

PRIVATE ACTS PUBLIC SETTINGS



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Private Acts, Public Settings

On the Current State of Cruising at Park de Oeverlanden in Amsterdam

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For Gert Hekma

Erotic play discloses a nameless world which is revealed by the nocturnal language of lovers. Such language is not written down. It is whispered into the ear at night in a hoarse voice. At dawn it is forgotten.

– Jean Genet,

The Thief's Journal

The erotic functions for me in several ways, [...] The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.

– Audre Lorde,

Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power

Abstract This paper describes small-scale research on homoerotic encounters in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It focuses explicitly on Park de Oeverlanden as it is the only place in the city where cruising is officially recognized and tolerated by the municipality. Non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews made it possible to analyze how the local sexual culture manifests and the meaning and motives contemporary cruisers attach to public sex.

From observations and interviews, it is concluded that Park de Oeverlanden still functions as a popular cruising place where a large variety of men gather to have casual and anonymous sex with other men. As public sex has a lengthy tradition of operating under the threshold of public visibility, it is still the norm to act in low-profile and discreet ways. Although negotiation strategies remain largely unchanged, findings indicate that casual conversations are becoming part of the repertoire.

Respondents emphasize sexual proximity as the primary motive for favoring offline over online cruising. Interviews reveal that some informants (re)claim the practice of cruising to resist prevailing sexual norms and to articulate an alternative to heteronormativity. Since a small group seizes Park de Oeverlanden as an emancipatory sexual space, it is argued that they break with the traditional norms of cruising – this occasionally results in disputes between progressive and more conservative cruisers.

Keywords cruising, public sex, homoerotic encounters, erotic oases, transforming norms, Park de Oeverlanden, Amsterdam.

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I will continue your legacy and shine a light on society's most perverse and most fascinating fringes.

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Cruisers of Park de Oeverlanden

My fellow students

And most of all,

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Table Of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Framework	3
2.1 Private Acts, Public Settings	3
2.2 Theory of Sexual Stigma	5
2.3 Sexual Citizenship	6
2. 4. Park de Oeverlanden: A Contested Space	7
3. Methodology	9
3.1 Observation	9
3.2 Interviews	10
3.3 Positionality	11
4. Findings	12
4.1 Park de Oeverlanden as an Erotic Oasis	12
4.2 Cruising at Nieuwe Meer	13
4.3 The Clearing	16
4.4 Clashing Motives	17
4.5 Transforming Meaning	18
4.6 Sense of Belonging	19
5. Conclusion	21
6. Bibliography	24
7. Appendix	28

1. Introduction

“[L]ike poems, cruising carves privacy out of public spaces. Poems are a kind of private communication that occurs in public speech. And I think cruising is that too: a training in reading occult codes; a way of seeing a significance in the world that most people don’t see.”
– Garth Greenwell

For many of us, the emergence of our queer selves did not occur in the domestic comfort of the family home – it happened in the bushes, or a car, and in the body of a stranger. For those whose sexual proclivities are adjudged dangerous and undesirable, public sex provides a rare avenue for intimacy due to its anonymous and fleeting nature. For this reason, cruising has been a practice of queer men for centuries. To date, every city has a place where men seek each other out for anonymous and impersonal sexual contact. These spaces are a worldwide phenomenon found in public parks, restrooms, parking lots, and wooded areas (Frankis & Flowers, 2009).

Laud Humphreys (1975 [1970]) conducted the first research on cruising. In his book *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*, he uncovers the hidden world of men meeting and engaging in homoerotic behavior in public restrooms. Following Humphreys, the body of literature expanded; in recent decades, several studies have been conducted into public sex in various settings (e.g., Delph, 1978; Lieshout, 1995; Tewksbury, 1996; Brown, 2008; Patnaik, 2015; Qian, 2017).¹ However, research on the current state of cruising in a Western context remains limited.²

Studies carried out before and around the turn of the century can be roughly divided into two fields: (1) deviant behavior, which characterizes public sex as the activities of social deviants, and (2) sexual health, the AIDS pandemic gave rise to a renewed interest in public sex to combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. As a result, cruising spaces are oftentimes dominated by homophobic discourses that cast them solely as places of violence and disease – a dirtiness ascribed not only to the physical space but also to the men who frequent them (Greenwell, 2016). These narratives ignore the radical potential that inheres to these spaces: the opportunity for men

¹ The world of public, impersonal sex is almost exclusively concerned with men having sex with men; however, it should be noted that some research has been done on women pursuing such sexual activities (e.g., dogging).

² Studies conducted > 2010.

to experiment, assert and articulate their homoerotic desires in ways that may be impossible to achieve in other spaces of their daily lives (Hubbard, 2011; Brown, 2008).

The practice of cruising carves out places of belonging and liberation that are essential for homosocialization; it can manifest anywhere as long as spatial and infrastructural conditions support it. However, this marginal practice is increasingly threatened by the ongoing commoditization and sanitization of public spaces (Bezemes, 2019). Amsterdam is no exception, as urban expansion puts the only official cruising place at risk (Meershoek, 2021b). Park de Oeverlanden is known as a popular public sex site as cruising is recognized and tolerated in a designated zone (AT5, 2009). With the arrival of a new residential area, the municipality expects the number of visitors to triple over the coming years. This development raises concerns among the local cruise community, as disputes over the meaning and function of the space may further intensify (Meershoek, 2021a).

Given the recent developments, this study examines the current state of cruising at Park de Oeverlanden in Amsterdam. A qualitative mixed-method methodology (observation and interviews) is used to gain insight into the local sexual culture, and the individual meanings contemporary cruisers attach to public sex. By analyzing the practice of cruising through four lenses – historical, sociological, political, and spatial –, this study aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this marginal social practice and the value participants attach to the cruising place.

This paper explores how the local sexual culture manifests at Park de Oeverlanden. I start with an examination of how the practice of cruising intersects with issues of sexual stigma, citizenship, and spatiality. Derived from these theoretical concepts, I problematize how ongoing sanitation and commercialization of public spaces undermine public sex. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the methods by which this research is conducted and briefly reflect on the ethical issues involved with this study. In the fourth section, I consider my findings in depth. Finally, I draw out some conclusions and critically reflect on the effectiveness of sexual citizenship in the context of cruising.

2. Theoretical Framework

The act of cruising can be defined as a set of ritualized strategies carried out by men who seek each other out in public space for anonymous and (im)personal³ sexual contact (Humphreys, 1975; Delph, 1978; Tewksbury, 1996). Delph (1978) coined the term *erotic oases* to describe the spaces where men meet for, and frequently engage in, (im)personal sex with men. Tewksbury (2010) elaborates on this by arguing that erotic oases are generally found in two forms. The first variety of places is located in public spaces, classically defined as “those spaces that exist outside and between the realm of work and home” (Hubbard, 2011, p. 91). These spaces are often civic locations encountered in everyday life (e.g., parking lots, public parks, public restrooms, beaches, and wooded areas). To facilitate erotic behavior, these locations need some form of physical structure to inhibit observation/detection (Keogh & Holland, 1999).

