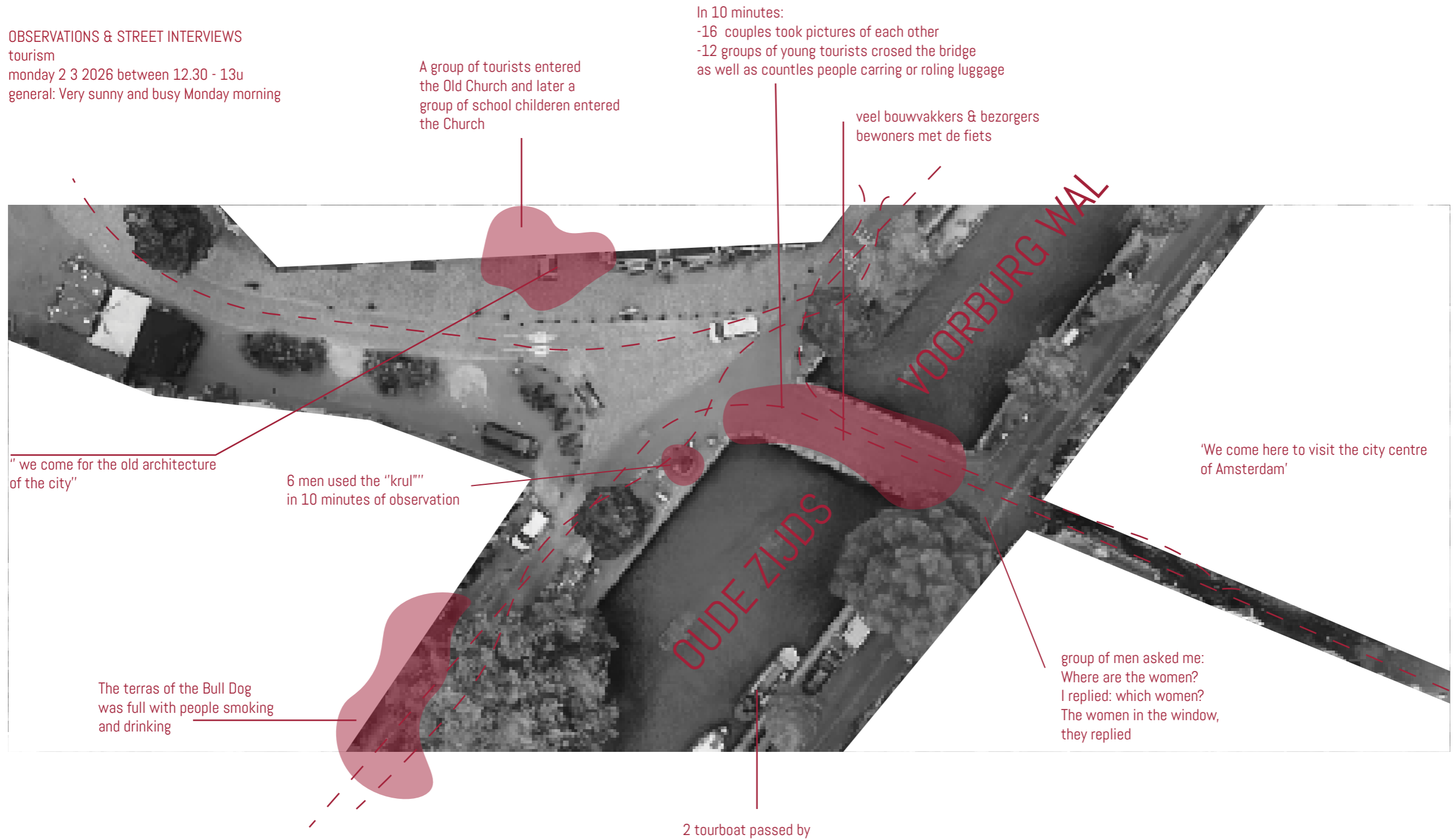


Figure 44: Street interviews Oude Kerk

I asked multiple couples or groups who looked like tourists what they were doing here and why they came to this place?

4.1.13 Field work



Figure 45: Observations surrounding the Oude zijds voorburgwal

4.1.14 Street interviews

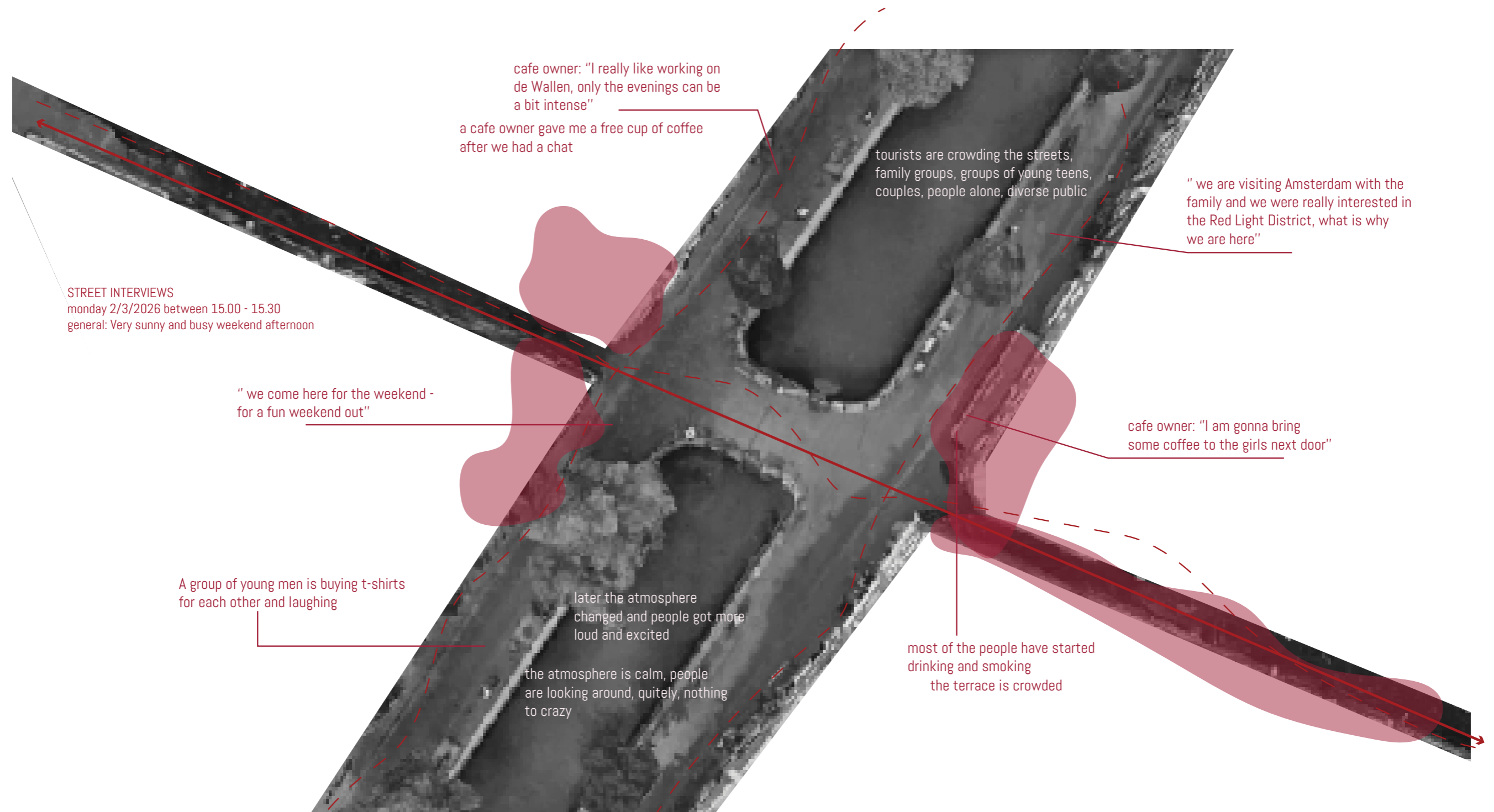


Figure 46: Street interviews surrounding the Oude zijds voorburgwal

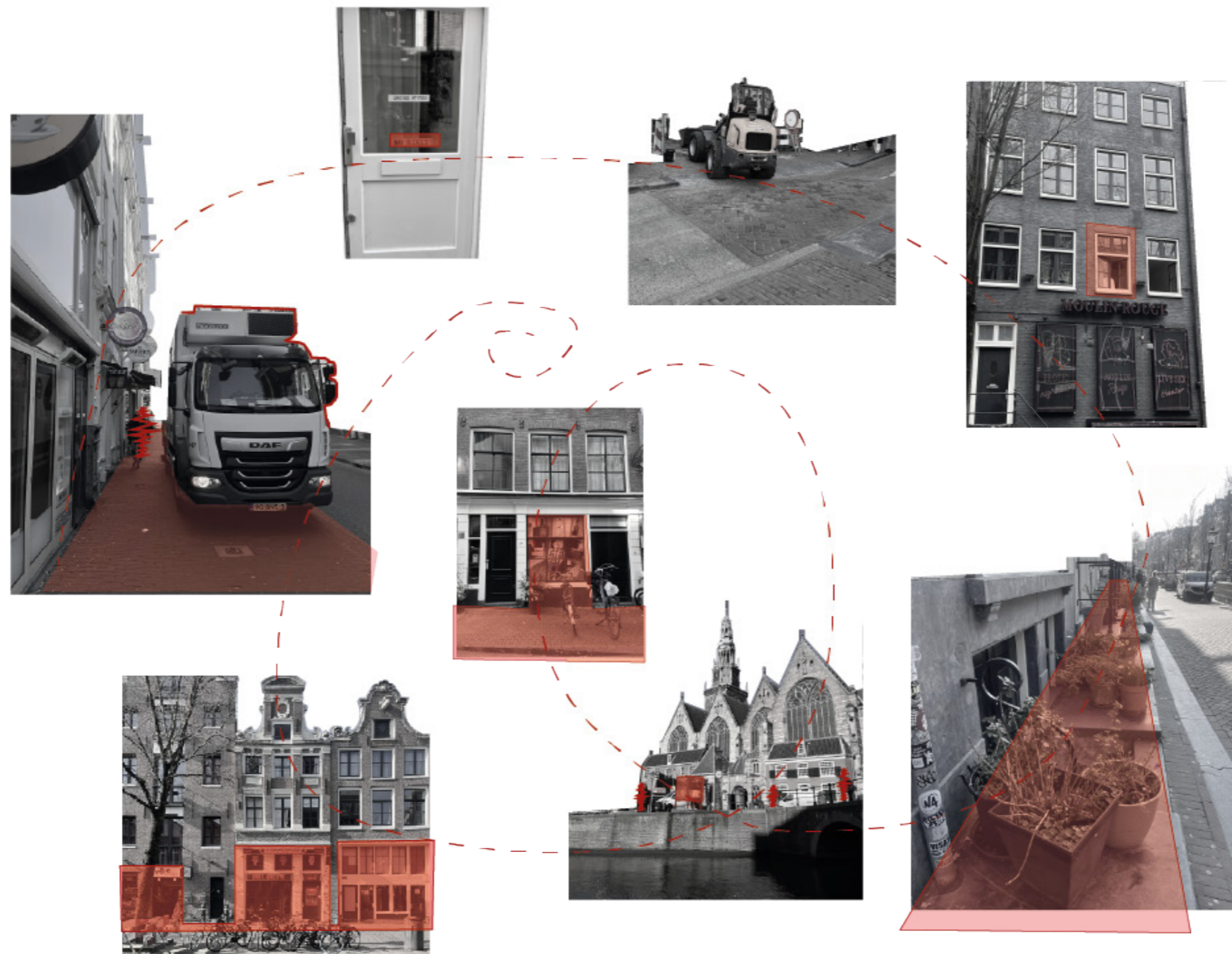


Figure 47: Clash of users

trucks that are too big for the streets, blocking the way for everyone else. Construction workers digging up the streets, turning them into chaos. Tourists who, all on their own, make the streets inaccessible to cyclists. Residents who fill every inch of public space with flower pots. Tourists have public toilet in front of one of Amsterdam's oldest churches. Tourists asking complete strangers where the women in the windows are. Window workers next to, between and above houses, making nuisance to residents sometimes unavoidable. Residents trying to keep their doors clear of bicycles.

4.1.15 conclusion fieldwork and street interviews

The field observations and walk-along interviews show that De Wallen is heavily dominated by commercial and tourist activities, causing everyday urban life to be hidden in the streetscape. In streets such as Warmoesstraat and Damstraat in particular, there is a lack of visible residential activity and apartments above the street level appear disconnected from public life, which contributes to the image of an area that functions primarily as an extension of the tourist economy.

At the same time, the public space is characterised by pressure, competition and fragmentation. Small interventions such as fences, terraces and demarcations point to an ongoing struggle for space between different user groups. The lack of freely accessible facilities, such as seating or green spaces, means that lingering without consumption is hardly facilitated and reinforces the fleeting, visitor-oriented use of the area.

Within De Wallen, however, there are clear spatial and social contrasts. In areas around the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, a more balanced mix of functions is evident and everyday life is more prominent, whilst other areas, such as the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, are dominated by commercialism, tourism and voyeurism. Furthermore, the analyses show that neighbourhood-oriented facilities are scarce and that the provision is strongly tailored to specific target groups, with an over-representation of tourist and niche functions. Although space is emerging for alternative and queer initiatives, the dominant structure remains largely economically driven and, at its core, heteronormative.

4.1.16 everyday experiences of public space

During my fieldwork in de Wallen, I tried to examine the different streets to highlight their diversity and how they are used. To show which spaces users occupy, how they present themselves in the streets and what they do there. I also wanted to see if I could identify any spatial clashes in the use of de Wallen by different stakeholders. To see if their differing values were reflected in the spatial arrangement.

This resulted in a analyses of the three main public spaces, the Old Church Square, the Dam Square, and Nieuwmarkt. Social, economic and environmental aspects were analysed in the space. The social aspect is mainly derived from interviews and informal conversations. The economic and environmental from field observations. The findings are concluded in figure..

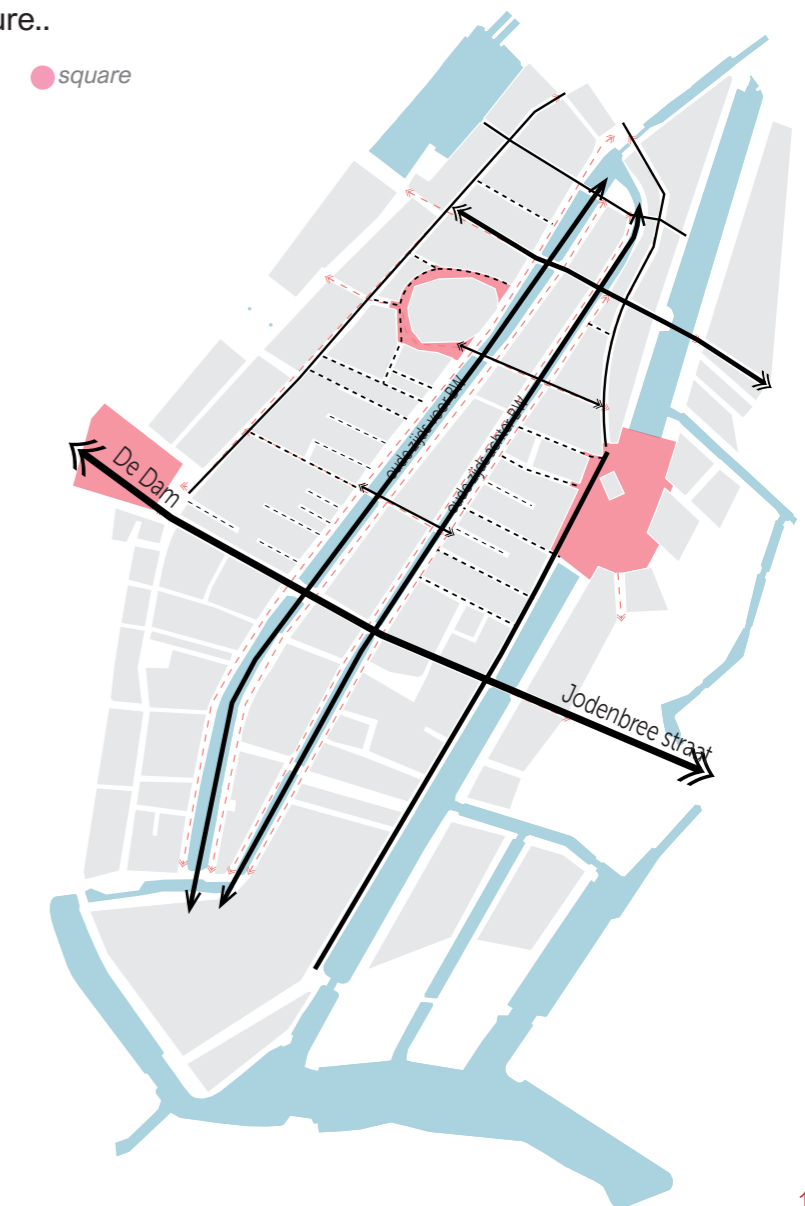


Figure 48: Street of de Wallen

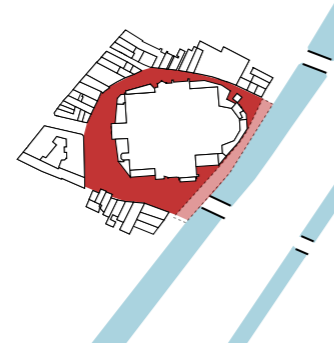
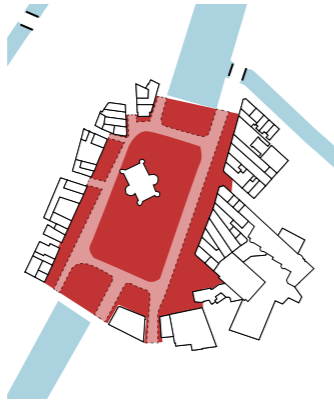
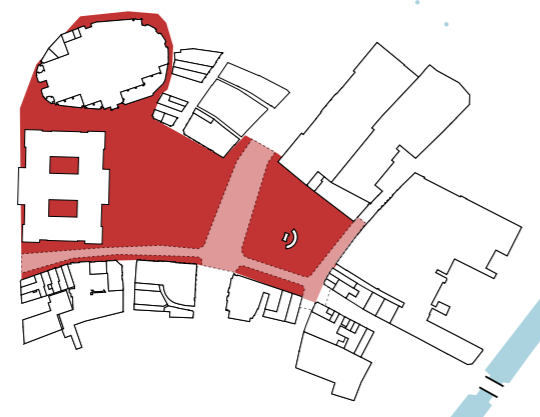
Space	Social	Economic	Environmental
<p>Oude kerk plein</p> 	<p>Users: predominantly tourists</p> <p>They visit mainly to experience cultural and architectural features.</p> <p>The space is very small in scale, but it functions less as a place to stay. There are no free public benches only seating associated with cafés and terraces, where you are expected to pay.</p> <p>Despite this, it still allows for social interaction. A community living room (neighbourhood space) borders the square, and there are also residential front doors opening directly onto it, which adds a layer of everyday life.</p>	<p>The surrounding functions include sex work venues, bars, and cafés.</p> <p>This creates a unique and somewhat unusual mix of uses.</p>	<p>There is virtually no greenery, although a canal runs alongside the space.</p>
<p>Nieuw markt</p> 	<p>Users: both local residents and tourists</p> <p>Respondents indicated that they often visit this place because it primarily serves local residents. There is a weekly local market, along with various community-oriented events such as April festivities, the Warmoes Biennale, and the Wallen Festival.</p> <p>At the same time, it is also considered a destination for many tourists.</p> <p>The space is smaller in scale and feels more intimate, with a greater number of seating areas that encourage people to stay and spend time there.</p>	<p>The square is bordered by many bars and cafés, with a strong presence of restaurants that activate the edges of the space.</p> <p>A metro station opens directly onto the square, and there are also many residential buildings surrounding it, contributing to a lived-in, everyday atmosphere.</p> <p>There are shops as well, but they are smaller in scale and more oriented toward local needs rather than tourism.</p>	<p>The space includes a border of trees and is located near the water, although it still contains a significant amount of hard surfaces (stone).</p>
<p>De Dam</p> 	<p>Users: mostly tourists</p> <p>It functions more like a traffic junction or transit hub — a place people pass through rather than stay in.</p> <p>It often serves as a starting point for protests and expressions of public opinion.</p> <p>The space is very large and not intimate, with a limited amount of seating and little real opportunity for social interaction.</p>	<p>There is almost no greenery, and pollution levels are high due to the convergence of multiple traffic flows.</p>	<p>There is almost no greenery, and pollution levels are high due to the convergence of multiple traffic flows.</p>