The second form is commercial locations specifically designed to facilitate sexual activity; such venues are often located in urban areas (e.g., bathhouses, adult stores, dark rooms, and sex clubs). As licensed and commercial premises, they charge admission fees; therefore, they have lesser accessibility than the first variety of erotic oases (Hubbard, 2011). Given the exclusivity and payment threshold of commercial premises, visitors can assume that all men present are interested in some form of sexual interaction. For this reason, sexual interest is made explicit (Tewksbury, 2010). In civic locations, the motives of men are less clear; therefore, sexual interest is negotiated through a series of stages. Individuals use ambiguous and nonverbal cues to signal their mutual intentions and sexual interest in each other (Delph, 1978). In this research project, I will primarily focus on the first variety of erotic oases as I examine the relationship between marginalized groups and public space.

2.1 Private Acts, Public Settings

The practice of cruising is well documented and has a lengthy history. For example, Peniston (2002) documents the use of urinals for homosexual encounters in late nineteenth-century Paris, Houlbrook (2000) describes same-sex behavior at public lavatories in the inter-war years in London, and Hekma (1999) examines the prominent role of parks and public toilets in the queer urban history of Amsterdam. All studies mentioned above gathered their data from judicial archives since homoerotic desires and behavior have a long history of criminalization and

³ I intentionally place “im” in parentheses because *impersonal* suggests no personal feelings are involved. Although public sex is anonymous, men do perceive cruising as intimate or personal.

persecution. To this day, public sex is policed through laws relating to ‘public decency’ and ‘obscenity’ (e.g., England & United Arab Emirates, Hubbard, 2011). To comprehend the complex relationship between sex(uality) and public space, it is important to understand how the public/private binary strongly influences current notions about sex and sexuality.

The attempts of institutions to push sexual acts and practices out of sight and into the private realm can be traced back to the Enlightenment (Hubbard, 2011). In his book *The Civilizing Process*, Elias (2000 [1939]) describes how Enlightenment thinking influenced new understandings of civility and manners; post-medieval European standards regarding violence, sexual behavior, and bodily functions transformed and became surrounded by shame, repugnance, and disgust. Elias concludes that feelings of shame surrounding human sexual relationships have increased over time (Elias, 2000, p. 134). In other words, he provides a theory of the body that illustrates how understandings of civility transformed over centuries to the point where contemporary notions of sexuality are surrounded by complex cultural norms about when and where to have sex (Smith, 1999). Specifically, sex is supposed to occur only out of sight (read: in the domestic or private sphere). Individuals who refuse to conform to these cultural conventions are seen as ‘uncivilized’ and threaten society’s values and wellbeing (Weitman, 1999).

In the context of homosexuality, the public/private binary is challenged. As Elias (2000) illustrates, sex is considered one of the most private acts. To be specific, sex should only happen in the privacy of one’s home. However, the home is not a neutral or safe haven in this context, as it is inextricably linked to the concepts of family, marriage, and reproduction (Schreve, 2022). For this reason, Hubbard (2011) argues that the public/private divide privileges heterosexuality by insisting that all sexual activity is a private matter. This marginalizes sexual ‘others’ since individuals who cannot conform to heterosexuality are rejected for their right to publicity *and* privacy. By excluding homosexuals from having sex safely and in the privacy of their homes, they are pushed into the public sphere. In this context, public space provided a veil of anonymity for those seeking sexual freedoms outside the constraints of their home and working lives. Men pursued their homoerotic desires by getting adept at “stealing moments of privacy and at finding cracks in society where they could meet and not get caught” (Shreve, 2022, p. 140). For this reason, the phenomenon of cruising must be understood as a response to a social organization based on the paradigm of hegemonic heterosexuality and sexual exclusivity (Adiego, 2019).

2.2 Theory of Sexual Stigma

Variation is a fundamental property of all life, from the simplest biological organisms to the most complex human social formations. Yet sexuality is supposed to conform to a single standard. One of the most tenacious ideas about sex is that there is one best way to do it, and that everyone should do it that way (Rubin, 1984, pp. 153-54).

Contemporary Western societies have established that sexual behavior that falls outside of the paradigm of hegemonic heterosexuality is subjected to scrutiny and supervision (Foucault, 2018 [1976]; Rubin, 1984). In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes the emergence of *scientia sexualis* in the nineteenth century, a medical discourse that categorized and hierarchically ordered ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ sexual behavior – being heterosexual, monogamous, and married is the norm. Both formal and informal controls show that heterosexuality is constantly (re)produced and made to appear as ‘good’ or ‘natural’ (read: heteronormativity). Jackson (2006) defines heteronormativity as follows: “The privileging of heterosexuality through its normalization” (p. 109). Whenever an individual is forced to justify their marginal position, the norm of heterosexuality is indirectly perpetuated.

With her concept of the *charmed circle*, Rubin (1984) elaborates on Foucault’s thinking and demonstrates how Western societies appraise sex acts according to the hierarchical system of hegemonic heterosexuality (see Appendix 1). For example, heterosexual bodies in a monogamous relationship, making love privately, is labeled as ‘good sex.’ In contrast, non-heterosexual bodies, having sex in public with various partners, is depicted as ‘bad sex.’ This hierarchy of sexual value justifies the well-being of the dominant group and the adversity of the sexually deprived (e.g., homosexuals, fetishist, and sex workers). However, Rubin notes that this value system is a product of socio-cultural developments. For this reason, the boundaries between ‘good sex’ and ‘bad sex’ are not static but rather fluid – this is further discussed in the following paragraph.

Rubin (1984) states that contemporary Western societies are marked by an adage of sex-negativity, meaning that sex is generally considered to be a dangerous or negative force. This is especially apparent in the context of sexual variety as “popular culture is permeated with ideas that erotic variety is dangerous, unhealthy, depraved and a menace to everything from small children to national security” (Rubin, 1984, p. 152). For this reason, stigmatized sexual communities remain vulnerable to the possibility of scrutiny or to periods in which they become the objects of moral panic.

To this day, men who engage in public sex remain vulnerable to moral judgments (Anderson, 2017; Bain et al., 2018; Johnson, 2008). By frequenting erotic oases, cruisers risk stigmatization, ostracism, and marginalization from their families and communities (Humphreys, 1975; Delph, 1978; Tewksbury, 1996; Flowers, Marriott & Hart, 2000). Men who engage in cruising keep this strictly separate from their daily lives, as disclosure could jeopardize their social status (Humphreys, 1975; Tewksbury, 1996; Hollister, 2004; Ngo et al., 2009; Qian, 2017). For this reason, questions of sexual morality also inform discussions about citizenship, as those whose sexual behaviors are adjudged dangerous or undesirable risk being excluded from society (Hubbard, 2001). Sexual relations are thus culturally mediated as men who engage in cruising conceal their erotic tendencies, conforming to society's expectations of what constitutes a 'good citizen.' For example, the former Mayor of Maastricht had to resign after being spotted on Grindr⁴ while married (Limburg, 2014).

2.3 Sexual Citizenship

Evans (1993) coined the term *sexual citizenship* to underline the material foundations of sexualities from a neo-Marxist perspective. The term has been applied to different domains, as the concept draws attention to various kinds of social exclusion that sexual communities experience (e.g., political, social, cultural, and economic). Sexual citizenship expands the liberal notion of citizenship, meaning having rights and obligations generated by a membership in a state (Marshall, 1950). It emphasizes that citizens have genders, sexualities, and bodies that matter in politics. Specifically, it draws attention to the fact that citizens are also sexualized members of a community who wish to have their sexual identities and erotic behaviors recognized (Weeks, 2007). This acknowledgement implies the free expression of sexuality and bodily autonomy in public space without curtailing their civil rights. For example, when public indecency laws are selectively enforced to proscribe homoerotic behavior. In other words, it demands a transformation of the public sphere to a domain where heterosexuality is no longer hegemonic, and sexual variation can coexist (Hekma, 2015).

In recent decades, homosexuality has become more accepted and domesticated in Western societies – resulting in greater visibility in the public arena (Savenije, 2013). At the same time, this 'tolerance' is accompanied by the prerequisite that homosexual men should act 'normal.' From the 1970s, the Dutch gay advocacy organization COC began to promote 'more normalized' ways of being gay (Savenije, 2013). In other words, homosexuals were compelled by

⁴ Grindr is a popular dating app for men who have sex with men. The application allows you to view profiles of men in the area, send messages to other users, and look for a date.

their community to give up promiscuity and public sex (Duyvendak & Hekma, 2006). This development has led to a dominant manifestation of an ideal and desired form of homosexuality, known as homonormativity (Duggan, 2001). By adhering to the heterosexual ideal, Rubin (1984) states that homosexuals who are coupled and monogamous are granted respectability and are recognized as ‘good citizens.’ Thus, current conceptions of sexual citizenship are based primarily on adopting similar lifestyles, and family structures as heterosexuals (e.g., same-sex marriage) and are less concerned with the equal representation of sexual diversity (Hubbard, 2001). As a result, marginalized sexual communities are continuously threatened to be buried beneath the pressure of assimilation.

2.4 Park de Oeverlanden: A Contested Space

On the outskirts of Amsterdam, along the banks of the Nieuwe Meer, lies the nature and recreation reserve Park de Oeverlanden. The site is approximately 60 acres and is located between the North bank of the lake and the A4 towards Schiphol Airport. The area originated in the 1950s – processes of land reclamation and debris dumping led to nature taking possession of the region. As a result, the area has a wild and unspoiled character and houses varied vegetation (Groen, Ginkel & Cruz, 2016).

Park de Oeverlanden is popular among residents of Amsterdam for various reasons (e.g., hiking, sporting, swimming), ideal for leisure activities. However, Nieuwe Meer – slang for Park de Oeverlanden – is mainly known as a public sex site; homoerotic encounters have occurred since the 1980s (Meershoek, 2021b). In 2009, district Nieuw-West recognized the reserve as an official cruising area – sexual acts are tolerated within the designated area by the municipality (AT5, 2009).

In the *Omgevingsvisie Amsterdam 2050*, the municipality presents its vision of Amsterdam’s rapidly growing economy and population. They state: “Because we want to be an inclusive city and public space belongs to everyone, we strive to design and manage it together with users” (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021, p. 212, translated by Benjamin). District Nieuw-West expects an increasing number of visitors to Park de Oeverlanden in the coming years due to a growing need for nature and the arrival of a new residential area with 11.000 homes for approximately 20.000 residents. These developments concern the local cruise community because they could jeopardize the current function of the site (Meershoek, 2021b).

Bezemes (2019) argues that cities’ ongoing sanitation and commercialization inevitably undermine cruising areas as they subvert the definition of a ‘good place.’ Words such as ‘safe,’ ‘clean,’ and ‘welcoming’ have become qualifications for desirable activities in public space; this

discourse prioritizes initiatives that fit into the moral and (hetero)normative interpretation of public life while ignoring more subversive and marginal social practices (Delany, 1999). Since public space accommodates a variety of values, cultures, and social practices, a collaboration between the municipality and stakeholders of different communities is essential. In the case of Park the Oeverlanden, this could be improved (Meershoek, 2021b). For example, in 2019, the city council presented a new map of the region; on it, the official cruising area has been halved (see Appendix 6). Neither cruisers nor interest groups (e.g., Stichting Keelbos, COC) were included in this decision-making process (Meershoek, 2021b).

Using the above theoretical concepts, I aim to research the current state of cruising through four lenses – historical, sociological, political, and spatial. By studying this phenomenon, I hope to gain insight into the norms and values of the local cruise community. Mapping the meaning and motives of this marginalized practice could help urban practitioners to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the value cruisers attach to public sex sites. Moreover, their perspective should be included when designing and managing public spaces. Due to a lacking historical perspective and prevailing social norms, cruising is often cast as a negative and undesirable practice (Bezemes, 2019). This study could offer tools to communicate about cruising in a respectful and destigmatizing way. To do this, I formulated the following research question: What is the current state of cruising at Park de Oeverlanden in Amsterdam? To comprehensively answer this question, I will focus on two sub-questions:

1. How does the local sexual culture manifest at Park de Oeverlanden?
2. What meaning and motives do contemporary cruisers attribute to their own (sexual) activities?

The practice of cruising remains a controversial and stigmatized topic (Tewksbury, 2010; Qian, 2017). For this reason, I want to apply a qualitative mixed-method methodology – observation and interviews – to answer my research question. Interviews would not suffice as my respondents are only partly representative of the sexual culture I aim to study. The men I have access to and want to talk to me are open about their sexual identity and erotic behaviors. Their willingness to cooperate sets them apart from the wider variety of men who frequent erotic oases (Humphreys, 1975; Brown, 2008). Therefore, I believe that observations provide an essential data source for this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Observation

Non-participant observation techniques were applied to gain insights into the current state of cruising in Amsterdam. In this study, I focused on Park de Oeverlanden since cruising is officially recognized and tolerated within a designated part of the nature reserve. Moreover, the area met the ideal requirements of a most-likely case study design as it is the only public sex site in Amsterdam where cruising occurs during daytime (Travel Gay, n.d.). Although cruising at Park de Oeverlanden takes place day and night, it was more convenient and safer to observe during the day. Between May and June, I frequented the location four times at hours best known for cruising: afternoons and evenings. Each visit lasted over three hours; observing over twelve hours in total.