Figure 49: Table with public space analyse

4.1.17 conclusion lived landscape

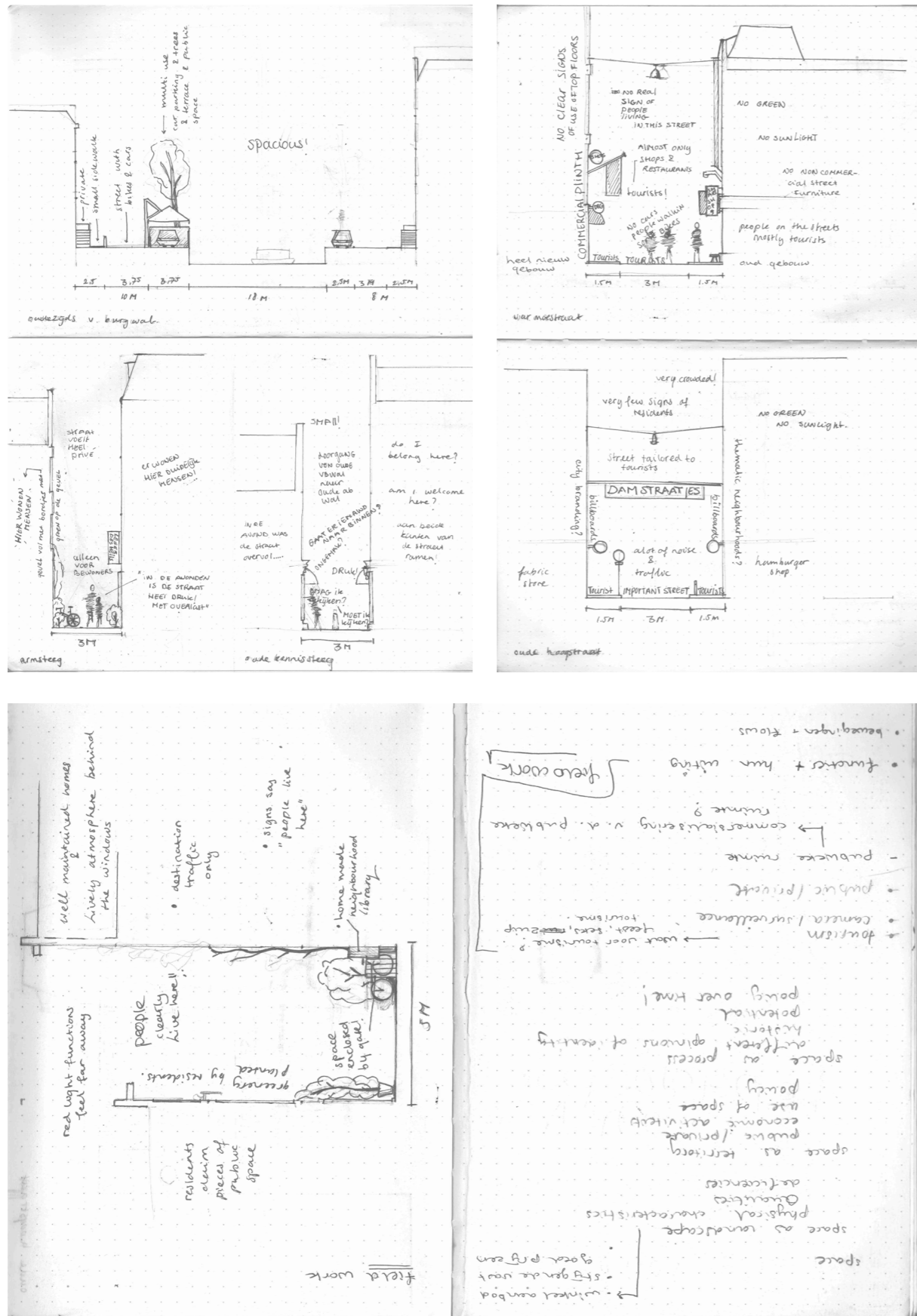


Figure 50: Notes during field work

De Wallen is a heavily used and centrally located urban area that brings together a wide variety of users, including residents, visitors, business owners and sex workers. These groups make use of the streets, squares and infrastructure in different ways, which leads to a high degree of dynamism, but also puts pressure on the available space. Consequently, the neighbourhood is experienced in diverse ways: whilst some appreciate the liveliness and social networks, others experience nuisance, pollution and feelings of insecurity or exclusion within their own living environment.

The spatial structure of De Wallen reveals clear differences between types of streets and connections. Residential streets mainly contain residential functions, but are sometimes physically closed off from public life by fences, whilst residents here do have to deal with considerable nuisance. Connecting streets running east-west function as busy routes for traffic and guided tours, with a predominantly commercial character and little visible residential function. In a north-south direction, the canals show stark contrasts: the Oudezijds Voorburgwal has a mixed and relatively balanced mix of uses, whilst the Oudezijds Achterburgwal is dominated by adult entertainment and hustle and bustle, with little room for other urban functions. Other streets, such as the Warmoesstraat and Zeedijk, also differ greatly in character, ranging from distinctly tourist-oriented to more locally oriented.

The spatial and functional layout of De Wallen is largely determined by tourism and commercial activities. The streets are predominantly characterised by functions geared towards consumption, whilst the residential character fades into the background in many places. Public space is scarce and often (semi-)privatised, and basic amenities such as green spaces and seating areas are largely absent. This results in a fragmented urban system in which different users, functions and spatial logics coexist, but are not in balance.

4.1.18 The Moral landscape of sex work

The third part of this chapter focuses on the moral landscape of de Wallen. The concept of moral landscape refers to the fact that in different areas of the city are associated with varying moral values. Moral landscape refers to how different places in the city are assigned moral meanings and values.'

The red light district is often understood as a separate “immoral” part of the city, where activities like prostitution are contained and tolerated as an exception to everyday social norms. However, this distinction is becoming less clear. Rather than being fundamentally different from the rest of society, areas like De Wallen can also be seen as reflecting broader social and economic changes, where intimacy and sexuality are increasingly shaped by commercialisation and exchange. In contemporary society, sex is not only linked to relationships or reproduction, but is also influenced by consumer culture and ideas of efficiency and choice. As a result, the red light district does not simply stand outside of “normal” moral values, but instead reveals the ambiguities and contradictions that exist within them.

To analyse this, the section draws on seventeen interviews conducted during this research. The interviews were coded in Atlas.ti using the code “Moral Landscape.” The selected quotes are analysed to identify recurring themes and patterns. The aim is to map the spectrum of moral diversity associated with De Wallen. This includes the various moral meanings and values that people attach to the area. The analysis aims to show how attitudes towards sex work are closely related to how de Wallen is experienced, with particular attention to its gendered dimensions. Ultimately, the goal is to highlight the contradictions within the moral landscape and to demonstrate the complexity of the Wallen.

moral landscape of sex work
 lived landscape of sex work
 regulated landscape of sex work

4.1.19 Moral landscape spectrum

The following pages contain a collection of quotes related to the moral landscape of de Wallen. These quotes are included here to demonstrate that the respondents expressed a variety of opinions with different justifications and levels of intensity. Presenting these views in this way helps to make them feel personal and expressive, as they come from real people.

Figure 51: Quotes

Yes, there have been a great many protests here, including from the Christian community

how I feel about the windows here. Like because sometimes, like I said, when I walk home on a Friday night, I don't like, I want to just walk through like this. Like I don't want to see the way that men are looking at them because I don't like that. And, um, I also as like a woman who's like growing older. I mean, I'm still young, we're all growing older all the time. But like, I think a lot about aging and how society looks at women who age and like, if that kind of stuff is on my 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 mean, I've lived in The Hague. In Utrecht. Everywhere there's a street where sex work happens. And I find it really difficult too, you know. Because I think: how many girls are actually there voluntarily? Do you look at drug use? Abuse in their childhood? Etcetera. How many girls are actually there voluntarily?

Quotation

um, my personal experience, I come here for work. I walk through the red light district. Like I walk through those streets from the metro every day to and fro to get here. And, um, sometimes, like even for me, someone who's here a lot and someone who, like I am a sex worker, I support the girls in the windows. Sometimes it can be a lot for me as well. It can be overwhelming. Um. Generally I work Fridays and like I usually honestly dread walking to the metro on a Friday evening because people get so weird and like rude and men get creepy. Um, so like, I'm not, it's not like a like a flat happy, like everything's awesome here all the time. I love it. You know, type of thing. It's always a bit more complex than that. But, um, so like, I definitely understand people who move through de Wallen in and are like, have a hard time with it. I can

do you think it's important for sex work to exist? Like this, in this window work [Interviewee] Well, it's... It's a bit difficult to answer, but that it's been here for decades, in this form. Yes. Sex work has been around for centuries, so we don't know any different; it's just part of the neighbourhood.

what they really want. So they kind of dance around it. Um, yeah, there's people like even people who come in here and learn that, like the people working here are sex workers. Like, they'll get weird. You know, there's people who are weird all the time with sex workers,

Yeah, I feel, I feel conflicted, like, I think that's also

Q. Are there ever protests against de Wallen? A. Yes! Of course! to people as sex workers. I think that sex work is for people because it's not that bad for them. It's not that bad for them. It's not that bad for them.

But there's always a counter-protest. You can imagine. empowering all the time. Um, I personally don't even

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.

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.

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 work 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 go in and like stand in and take pictures of. That feels very voyeuristic, very sensationalizing to me, that

do tend to see a bit more discomfort amongst women I think. Yeah. especially like feminist women. Because it can make a lot of feminist women, like not know how to feel? Not know which stance to take. About sex work and you know and you see like with the red light. With the windows here, it's a very specific type of sex work. It's very visual focused. And so like, you know, they dress in a certain way, they look a certain way and it is pandering to the male gaze because 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 why you would feel uncomfortable with that. And so sex work is furthering the oppression of women and the objectification, objectification of women. I have all those thoughts kind of start to come right.

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

the time with sex workers, but, I think it's uncomfortable for women. I think walking there, I notice that more so with women, especially young women. But, um, I think it's hard for them to see this and not like, how can I say this? It's hard for them 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.

Okay. Yes. People have certain ideas and they think that that's just what it's like and it's not like that at all. Yeah. Um, and they make a lot of moralizing judgments about sex work. There's a lot of projection about the work. A lot of like, I could never see myself doing that. Like I would feel so degraded. So she must feel degraded. Um, just like thinking it's inherently 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

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.

especially with sex work. Yeah, yeah. All 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'm 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

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.

more than a minute to walk past. interviewee Would you prefer it if you didn't have to see that? Or didn't have to walk past it? interviewer No, not necessarily. I think it's just something that's part of Amsterdam.

So... Yeah, it's also kind of iconic for Amsterdam. I quite like it, actually. Yeah. But I don't mind not having to spend much time there, so to speak. It's just the people who come to find very chill.

Well, I think it reminds people that we exist. Um, I think sex work is something that's so often pushed underground because people get uncomfortable with it. Um, and that is a reaction people have all the time to the windows is like discomfort. Uh, so I think it's good to make people kind of acknowledge that discomfort and sit with it and like question it. Like, why are they uncomfortable seeing someone in the windows? What is it about that that makes it weird? I think it's good to be like having those questions come up for people. Um, just generally I think it's good for people to be challenged, I mean someone who's never seen a sex worker in their life before comes here. And it's like, it's good to see this can happen and like, it can be okay. Like, it can have to be weird. It's not like there's like crime all around pimps standing on the corners. You know, like it could just happen in the city center. and like businesses to be weird. Like I

Yeah, I think the most important thing right now is to change the neighborhood's public image. And right now, because it's known for sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, it only attracts that kind of crowd. Yeah, those are normal tourists, too. But the tourists this neighborhood attracts mainly come for the sex scene, for the bars, the coffee shops, and the like. And that, of course, has partly to do with the public image of the city of Amsterdam. Specifically, this part of Amsterdam. People think "Well, that's why we come to this neighborhood." um, my personal experience, I come here for work. I walk through the red light district. Like I walk through those streets from the metro every day to and fro to get here. And, um, sometimes, like even for me, someone who's here a lot and someone who, like I am a sex worker, I support the girls in the windows. Sometimes it can be a lot for me as well. It can be overwhelming. Um, generally I work Fridays and like I wouldn't be surprised. I wouldn't want that to happen, but I wouldn't be totally shocked. The municipality has made it clear that they don't particularly care about preserving sexwork as a red light district. Um, so it doesn't feel like something that's safe from being erased. Um, and I could also just see, see it get more and more gimmicky, more and more gentrified, more and more like almost gimmicky. Um, and it's just not quite what it used to be. Um, and that makes me a little sad. Yeah. But yeah.

I think it's a good thing. That in a city like Amsterdam, there are windows. Or the option for sex work. In a safe environment. Run by volunteers. By people who choose to do it themselves.

evening. But it's only a short stretch you have to cross. If, say, you want to go from here to Nieuwmarkt, I have to cross it loads of times. Yeah, that's how it starts too. But it's so short that it really doesn't bother me. And on the other hand, somehow I feel a bit unsafe, but... I know nothing's going to happen, because... There are so many people, so if anything happens, you just let out a scream... And straight away there'll be a thousand people around me.

Taken together, these quotes provide an overview of the moral landscape of de Wallen. This is shown on the following page and illustrates how all the opinions relate to one another. Most opinions are underpinned by something that can also be seen as aspects of the regulated or lived landscape. Alternatively, they are purely moral opinions.

Some people say that's just part of it.

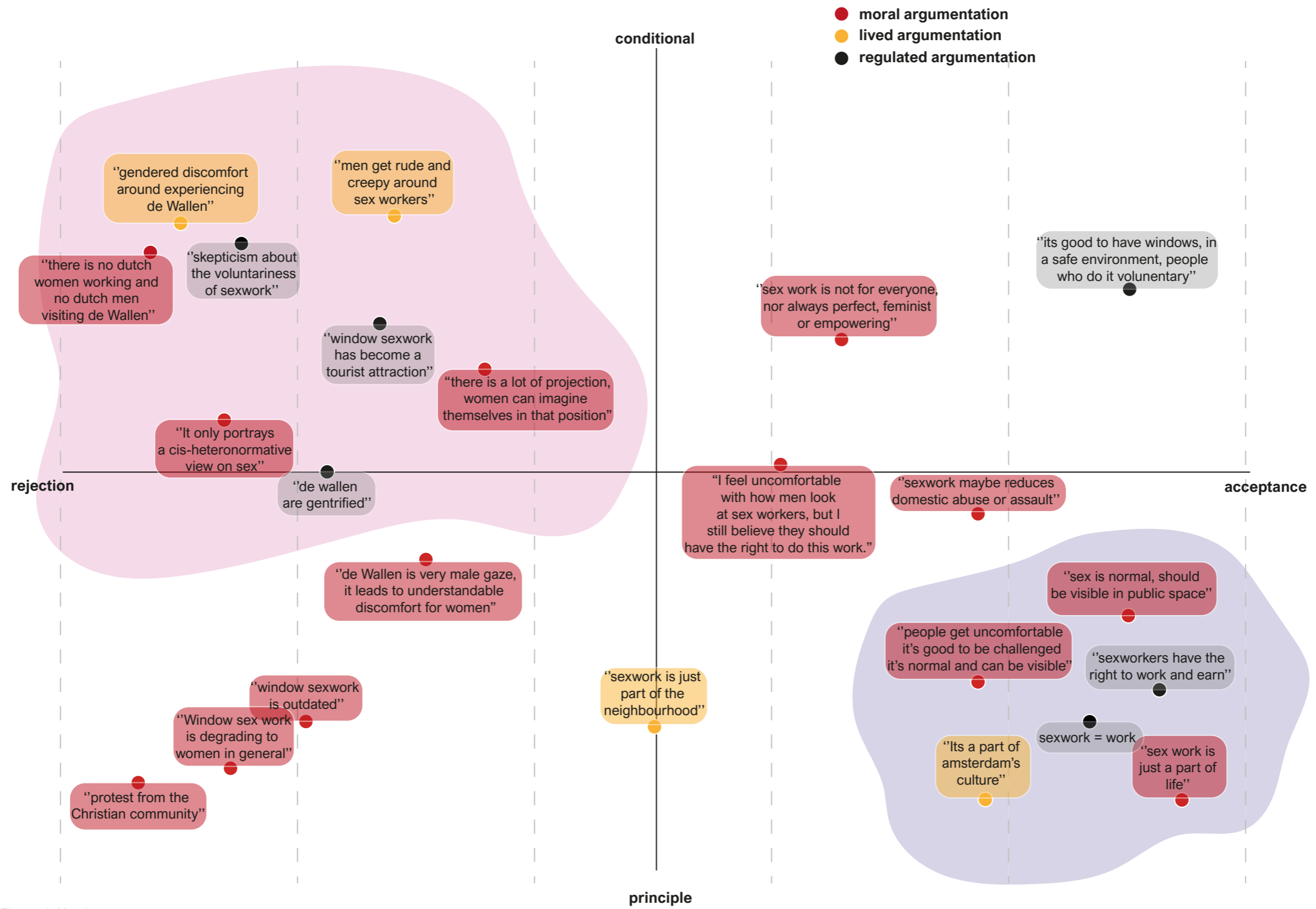


Figure 52: Moral spectrum

4.1.20 Moral landscape conclusion

The aim of this framework was to illustrate the moral views people hold regarding the Red Light District. The aim was also to examine whether moral values influence people's opinions of the Red Light District or their willingness to spend time there.

Firstly, it can be said that there are many differing opinions regarding the Red Light District. These opinions relate to gender, progressiveness, safety or religion. The opinions have been plotted on a framework where rejection – acceptance is set against conditional – principled. The first axis was chosen because the opinions on this axis varied, ranging from total acceptance to total rejection. The second axis was chosen because residents' opinions were sometimes based on a principled idea, such as 'sex work is degrading to women in general', or more on a conditional judgement, such as 'window work is not attractive, because men get groping around sex workers', where the judgement is not necessarily focused on sex work itself but more on the environment in which it takes place.

The diagram shows that there are two main clusters of opinions. The first is the group that accepts sex work in the Red Light District on principle. This includes statements such as 'sex is normal, so it should be allowed to take place in public' or 'sex work = work'. The second cluster involves the rejection of sex work, but primarily because of the conditions in which it takes place. Examples include "window sex work has become too much of a tourist attraction" or "the

Red Light District represents an overly cis-heteronormative view of sex work". It is noteworthy that few people stated that they fundamentally disapproved of window sex work in general.

However, this analysis also raises a number of questions:

- Why does it actually matter for the legitimacy of sex work in the Red Light District what people and policymakers think of sex work from a moral standpoint?
- Does the opinion that policymakers hold about sex work influence the policy choices they make?

4.2 Actors & Value perception - SQ2

4.2 Actors & Value perception

The second part of the findings chapter examines the various users of de Wallen and how they perceive and value the area. Herzog et al (2024, p. 1328) state the following about values in urban space: “*Past and present development projects demonstrate that pluralistic values of various stakeholders often lead to conflict about the planning of urban space (McAuliffe and Rogers, 2019). A key challenge for planners and decision-makers is to identify and address these diverse and often competing values of citizens and other stakeholders (Van der Wal et al., 2015).*” As described before, transformations of Red-Light Districts can be seen as contested processes, with actors expressing feelings of loss and displacement, but may also resist, be relieved by, or adapt to changing circumstances (Singelenberg & Van Gent, 2020). RLDs are therefore inherently linked to competing values and conflicts that can arise as a result.

In the following chapter, a description is given of how stakeholders value and perceive de Wallen. First, the perception of the problem is described for each user, followed by the different values for each user. The various values are then analysed to identify conflicts between users. This analysis leads to a value framework for the Red Light District, which is an elaboration of the value framework found in the literature review. Within this value framework, we examine which values conflict with and the different meanings associated with the values. A more detailed overview of values and perceptions per interview can be found in appendix. The data for this analysis comes from various interviews conducted between February 2026 and April 2026.

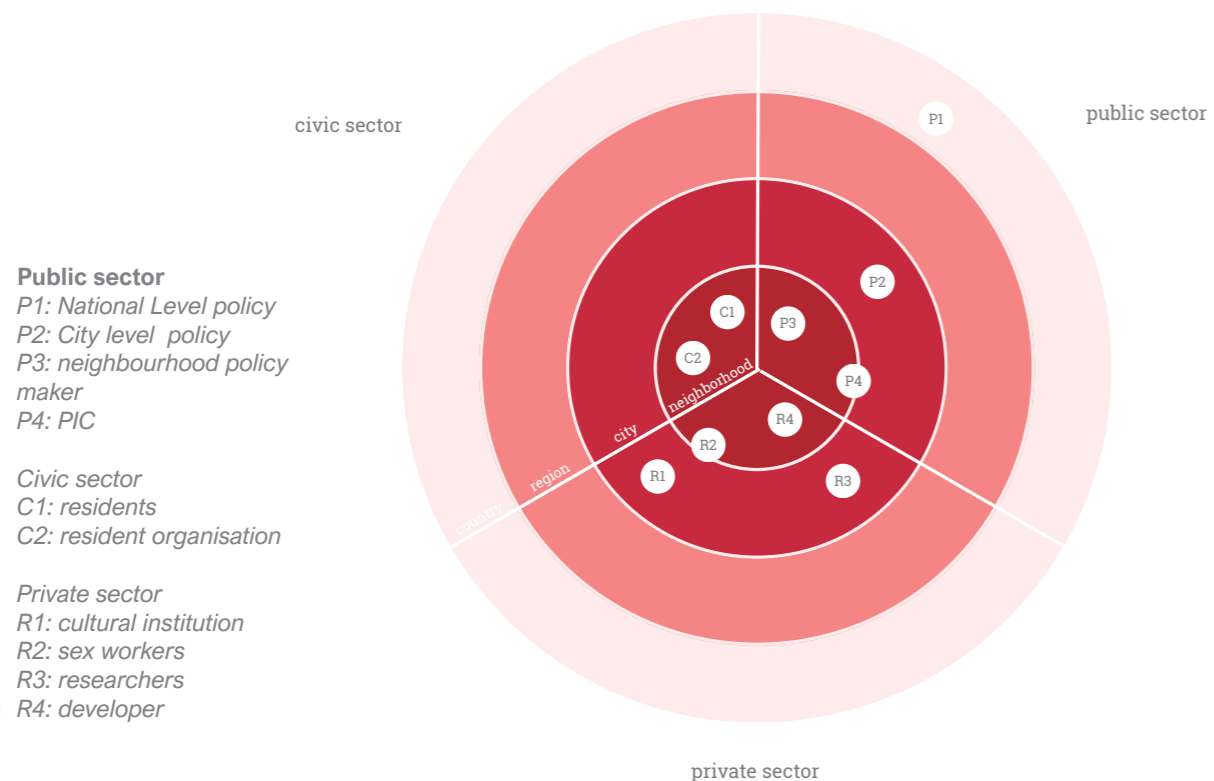


Figure 53: Figure with interviewed stakeholders

4.2.1 Perception of the problem

Policymakers | Policy-makers highlighted three issues: the attraction of what they described as ‘undesirable’ tourists, the prevalence of a ‘sex, drugs and rock ’n’ roll’ identity, and difficulties with transformation and changes, with the first two leading to livability challenges. An interesting aspect among the policymakers surveyed was the difference in the institutional roles and level they hold. This means that they view the Red Light District from different perspectives and with different objectives in mind. Their perceptions must therefore also be viewed in this light.