As a man, it was relatively easy to access cruising sites: (1) because cruising takes place in public space, and (2) as a cis male, I could easily pass as a potential cruiser. Since cruising is done in public, individuals who frequent erotic oases are used to being observed by ‘strangers’ (Humphreys, 1975; Delph, 1978). This phenomenon can thus be defined as public behavior; therefore, it exempts them from informed consent guidelines if “local cultural values,” and intrusion are respected (Antropologen Beroepsvereniging, 2018; Bolton, 1996). Adhering to the norms of this specific sexual community, I considered a covert role during my observations as most ethical. First, I minimized disruption to the space and presented no risk to the cruising men (Brown, 2008). Second, I deemed it necessary since an overt role would have altered the behavior I aimed to study (Adiego, 2019; Frankis & Flowers, 2009). To respect the privacy of other cruisers, I never disclosed my research interest while observing.

Although many scholars stress the importance of participant observation techniques in researching anonymous sex (e.g., Adiego, 2019; Brown, 2008; Lieshout, 1995), no sexual conduct was performed by me. This study focuses on cruising behavior at the meso-level; therefore, individual sexual acts did not have my primary interest. While observing, I presented myself as a potential cruiser or “voyeur” (Humphreys, 1975). In this way, I could ethically observe cruising behavior while simultaneously maintaining “professional value” (Tewksbury, 2004, p. 45). By presenting myself as a cruiser, several attendees viewed me as a potential sexual partner – people winked at me, tracked me for a while, or masturbated in front of me. Some men were more direct and instigated sexual encounters by touching my butt or penis. On these occasions, I communicated respectfully that I was not interested in explicit sexual contact. In most cases, they accepted my rejection; however, two incidents occurred where firm gestures and explicit verbal

communication were necessary to protect my boundaries. Rejecting fellow cruisers never led to any conflict and was, ultimately, always respected. Negotiating sexual disinterest is an essential part of the cruising process; therefore, rejection is neither humiliating nor insulting (Frankis & Flowers, 2009).

Behavioral mapping and counting techniques were used to structure my observations (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Behavioral mapping was applied to study how men used the layout of the cruising area. Since the 'action' at Park de Oeverlanden is widespread, I wanted to investigate what happened where. For example, where most visitors entered the site, how they met, and where explicit sexual acts occurred. To gather this information, I walked around and familiarized myself with the area; these findings are presented in a cartography of Park de Oeverlanden (see Figure 1). To get an impression of the flow in the park, I counted for fifteen minutes once an hour using a handheld counter; these figures are included in Table 1. As Park de Oeverlanden is over 60 acres and people are constantly walking around, the data contains a certain degree of inaccuracy.

3.2 Interviews

This research draws on semi-structured interviews with four men who regularly cruise for male sexual partners in public parks in Amsterdam. The literature indicates that some behaviors are site-specific, depending on the layout and the population that frequents them (Keogh & Holland, 1999; Frankis & Flowers, 2009; Adiego, 2019). For this reason, the interviewees needed to be familiar with Park de Oeverlanden.

Respondents were recruited from my network, thus using convenience sampling (Bryman, 2016). By applying this strategy, I had no intention of creating a representative sample of the local cruise community. Since access to this specific target group is difficult, I used convenience sampling as an opportunity to gain more insights into the individual meaning and motives of contemporary cruisers. Through mutual friends, I identified four cruisers willing to be interviewed⁵ – all individuals agreed to participate before their contact information was passed down to me (see Appendix 2). In this process, my role as a researcher was made explicit and oral consent was given prior to each interview.

All interviews were conducted in person; three were completed in a private room at the university and one in the respondent's home. Interviews lasted between 45 and 100 minutes and utilized a semi-structured format. While working with an interview guide (see Appendix 3 & 4), I

⁵ Respondents are all Dutch men, with an average age of 31.5 years and an age range from 23 to 36. All interviewees self-identify as homosexual.

allowed myself to elaborate if unexpected topics came up. As sensitive issues were discussed, respondents were not obligated to answer and could stop or postpone the interview when necessary.

In adhering to the ideals of grounded theory, all interviews were recorded by phone. After transcribing the interviews, recordings were deleted, and transcripts were securely stored. Respondents were referred to by pseudonyms in both the transcripts and the observations, and personal characteristics were omitted to protect their anonymity (Antropologen Beroepsvereniging, 2018). ATLAS.ti was used to structure and code the obtained data. After analyzing and grouping the data (see Appendix 5), I attempted to formulate a theory based on essential and recurring themes (Bryman, 2016). However, due to the limitations of my research project (i.e., limited time and the number of respondents), data saturation was not achieved; therefore, the ideals of grounded theory were not fully realized (Bryman, 2016).

3.3 Positionality

Early studies into the practice of cruising adhered to “the objectivist tradition of depersonalized, decontextualized report-writing” (Walsh-Bowers & Parlour, 1992, p. 107). For example, several scholars emphasized that they were ‘outsiders’ and had to get familiar with the gay subculture (e.g., Humphreys, 1975; Delph, 1978; Ponte, 1974). As a queer person, I am acquainted with the meaning and norms of the subculture studied. Being an ‘insider’ made it easier to navigate these sexualized spaces – my positionality as a queer man presented both advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, emphasizing this part of my identity made it easier to create rapport between my respondents and me; one informant stated he felt he could be honest and open because he considered me “one of them.” Moreover, as a gay man, I am familiar with the subtle and ambiguous cues associated with cruising. This prior knowledge and lived experiences helped me interpret accurately and understand essential nuances. On the other hand, my emotional involvement with this community may have affected my objectivity; as my knowledge is situated, it will be impossible to replicate this study.

4. Findings

4.1 Park de Oeverlanden as an Erotic Oasis

It is a warm Wednesday afternoon; I can feel the sun on my face while locking my bike through the fence. Before entering Park de Oeverlanden, I noticed a sign: *no cruising outside the indicated area!* The sign displays the cruising place and is marked by the Municipality of Amsterdam and the police – violating the marked territory; cruisers risk a fine of €85 (see Appendix 6).

Around this time of year, the area can be described as densely green, with trees, bushes, and wildflowers. After entering the reserve through a wooden fence, I find myself on a dirt road that leads further into the woods. The area is sandwiched between two roads; on my right is a freeway – while walking through the woodlands, I hear cars going by. To my left is a bike path following the banks of the Nieuwe Meer. Although both sides are busy with commuters, cyclists, and hikers, the nature reserve is an oasis of tranquility. Birds are chirping, rabbits are hopping around, and Scottish Highlander cows are grazing undisturbed.

The woodland is crisscrossed with footpaths and narrow tracks. Most of the trails are muddy due to the humidity of the previous days. As I leave the main road and follow a smaller path, I notice all sorts of garbage – the area is polluted, namely: paper tissues, condoms, and lubricants (see Appendix 7). The waste indicates I'm getting close; this is where the action takes place! (Field note: Nieuwe Meer, 18/05/22, 15:45).

Park de Oeverlanden presents the ideal conditions for an erotic oasis: (1) the dense vegetation provides a more or less safe setting with low public visibility, and (2) there is a constant flow of potential sexual partners (see Table 1). Since the 'action' is all day long, the divide between day and night uses of the space is less significant. Non-cruisers are spotted (e.g., hikers or dog walkers); however, these occasional visits are far outnumbered by the presence of cruising men. Being outdoors while immersed in such a hypersexual atmosphere often resulted in surreal experiences. As Respondent II explains: "You enter a kind of parallel universe [...] normal life goes on around you. You step out of day-to-day reality for a moment; that's what I like about cruising."⁶

⁶ The author translated all quotes in this section from Dutch to English. In translating the quotations, the author aimed to stay as close to the original as possible.

Table 1: *Visitors Park de Oeverlanden*

Date	Day	°C	Time	Visitors *
18 - 05 - 2022	Wednesday	23	15:45	60
			16:45	68
			17:45	59
22 - 05 - 2022	Sunday	25	14:00	99
			15:00	117
			16:00	105
26 - 05 - 2022	Thursday	18	15:00	34
			16:00	29
			17:00	33
12 - 06 - 2022	Sunday	21	14:30	72
			15:30	99
			16:30	88

* Counted for 15 minutes, once an hour.

4. 2 Cruising at Nieuwe Meer

As Park de Oeverlanden is quite large, different parts of the territory appear to have distinct functions. The area is reachable on foot, bike, and car. Visitors on foot or by bike can enter the site from practically every direction; however, most visitors park their car near Oude Haagseweg and enter through the Depot (see Figure 1).

The Depot can be characterized as an exploration zone. Cruisers get acquainted with the area and get an impression of the men present; this zone is also used for socializing. Respondent I states: “I always make the rounds first to see who’s there, what’s going on, and if there are any new paths.” Interviewees explain that it is uncommon to directly approach another cruiser without prior negotiation – building sexual tension is essential to cruising. All respondents have difficulties in describing how sexual interest is negotiated. In their attempts to verbalize this process, they use words like “hunting” and “game.”

Initial contact is generally established by prolonged eye contact. Subtle glances go hand-in-hand with certain gestures (e.g., nodding, smiling, raising one's eyebrows, or rubbing one's penis); it is precisely the quick succession of specific body language that characterizes a sexual advance. The next step is following a cruiser or allowing oneself to be tracked. Respondent I explains:

First, you check what kind of meat you have in store. Eventually, you'll make eye contact with someone [...] you walk behind him for a bit; in time, he will follow you again. You wander off to a quieter spot when you are sure that the interest is mutual. Every now and then, you check to see if he is still coming after you, then you hold still and wait...

Several interviewees describe the exploration zone as too public for sexual acts. Even though cruising takes place in the open, it does not imply that all participants are comfortable with being watched. Respondent II states: "Sometimes people have to give you a little privacy too, even if it's in public space." After mutual sexual interest is established, most men retreat to a more 'private' spot deeper in the woods – on the map, these places are marked as explicit sexual zones (see Figure 1).⁷ Fellow cruisers often respect this need for privacy; however, in some cases, it is violated. Respondent II explains: "Sometimes you've made it very clear that you're not interested [...] and then when they see you having sex with someone else, they seize their opportunity and start touching you!" All interviewees recalled similar experiences, implying that consent occasionally is neglected. While these incidents are unpleasant, respondents also noted that they have improved at setting boundaries by cruising.

It is important to stress that individual cruising interactions may differ from the script mentioned above and that the functions of the different zones are not strictly separated. For example, Respondent III notes that his negotiation strategy depends on his mood and potential partner(s). While emphasizing non-verbal communication, starting a conversation at Nieuwe Meer is not uncommon. Moreover, some interviewees explicitly mention that they prefer to communicate with other cruisers; however, men often reject this as silence is used to shield one's identity.

⁷ As indicated in Figure 1, much 'action' takes place outside the designated area.

Figure 1: *Cartography Park de Oeverlanden*



4.3 The Clearing

What sets Nieuwe Meer apart from other cruising areas (e.g., Rosarium, Oosterpark) is that it also functions as a popular destination for (nude) recreation. In the middle of Park de Oeverlanden is a clearing (see Figure 1); this spot attracts a large group of leisure people who prefer to sunbathe naked. To be clear, these nudists are predominantly men who also cruise; however, this recreational aspect affects the atmosphere of the area.

In contrast to the Rosarium (Vondelpark) or Oosterpark, cruising at Nieuwe Meer takes place day and night. This situation is unique as most cruising areas are only active during nighttime. The reason for this: (1) cruising is concentrated at times when “outsiders” are not present, and (2) darkness protects the anonymity of the participants. When asked about the differences between cruising during the day or at night, Respondent III explains:

Daytime is more recreational, so you just make a day out of it. For example, if you go to Nieuwe Meer, you usually have more time and space, and the sun is probably shining. You really feel like enjoying yourself! When you go [cruising] after a night out, you want to get started as quickly and directly as possible.

Respondent IV characterizes the Rosarium and Oosterpark as an “*afwerk plek*,” implying that anonymity and quick sexual consumption is the norm.⁸ Interviewees describe the atmosphere at Nieuwe Meer as more open and relaxed.

While sexual acts were observed at the clearing, most actions remained limited to the explicit sexual zones (see Figure 1). Whereas the atmosphere in the explicit sexual zones is tense and serious, interviewees describe the ambiance at the clearing as casual and playful. Men lie by themselves or in groups; most are naked or dressed in swim- and fetish wear (e.g., jockstraps, thongs, harnesses). Individuals are chatting, consuming alcohol, or reading a book – on sunny days, over 50 men were observed (see Table 1). When recreating, sex is not necessary – occasionally, someone gets up, puts on shoes, and disappears into the bushes. Respondent IV’s experience is representative of the group of men who regularly frequent the clearing:

For me, it’s always fun because I’m there with friends. We are free among each other; we all know what we are doing there [...] Many people come there alone, have sex secretly, and leave again. I’m just with people who know me daily, and these are not sex friends; they’re really my

⁸ “*Afwerk plek*” refers to places men go for quick sexual consumption. In the context of men having sex with men, this sexual activity is free of charge.

friends! We know about one another that if we go for a walk, we'll probably have sex. There's no taboo for us when we're there or doing things; it feels relaxed. For many people, it's still a *necessity* to be there; to me, it's just a *preference* [emphasis added] (original word: *bijkomstigheid*).