The first problem described by respondents was the influx of a particular type of tourism in large numbers. They refer to the presence of “*wrong*” or undesirable tourists, characterised by excessive consumption, disruptive behaviour, and a lack of respect for the environment. As described: “*[They] make a lot of noise, drink a lot, break things... and use too much.*” This behaviour is not only seen as problematic in itself but also as economically profitable, leading businesses to cater specifically to this demand. This, in turn, reinforces de Wallen’s international identity. According to the respondents, the association with sex, drugs, and nightlife overshadows other qualities of the area, such as its historical and cultural significance. As they explain: “*The other identity such as history and culture pales into insignificance.*” In this context, the presence of this identity is questioned: “*I don’t really understand why we want to keep that identity at all that can be done somewhere else.*” These issues are directly linked to quality of life and safety. They describe everyday nuisances, such as noise, vandalism, and inappropriate behaviour, which directly affect residents’ living conditions and result in high cleaning and surveillance costs for the local authority. For example: “*Every little garden gets pissed on the green spaces are a nightmare.*” In addition, extreme crowding is described as creating potentially dangerous situations that require active intervention: “*It can get so busy that we have to cordon off alleys because it becomes too dangerous.*”. These conditions are seen as direct consequences of the interplay between tourism, consumption patterns, and spatial concentration.

Respondents also describe the challenges involved in implementing transformations as a problem. This is linked to difficulties surrounding renovations, stemming from a combination of spatial, economic and institutional constraints. The area is described as physically saturated and embedded within a historic urban fabric, leaving little room for physical interventions: “*If I wanted to add something, for example by installing more windows, that is simply not possible the area is already full. The buildings are small and listed – you cannot knock through walls or extend them.*” These spatial constraints are exacerbated by high property values, making large-scale interventions such as buying up properties financially difficult.

As the respondent notes: *“Property is still extremely expensive buying up buildings costs hundreds of thousands per property,”* besides municipal budgets require choices between competing public interests. An example from the interview: *“Why should I buy that corner property when I could use the whole sum to provide social care for half the district for a year?”* At the same time, administrative processes are described as contentious, with conflicting interests among stakeholders and legal proceedings further restricting the scope for action: *“You can hardly do anything, because everyone wants something different anything you enforce leads to legal proceedings. It’s just very difficult.”*

Another concern is safety. The respondents attribute this mostly to new technologies, such as tourists taking pictures or smart glasses that can secretly capture images. This creates risks for sex workers, especially for those who have not told their family or friends about their job. Finally, the respondent also points to internal issues within the sector itself, including conflicts between sex workers and clients, such as instances where *“sex workers had the tendency to add a few extra zeros when customers paid,”* leading to aggression and police involvement.

sexworkers | The second group is related to sex work on De Wallen. Respondents described the fear of being shut down driven by ongoing policy interventions and transformation ideas. One respondent explains: *“There is always the threat of them closing more windows. It’s always in the back of our minds.”* This is not framed as a hypothetical scenario, but as a realistic trajectory: *“I wouldn’t be surprised if in a couple of years there were no more windows. it doesn’t feel like something that’s safe from being erased.”* Another problem respondents described is a perceived loss of authenticity, which they describe de Wallen, as becoming increasingly *“gimmicky”* and oriented towards commercial consumption and tourism and feeling less authentic. The respondent sees this also in the erasure of historical traces, for example the closure of the formerly active window streets, de Trompetsteeg. The windows have been closed and transformed into function not related to sexwork. A respondent describes *“that that street was very much historically tied to sex work. That historical connection is totally gone.”*

Tourism plays an ambiguous role within this perception. On the one hand, respondents express strong frustration with tourist behaviour, particularly in relation to disrespect towards sex workers. This includes actions such as taking photographs, ignoring social norms, and displaying inappropriate behaviour. As one respondent explains: *“Most of them haven’t seen anything like this before so they don’t know how to act.”* At the same time, tourism is also recognised as economically indispensable, pointing out a paradoxical relationship: *“Sex workers are dependent on them for their livelihood. It’s a love-hate relationship.”* In addition to these concerns, respondents also report situational experiences of discomfort and safety concerns, particularly during peak moments. For example, one interviewee describes feeling overwhelmed by crowd behaviour: *“I honestly dread walking to the metro on a Friday evening people get weird, and men get creepy.”*

These experiences are not necessarily framed as constant, but rather as context-dependent and linked to specific times. As well as structural inequalities, for example when *“operators choose not to rent to trans or homosexual sex workers.”*

Residents | The third group that was interviewed were residents. They described a range of problems, including tourism pressure that leads to declines in safety and spatial issues. Residents describe how navigating the area becomes difficult due to the combination of high density of visitors and the narrow street pattern. As one resident explains: *“It’s so busy. You come out of a side street. Then you have to wait for a gap to appear. Then you squeeze in. Then you just go with the flow.”* However, overcrowding is not the only issue related to tourism; it is also a social and safety-related problem. Residents link the presence of large numbers of tourists to increased nuisance, including drug-related activities and a decline in their sense of safety. One respondent notes: *“What I think is a real problem for a great many people is drug-related crime and the nuisance caused by dealers.”* In addition, nighttime disorder is frequently mentioned, including noise, aggression, and inappropriate behaviour in public spaces. As described by another resident: *“People often use it at night causing a terrible nuisance with fights, loud shouting, urinating in public and drug dealing.”*

At the same time, the sense of safety appears to be ambivalent and situational. Some residents describe feeling unsafe, particularly at night, while acknowledging that large crowds and eyes on the streets can also provide a sense of protection. As one interviewee explains: *“I feel a bit unsafe but I know nothing’s going to happen, because there are so many people around who see me.”*

A second recurring theme concerns the area’s commercial character, especially the homogenization and tourist-oriented nature of its retail and amenities. Residents express concerns about the disappearance of affordable amenities, alongside the rise of tourist shops. As one interviewee states: *“In some places, it’s actually really, really touristy. Think rubber ducks and stroopwafels. I really can’t be bothered with that.”* This is accompanied by a perceived loss of authenticity, as described by another respondent: *“You always end up with the same old shops whereas it’s the unique ones that make the neighbourhood special.”* Related to this, the identity of the area itself is perceived as part of the problem. Several residents point to the role of de Wallen’s public image in attracting specific types of visitors and reinforcing certain behaviours. The neighbourhood’s association with *“sex, drugs, and nightlife”* is seen as influencing both its visitors and atmosphere. Consequently, some residents express a desire to shift this image towards a broader and more culturally oriented identity, emphasising the area’s historical and architectural qualities rather than its association with party tourism.

Despite these challenges, residents also demonstrate a certain degree of adaptation and acceptance of the situation. Some indicate that they have become accustomed to noise and activity, and do not necessarily experience it as disruptive. For example: *“I can sleep really well even when it’s noisy, I just think, ‘How nice,’ and turn over and carry on sleeping.”* At the same time, this acceptance appears to have limits. Even residents who express tolerance towards tourism emphasise that current levels exceed what is considered acceptable: *“We’re not against tourism per se, but the line has definitely been crossed.”*

Cultural institutions | The respondent frames the problem as an overshadowing of Amsterdam’s cultural identity in de Wallen. According to the respondent, the city risks being reduced to a one-dimensional image associated with tourism and nightlife. As they explain, *“otherwise Amsterdam kind of fades into oblivion and ends up in the category of cities where people mainly go to party.”* Related to this is the perception that the inner city is seen as inauthentic or staged. The respondent explicitly challenges this idea, stating that *“it should not seem like the inner city is just a sort of façade of pretty Dutch houses it is actually real.”* In addition, the respondent identifies a struggle for recognition and visibility of cultural institutions within de Wallen. Cultural actors feel the need to justify their presence because the area is associated with Red Light activities. As the respondent notes, *“we have to defend ourselves as a cultural hotspot, because you are located on the Wallen.”* This indicates a perceived imbalance in which cultural functions are overshadowed by the area’s reputation. A further dimension of the problem is the limited engagement of local residents and Dutch visitors with the city centre. The respondent observes that many residents of the city perceive the centre as primarily a space for tourists, stating, *“the centre is for tourists,”* which the respondent actively counters by presenting it as part of *“their own history and culture.”*

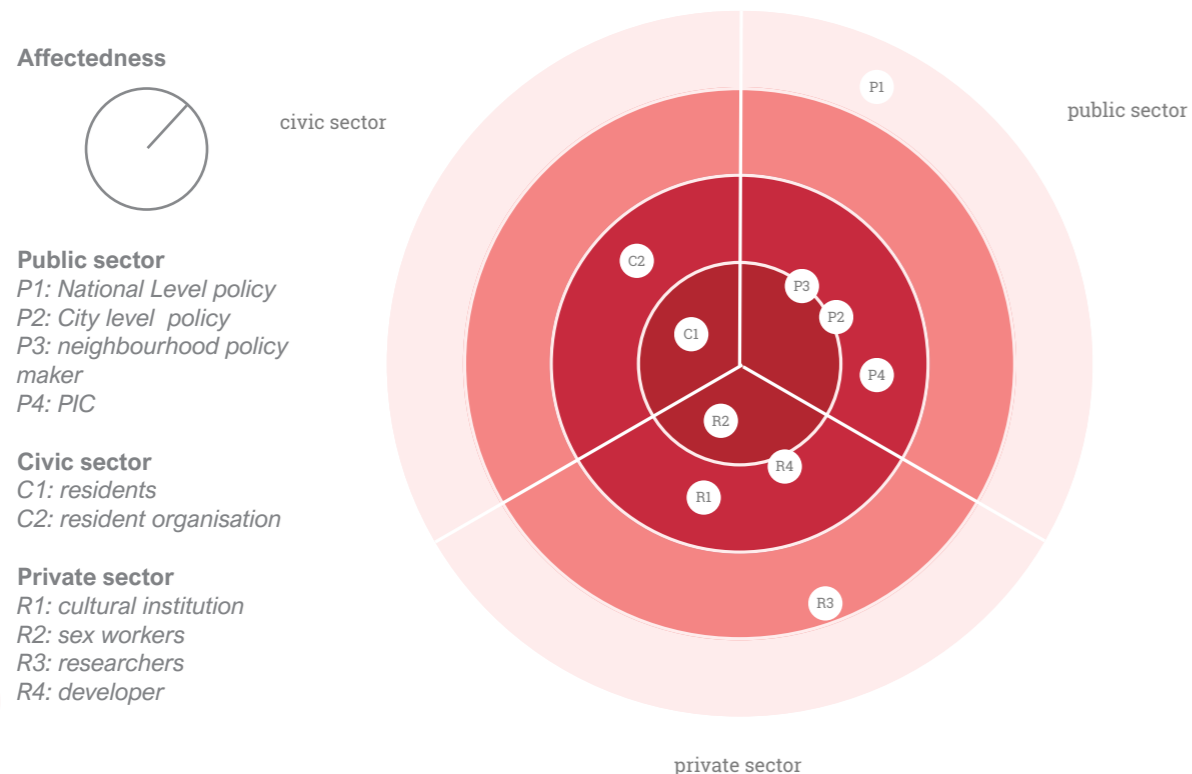


Figure 54: Figure with interviewed stakeholders - Affectedness

Perceptions of the problems faced by users differ in some respects but also overlap. However, the extent to which they are affected by the problems in the Red Light District has not been explicitly discussed. Figure [xx] shows how users are affected and how this relates to one another. It is clear that residents, sex workers, cultural institutions and businesses are most affected by these issues, as they are directly involved. Further out from the centre are local-level policy-makers and interest groups. In the outer rings are national-level policy-makers. Although policy-makers have strong opinions on the issue, it is important that they listen to those most directly affected

4.2.2 Value framework

The following section of the chapter sets out the values associated with the Red Light District. As mentioned earlier, these have been drawn from interviews with various users of the Red Light District. First, there is a discussion of all the values, followed by the creation of a value framework. This framework comprises the values most frequently cited by users and, taken together, forms the spectrum of values associated with the Red Light District. The framework is then used to analyse conflicts and perceptions. The organization of the value framework figure was inspired by the framework presented by Marthe Singelenberg and Anna Tores (2026) from their study into de Wallen, although the content, analysis, and interpretation are original to this study.

The values people attach to De Wallen differ by stakeholder group, but cluster around a few core themes: cultural & historic value, social value, safety, visibility, economic value, spatial concentration, liveliness, and acceptance. Below, each value is described with perspectives and key quotes from policymakers, sex workers, residents, and cultural institutions.

Cultural & historic value | For policy makers working at the neighbourhood level, De Wallen is primarily valued as a cultural-historical area. They emphasise that its heritage, beauty and cultural offerings as most important values. One respondent describes De Wallen as *“not only a tourist area, but also a historically very beautiful area,”* pointing to heritage buildings, cultural institutions such as the Oude Kerk, and the district’s architectural and historical layers. They stress the aesthetic and historic value of the area: *“it is simply a very beautiful city the beautiful façades that all tell stories. That is something you really want tourists who are interested in that to see.”*

Residents similarly highlight the historical significance of the neighbourhood. Many see De Wallen as the oldest part of Amsterdam with immense heritage value: *“This is the oldest part of Amsterdam, so it’s of immense historical value. There are loads of museums, but also buildings, cultural heritage. I really think it’s one of the most beautiful parts of the Netherlands.”* For them, the historic character is part of what makes

the area special and worth preserving.

Cultural institutions also attribute strong cultural and historical significance to De Wallen, describing it as “a very historical, significant place” where “there is still a lot of history and culture to be found.” Beyond heritage, they value the area as a site of cultural production, where festivals and initiatives create active engagement: “There is more to do than just walk through and leave.” For these organisations, history and contemporary cultural programming are deeply intertwined.

Cultural value is also important to respondents associated with sex work. This was largely discussed in the Perception section of this chapter, but for the sex work community, the area holds significant historical value. The area plays a key role in the history of the emergence of sex work and serves as a link to the existence of legal sex work.

Social value | Local policy makers describe De Wallen as an neighbourhood with strong informal social networks and a sense of community. They point to spaces where people meet, play games, sing, or simply interact: “There are many small places where you can play games, sing, or meet people.” Semi-formal structures such as communities around shared gardens and neighbourhood groups further support mutual care. This contributes to a sense of social cohesion where “people know each other, greet each other in the streets it is like a village, Amsterdam is a village.”

Sex workers also emphasise the importance of social networks, both for information exchange and mutual support. Within the local community, they actively share knowledge: “Within the local community of sex workers. We try to disseminate information as much as we can.” This extends beyond the neighbourhood, as they aim to inform tourists and shape a more nuanced view of sex work: “Information to tourists, and hopefully they take it with them and develop a more nuanced view of sex work that they can spread further.” They also observe that local initiatives bring different groups together: “A lot of local people, business owners, residents. they know each other, talk, plan events together. There’s definitely a community here, and many residents and sexworkers are proud to live here.” At the same time, respondents point out that the relationship between sex workers and the broader community is not always fully integrated and also operate alongside each other.

Residents similarly perceive De Wallen as a social, community-oriented neighbourhood. Long-term residents highlight the close-knit character: “I’ve been living here for over 30 years now. And you really do notice that there’s a fairly close-knit local community here.” Newer residents also experience the area as welcoming: “Everyone here is really welcoming. And they’re very interested when you have a chat with them.” Informal meeting places and everyday interactions create a sense of belonging that many describe as “a village within the city.”

Cultural institutions link social value to tolerance and inclusion, seeing their work as rooted in openness: “The organisation stands for freedom and tolerance, and actively creates space for diverse groups to express themselves.” For them, social value is not only about community life but also about the ethical commitment to diversity.

Safety | City-level policy makers strongly link safety to visibility and regulation. They argue that the openness of window sex work makes it the safest form of sex work because it allows continuous monitoring: “It is the most visible form and that means we are best able to maintain contact.” Supervisors and police are regularly present, and “you can safely say that no new sex worker is working on De Wallen for more than 24 hours without being spoken to by one of our supervisors.” They can “just walk around and, at a convenient moment for the sex worker, say hello,” while sex workers “recognise the faces of supervisors and police because they see them walking around the area.” These repeated encounters build familiarity and could lower thresholds for seeking help. It is important to note that this is from the municipality’s perspective. This does not necessarily mean that this approach to ensuring safety also makes every sex worker feel safe.

Sex workers emphasise safety in terms of control over their immediate working environment. The window system allows them to screen clients before letting them in: “The customer can only come in once we’ve opened the door you can see and smell the customer.” This control is supported by cameras, on-site management and emergency systems, which together create what they describe as a “very safe” working environment. Even more important is the constant presence of people and other sex workers in the area, which brings a form of informal social control: “Just look outside. We’re right in the middle of the city, in a residential neighborhood. There are always people around: residents, tourists—there’s a lot of social control.” Closely related to safety is the value of self-reliance and autonomy. Respondents repeatedly emphasize that sex workers at de Wallen can operate as independent workers, with control over their schedules, clients, and working conditions. As one respondent notes: “You’re your own boss if you want to say no, then you say no.”

Residents frame safety more in terms of livability and a clean living environment. While they rarely talk about safety in abstract terms, their concerns about drug-related crime and street safety reveal a strong underlying value: a safe, orderly neighbourhood where they can live without fear. Their wishes for resolution of these problems reflect the importance they place on everyday safety.

Visibility | City-level policy makers state visibility is not only a regulatory tool but also carries an emancipatory dimension for sex workers, especially for trans and queer sex workers. They argue that presence in a regulated, visible space is experienced as meaningful recognition: “Visibility has something emancipatory about it.” At the same time, they acknowledge that this same visibility can be experienced as stigmatising by others.

Sex workers value visibility as a quality that challenges stigma and contributes to the normalisation of sex work. They highlight the unique coexistence of sex work with everyday urban life in a historic centre: *“The church and sex workers together. It’s unique in the world so visible and out in the open in a historic city centre.”* This openness makes their presence undeniable: *“It reminds people that we exist it doesn’t have to be hidden.”* They also note that this visibility can provoke discomfort that leads to reflection: *“People feel discomfort, it makes them question why.”* In this way, visibility is tied to broader values of tolerance, confrontation and social awareness.

For residents, visibility of sexwork is part of what makes De Wallen iconic and characterful, though it comes with trade-offs. They describe living here as a process of *“give and take,”* where noise, crowding and tourism are part of everyday life. Elements such as sex work and sex-related retail are often seen as something one *“gets used to,”* or as *“part and parcel of the neighbourhood.”*

Economic value | Policy makers acknowledge that De Wallen has a highly functional economic system, in which sex work is embedded within the leisure and tourism economy. They note that *“sex workers earn very well on De Wallen,”* and that *“the rooms during peak hours are in very high demand,”* indicating an active and competitive market. This economic value does not only directly benefit sex workers refereeing to tourist tax and the international recognition of Amsterdam as a tourist attraction.

For sex workers, economic value is fundamental: *“The reason people enter this profession is because they want to earn money, just likt any other profession.”* De Wallen’s layout, visibility and accessibility attract clients who are *“window-shopping,”* and they recognise their dependence on tourism: *“Tourists are the biggest source of income for girls working here. At the same time, they see sex work as key to Amsterdam’s global reputation: “Sex work has done a lot for Amsterdam... to put it on the map.”*

Spatial concentration | Policy makers value the spatial concentration of windows because it enables efficient monitoring and care: *“It is very convenient to have all the windows gathered in one place.”* This clustering has a clear social component: it allows sex workers to see and support each other. As one respondent explains, *“for sex workers it is important that they can see each other and have a social network.”*

This proximity creates informal social control, where workers collectively observe each other’s well-being: *“Then sex workers can notice among themselves: the curtains stay closed for a very long time.”* In such situations, they may intervene or contact authorities, showing how peer-based monitoring contributes to safety. Sex workers confirm the importance of being able to see each other and build networks, but also point out that their connection with residents could be stronger. They note that stronger ties could lead to a more unified voice in policy debates: *“If there were more of a connection between residents and sex workers... we could have a stronger, unified voice when speaking up.”*

Liveliness and mixed urban function | Residents appreciate De Wallen for its central location and lively atmosphere. They describe the area as entertaining in itself: *“The city itself is enough to keep you entertained. There are some truly remarkable people living here and walking the streets here.”* The centrality makes it easy to meet friends and family: *“It’s easy for everyone to get here, even friends from out of town. It’s just a short trip from Central Station.”* The constant activity, cultural offer and nightlife all contribute to a strong sense of identity and diversity of experiences: *“Actually, you can do almost anything here.”*

Cultural institutions also emphasise the importance of mixed urban functions and authenticity. They argue strongly that different functions should remain integrated: *“It should 100% coexist.”* This includes not only cultural institutions and hospitality, but also sex work, which they explicitly recognise as part of the area’s cultural fabric: *“Sexwork on the Wallen is also culture. it has been there for a long time.”* They describe De Wallen as a genuine urban environment rather than a purely touristic setting: *“A real building with stories, with history, with people who live here.”* For them, the area is *“a lively and pleasant neighbourhood”* with *“many authentic cafés and restaurants,”* where *“there is much more to do than people think.”*

Acceptance, tolerance and diversity | Residents describe De Wallen as a place with a high degree of acceptance and diversity: *“There is a high degree of acceptance people are open to different things it is a place where everything mixes, and everyone can be themselves.”* They see it as an iconic, liberal part of Amsterdam that should be preserved: *“It is something that simply belongs to Amsterdam such areas are essential to prevent the city from becoming dead.”* At the same time, they understand these positive qualities in relation to trade-offs, referring to the need for *“flexibility”* and describing living in the area as a process of *“give and take,”* where noise, crowding and tourism are part of everyday life.

Cultural institutions explicitly link acceptance to their mission and identity. They emphasise that their organisation stands for *“freedom and tolerance,”* and that they create space for diverse groups to express themselves. For them, acceptance is both a social and ethical value, rooted in openness and a commitment to inclusivity.

Conclusion | The values attributed to De Wallen by policymakers, sex workers, residents and cultural institutions reveal a dynamic and multifaceted urban environment. Each group identifies distinct priorities, ranging from safety, economic viability and regulatory oversight to social cohesion, cultural heritage, and acceptance. These values intersect and sometimes conflict, demonstrating the complexity of balancing diverse stakeholder interests in a unique neighbourhood. The ongoing dialogue between these perspectives shapes both the future of De Wallen and its place in Amsterdam’s urban fabric.



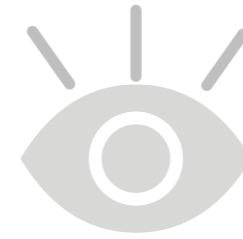
cultural / historic



community



informal social networks



visibility



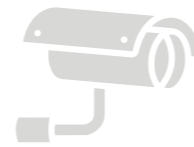
economic



autonomy



acceptance



safety



spatial concentration



heritage



liveliness



mix of urban functions



care



clean environment



identity



authenticity

Figure 55: Value framework

4.2.3 Value perception

During the interviews and the creation of the value framework, it became clear that some users mentioned the same value but attached a different meaning to that value. In the following chapter, a few examples will be given regarding this phenomenon.

Social | First and foremost, social value. Most respondents identified social value as a core value for the Red Light District. However, it is important to note that not every respondent is referring to the same community. Residents talk about social value in terms of interacting, meeting, and gathering with other residents. Sex workers, on the other hand, describe social value primarily in relation to other sex workers. Both groups describe the importance of social connections but are referring to different groups.

Safety is a core concern for everyone involved in De Wallen, but its meaning varies among groups. Sex workers see safety as having control over their work, a secure environment and informal social control among the community. Policymakers focus on safety through visibility, monitoring, and regulation, while residents define it as low crime, order, and a clean neighbourhood. Despite their different perspectives, all groups recognise the importance of working together to enhance safety in the area.

Heritage | Different user groups also attach a different meaning to this value. For cultural institutions, policymakers, and residents, the architectural and historical heritage is of great importance. This includes buildings such as the old church and museums, as well as the buildings along the canals. For sex workers, heritage also lies in something else: the connection between the history of sex work and de Wallen. Different groups attach different meanings to the same value.

Visibility | Some sex workers find de Wallen's portrayal of sex work to be too narrow, reinforcing stereotypes and ignoring the sector's diversity. Also, for some residents and policy makers, the highly visible nature of sex work creates a gendered public space that feels uncomfortable. However, both sex workers and residents see this visibility as a step toward greater acceptance, making sex work a recognised part of everyday urban life. This conflict reflects competing understandings of whether visibility liberates or stigmatises.

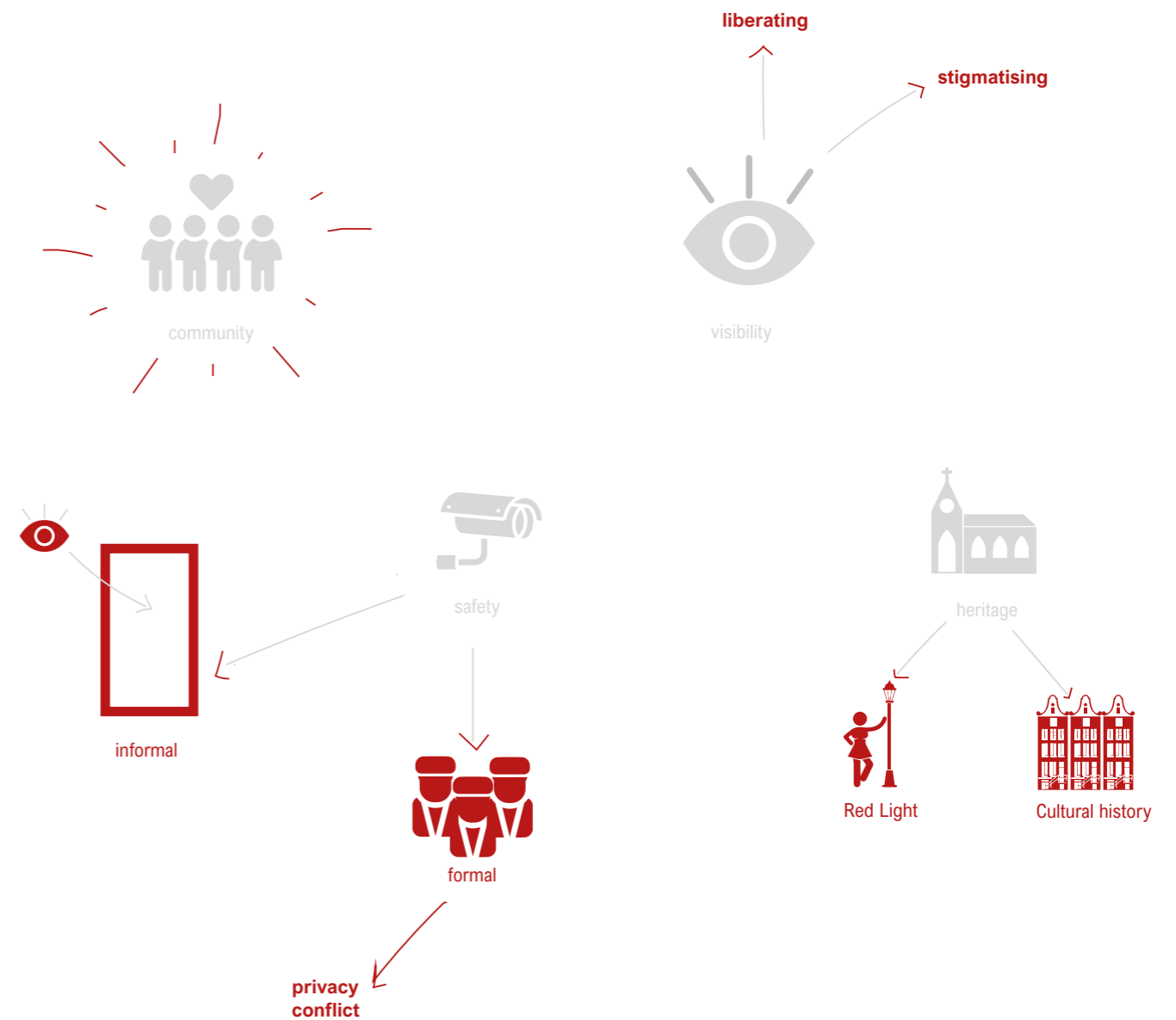


Figure 56: Different value perception

4.2.4 Value conflicts

A range of competing values underlies ongoing conflicts between policymakers, sex workers, residents, and cultural organizations in De Wallen. These tensions make it challenging to reach consensus on the area’s future and highlight the complexities of urban governance in a diverse environment.

Spatial concentration and visibility conflict | Policymakers favour clustering window sex work and maintaining high visibility, as this simplifies regulation, enables continuous monitoring, and supports social control among sex workers. However, this same concentration and visibility draws large numbers of tourists, leading to overcrowded public spaces and consequently making residents feel less safe in their own neighbourhood.

Growth management conflict | While De Wallen is highly profitable for sex workers and local businesses, the influx of tourists and tourist-focused amenities can undermine the area’s calmness. Residents express concerns about, drug-related crime, and the one-sided nature of local shops, which are primarily aimed at tourists rather than residents. This tension raises questions about how to sustain economic vitality without sacrificing a livable and diverse neighbourhood.

Character conflict | Residents, local authorities, and cultural organisations often emphasise the neighbourhood’s cultural, historical, and authentic character, describing it as “a village within the city” with immense heritage value. Market-driven interests, by contrast, focus on its potential for economic gain through tourism. There is ongoing tension between maintaining a diverse, mixed-use neighbourhood and the risk of evolving into a tourism monoculture. These competing visions for De Wallen’s identity make it difficult to develop a shared path forward.

Livability conflict | De Wallen is valued for its open and tolerant character, but this same openness can undermine residents’ sense of safety and everyday livability. While some residents see tolerance as part of the area’s identity and as something worth preserving, others experience its consequences in the form of crowding, noise, and constant tourist presence. The conflict therefore lies in balancing the neighbourhood’s liberal character with the need for a calm and secure living environment.

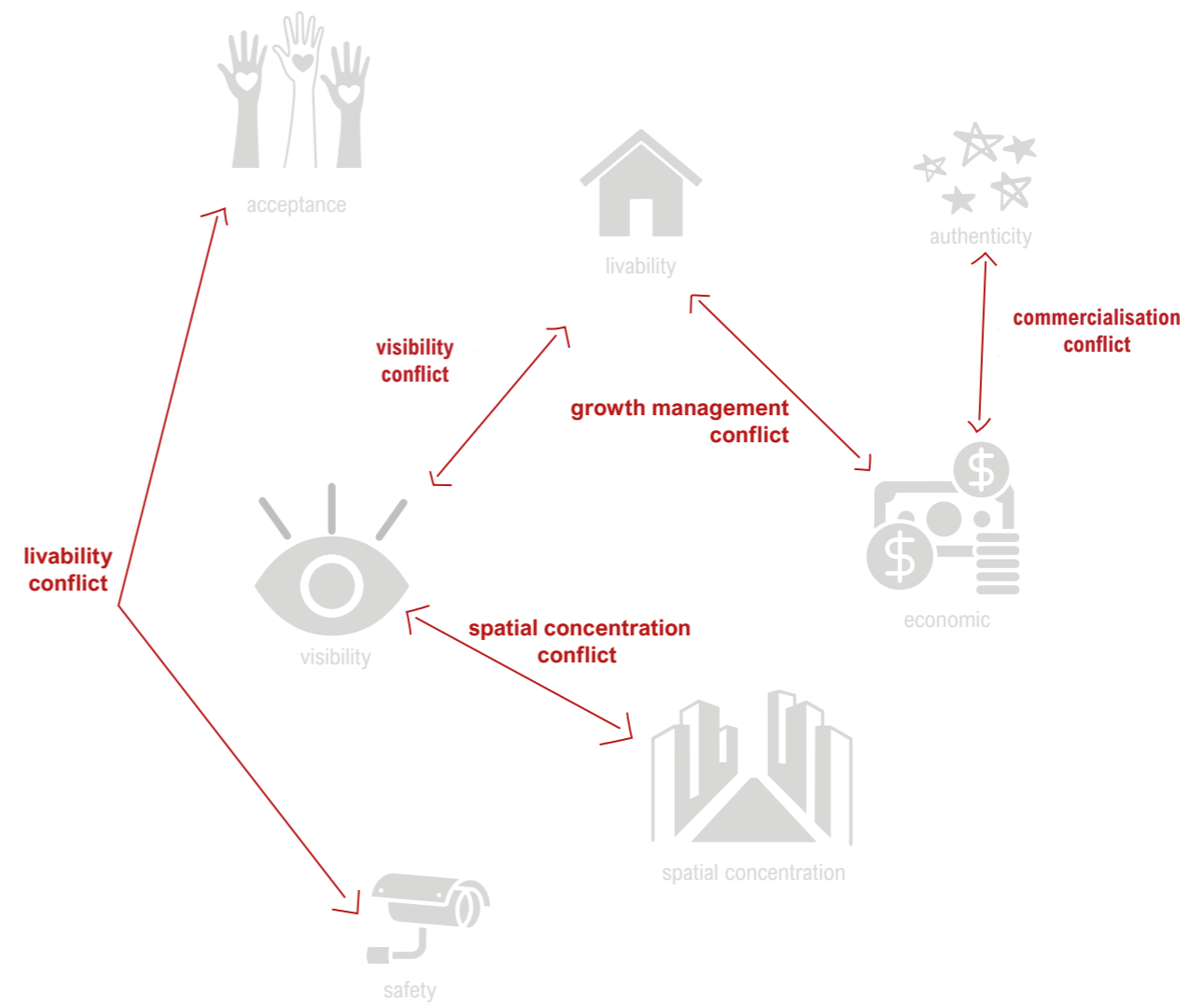


Figure 57: Value conflict

4.3 Future Scenario - SQ3

4.3.0 the future

The future of De Wallen has become a topic of extensive discussion and debate. During the project this research took place, several other studies have been carried out, books have been published, and talks have been held on the future of this unique and remarkable district. In my own research, I sought the perspectives of respondents on what changes they envision and what direction they hope the area will take. This chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation by offering new insights into De Wallen's prospective future.

This chapter is organised as follows. It begins with an exploration of global and local trends that may have influence on the development of the district. After that narrowing in on the most relevant trends for scenario building. Next, the process of constructing scenarios and their defining characteristics is outlined. The chapter then delves into detailed descriptions of each scenario within distinct landscapes of sex work. The core values, conflicts and trade-offs central to each scenario are subsequently discussed. The chapter concludes by comparing the scenarios, drawing conclusions and recommendations.

I want to see more signs explaining to tourists how they should behave towards sex workers

And perhaps every neighbourhood needs its own windows. I mean, Ruisdaalkade has its own windows.

So I would argue in favour of that other identity. It's something that will attract a lot of tourists too. Because that's also incredibly interesting

There were also certain sections here where there were windows. So why don't you advertise that anymore?

I do wonder whether it's a good idea to concentrate it all in one place like that. And to put so much together. I think it might not be such a bad idea after all. To have them spread across a few streets. In different neighbourhoods. There are people in need everywhere.

it would be to like force tourists to like take a little crash course before they walk through the streets. Um, or for example, taking photos like you can get fined, but it's not even technically illegal, like making it illegal or something like that.

I'd like to open back up more windows,

Figure 57: Quotes

4.3.1 Trends

Global trends | In the literature review several trends were discussed regarding Red Light Districts, the three main developments described by Aalbers & Sabat (2012) : digitisation, globalisation and tourism. Firstly, the rise of the internet has, and will do in the future, radically change the spatial logic of sex work. It has become less dependent on visible street or window locations and can move to online platforms, causing physical red light districts to lose some of their central function (Rijnink en Van Wijk, 2020). Secondly, globalisation plays an important role. The globalisation of the sex industry has led to increasing international mobility of sex workers and the emergence of a transnationally organised sex industry (Loopmans & Van Den Broeck, 2011). Another result of globalisation is migration, which places red light districts within global circuits of mobility (Hubbard, 2012). In some cases, this has resulted in changing labour relations and new forms of regulation (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). Thirdly, the growth of tourism contributes to the transformation of red light districts. These places are increasingly positioned as a tourist attraction, with sex work becoming part of an urban spectacle. At the same time, this tourist function clashes with policy goals relating to quality of life, safety and image (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). These global processes are made possible in part by low-cost airlines and the Schengen zone (Loopmans & Van Den Broeck, 2011). The result is a red light district in flux: an area in which sex work continues to exist, but is constantly being reformed, relocated and renegotiated under the influence of broader urban and global processes.

In addition, social changes play a role, such as the persistent stigma surrounding sex work, whereby sex workers are often associated with exploitation, human trafficking and other negative perceptions (Snippe et al., 2018). Furthermore, political changes and international developments can lead to an influx of more vulnerable or unprotected sex workers (Rijnink en Van Wijk, 2020). Finally, society at large appears to be becoming more conservative, which may put further pressure on the position of sex workers.

Local Policy | In addition, local objectives and plans set by policymakers have a significant influence on the character of Amsterdam's red-light district. Firstly, tourism is expected to continue to grow, and the City of Amsterdam aims to reduce overcrowding and nuisance. They intend to achieve this, amongst other things, by reducing the number of window-based working spaces and improving the city's image regarding drugs (Uitvoeringsprogramma Aanpak Binnenstad 2025, 2025). The municipality also wishes to enhance the cultural value of the city centre, which means that heritage, identity and culture will be given greater emphasis in policy. Also the livability is a major theme and the municipality wishes to create more peace, space and safety on the streets.

4.3.2 Scenario building

Scenarios are developed by plotting two trends against each other on axes. It is therefore important to select trends that have a significant impact and are not entirely predictable. The most impactful and least predictable trends are plotted on the axes. The scenario axes are based on two variables that combine spatial impact with uncertainty in the future of the Wallen: touristic pressure and the visibility of sex work. Tourism is an impactful driver because it shapes public space use, local economic logics, the livability of residents and the district's identity. At the same time, it is also unclear exactly how tourism will develop in the future.

The extent to which sex work remains visible in the streetscape is also consequential for the spatial, social, and moral character of the area, as it determines whether the Wallen continues to function as a visible red-light district, which has a significant impact. The visibility of sex work is also uncertain. Digitalisation can reduce the dependence on physical locations and shift sex work toward online or less public forms, while stigma and growing conservatism may further discourage public visibility and strengthen pressures toward concealment or displacement. In this way, the scenario matrix remains focused on the most uncertain and structurally important dimensions.

The scenario planning method results in four scenarios. However, this study aims to focus on sex workers and their needs as well. The scenario matrices are driven by external trends and structural forces, which means the needs and agency of sex workers don't naturally emerge as an axis. For the fifth scenario, a different method was used, namely the 'What If' method. Using this method, the question can be posed: *'What if we envisioned the future based on the needs of sex workers?'* Drawing on interviews and the sexwork manifesto, this question was central to the development of scenario 5, 'The Sexy wallen'.

Sex work Manifesto | The final input for the scenarios is a manifesto on the future of sex work, signed by eight organisations involved in sex work. The manifesto sets out twelve points which, according to the organisations, need to be addressed in order to improve the situation of sex workers in de Wallen. Points 6 to 12 of the manifesto primarily concern rights, participation, and policy measures related to housing and relations with the police. The first five points address the built environment of De Wallen. They argue that more legal workplaces are needed to improve the bargaining position in relation to operators and potentially reduce the rent for a room. They also state a need for diversity in workplaces to cater for the needs of, for example, sex workers with disabilities, those from different backgrounds, or those who are LGBTQ+. Furthermore, they call for permission to work from home and to solicit clients online. Finally, they express the desire for a workplace managed by sex workers themselves (Sekswerker Manifest, z.d.).

All scenarios are examined and analysed from the perspective of the three landscapes. For each landscape, specific aspects have been selected to enable comparison between the scenarios. For the Regulated Landscape, these are: *security measures, economic orientation, risk of gentrification, and mix of functions*. For the Lived Landscape, these are: *tourist pressure, liveability, spatial segregation, autonomy, and pressure on public space*. For the Moral Landscape, these are: *acceptance of sex work and perception of safety*.

For each scenario, certain aspects that characterise it have been highlighted. There are also arrows indicating whether the characteristic is increasing or decreasing. These arrows are in comparison to the current situation. Each scale runs from low to high, with the position of the marker indicating where this scenario sits relative to that range.

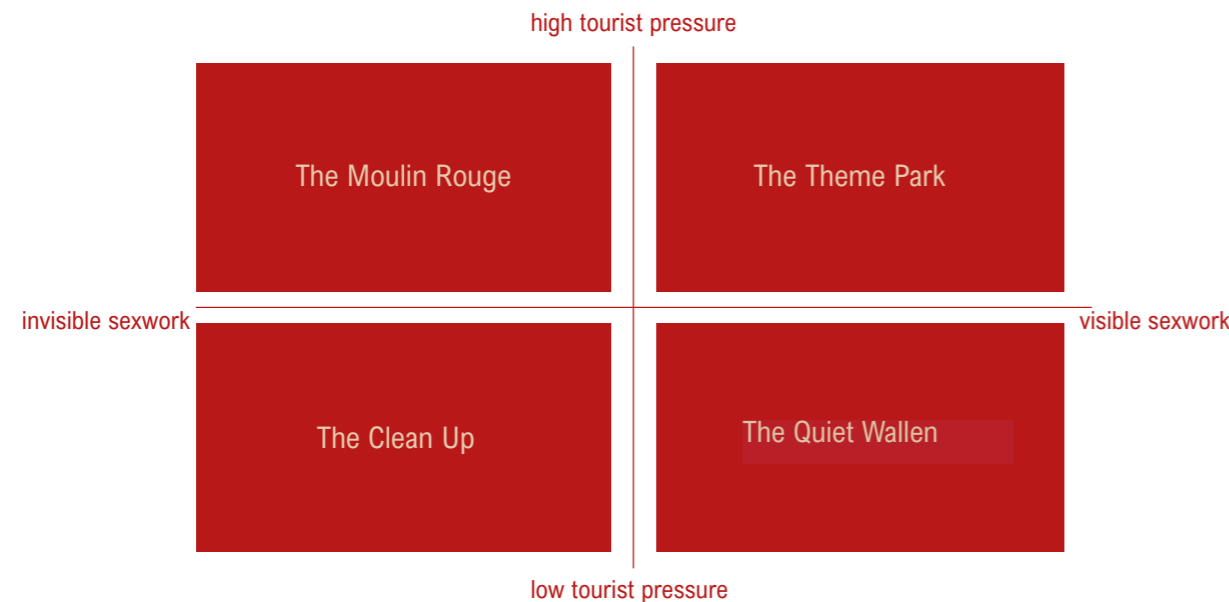


Figure 58: Scenario matrix

“The scenarios are discussed in order from most to least likely, based on current trends and policy directions discussed in section 4.3.1. The Theme Park and The Moulin Rouge reflect trajectories already underway in Amsterdam, while The Clean Up and The Quiet Wallen require more significant shifts in either tourism patterns or political will. The Sexy Wallen is presented last, not because it is considered least desirable, but because it represents the most fundamental departure from the current situation — and the most deliberate reimagining of De Wallen from the perspective of sex workers themselves.”