This quote reflects the growing tensions between cruisers and recreators, as the latter's culture is at odds with the traditional norms of cruising. Although access to sex is also an important motive for recreators, the social context is different from that of other cruising areas since most men do not hide their sexual identity during the day and openly frequent bars and clubs aimed at gay men.

4.4 Clashing Motives

Since public sex has a lengthy tradition of operating below the threshold of public visibility, cruisers act in self-regulating and "low-profile" ways. Due to this history, interviewees still believe a significant percentage of visitors self-identify as heterosexual – for them, being unobtrusive and discreet is essential. Respondent III mentions: "In the bushes, other things are important!"

Whereas in the local queer community being fashionable, feminine, and flamboyant are considered valuable assets of one's identity, cruising men fit more closely with traditional masculine stereotypes. Respondent III explains: "When I'm in my regular clothing [...] I'm a lot less popular. If I wear a hoodie and black sweatpants, there's no problem." Several interviewees admit disguising explicit expressions of homosexuality while cruising; in this process, normative masculine stereotypes are reinforced. Thus, traditional cruising culture can be characterized as masculine, with a neutral appearance and an indifferent communication style as the norm.

Moreover, cruising areas are not only marked by the physical absence of women; men who are "feminine presenting" or flamboyant are policed for being too visible. Respondent III states: "In my opinion, the structure is more open and freer nowadays, but the history and the culture [of cruising] is very masculine. [...] I think more feminine people just don't feel welcome."

As mentioned above, recreational users are less concerned with keeping a low profile as they are comfortable with their sexual identity. For this target group, visible manifestations of queerness (e.g., being naked or dressed in fetish wear) provides them with a sense of freedom. Moreover, interviews and informal conversations reveal that many recreators favor transforming Park de Oeverlanden from a male-dominated territory to a more diverse area. Diverse does not necessarily imply male/female or heterosexual/homosexual, but rather a more inclusive and queer-friendly environment. While talking about this, respondents often refer to the park

Hassenheide in Berlin - they describe it as a sanctuary where various genders come to cruise and relax. Respondent IV explains:

I used to think that only a specific type of person came there [Nieuwe Meer] to have sex. Nowadays, I have the idea that the queer scene is coming there more and more [...] I'm not talking about the new definition of queer, as in gay, but queer as in a group of non-judgmental people who come there to feel free. If something is possible in terms of sex, they do it, but it doesn't have to be! [...] What you also see at Hassenheide, for example, is a place that is not necessarily sexually charged but where you can just feel free in the open air!

Respondent IV recalls an incident that occurred between his friends and a regular group of cruisers. The interviewee describes his friends as “outspoken” and “strong personalities” – they were with a dozen, including three females. “While sitting at the clearing, a man approached us and accused us of disrupting the cruisers” (Respondent IV). The man complained that the other visitors felt intimidated by the size of the group and were afraid to cruise because of them. This incident illustrates a persistent belief among cruisers; despite the apparent openness and unrestricted nature of public sex, cruisers must obey the norms of the sexual culture. As these norms primarily function to protect cruisers' safety, it reveals that large groups of friends or women are seen as threatening to the space. Herein they overlook the fact that a larger variety of people may enjoy spending time at a place that temporarily exempts them from prevailing social norms. According to Respondent III this belief is particularly present among older generations, as he puts it: “They are still ashamed and afraid [...] so they keep it very closed and think that the area will be disturbed if other people come.”

4.5 Transforming Meaning

With the arrival of the Smartphone - the first iPhone was launched in 2007 - dating apps such as Grindr became the preferred meeting place. Some interviewees called it a “godsend,” as Respondent IV recalls: “With Grindr, it became a lot easier. You no longer had to go to a cruising area or gay bar to pick up men. You were finally able to meet at home!” Fifteen years later, this sentiment is no longer shared by everyone. Interviewees describe Grindr and other hookup apps (i.e., Scruff) as cold, superficial, time-consuming, and unimaginative. The primary reason why respondents favor offline cruising over online cruising is sexual proximity – at a cruising area, motives are clear(er); you're both there for the same reason. Respondent III explains:

[...] because I just want direct contact. Grindr takes too much time; in the end, I'm just endlessly staring at a mosaic of profile pictures, and I'm still not outside. At least with cruising, you're already out and in beautiful scenery instead of lying on your bed scrolling on Grindr for hours...

All respondents value being outdoors and in nature; they call it "exciting" and "adventurous." For interviewees, the thrill of not knowing who to expect and the risk of being caught adds significantly to the sexual experience. Respondent I states that having sex outdoors gives him a sense of "sexual freedom." Moreover, some even view it as a form of resisting the bourgeois sexual morality and the desired normalization of homosexuals. As Respondent IV explains:

It has to be in the bedroom, and it has to be hidden. It's a sort of defiance against the norm that everything must be so secret! Maybe that plays a part [...] but also the thrill of getting caught. Just for a moment, to resist what is expected of you. You're already being labeled; I'm allowed to be gay, but [...] it's a kind of unconscious *middle finger!* [emphasis added].

For two respondents, public sex sites have even more significance as they consider the practice of cruising an essential part of their history:

When I'm there, I have many thoughts about the past [...] like, who have all been before me. I see it [cruising] as a culture that has been passed down on generations, without ever being written down but has been going on for hundreds of years [...] by being there, I become part of the story that lives there. (Respondent III).

Interviews indicate that public sex has transformed from a necessity to a preference. Cruising has become one of the many means of scoring easy and casual sex, as various options are now available. However, for some respondents, cruising involves more than just sex; for them, it is a way of resisting repressive sexual norms and reclaiming their cultural heritage.

4.6 Sense of Belonging

The practice of cruising has a lengthy tradition of manifesting in peripheral or ambiguous spaces. Respondent III describes: "Cruising is the art of potentiality; finding possibilities in something impossible." As poetic as this may sound, it also presents certain disadvantages. Due to its

anonymous and unstructured nature, cruising places are vulnerable to undermining forces.

Respondent III continues: “Often, participants want to remain anonymous and thus cannot mobilize themselves. Therefore, it demands support and protection from the outside!”

All respondents consider the recognition of Nieuwe Meer as a positive development.

Respondent II explains: “It really forces the municipality to think about it and see it as an integral part of the city.” However, interviewees noted that the historical perspective regarding these spaces is often lacking and that urban planners are unaware of the benefits of such places. As Respondent I states: “Many people don’t understand why it can be a safe haven for people.”

When asked about the benefits of Park de Oeverlanden, respondents emphasized “self-discovery” and a “sense of community.” Several interviewees stated that it provides them with an opportunity to explore their sexuality outside of the expectations of everyday life. Respondent III recalls: “Knowing I would never see this person again [...], I dared to explore my sexual fantasies without being ashamed!”

Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that Nieuwe Meer helped them realize that they were not alone; it provided an environment where they did not feel “freaky” or “perverted.” For them, public sex sites present an alternative to heteronormativity as it establishes a new “norm.” This norm fits cruisers into a community with its own rules and expectations; in this way, it offers a temporary liberation from prevailing social norms. Respondent IV explains:

At one point, I took many friends who felt trapped, were ashamed, or never dared to go because they had a certain idea about it. [...] It’s also a matter of letting go of shame and realizing that it can be done differently. A place like Nieuwe Meer contributes to that [...] it lets you move through life a little more freely!

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined the current state of cruising at Park de Oeverlanden in Amsterdam. I focused on two sub-questions to comprehensively understand this marginal social practice. First, by using non-participant observation techniques, I gained insight into how the local sexual culture manifests at Park de Oeverlanden. Second, I got a glimpse into contemporary cruisers' meanings and motives, drawing on semi-structured interviews with four men. Based on this research, I would like to draw some conclusions.

Firstly, it can be concluded that Park de Oeverlanden still serves as a popular cruising place where a large variety of men gather to have casual and anonymous sex with other men. In line with Keogh & Holland (1999), Nieuwe Meer meets the ideal requirements to facilitate erotic behavior as the dense vegetation inhibits detection/observation from adjacent roads. As public sex occurs day and night, Nieuwe Meer is almost exclusively the territory of cruising men. Contemporary negotiation strategies still broadly correspond with the traditional ambiguous and nonverbal cues (Delph, 1978); however, casual conversations are increasingly becoming part of the repertoire – this finding is illustrative of the transforming local cruising culture.

Park de Oeverlanden functions both as a popular cruising place and a (nude) recreation area. This recreational aspect sets Nieuwe Meer apart from other known cruising sites in Amsterdam. Since cruising has a lengthy history of operating under the threshold of public visibility (Schreve, 2022), findings indicate that cruisers act in discreet and low-profile ways. However, a small group of cruisers at Nieuwe Meer is less concerned with keeping a low profile as visible manifestations of queerness provide them with a sense of freedom. These different interpretations of the function of the space occasionally lead to disputes between progressive and more conservative cruisers.

Secondly, in an era where cruising has become one of the many means of scoring easy and casual sex, many men still prefer the unrestricted nature of public sex. Interviews indicate that sexual proximity is the main reason for favoring offline cruising over online cruising. However, for two respondents, public sex has a more profound meaning; they intentionally (re)claim this practice to resist the bourgeois sexual morality and the desired normalization of homosexuals. This act of rebellion indicates that the boundaries between 'good' and 'bad' sex remain largely unchanged (Rubin, 1984). In other words, public sex and promiscuity are still not granted respectability as legitimate and healthy expressions of sexual desire.

In the context of sexual citizenship (Evans, 1993), recognizing Park de Oeverlanden as an official cruising place is seen as a positive development. However, the recent halving of the area,

without any consultation of its stakeholders, proves that this perspective is still insufficiently integrated within the Municipality of Amsterdam. By confiscating a small portion of public territory, cruisers challenge dominant ideologies as they disrupt expectations of what is 'normal' in public space. Thus, cruisers create an environment where people are temporarily exempt from prevailing social norms. For this reason, it functions as a safe haven for various people.

Lastly, it could be argued that a small group at Nieuwe Meer breaks the traditional cruising norms. By explicitly (re)claiming the space, the area is simultaneously marked by homosexuality. This visibility could jeopardize the cruising place in two ways: (1) it is vulnerable to homophobic intolerance, and (2) its visitors are marked as belonging to a particular sexual identity. The latter may lead to losing a group of cruisers who cannot afford this kind of visibility. For this reason, I remain skeptical of the potential of sexual citizenship as institutionalization and public visibility are at odds with the subversive and transgressive nature of this practice.

It is essential to emphasize that my intention is not to cast Nieuwe Meer as a utopia solely. In line with Greenwell (2017), I think cruising places deserve more richness and nuance after decades of denigration. However, even though these places inhere potential, I am not blind to the fact that they are also contaminated with trauma, risk, and (sexually) transgressive behavior. These findings are no surprise, as cruising spots are outlets for individuals burdened by the hegemonic power of sexual normativity and the condemnation of perversion. The undermining of cruising places indicates that a future in which sexual variation can coexist is still far off. However, when it comes to sexual emancipation, queer transgressions of public space are crucial in articulating resistance to heteronormativity.

Reflecting on this study, I want to draw out two important limitations. First, the willingness of my respondents to cooperate sets them apart from a wider variety of men who frequent erotic oases. My respondents can be classified as belonging to the progressive group of cruisers; therefore, my findings are biased and only partly representative of the local cruise population. Second, I only observed during the daytime for convenience and safety reasons. This fact is significant, as observations at night may have resulted in different issues, spatial-, and negotiation strategies.

Future research could examine if reclaiming cruising as an emancipatory practice is Amsterdam-specific or a broader phenomenon. Moreover, it would be interesting to generate more insights into the different motives of cruising men; on the one hand, individuals who seize cruising places as emancipatory sexual spaces, and, on the other, a significant part who still operate under the veil of anonymity to take refuge from prevailing social norms. While

researching these topics, paying more attention to trauma and the downsides of the quest for (sexual) liberation is crucial. For example, how to find sexual freedom while preserving sexual, physical, and psychological well-being?

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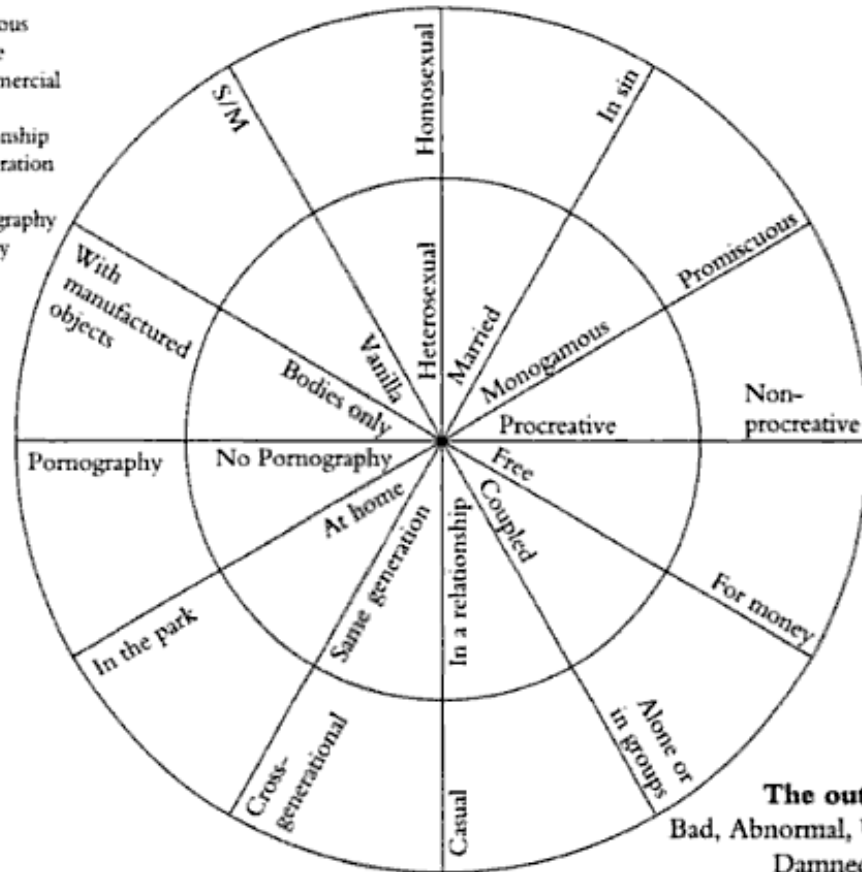
7. Appendix