The Theme park | De Wallen remain primarily a tourist attraction, and visible sex work continues to be a prominent feature of the streetscape. The district functions as a space where visitors, nightlife audiences, and sex work continue to overlap. The public realm is busy, commercial, and constantly in motion, with a strong tension between consumption, observation, and use.

The Moulin Rouge | the Wallen remain attractive to visitors, but sex work largely disappears from the street scape. The district remains lively and commercial, but its core function changes: tourism consumption and urban experience, rather than sex work, shape the atmosphere.

The Clean up | This scenario represents the strongest shift toward a normal, liveable urban district. Sex work barely visible in public space, while tourist pressure decreases significantly. The Wallen then become more of a mixed residential and urban area, with room for residents, everyday services, safety, and rest.

The Quiet Wallen | Sex work remains physically present and visible, but the district is more strongly shaped around calm, safety, and everyday use. The municipality accepts that sex work remains part of the area, but tries to limit its impact on residents and public space.

The Sexy Wallen | This scenario focuses on increasing the number of legal, accessible and more suitable sex work venues in the Red Light District. These need not be limited to window-based venues, but could also include, for example, online recruitment or home-based work. A venue that is co-managed by sex workers also came forward in the manifesto.

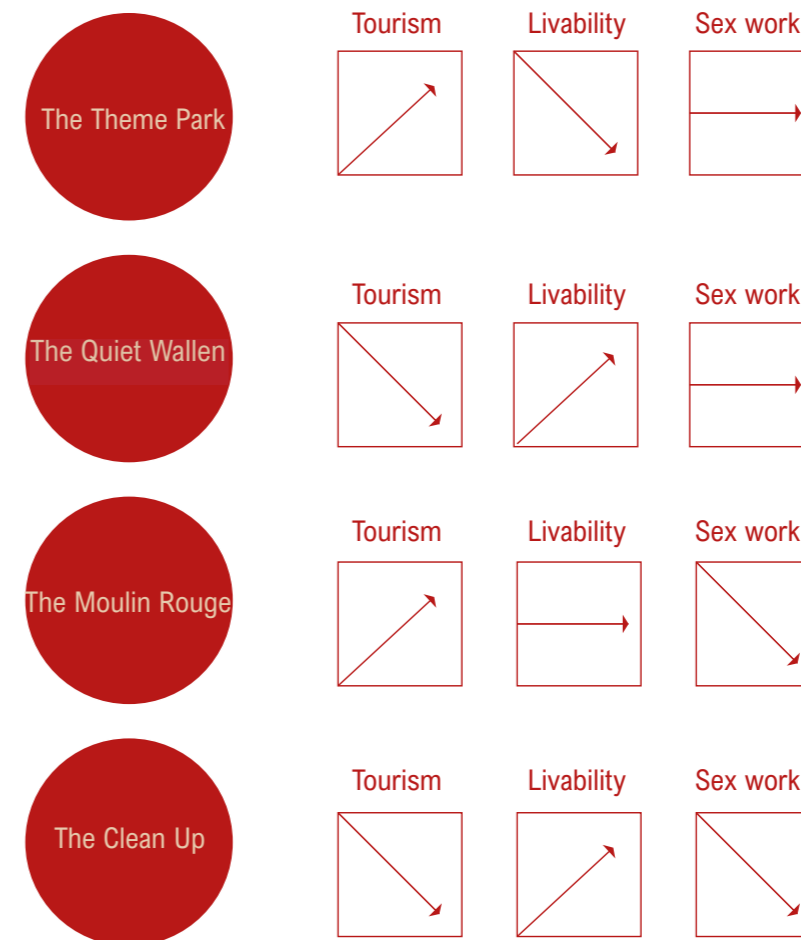


Figure 59: Scenario

4.3.3 The Themepark



Figure 60: Scenario visualisation

This scenario describes a Wallen in which visible sex work remains an important part of the streetscape, while tourist pressure continues to dominate the area. The district retains its function as an internationally recognisable red-light district, and it is increasingly shaped by crowding, commercial consumption, and entertainment area.

Regulated landscape | Surveillance, policing, signage, and crowd management all become more prominent as authorities attempt to keep order in a highly pressured area. This could also mean stricter rules for operators, as well as possibly forms of access control during peak periods, for example paying an entrance fee to enter the neighbourhood. The economic logic of the district would become more strongly oriented toward tourist consumption, with higher returns for hospitality, leisure, souvenir retail, sex work sector and other entertainment activities. Although central location could keep property values relatively high, the pressure on the housing market would likely make long-term and affordable living less viable, so the overall resident character of the area would continue to decline.

Lived landscape | de Wallen is experienced as a dense, commercial space in which residents, visitors, and sex workers' spaces continuously overlap. The everyday use of the district is shaped by crowding, noise, and a constant flow of tourists, which puts pressure on public space and public amenities. Social relations also shift: tourists become the dominant presence in the street, residents turn into more passive users of the space. Resulting in residents shutting themselves away behind fences even more, and the physical separation between residents and visitors will become even more pronounced as a result of these fences. Public spaces will become even more fragmented and privatized. Sex work remains visible, but with more controlling, less privacy, and a more commercialised setting.

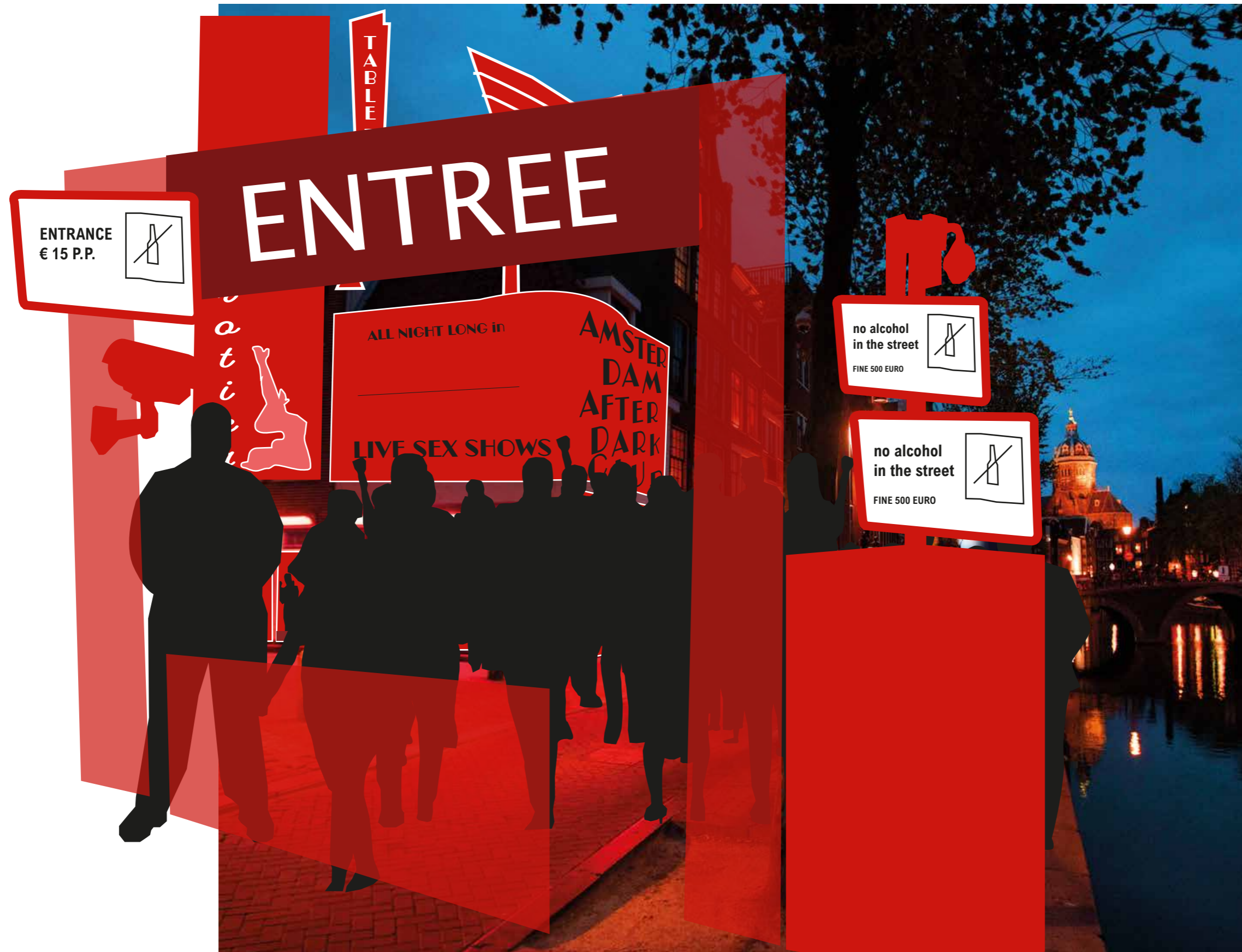


Figure 60b: Scenario visualisation taken to the extreme

value | the most central value is economic value. Profit and commercial return are the main drivers of this future. At the same time, visibility, spatial concentration, and liveliness remain important and are strongly reinforced in this scenario, since the area continues to function as a dense and active urban attraction with visible sex work.

Trade-offs | “The main trade-offs are that tourist pressure and commercialisation undermine the values of a quiet environment, community, and authenticity. Over time the area becomes more oriented toward visitors than everyday residential life. For sex workers specifically, heavy security measures and the gimmicky character of the district can reduce both their autonomy and the social acceptance of sex work as legitimate labour.”



Figure 61: Scenario visualisation with value

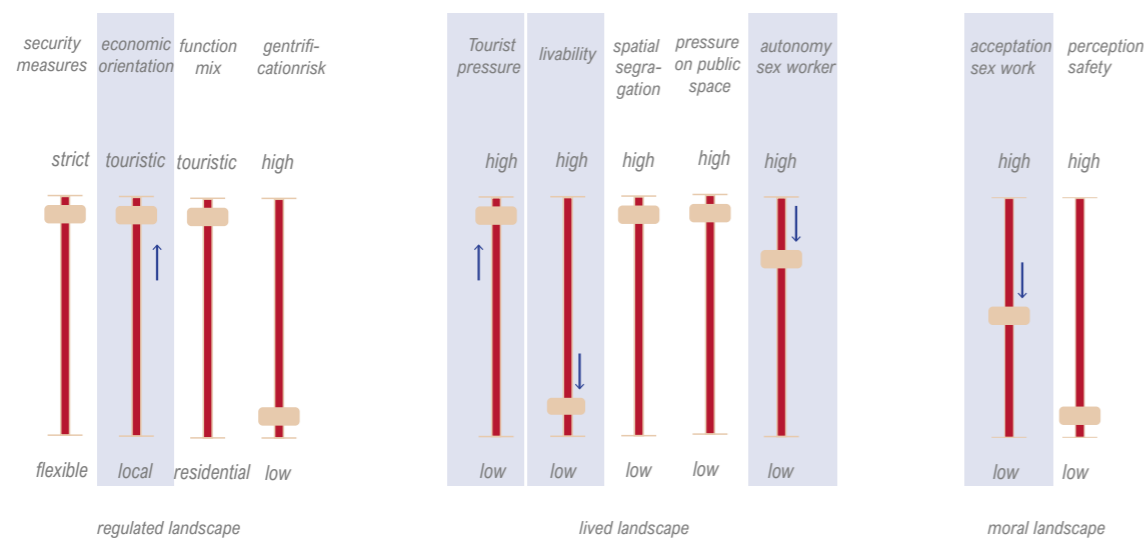


Figure 62: Scenario visualisation with sliding scales

4.3.4 The Moulin Rouge Wallen



Figure 63: Scenario visualisation

This scenario depicts a Wallen in which sex work disappears from the public space, whilst tourism remains a strong presence. The neighbourhood may still be associated with sex work in a historical or symbolic sense, but no longer as an everyday spatial reality. The identity and tourist attraction therefore shifts from that of red-light district to a focus on heritage, architecture and history.

Regulated landscape | The regulated landscape is becoming less specific to sex work and more generally urban and tourist-oriented. For example with less emphasis on monitoring windows and rules around sex work, and more on regulating visitor flows, the hospitality sector and noise levels. This is because bars, hotels, coffee shops and the like will still remain in the area. Due to the change in the neighbourhoods identity, the area may become more attractive to better-off tourists leading potentially more upmarket urban services. Property values may rise due to an improved reputation, reduced direct nuisance and potentially greater appreciation for an ‘authentic yet refined’ inner-city location. On the other hand the continuing tourist pressure may limit that increase in value.

lived landscape | The neighbourhood may be perceived as aesthetically pleasing and touristy. There is less nuisance from visitors due to reduced nightlife. However, there are still cafés and bars in the area, which would continue to cause a certain amount of nuisance. Due to the symbolic association with sex work, references to this past are likely to remain visible in the streetscape, such as in the names of cafés or hotels. Residents may be less inclined to feel the need to protect themselves from tourists, however it does not fully develop into a quiet residential area.

Moral landscape | Because of the identity shift, it is likely that with the disappearance of visible sex work and the persistence of its memory, it may become more gimmicky or even museum-like, without receiving genuine social recognition as a legitimate urban practice.

Value | the values that come to the foreground are economic, culture, safety, and, to some extent, heritage, a certain few on heritage. The area becomes quieter and more orderly, and this can improve liveability and make the district more attractive.

Trade off | The key trade-off is between improved livability for residents and the safety, autonomy, and social networks of sex workers. As visible sex work disappears, the informal support structures and everyday community that window-based work provided are lost, pushing sex work toward more hidden and potentially less protected forms. A second trade-off concerns urban identity: while the neighbourhood becomes quieter and more attractive, it loses part of its distinctive character, with sex work remembered as history rather than recognised as a legitimate and lived urban practice.”

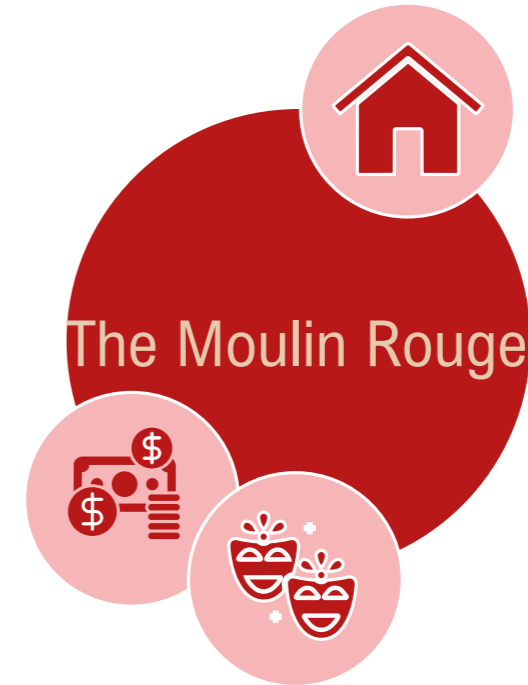


Figure 64: Scenario visualisation with value

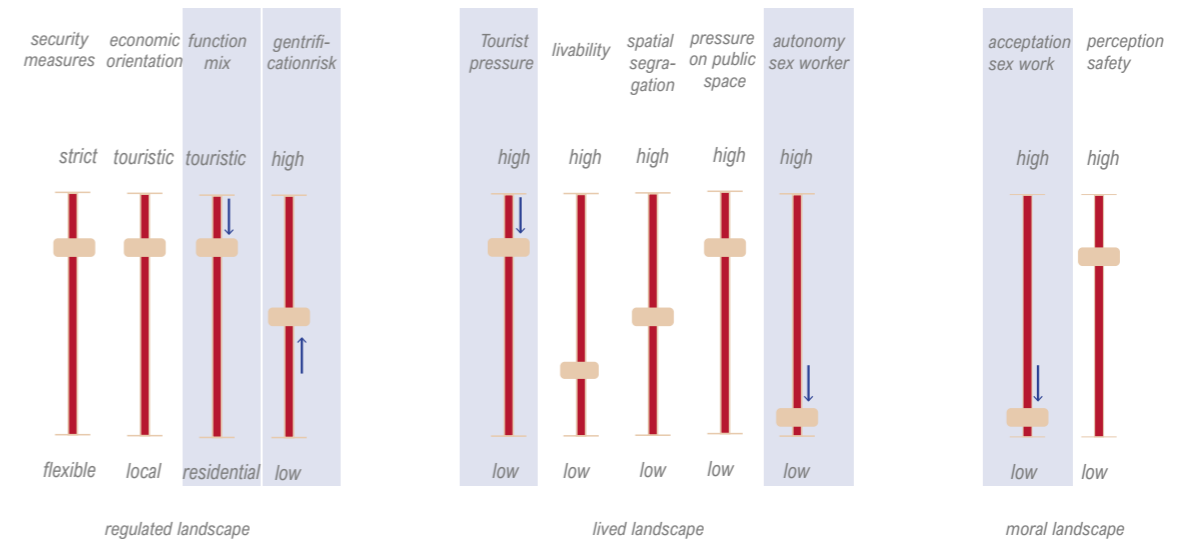


Figure 65: Scenario visualisation with sliding scales

4.3.5 The Clean Up



157 Figure 66: Scenario visualisation

This scenario describes a Wallen where sex work is not visible and tourist pressure has decreased significantly. The neighbourhood is then developing into a more quiet and mixed-use urban district with a stronger residential character. Because there are no physical aspects to sex work, the memory of it fades away.

Regulated landscape | the district loses its focus on sex work and tourism, but its central location means it remains attractive for residential use, small-scale services, and potentially higher-income functions. The property market would likely undergo revaluation. As the neighborhood becomes quieter, more liveable, and less strongly associated with sex work and mass tourism, property values may rise. This creates a clear gentrification risk: the area may become more expensive and exclusive rather than more socially inclusive.

Lived landscape | In the lived landscape of scenario 4, the district experiences considerably less tourist pressure in public space, which creates more room for residents to use the area more comfortably. This could translate into more benches, small gardens, and a less fragmented public realm, with fewer physical separations between visitor routes and residential life. The area would likely lose part of its urban intensity, less lively and less socially diverse.

Moral landscape | As sex work largely disappears from the public debate of the district. It becomes less visible as both a social and moral issue in the shared urban space, because it is no longer part of the everyday streetscape. At the same time, the symbolic meaning of the Wallen changes: the district is no longer the iconic place where “Amsterdam can do anything,” but instead becomes a more ordinary inner-city area. However, the disappearance of visibility does not mean that stigma fades automatically. On the contrary, when sex work moves out of sight, acceptance may not increase at all; it may simply become less relevant or even give way to forgetting and further marginalization. The moral position of sex work therefore shifts from being visible and publicly debated to being more hidden, less recognized, and potentially more vulnerable.

the values | values that come to the foreground are quiet, clean environment, liveability, and a particular form of heritage. The neighbourhood becomes quiet, orderly, and more attractive as a residential inner-city area. This can improve everyday comfort and spatial quality.

Trade off | The central trade-off is that while the neighbourhood becomes calmer and more liveable, this comes at a significant cost for sex workers: the loss of visible, accessible earning spaces eliminates a relatively stable income structure and the social community that came with it. As the district becomes quieter and more attractive to higher-income residents, gentrification risk increases, making De Wallen more exclusive rather than more inclusive. Crucially, the disappearance of visible sex work does not automatically reduce stigma — instead sex work risks becoming socially forgotten and more vulnerable rather than more accepted.



Figure 67: Scenario visualisation with value

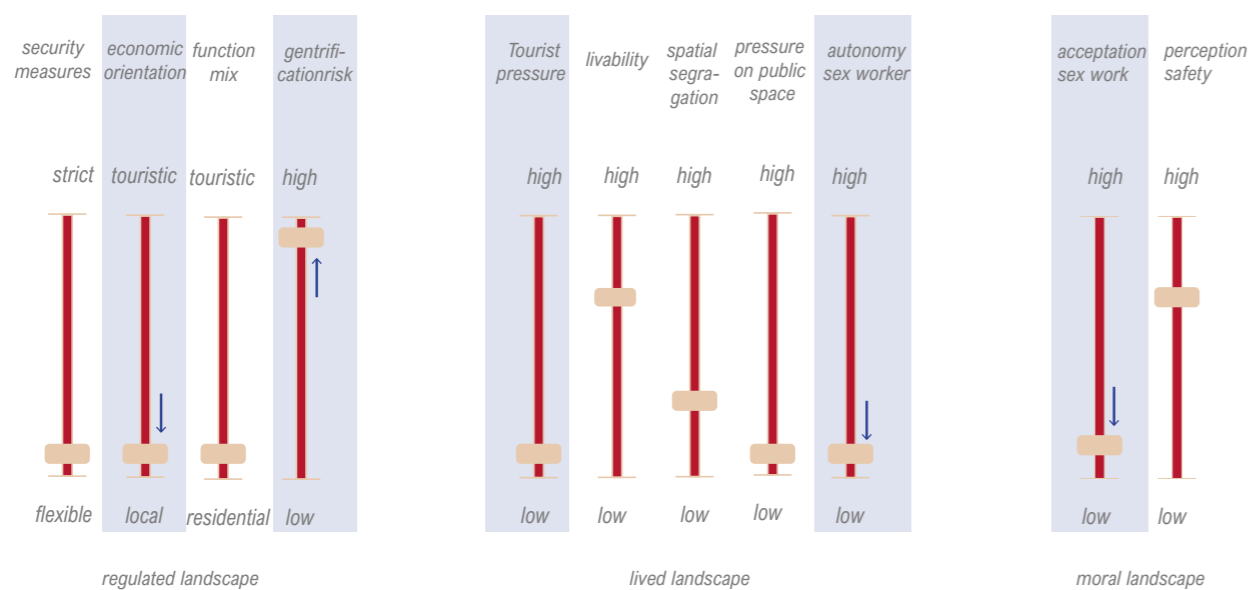


Figure 68: Scenario visualisation with sliding scales

4.3.6 The Quiet Wallen



Figure 69: Scenario visualisation

In this scenario, sex work remains a prominent feature of the Red Light District, but tourist pressure decreases significantly. The district is therefore no longer primarily a visitor destination, but does retain its clear function as a sex work area.

Regulated landscape | sex work and erotic services continue to exist, but mass tourism declines. This means that regulation focus is not as much on managing extreme visitor pressure, but remains necessary to keep the neighbourhood safe and manageable. The economic logic of the neighbourhood changes in this scenario. As a proportion of the tourist disappears, the direct profitability of the existing tourist system declines. This means that the neighbourhood must adapt to a different type of visitor and to other forms of economic activity. This also has consequences for the surrounding businesses in de Wallen that rely on tourism, therefore likely to shrink or adapt to a smaller audience. At the same time, the central location remains an important factor, allowing the area to remain attractive for other functions, such as small-scale service providers. For the housing market, the reduction in tourist overcrowding could make the neighbourhood more attractive for residential use, which in the long term could lead to a revaluation of the property. At the same time visible sex work may also influence the valuation of real estate.

Lived landscape | In the lived landscape, the neighbourhood becomes quieter and less crowded. There is less constant movement and nuisance of tourists, giving users more space in public areas. The atmosphere is less chaotic than in scenario 1, but the neighbourhood remains clearly specialised. Sex workers may benefit from greater peace and quiet and less nuisance, whilst residents are less affected by public pressure. It is also possible that more space will become available for other uses.

Moral landscape | the moral tension is shifting away from spectacle and towards the question of how a sex work district can continue to exist in a responsible manner. It is likely that people continue to question the gendered aspect of the issue. Acceptance may increase due to the lower number of tourist, but sex work remains a visible and therefore morally charged part of the neighbourhood.

Value | The most central values are visibility, quiet, safety, spatial concentration, and liveliness. Sex work remains present and visible in the area, but tourist pressure is lower which increases livability.

Trade offs |The main trade-off is economic: as tourism declines, sex workers must adapt to alternative ways of attracting clients, such as online recruitment, which reduces their autonomy and the stability of their income. At the same time, a quieter and cleaner neighbourhood becomes more attractive to higher-income residents, creating a gentrification risk that can put visible sex work under pressure. As a result, acceptance may also decline, as sex work remains a visible and therefore still contested presence in an increasingly residential neighbourhood.



Figure 70: Scenario visualisation with value

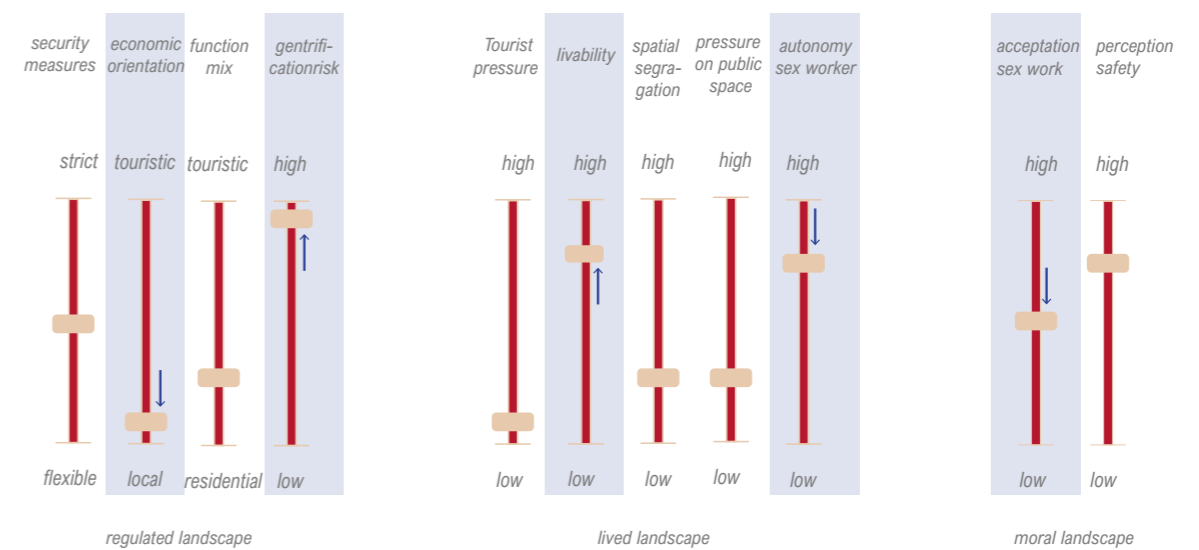
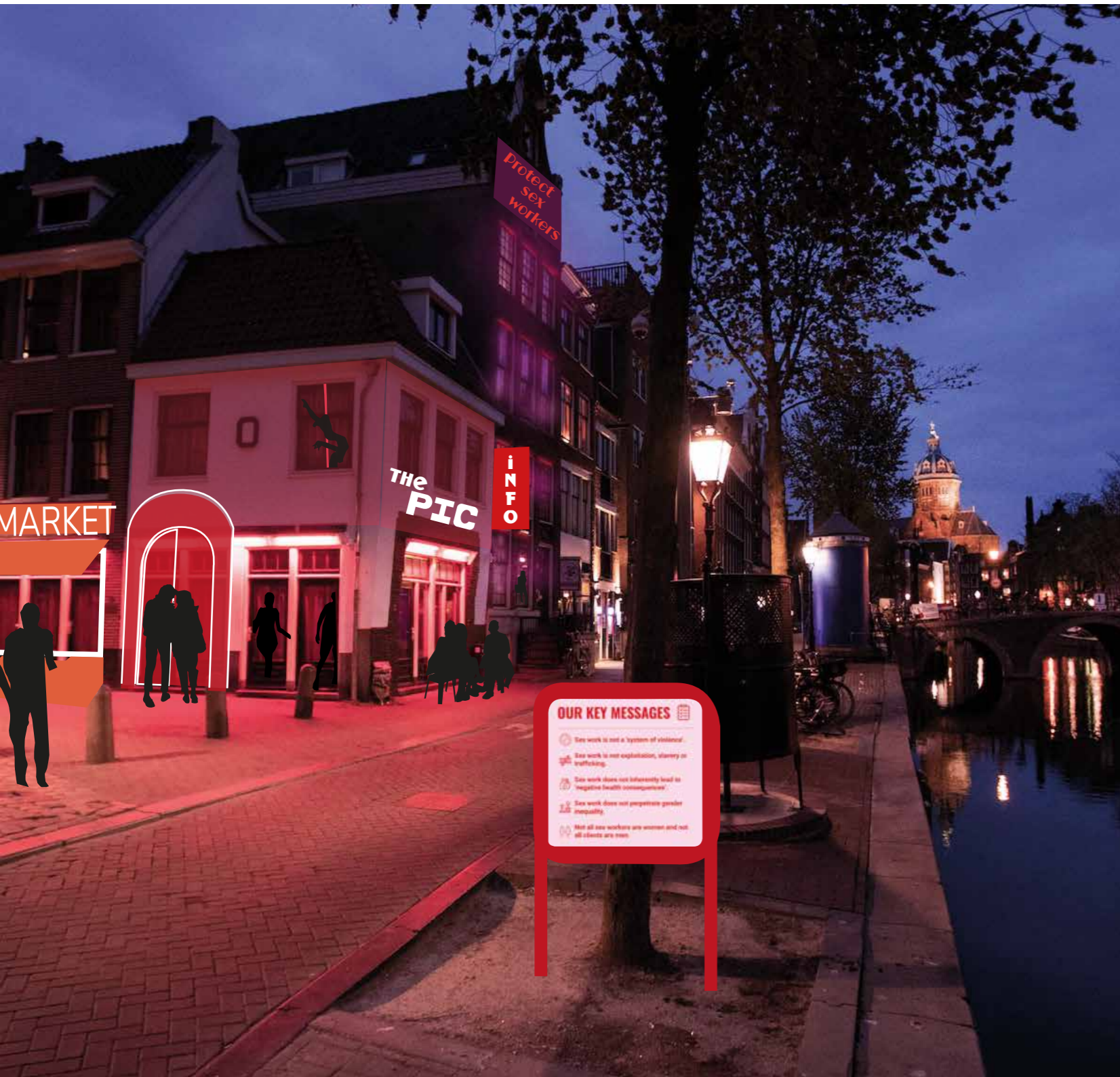


Figure 71: Scenario visualisation with sliding scales

4.3.7 The SEXY Wallen



163 Figure 72: Scenario visualisation

landscape — regulated ● lived ● moral — value — scenario

Instead of de Wallen being shaped by tourism or the reducing of tourism pressure, this scenario centres around sex work a legitimate urban function in its own right. The district becomes a place where sex workers can choose from different kinds of venues and work arrangements, depending on preference, body, identity, safety needs, and working style. In this scenario, the Wallen would no longer be a district where sex work survives despite the city. Instead, it becomes a district where sex work is actively planned for as part of the urban fabric.

Regulated landscape | the municipality stops the freeze of new workspaces and increases the number of legal sex-work venues and formally designates more areas as sex work places. This strengthens the bargaining position of sex workers to operators and can reduce rent pressure. Regulation is about making the sector safer and accessible. New venue types may include co-managed workplaces, or hybrid spaces that allow online recruitment and, where desired, home-based work. The regulatory framework becomes more inclusive and more adaptive, while still setting clear rules around safety, labour conditions, and anti-exploitation measures. The security measures in at the street level are more surrounding protecting sexworkers and educating tourists than reducing tourist nuisance. Signs with texts “be respectful to our workers” and “tip well”.

Lived landscape | Sex workers can move more easily between different kinds of venues and may feel less isolated because the district supports peer networks, care providers, and more stable workplace communities. The area remains active and visible.

Moral landscape | In the moral landscape, the key shift is from stigma and moral opinions toward recognition and legitimacy. Sex work is understood as work. This does not mean that all moral tensions disappear, but the central question changes: instead of asking whether sex work should be visible at all, the discussion focuses on what conditions make it safe. Morally, the Wallen become a place where the city takes responsibility for sex workers and be less related to nuisance or a tourist gimmick.

Value | The central values of The Sexy Wallen are autonomy, safety, and acceptance. Unlike the other four scenarios, which are shaped primarily by external forces such as tourism pressure or policy reduction, this scenario places the needs and agency of sex workers at the centre of spatial and regulatory decision-making. The district becomes a place where sex work is not merely tolerated but actively recognised as legitimate urban labour.

Trade off | The tensions this scenario generates are real and should be acknowledged. More legal and visible venues may attract more tourists, which runs counter to the municipality’s goal of reducing overcrowding. A stronger focus on sex worker needs, through co-managed workplaces, home-based work, and online recruitment, may conflict with resident preferences for a quieter, more orderly neighbourhood.

4.3.8 Comparison

When the four scenarios are placed side by side, a clear pattern emerges: a shift from a busy, commercial and highly controlled urban landscape toward a calmer, more residential and more “cleaned-up” landscape, but each step comes with its own price. The further one moves toward scenario 4, the less regulation is about managing tourism and the more it becomes ordinary, residential urban logic. At the same time, the risk increases that sex work disappears from formal space altogether, rather than being safely and adequately reorganised.

The most central trade-off concerns economic growth. When policy choices favour fewer visible windows and/or reduced tourist pressure in order to improve livability, this simultaneously cuts into sex workers’ direct income base. Consequently shrinking the stable and publicly accessible sector in which sex work in de Wallen takes place. As a result, the economic security is directly undermined, even though the overall spatial quality of the neighbourhood may improve. This trade-off works in the opposite direction as well: when a high degree of tourism and visibility is maintained, livability for residents does not improve. Nuisance, safety problems and related issues persist.

A second key trade-off concerns the visibility of sex work in relation to safety, autonomy and social infrastructures. In scenarios where sex work is visibly present, a form of collective infrastructure emerges, offering informal safety, economic stability and direct social networks. When this visibility decreases, sex work shifts toward more hidden or unregulated forms. This may initially appear to produce more calm and less public friction, but at the same time the structures that provided protection and mutual support disappear, making the position of sex workers more vulnerable.

In the lived landscape, there is a clear trade-off between calm and liveliness. The calmer and cleaner the neighbourhood becomes, the more liveliness decreases, while the neighbourhood becomes more livable. What is striking is that community value remains present in all scenarios in some form and does not fundamentally disappear. What changes is the way in which that community functions: in the more intensive and tourist-oriented scenarios, a shared but tense public space emerges, with overlap between different groups, while in the calmer scenarios the community may gain more space for residents and everyday neighbourhood life. Community is therefore not a disappearing value, but a constant that continuously takes on different forms under the pressure of spatial and economic shifts.

In the moral landscape, the less visible sex work becomes, the less it is recognised as a legitimate urban practice in public space. Acceptance does not automatically increase; instead, it may turn into indifference or forgetting. There is a broader tension between visibility and social recognition. Visibility generates confrontation and debate, but it also keeps sex work present as part of urban reality. When visibility disappears,



Figure 73: Scenario visualisation with value

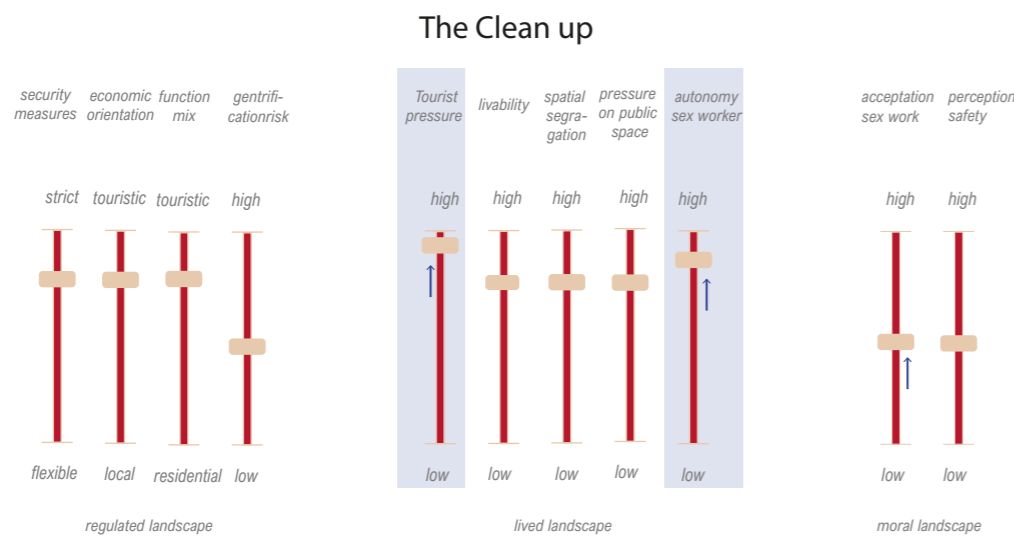


Figure 74: Scenario visualisation with sliding scales

direct friction decreases, but this does not lead to automatic acceptance. Instead, sex work may be pushed out of sight and gradually fade from public consciousness, leading to marginalisation and loss of recognition.

A recurring economic trade-off also exists between growth and inclusivity. In scenarios with strong tourist pressure, economic activity remains high, but it is tightly linked to tourism and other commercial functions. In the calmer, more “cleaned-up” scenarios, the economy shifts toward a residential character and small-scale service provision. The resulting higher property values and residential gentrification make the neighbourhood more attractive to affluent groups, but less accessible to lower-income residents. Economic “improvement” therefore does not go hand in hand with inclusivity, but rather with selectivity and a redistribution of space.

Finally, “The Sexy Wallen” is discussed in relation to the other scenarios. The tensions this scenario creates, around tourism and resident livability, are acknowledged but should not be treated as disqualifying. Every scenario in this chapter involves trade-offs; what differs in the Sexy Wallen scenario is who bears the cost. The Theme Park, it is sex workers who lose autonomy. In The Moulin Rouge and The Clean Up, it is sex workers who lose income, community, and recognition in favour of a cleaner neighbourhood image. The Sexy Wallen reverses that logic: it is the first scenario where the cost is not automatically absorbed by sex workers themselves. But what distinguishes The Sexy Wallen from the other four scenarios is that it deliberately chooses a side, and treats that choice not as a flaw but as a position.”This makes visible a question that the other scenarios consistently avoid: whose needs has planning in De Wallen historically protected? The tensions generated by this scenario are not a reason to dismiss it, they are a sign that genuinely inclusive planning requires different priorities, not just better spatial solutions.

characteristic (regulated)	Scenario 1: Theme Park	Scenario 2: The Moulin Rouge	Scenario 3: The quiet Wallen	Scenario 4: The Clean Up
Security measurers	Increase	decrease	decrease	decrease
Economic orientation	Increase	constant, but change orientation	decrease and change	decrease and change
Gentrification risk	constant	increase	increase	Increase significantly
Function mix	more tourist	constant, but changes function	more residential	more residential

characteristic (lived)	Scenario 1: Theme Park	Scenario 2: The Moulin Rouge	Scenario 3: The quiet Wallen	Scenario 4: The Clean Up
Tourist pressure	Increase	constant	decrease	decrease significant
Livability	decrease	increase	increase	increase significantly
Spatial segregation	Increase	constant	decrease	constant
Autonomy of sexworkers	constant	decrease	constant / increase	decrease
Pressure on public space	Increase	constant / decrease	decrease	decrease

characteristic (Moral)	Scenario 1: Theme Park	Scenario 2: The Moulin Rouge	Scenario 3: The quiet Wallen	Scenario 4: The Clean Up
Acceptance of sexwork	decrease / under-pressure	decrease	constant / increase	decrease
Perception of Safety	decrease	constant / increase	increase	increase

Figure 75: Comparison table

5.0 The ending

5.1 Conclusion

Aim | The aim of this research was to create future scenarios for de Wallen as an urban space characterized by persistent challenges. Conflicting values and recurring spatial conflicts has led to the current misalignment among users, e.g. residents, business owners, sex workers, and municipal authorities, regarding both the nature of the challenges facing de Wallen and the desired direction for its transformation. This misalignment hinders efforts to create a coherent future for the neighbourhood. This led to an investigation answering the following research question: “*How can the spatial characteristics of de Wallen and the values among its actors inform the development of inclusive future scenarios for the future of sex work in Amsterdam’s Red-Light District, de Wallen?*”

Subquestion 1 | The first part of this research was aimed at answering the question: “*What are the spatial characteristics and functions, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?*” To better answer the question, it was divided into the following three parts, below addressed in turn: Regulated, Lived and Moral landscape.

The regulated landscape of De Wallen can be understood as complex. The area is characterised by a strong mix of functions, where sex work is embedded within a broader urban economy of tourism, hospitality, and amenities, rather than existing as an isolated activity. The spatial analyses reflects limited residential presence, a below average (15%) share of social housing, and ongoing pressures towards more upmarket development, while heritage protections constrain large-scale transformations. Security regulations of De Wallen involve a system of control that influences both behaviour and the character of the area. However, the data on safety and nuisance suggest a tension: while regulation is justified by high levels of perceived insecurity and recorded crime, it does not necessarily lead to a clear reduction of these issues, and may instead contribute to a heightened sense of surveillance. As a result, De Wallen emerges as a space that is simultaneously over-regulated and only partly controllable, due to its dense urban fabric, narrow streets, and constant tourist flows.

The lived landscape of De Wallen is shaped by a diverse of users - residents, tourists, sex workers and cultural institutions - who are not only distinct from one another but also internally heterogeneous groups with varying needs, routines, and experiences of the area. De Wallen’s central location within Amsterdam, combined with its public transport connections and proximity to the cruise terminal, makes it a convergence point for large flows of people. This results in a space that is intensely used without interruption. The everyday experience of De Wallen described as contradictory. On one hand, the area is perceived as socially vibrant and exciting, offering a concentration of activity, culture, and urban life that few other neighbourhoods in the city can match. On the other hand, this intensity comes at a cost: commercial functions dominate the streetscape, public seating is scarce, and the spatial logic of the area is overwhelmingly oriented towards consumption rather than dwelling. The result is

an environment that is lively but not necessarily liveable. This tension is also visible in the position of residents. Their presence in the neighbourhood complex; on one hand, they are protected through physical interventions such as fencing and signage that distinguishes residential space from public space. On the other hand, residents also informally appropriate the street, sitting outside, socialising, and engaging with the neighbourhood in ways that assert a sense of belonging. This duality captures the essence of the lived landscape of De Wallen: it is a space where everyday life persists, but always in negotiation with forces.

The moral landscape of De Wallen was examined with two aims: to map the diversity of moral views that people hold regarding de Wallen, and to explore whether these moral values influence people’s opinions of the area or their willingness to engage with it. The analysis reveals a landscape of considerable moral complexity, shaped by attitudes relating to gender, safety, and religion. This framework revealed two dominant clusters. The first consists of those who accept sex work in De Wallen on principled grounds, operating from positions such as “sex is normal and should be allowed to take place in public” or “sex work is work.” The second cluster rejects sex work not on principle, but because of the conditions surrounding it, including its form as a tourist attraction or its reproduction of a narrowly cis-heteronormative image of sexuality. Notably, few respondents expressed fundamental opposition to sex work as such. It suggests that moral resistance to De Wallen is, for the majority, not about sex work in principle but about the spatial, social, and cultural conditions in which it is embedded. This shifts the moral debate away from a question of permissibility, toward a more nuanced set of questions about dignity, representation, and the kind of urban environment that sex work is allowed — or forced — to inhabit. In this sense, the moral landscape of De Wallen does not simply reflect pre-existing values; it is itself produced by the spatial and social conditions of the area, and must therefore be read alongside the regulated and lived landscapes that shape everyday life there.

Subquestion 2 | The second part of this research, was aimed at answering the question: “*How do different actors perceive and value de Wallen, regarding the transformation of de Wallen?*” The problems experienced in De Wallen are interconnected, and actors identify overlapping as well as conflicting issues. Residents primarily raised concerns related to liveability, safety, overcrowding from tourism, and the erosion of neighbourhood character and authenticity. Sex workers expressed concerns about the threat of closure and articulated an ambiguous relationship with tourism, recognising their economic dependence on tourist flows while simultaneously experiencing them as a source of nuisance. Cultural institutions echoed concerns about identity, particularly the fear that De Wallen is increasingly reduced to its association with sex work alone.

The value framework confirms this complexity. Although actors share similar underlying values, such as safety, social value, and heritage, these are not understood uniformly across groups. Shared terminology does not imply shared meaning: each actor defines and prioritises these values differently, and envisions different spatial and responses to them. Safety, for instance, is considered important by all stakeholders, yet what makes the area feel safe differs between a resident, a sex worker, and

a tourist. This divergence in interpretation means that even where consensus on values appears to exist, disagreement remains about how those values should be realised in practice. Moreover, values frequently conflict with one another. As the problem perception analysis already suggested, improving one value often comes at the cost of another, producing unavoidable trade-offs.

Subquestion 3 | The last part of this research was aimed at answering the question: *“What future scenarios can be developed for the transformation of De Wallen?”* This research developed five scenarios for the future of De Wallen, each describing a distinct direction for the district across the regulated, lived, and moral landscape. The Theme Park and The Moulin Rouge reflect trajectories already underway, driven by tourism pressure and municipal image politics. The Silent Wallen and The Clean Up represent more residential futures, quieter and more liveable, but at a consistent cost to the visibility, income, and social infrastructure of sex workers. Across all four matrix scenarios, a clear pattern emerges: every step toward a calmer, cleaner neighbourhood is simultaneously a step away from the conditions that make sex work safer, more stable, and more recognised.

The Sexy Wallen scenario interrupts this pattern. By stepping outside the matrix method and centring the needs of sex workers directly, it makes visible what the other four scenarios obscure: that planning decisions in De Wallen have never been neutral. Each scenario reflects a value judgement about whose needs matter most. The key lesson this chapter offers is that transformation without loss is not possible. The question is therefore not whether costs are incurred, but who bears those costs and which values we as a society wish to protect.

Main research question | This research asked how the spatial characteristics of De Wallen and the values of its actors can inform the development of future scenarios for sex work in Amsterdam’s Red-Light District. The analysis shows that De Wallen cannot be understood as a problem solvable through a single spatial intervention. The physical fabric of the district interacts with a deeply fragmented value landscape in ways that make conflict not a temporary condition, but a structural feature of the area. The five scenarios make visible what policy discussions often obscure: that every transformation of De Wallen involves unavoidable trade-offs, and that no intervention is neutral in its consequences. The scenarios for De Wallen are therefore only possible if trade-offs are made transparent, if sex workers are structurally included in decision-making, and if policymakers acknowledge that spatial interventions always encode choices about whose futures are prioritised.

5.2 Discussion

This chapter situates the research in a broader academic context, highlighting its overall contribution to the field of urban studies and red light district research. First, the academic contribution is discussed, followed by the theoretical implications, methodological reflections, and limitations of the study.

Academic Contribution | This research contributes to existing by transforming Hubbard’s (2012) abstract landscape concepts into analytical tools for spatial of the case of Amsterdam’s Red Light District. For example, Hubbard’s moral landscape refers to how different places in the city are assigned moral meanings, where areas like De Wallen are historically labeled as spaces of “immorality” where sex work is tolerated but socially set apart from what is considered normal or respectable. This research applies this concept per scenario by examining the moral tension in each; for example, Scenario 3 shows heritage tourism rising while sex work identity declines. The innovation lies in applying all three landscapes (regulated, lived, moral) simultaneously across five scenarios, creating a comparative matrix.

A second contribution is that all users of De Wallen are positioned as equal stakeholders, with their values and perspectives given equal weight in the analysis. This research demonstrates that it is critically important to center the voices of marginalized groups, particularly sex workers, in urban policy debates. By including the sex worker interviews and manifesto as a basis for Scenario 5, this research challenges top-down policy approaches and actively chooses to center sex workers as co-creators of urban futures rather than passive objects of policy. This answers calls from existing literature to foreground oppressed communities as knowledge-holders and political actors.

Third, this research provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of reality in De Wallen by generating insights into trade-off, for example the tourism-livability trade-off. Through scenario planning, the research demonstrates how findings can inform policy while acknowledging that transformation without loss is impossible, an insight for planners dealing with gentrification, cultural heritage, and marginalization. The research clearly shows where the pain points lie and offers an analyses of urban transformation under competing stakeholder values.

Theoretical implications | This research directly engages with and advances the discussion on urban value that Herzog et al. (2024) describe. Herzog et al. argue that “value conflicts in urban transformation cannot be understood merely as disputes over resources, such as space or money. Such conflicts originate from differences in orientations, concerning what actors consider legitimate, desirable, or morally appropriate.” (p2) This research confirms that conflicts are about competing visions of what urban life should be, not just resource allocation. Greco et al.,(2024) describe that paradox theory as a useful analytical lens, conflicting yet equally legitimate values

can coexist simultaneously, creating situations in which no single option fully satisfies all concerns. Results showed value conflicts are inherent, not accidental, and explicitly demonstrates the trade-offs and value conflicts across scenarios. It shows how values can be interpreted differently by different stakeholder groups. Furthermore, by applying paradox theory through comparative scenario analysis, this research moves beyond describing value conflict to showing how it can be managed rather than eliminated—demonstrating that transformation without loss is impossible, and the critical question is which values are protected and who bears the costs.

Most existing research criticizes the transformation of red light districts from a retrospective perspective, analyzing what has already happened. This research goes beyond criticism by presenting multiple scenarios and showing how they interconnect, creating a more diverse picture of possible transformations. Importantly, this research is future-oriented rather than retrospective, offering space to think critically about transformations before they are fully implemented. This proactive approach allows planners and policymakers to consider trade-offs and consequences in advance, rather than only analyzing impacts after transformation has occurred.

Methodological reflection | This research has limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the case study focus on Amsterdam's De Wallen means that findings may not be directly transferable to other red light districts with different historical, cultural, or regulatory contexts. Also the focus on spatial and policy dimensions does not allow for extensively addressing economic analyses or detailed financial modeling of transformation costs and benefits.

Secondly, the interviews revealed that social value emerged as the most prominent value among stakeholders. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution. Most interviewees were connected through the local community center (buurthuis), which may have influenced their emphasis on social cohesion and community. Nevertheless, this finding was confirmed by people outside the community center, who also described De Wallen as a very social and close-knit neighborhood. This suggests that while the sampling may have been slightly skewed toward residents connected to community organizations, the finding about social value remains robust.

Thirdly, more residents were interviewed than members of other stakeholder groups, which provided greater diversity within the resident category but potentially less diversity among sex workers, businesses, and policymakers. This research focuses specifically on window sex workers in De Wallen, which represents only one segment of the sex work industry. The sex industry is highly heterogeneous, consisting of street work, window sex work, escorts, online work, club-based work, and other forms (Macioti & Geymonat, 2016). By focusing on window workers, this research misses the perspectives and experiences of other sex worker groups who may face different challenges, have different needs, and be affected differently by transformation policies. Additionally, sex work is embedded in migration, gender, class, and racialization (Macioti & Geymonat, 2016), and this research does not fully capture how these intersecting identities shape different sex workers' experiences of the district. Future

research should address this limitation by including more diverse sex worker populations and examining how transformation affects different forms of sex work differently.

Lastly, scenario planning proved to be a valuable methodology for this research, offering several strengths. It allowed for the exploration of multiple plausible futures rather than assuming a single inevitable trajectory. Furthermore, making value conflicts and trade-offs explicit and comparable across scenarios. It also provided a structured framework for integrating the three analytical landscapes (regulated, lived, moral) into a coherent comparative matrix. However, scenario planning also has limitations. The scenarios are not predictions but rather analytical tools for thinking through possibilities, which means they cannot tell planners which future is most desirable or likely. The scenarios depend on the values and assumptions embedded in their construction, and different researchers might develop different scenarios based on the same data. Additionally, the scenarios simplify complex realities, which means some nuances and interactions may be lost in the process of creating clear, comparable future pathways. Despite these limitations, scenario planning proved particularly well-suited for this research because it embraces paradox and value pluralism rather than attempting to resolve them. By showing multiple futures rather than prescribing one "best" solution, the methodology aligns with the theoretical finding that transformation without loss is impossible and that the critical question is which values are protected and who bears the costs.

5.3 Future research

This research shows several directions for further investigation. First, the relationship between digitalisation and sex work in De Wallen deserves more systematic study. As online platforms increasingly replace fixed physical workplaces, it remains unclear how this shift affects the spatial organisation of the district, the working conditions of sex workers, and the regulatory frameworks that govern them.

Second, more research is needed into the specific workplace preferences and needs of sex workers themselves. This research has shown that diversity in venue types is important, but the conditions under which different workers prefer different settings remains underexplored. A better understanding of these preferences would allow for more targeted spatial planning. The possibility of self-regulation by sex workers also asks for attention. Co-managed or worker-led workplaces are currently rare, but the Sex Work Manifesto and interviews conducted for this research suggest there is demand such models. Future research could examine existing examples of self-regulation in other cities or sectors, and explore under what conditions such models could be viable in De Wallen.

Third, the scenarios were developed partly based on respondent perspectives, but it is not known how different stakeholder groups would actually respond to or evaluate each scenario. Future research could test the scenarios or co create with these groups to see which futures they find desirable. Similarly, the value framework is based on a specific group of respondents at a specific moment. It would be worth investigating whether these values shift over time, or whether different demographic groups within De Wallen hold fundamentally different value frameworks that a single study cannot capture.

Last, de Wallen is unique but not isolated. Other European red-light districts, Hamburg's Reeperbahn, or Utrecht's Zandpad, have undergone similar transformations. Comparative research could examine what lessons those trajectories offer for De Wallen's future. The relationship between visibility, stigma, and social acceptance is touched on but could be a standalone research focus.

5.4 Recommendation

“This research suggests that future interventions in De Wallen should begin from the recognition that sex workers need to be actively included in research and planning processes. Their participation does not happen automatically, and it requires deliberate choices about who is invited, who is heard, and whose knowledge counts. At present, sex workers are often spoken about rather than spoken with, while policy decisions are made in the name of safety without fully understanding sex workers' lived realities. A more considered approach positions sex workers as legitimate stakeholders with expertise about their own conditions, needs, and risks.

A second recommendation is that policy-makers should be more explicit about the long-term consequences of the trade-offs they make in De Wallen. The transformations being discussed have significant implications for quality of life, livelihood security, safety, visibility, and the future of the district itself. This means that interventions should not be framed as straightforward improvements, but as choices that privilege some values while marginalising others. Any strategy for De Wallen should therefore make these trade-offs transparent and openly discuss who benefits, who loses, and what kind of urban future is being created.

A third recommendation is that the municipality should separate sex work more clearly from the focus on human trafficking in public debate and policy. While trafficking is a serious problem that requires attention, an emphasis on it can reinforce stigma and make it harder to discuss sex work in a nuanced and realistic way. When sex work is automatically associated with exploitation, it becomes difficult to discuss working conditions, rights, safety, and spatial needs constructively. The municipality should therefore work to distinguish between trafficking and consensual sex work, and should avoid policy narratives that treat all sex work as something to be hidden, rescued, or eliminated.

Another recommendation concerns knowledge gaps. There is still limited knowledge about which spatial interventions in De Wallen actually work, which do not, and under what conditions they succeed or fail. This makes it difficult to evaluate proposed changes and increases the risk that interventions are based on assumptions rather than evidence. Future policy should therefore be accompanied by more systematic research, monitoring, and evaluation. At the same time, this knowledge production should be collaborative rather than top-down, so that sex workers themselves are part of defining what counts as a successful intervention.

Finally, the future of De Wallen should be approached with more openness to diversity, complexity, and discomfort. The current debate is polarised, and moral judgement often dominates the conversation, making it difficult to discuss sex work, its place in the city, and the wishes of those who do the work honestly. The existence of sex work is part of urban life, and a well-organised sex work sector can contribute to a

city that values freedom, autonomy, and emancipation. As one interviewee noted it perfectly: sex work is not perfect or universally empowering, but that does not justify denying sex workers the right to do the work and earn money.”

5.5 Reflection

This research began from the need to find a topic that engaged me. Within my master’s programme I had encountered many subjects that I found interesting but that did not grip me in a deeper sense. I wanted to work on something that I could not easily put down. De Wallen offered exactly that: a place where spatial planning, moral debate and urban identity, intersect.

That interdisciplinary ambition was also a challenge. This research combined spatial analysis from an urbanism perspective with a values-based qualitative approach more common in management research. During this process it felt like two separate studies that I was trying to hold together. The spatial observations produced in the first part of the research were difficult to translate into textual conclusions, and I wonder whether a spatial problem deserves a more spatial answer. Translating the values gathered through interviews into future scenarios raised its own questions; about interpretation, and the distance between what people say they value and what that means for how space should be organised.

Looking back at the research design, my main reflection is that the weight of the research was not distributed as I would have liked. The first two sub-questions, on spatial characteristics and actor values, produced findings that, in retrospect, were largely confirmatory of existing knowledge. But the result that were the most contribution of this research, the scenario development, received less space and depth than it deserved. Given the chance to do it again, I would have moved faster through the descriptive groundwork and invested more in testing the scenarios directly with the people they concern most, in foreexample a focus group.

That brings me to my position as a researcher. I am not a sex worker, nor a resident of De Wallen. I am a student who chose this topic because it mattered to me. Throughout the research I regularly questioned what my position as a researcher was. That distance between researcher and subject is not unusual, but in this context it felt worth taking seriously. At one point during the fieldwork, a sex worker mentioned how often they are asked to tell their story. They said it matter-of-factly, but in that moment I heard something that stayed with me: the thought that this research, too, was one more instance of someone asking.

This connects to the broader scientific and societal value of this research. There is a question about what academic knowledge contributes in situations shaped by political interest, public pressure, and moral debate. De Wallen has been studied, reported on, and discussed extensively. Another research report does not automatically move that conversation forward. What I hope this research offers is not a solution, but a framework for making the trade-offs more visible.



6.0 Sources

Aalbers, M. B. (2005). Big sister is watching you! Gender interaction and the unwritten rules of the Amsterdam red-light district. *Journal of Sex Research*, 42(1), 54-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490509552257>

Aalbers, M. B., & Sabat, M. (2012). Re-making a Landscape of Prostitution: The Amsterdam Red Light District: Introduction. *City*, 16(1-2), 112-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.662372>

Ashworth, G. J., White, P. E., & Winchester, H. P. M. (1988). The red-light district in the West European city: A neglected aspect of the urban landscape. *Geoforum*, 19(2), 201-212. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(88\)80029-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(88)80029-0)

Amsterdam Tourism statistics - How many people visit? (2024). (z.d.). Road Genius. [https://roadgenius.com/statistics/tourism/netherlands/amsterdam/#:~:text=Amsterdam%20welcomed%209.5%20million%20tourists,2.0%20million\)%20of%20total%20tourists.](https://roadgenius.com/statistics/tourism/netherlands/amsterdam/#:~:text=Amsterdam%20welcomed%209.5%20million%20tourists,2.0%20million)%20of%20total%20tourists.)

Avin, U., & Goodspeed, R. (2020). Using Exploratory Scenarios in Planning Practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86, 403 - 416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2020.1746688>

Basak, O., & Van Liempt, I. (2025). Liveable, but for Whom? - Perceived Liveability and Citizen Participation in Amsterdam's Red-Light District. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 116(2), 146-160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12664>

Bedrijven op de kaart. (z.d.). <https://app.bedrijvenopdekaart.nl/?bodkdata=N4lgZiBcDallYB-sEgLoBoQCMrWgBgDoB2AZgA40BWEgsgTjLPWjuIDYAmKm+x5o4vSjUAjAREAWEH2Y-dilvCVHipMIAF8gA>

Cai, Z., Wang, B., Cong, C., & Cvetkovic, V. (2020). Spatial dynamic modelling for urban scenario planning: A case study of Nanjing, China. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 47, 1380 - 1396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399808320934818>

Data zoekresultaten op locatie - Data en Informatie. (z.d.). <https://data.amsterdam.nl/data/geozoek?center=52.3731144%2C4.8933143&legenda=true&zoom=9>

Di Ronco, A. (2022). Law in action: Local-level prostitution policies and practices and their effects on sex workers. *European Journal of Criminology*, 19(5), 1078-1096. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370820941406>

Fiolka, R., Marshall, Z., & Kramer, A. (2022). Banishment through Branding: From Montréal's Red Light District to Quartier des Spectacles. *Social Sciences*, 11(9), 420. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11090420>

Gaissad, L. (2005). From nightlife conventions to daytime hidden agendas: Dynamics of urban sexual territories in the south of France. *Journal of Sex Research*, 42(1), 20-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490509552253>

Gemeente Amsterdam. (2024, juni). WallenCijfers [Presentatieslides; https://openresearch.amsterdam/image/2025/1/31/aanpak_binnenstad_wallencijfers_2024.pdf].

Gemeente Amsterdam. (2025). Bezoekersprognose-Amsterdam-2025-2027. <https://onderzoek.amsterdam.nl/publicatie/bezoekersprognose-amsterdam-2025-2027>
Gooptu, N., & Bandyopadhyay, N. (2007). "Rights to Stop the Wrong": Cultural Change and Collective Mobilization—The Case of Kolkata Sex Workers. *Oxford Development Studies*, 35(3), 251-272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600810701514811>

Herzog, R. H., Gonçalves, J. E., Slingerland, G., Kleinhans, R., Prang, H., Brazier, F., & Verma, T. (2024). Cities for citizens! Public value spheres for understanding conflicts in urban planning. *Urban Studies*, 61(7), 1327-1344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231207475>

Hielkema, D. (2024, juni). Amsterdam halveert komende jaren aantal zee cruises in Centrum - in 2035 moet PTA verdwenen zijn. Het Parool. <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/amsterdam-halveert-komende-jaren-aantal-zee-cruises-in-centrum-in-2035-moet-pta-verdwenen-zijn~b3a6712a/>

Hubbard, P. (2004). Cleansing the Metropolis: Sex Work and the Politics of Zero Tolerance. *Urban Studies*, 41(9), 1687-1702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243101>

Hubbard, P. (2012). Afterword: Exiting Amsterdam's red light district. *City*, 16(1-2), 195-201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.662362>

Hubbard, P., & Sanders, T. (2003). Making space for sex work: Female street prostitution and the production of urban space. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(1), 75-89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00432>

Hubbard, P., & Whowell, M. (2008). Revisiting the red light district: Still neglected, immoral and marginal? *Geoforum*, 39(5), 1743-1755. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2008.05.003>

Indarti, I., Peng, L. H., Wahyuningsih, U., Martadi, M., & Yulistiana, Y. (2024). Can batik craft products in the red-light area improve sustainable social and economic impact? A case study of the largest former prostitution area in Southeast Asia. *Heritage and Sustainable Development*, 6(2), 791-812. <https://doi.org/10.37868/hsd.v6i2.649>

Jaoude, A. G., Mumm, O., & Carlow, V. (2022). An Overview of Scenario Approaches: A Guide for Urban Design and Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 37, 467 - 487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122221083546>

Kuitert, L., Volker, L., & Hermans, M. H. (2023). Definitely Not a Walk in the Park: Coping with Competing Values in Complex Project Networks. *Project Management Journal*, 54(1), 19-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/87569728221127958>

Loopmans, M., & Van Den Broeck, P. (2011). GLOBAL PRESSURES, LOCAL MEASURES: THE RE-REGULATION OF SEX WORK IN THE ANTWERP SCHIPPERSKWARTIER. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 102(5), 548-561. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2011.00660.x>

Lorway, R., Khan, S., Chevrier, C., Huynh, A., Zhang, J., Ma, X., Blanchard, J., & Yu, N.

(2017). Sex work in geographic perspective: A multi-disciplinary approach to mapping and understanding female sex work venues in Southwest China. *Global Public Health*, 12(5), 545-564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2015.1123748>

Macioti, E. P. G., & Geymonat, G. G. (z.d.). Sex workers speak. Who listens? Mörk, A., & Brandellero, A. (2024). Experiencing Amsterdam's Red Light District as a female resident: Normalization, alliances and diversion. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 31(5), 673-693. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2023.2239520>

Neuts, B., Devos, T., & Dirckx, T. (2014). Turning off the red lights: Entrepreneurial urban strategies in 'De Wallen' Amsterdam. *Applied Geography*, 49, 37-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2013.09.005>

Rapport_binnenstadsenquête_2024. (z.d.).

Reizigersgedrag | NS Dashboard. (z.d.). <https://dashboards.nsjaarverslag.nl/reizigersgedrag/amsterdam-centraal>

Rijnink, R., Van Wijk, A., & Bureau Beke. (2020). Ontwikkelingen in de prostitutiebranche: Een literatuur- en documentenstudie op landelijk niveau en specifiek voor Den Haag. In *Ontwikkelingen in de Prostitutiebranche* (pp. 1-48) [Report]. https://bureaubeke.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Notitie_Prostitutie_Den_Haag.pdf

Rius-Ulldemolins, J., & Klein, R. (2022). From a Barrio Chino Urban Stigma to the Raval Cultural Brand: Urban Memory and Cultural Policies in the Renewal of Central Barcelona. *Journal of Urban History*, 48(6), 1407-1423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144220981117>

Sabat, M. (2012). From red light to black light: Spatial transformation and global effects in Amsterdam's Red Light District. *City*, 16(1-2), 158-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.663555>

Sasajima, H. (2013). From red light district to art district: Creative city projects in Yokohama's Kogane-cho neighborhood. *Cities*, 33, 77-85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2012.07.011>

Serino, A. (2012). A collection of documents from Redlight Art Amsterdam: Introduction to the artists' contributions. *City*, 16(1-2), 172-176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.663554>

Sekswerker Manifest. (z.d.). *Sekswerker Manifest: De toekomst van sekswerk in Amsterdam*. <https://www.sekswerk.info/files/2025-06/sekswerkers%20manifest%20NL.pdf>

Setyawan, J., Wibowo, J. M., & Indrawardani, K. F. (2024). An Analysis of dolly red-light district closure impact: 10-year post-transformation study on the psychological and economic vulnerability of susceptible women groups. *BIO Web of Conferences*, 146, 01035. <https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/202414601035>

Singelenberg, M., & Van Gent, W. (2020). Red light gentrification in Soho, London and De Wallen, Amsterdam. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 35(3), 723-742. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-020-09753-5>

Snippe, J., Schoonbeek, I., Boxum, C., & Breuer&Intraval. (2018). *Onderzoek Maatschappe-*

lijke positie sekswerkers [Report]. WODC, ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-855348.pdf>

Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (z.d.). Leeggelopen opblaaspop op een handkar. <https://archieff.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/cc341970-9977-7652-ed0-50d204855cd3/media/2aabe064-f-len&rows=1&page7667d1b0b30?mode=detail&view=horizontal&q=wallen&rows=1&page=2>

Strickland, A. B., & Gravari-Barbas, M. (z.d.). 22. Transforming Pigalle: The gentrified evolution of the Paris red-light district.

Tigchelaar, A. (2019). Sex Worker Resistance in the Neoliberal Creative City: An auto/ethnography. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 12, 15-36. <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219122>

Uitvoeringsprogramma Aanpak Binnenstad 2025. (2025, 5 februari). Openresearch.Amsterdam. <https://openresearch.amsterdam/nl/page/118544/uitvoeringsprogramma-aanpak-binnenstad-2025>

Van Liempt, I., & Chimienti, M. (2017). The gentrification of progressive red-light districts and new moral geographies: The case of Amsterdam and Zurich. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(11), 1569-1586. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1382452>

Veiligheid in beeld | Website Onderzoek en Statistiek. (2022, 31 oktober). <https://onderzoek.amsterdam.nl/interactief/dashboard-veiligheid?gebied=52&index=criminaliteit&meting=2026-1&indeling=wijk&subindex=totaal>

Weitzer, R. (2014). The Social Ecology of Red-Light Districts: A Comparison of Antwerp and Brussels. *Urban Affairs Review*, 50(5), 702-730. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087413504081>

Weitzer, R., & Boels, D. (2015). Ghent's Red-Light District in Comparative Perspective. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 12(3), 248-260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-015-0181-1>

7.0 Appendix

appendix A - Everyday experience

On Saturday, March 7, the Warmoes Biennale opened. This event was organised by two local entrepreneurs from De Wallen. The biennale consists of two months of public art installations across bars, churches, and shops in Amsterdam's city centre.

According to the organisers, the aim of the event is to highlight the heterogeneity of the inner city. This is achieved by hosting art in a wide variety of everyday locations, ranging from snack bars to laundromats. The event targets both local residents, encouraging them to rediscover their neighbourhood, and a broader Amsterdam audience. The opening featured a parade through the city centre, with participating organisations walking together, each carrying their own flag, forming a diverse, highly visible procession.

key observation:

Dairy Entry #2

Warmoes Biennale Walk Along | 07/03/2026 | 14.00 | Nieuwmarkt

I found this event on Instagram, which showed me a sponsored post about the upcoming biennale. I think I am in the geography of this sponsored post. I do not live in de Wallen but because of this research do follow Instagram account related to this. Furthermore am I young, living in Amsterdam, interested in contemporary art, again placing me in the target group for this post. If I had not found this on Instagram, I would have seen a post or flyer, as I saw a lot of posters around the city. This could also be because I am doing this research and focused on de Wallen. Other people that I spoke to did not know it was happening. The biennale is organised by Bonne (surname) who owns an expansive clothing brand and shop on de Warmoestraat. Together with a colleague, they wanted to show the colourful and diverse city centre and celebrate it by displaying contemporary art in unusual but everyday places. The festival was an invitation to Amsterdam to meet residents and for the neighbourhood to connect.

We arrived at de Nieuwe Markt for the opening of the Biennale. Around 200 people gathered at the Nieuwmarkt, all dressed up and up for celebration. The people from the locations, pavilions, of the biennale all carried their own flag with a logo from the organization. It was a colourful combination with organisations like Febo, Laudromat, Giftshop, Original Pancake shop, museum, Sex Palace. The event started with a speech from the organization and a thank you to all the sponsors, including the municipality.

We started walking with the flags and going a group alongside all the different pavilions.

We entered places we hadn't before and also spoke to people we had not spoke to before. I saw the neighbourhood differently. I felt like at the places I didn't feel like visiting before, I wanted to enter and explore. In a way I also wanna see other parts of the city.

For some reason I felt powerful and like I belonged there. It felt like I had a place in the neighbourhood and a purpose, in contrast to other times, when I didn't feel quite welcome.

I also felt weirdly superior to tourists and visitors because I was having fun at a place that was normally theirs. Which is a feeling not directed to anyone in particular but I felt like it was also my place to be there.

I think this feeling is very important to have but an important side note is ofcourse that I have a connection with art and it makes me feel comfortable. But that will be different for other people. The feeling however is a valid feeling and one I sometimes feel is missing in de Wallen. A feeling of pride and connection. I feel like there needs to be more to be proud of in de Wallen.



appendix A - Everyday experience

This event took place on February 15, 2026, during the Day of Paid Love, and was held at Casa Rosso.

This day celebrates sex work and aims to highlight its social and cultural significance. The event was organised by an initiative called Full Service and brought together members of this community, including queer community, sex workers, clients, and local residents. The event lasted approximately two hours and functioned as a space for gathering, exchange, and visibility. It was primarily aimed at the Full Service community and those connected to it.

key observation:

Diary Entry #1

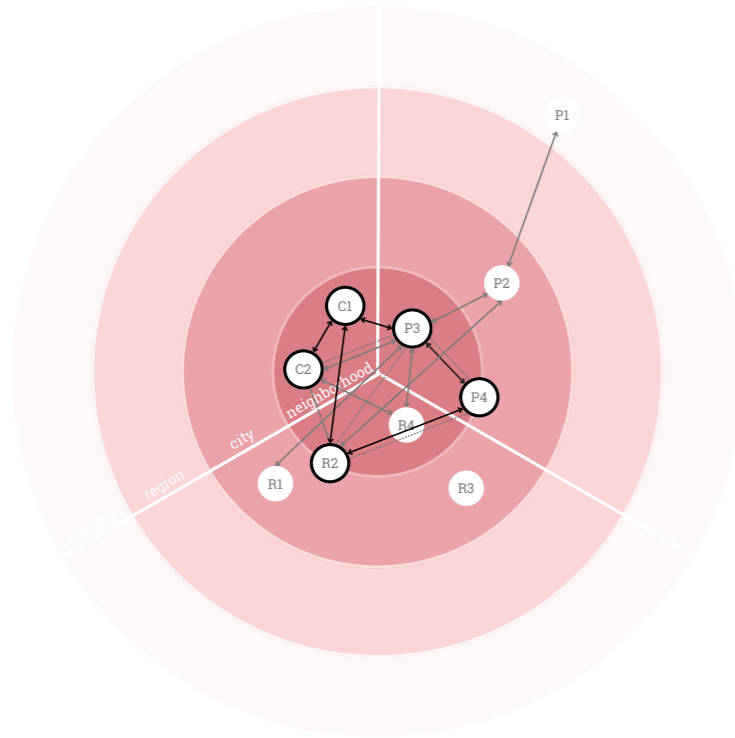
Full Service Cabaret Day of Paid Love | 15/02/2026 | 14:00 - 16:00 | Casa Rosso, de Wallen

I found out about this event through the website <https://queer-kalender.nl/en/>. Queer Calendar, which is a platform where you can find queer events in Amsterdam. If it had not been posted there I don't know if I would have found out about this event as a person with little knowledge about/connection to the Wallen or sex worker communities based there. The tickets were sold by sliding scale, ranging from 'community', 'general admission' and 'supporter' with an option to email for a free ticket for people with limited financial resources. Furthermore, in the description of the event it was outlined that 'community, clients, & residents' are all welcome. This is unlike other events I have come across at Casa Rosso, who donated the theatre for this event. The relative lower price combined with the welcoming description removed many financial and social barriers for joining the event.

When arriving around 2pm, there was a short line outside. We walked from tram 4 stop Rokin. From that direction, Casa Rosso is located somewhat at the start of the Wallen so we did not see much of the rest of the Red Light District before entry. We were welcomed right outside the entry by a kind person scanning our tickets. There was no option to buy drinks. The venue was quite full, but we found two empty seats upstairs. Everyone working at the venue was kind and welcoming. The show started with an explanation of how the show came about and the two golden rules of sex work: pay upfront and tip generously. Throughout the event, someone went around with a bag to tip money and/or to leave a nice note for the sex workers performing. The show was in celebration of the Day of Paid Love, a day on the day after Valentines Day that celebrates sex work. The performances included strip shows, singing and poetry, panel/interview, drag shows, pole dance, burlesque and comedy. Before the shows started two awareness people were pointed out, that you could go if anything came up for you emotionally or physically during the show. This made me feel very safe and taken care of. In the middle of the show there was a short intermission where the crowd was asked if they had any events to promote. People promoted their events, ranging from porn screenings or kinky club nights to an iftar celebration and someone from the queer sex worker community looking for housing. This portion blurred the line between audience and performers and strengthened a feeling of connection in the room. Throughout the night it was often mentioned by the narrator how important it was for sex workers to stay at the Wallen. After the show there was a dragshow by a different collective at Palais van de Weemoed, also located within the Wallen. The narrator pointed out how rare and wonderful it was for two queer events to happen on the same day at the Wallen, and how there should be more of that. The show radiated warmth, pride in the work and of the community, joy and a resistance to being stigmatised, excluded or hidden. The narrator/presenter, organiser of the evening and sex worker, Mercy St. J, wore a keffiyeh in support of Palestine. The panel portion of the event consisted of an interview with two sex workers based in Nijmegen, Taro. They organised a fundraiser at a squatted cinema in Nijmegen for a Palestinian woman titled Sex Workers Against Genocide where they raised about 2000 euros. They talked about how they went about organising and ways of getting involved with the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

At the end of the show, a QR code was promoted to join a Telegram group chat to stay up to date with Full Service Production's events. We left the venue and walked down the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, which felt a little strange. Besides the one or two queer flags and one or two Palestinian flags hanging from residents' windows, support for queer liberation or the Palestinian cause were not overt like they had been during the show we just visited. I am not saying this means people aren't in support of these causes, but just pointing out it was less overtly visible or centred as it had been during the show. The streets felt more commercial than community oriented, at least for us visitors. Suddenly we were surrounded by mainly male presenting people and tourists, which was very different from inside the venue. It had been warm and soft lit inside, and now we were walking in cold stormy weather around harsh neon lights. A man standing in front of another venue tried to get us 'girls' inside to join. Pictures of straight, fit couples and conventionally attractive women surrounded us. Groups of men (mostly tourists) were standing around everywhere. It felt like we were suddenly in a different place. It felt like you had to know where to go, or otherwise you're a bit like a tourist yourself if you don't know your way around. I don't think this is necessarily good or bad, but it was very cold and stormy, we did not know what places around the neighbourhood would be fun for us to enter and in the bad weather we did not want to walk around a lot so we did not stay around in the neighbourhood.

appendix B - Value conflicts

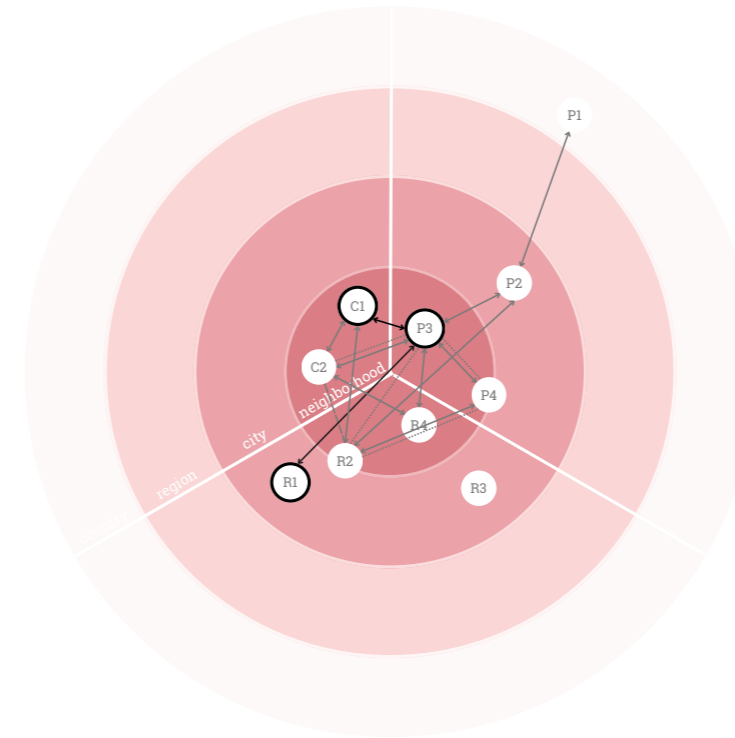


public sector
P1: Justice department
P2: sexwork and humantrafficking department
P3: policy maker
P4: PIC information centre

civic sector
C1: residents
C2: resident organisation

private sector
R1: cultural institution
R2: sexworkers
R3: researchers
R4: developer

collaboration - social value

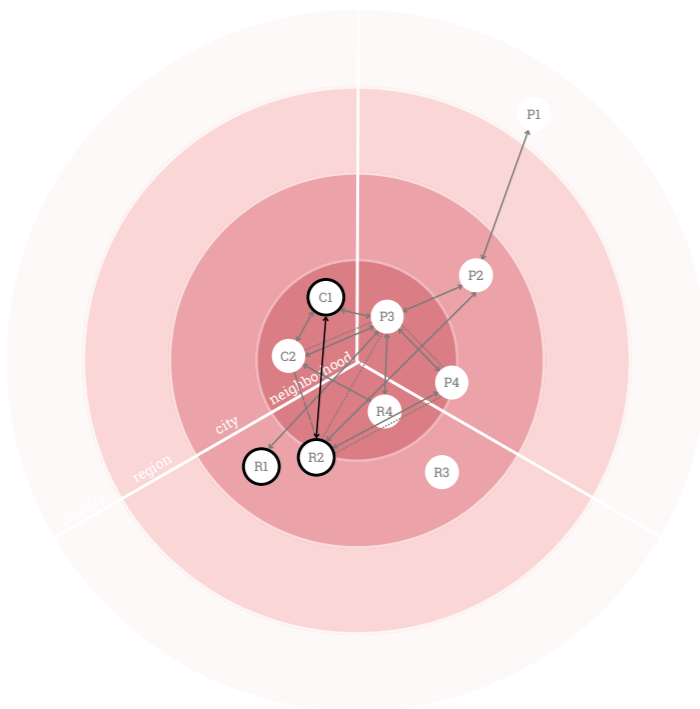


public sector
P1: Justice department
P2: sexwork and humantrafficking department
P3: policy maker
P4: PIC information centre

civic sector
C1: residents
C2: resident organisation

private sector
R1: cultural institution
R2: sexworkers
R3: researchers
R4: developer

collaboration - cultural value

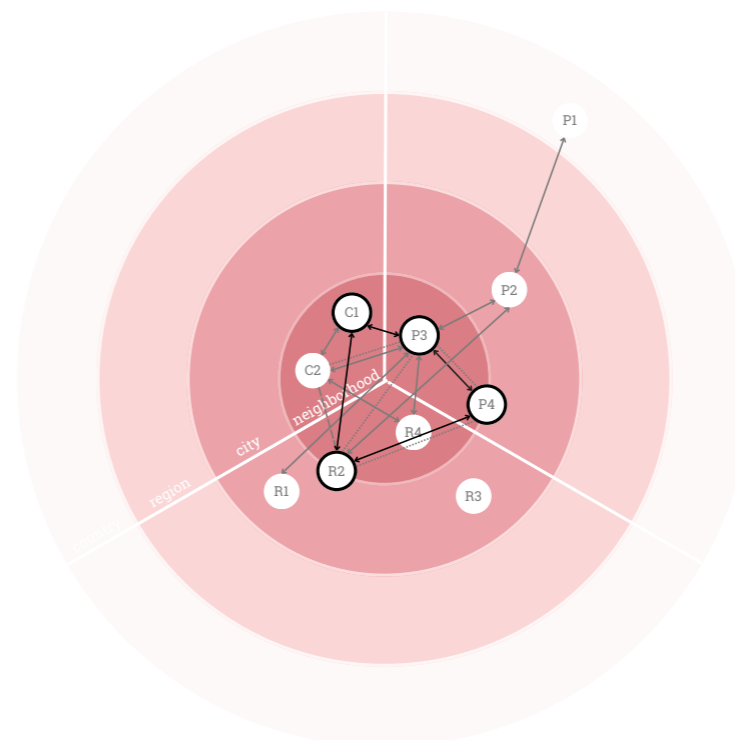


public sector
P1: Justice department
P2: sexwork and humantrafficking department
P3: policy maker
P4: PIC information centre

civic sector
C1: residents
C2: resident organisation

private sector
R1: cultural institution
R2: sexworkers
R3: researchers
R4: developer

collaboration - acceptance & tolerance value



public sector
P1: Justice department
P2: sexwork and humantrafficking department
P3: policy maker
P4: PIC information centre

civic sector
C1: residents
C2: resident organisation

private sector
R1: cultural institution
R2: sexworkers
R3: researchers
R4: developer

collaboration - safety value

appendix B - codes atlas.ti

name	codegroup 1	source	identity	identity value	Just City index
belonging	acceptance value	Just City index	problems	research	inductive
empathy	acceptance value	Just City index	change	research	inductive
inclusion	acceptance value	Just City index	desire for the future	research	inductive
reconciliation	acceptance value	Just City index	clash / conflict	research	inductive
respect	acceptance value	Just City index	interesting	research	inductive
tolerance	acceptance value	Just City index	moral landscape	research	Hubbard landscapes
trust	acceptance value	Just City index	Lived landscape	research	Hubbard landscapes
normalisation	acceptance value	Just City index	regulated landscape	research	Hubbard landscapes
empowering	acceptance value	Just City index	meaningful encounters	social value	Veld Academie
cultural expression	cultural value	Veld Academie	social engagement	social value	Veld Academie
cultural offer	cultural value	Veld Academie	social network	social value	Veld Academie
history	cultural value	Veld Academie	able to participate	social value	Veld Academie
leisure	cultural value	Veld Academie	say	social value	Veld Academie
voice	democracy value	Just City index	mutual trust	social value	Veld Academie
protest	democracy value	Just City index	co reliance	social value	Veld Academie
debate	democracy value	Just City index	sense of safety	social value	Veld Academie
conflict	democracy value	Just City index	sense of belonging	social value	Veld Academie
critical thinking	democracy value	Just City index	affiliation	social value	Veld Academie
productive	economic value	Veld Academie	inclusivity	social value	Veld Academie
circular	economic value	Veld Academie	care	social value	Veld Academie
affordability	economic value	Veld Academie	social diversity	social value	Veld Academie
suitable employment	economic value	Veld Academie	zelfstandigheid	social value	Veld Academie
local economy	economic value	Veld Academie	self-reliance	social value	Veld Academie
innovation	economic value	Veld Academie	inviting	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
economic	economic value	Veld Academie	liveliness	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
neighbourhood-oriented economics	economic value	Veld Academie	clean environment	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
sense of security	healthy development value	Veld Academie	openness	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
meaning	healthy development value	Veld Academie	welcoming	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
personal growth	healthy development value	Veld Academie	orientation	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
exchange of knowledge	healthy development value	Veld Academie	esthetic quality	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
proper education	healthy development value	Veld Academie	visibility	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
incentive design	healthy development value	Veld Academie	quality of greenery	spatial experience value	Veld Academie
space for imagination	healthy development value	Veld Academie	accessibility	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
air quality	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	closeness of facilities	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
water quality	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	quality of living	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
sufficient rest	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	eligibility	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
light and darkness	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	spatial connection	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
shelter	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	traffic safety	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
healthy food supply	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	natural surveillance	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
movement, sport, play	healthy environment value	Veld Academie	diversity	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
vitality	identity value	Just City index	active mobility	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
spirituality	identity value	Just City index	centrality	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
pride	identity value	Just City index	volume	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
character	identity value	Just City index	massa	spatial planning value	Veld Academie
beauty	identity value	Just City index			
authenticity	identity value	Just City index			

appendix C - used figure