7.1 Appendix 1: *Charmed Circle*

The charmed circle:

Good, Normal, Natural, Blessed Sexuality

Heterosexual
Married
Monogamous
Procreative
Non-commercial
In pairs
In a relationship
Same generation
In private
No pornography
Bodies only
Vanilla



The outer limits:

Bad, Abnormal, Unnatural,
Damned Sexuality

Homosexual
Unmarried
Promiscuous
Non-procreative
Commercial
Alone or in groups
Casual
Cross-generational
In public
Pornography
With manufactured objects
Sadomasochistic

FIGURE 1. The **sex** hierarchy: the charmed circle vs. the outer limits

Source: Rubin, G.S. (1984). "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In: Vance, C. (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger: exploring female sexuality*, 267–319. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

7. 2 Appendix 2: Respondents

Respondents	Age	Gender	Sexuality	Duration
Respondent I	23	Male	Homosexual	1:23:16
Respondent II	36	Male	Homosexual	1:19:44
Respondent III	31	Male	Homosexual	1:40:32
Respondent IV	36	Male	Homosexual	46:40

7.3 Appendix 3: Operationalization

Concept	Dimension	Indicators
<i>Cruising</i>	Norms	(1) Do's & Don'ts
		(2) Non-verbal cues
		(3) Negotiation strategies
	Motive(s)	(1) Anonymity
		(2) Quick sexual succession
		(3) Personal preference
<i>Sexual Stigma</i>	Meaning(s)	(1) Adventure
		(2) Sexual freedom
	Coping strategies	(1) Silence
		(2) Anonymity
		(3) Concealing erotic tendencies

	Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Prejudices (2) Being open about cruising (3) Shame
<i>Sexual Citizenship</i>	Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Representation (2) Recognizing cruising sites (3) Institutionalization
	Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Historical perspective (2) Promiscuity as a legitimate expression of sexual desire
	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Personal safety (2) Bodily autonomy

7.4 Appendix 4: Interview Guide (Dutch)

Ten eerste wil ik je hartelijk danken voor je tijd; *vind je het goed als ik nu begin met opnemen?* Dit interview is onderdeel van mijn bachelor thesis voor de studie *Interdisciplinaire Sociale Wetenschappen* aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Middels dit gesprek hoop ik meer te weten te komen over de lokale cruise cultuur en de (hedendaagse) aantrekkingskracht tot publieke seks.

Zoals besproken is dit interview geheel anoniem; in mijn uiteindelijke scriptie zullen pseudoniemen worden gebruikt en persoonlijke kenmerken achterwege worden gelaten. Als je het leuk vindt, mag je natuurlijk ook het uiteindelijke resultaat inzien!

Een paar puntjes voordat we verdergaan. Ten eerste is dit vooral een gesprek waarin ik benieuwd ben naar jouw ervaringen en avonturen – er zijn dus geen goede of foute antwoorden! Aangezien we het over ‘persoonlijke’ onderwerpen gaan hebben, kan je altijd aangeven wanneer je een vraag liever niet wilt beantwoorden en het interview kan te allen tijde gestopt of gepauzeerd worden.

Mocht je vragen hebben tijdens het interview, schroom dan niet om ze te stellen! Is alles tot zover duidelijk?

Algemeen

- Hoe oud ben je?
- Hoe identificeer je jezelf?
- Wat is je huidige relatiestatus?

Cruising

- Kan je je eerste ervaring met een man nog herinneren? Zo ja, vond deze plaats in je ouderlijk huis? Was je toen al ‘out’?
- Hoe werd je bekend met het fenomeen cruisen?
- Kan je je eerste ervaring nog herinneren. Zo ja, hoe was dat?
- Waar in Amsterdam cruise je zoal?
- Cruising wordt ook wel beschreven als een ‘kunst’ of ‘ritueel’ kan je begrijpen waarom?
- Kan je me meenemen – *je gaat naar zo’n plek en dan...*
- Wat vind je zo spannend/geil aan cruisen?

- Wat zijn de *do's* en *don'ts* tijdens het cruisen? Zo ja, zou je kunnen stellen dat er bepaalde gedragsregels zijn?
- Tegenwoordig bestaan er ook andere mogelijkheden om seksuele partners te ontmoeten (vb. apps als Grindr en Gay Romeo). Waarom heeft offline cruising voor jou de voorkeur?
- De meeste literatuur stelt dat cruising zich veelal in stilte voltrekt, komt dit overeen met jouw eigen ervaringen?
- Hoe ervaar jij het contact met andere mannen tijdens het cruisen?
- Wat betekent cruising voor jou?
- Wat betekent seks hebben in de openbare ruimte voor jou?

Seksueel Stigma

- Als je gaat cruisen, heb je dan meerdere seksuele partners (tegelijk)?
- Verricht je binnen deze ruimtes bepaalde seksuele handelingen, die je niet met je partner/thuis zou verrichten?
- Seks in de publieke ruimte blijft een controversieel thema. Wat is volgens jou de huidige opvatting over cruising? Is deze in de afgelopen jaren positief of negatief veranderd?
- Publieke seks plekken trekken een diverse groep mannen aan. Bijvoorbeeld ook mannen die niet 'openlijk' homoseksueel zijn. Waarom is dat?
- Wordt er anders tegen online cruising aangekeken (vb. via chat sites en apps) dan offline cruising? Zo ja, waarom is dat?
- Wordt er in de homogemeenschap openlijk gesproken over cruising? Bijvoorbeeld, voel je je vrij om dat te bespreken (mocht je daar behoefte aan hebben)?
- Ben je bang om herkend te worden? Zo ja, wat doe je om je anonimiteit te waarborgen?
- Met de komst van apps, vind je dat cruisen overbodig is geworden?

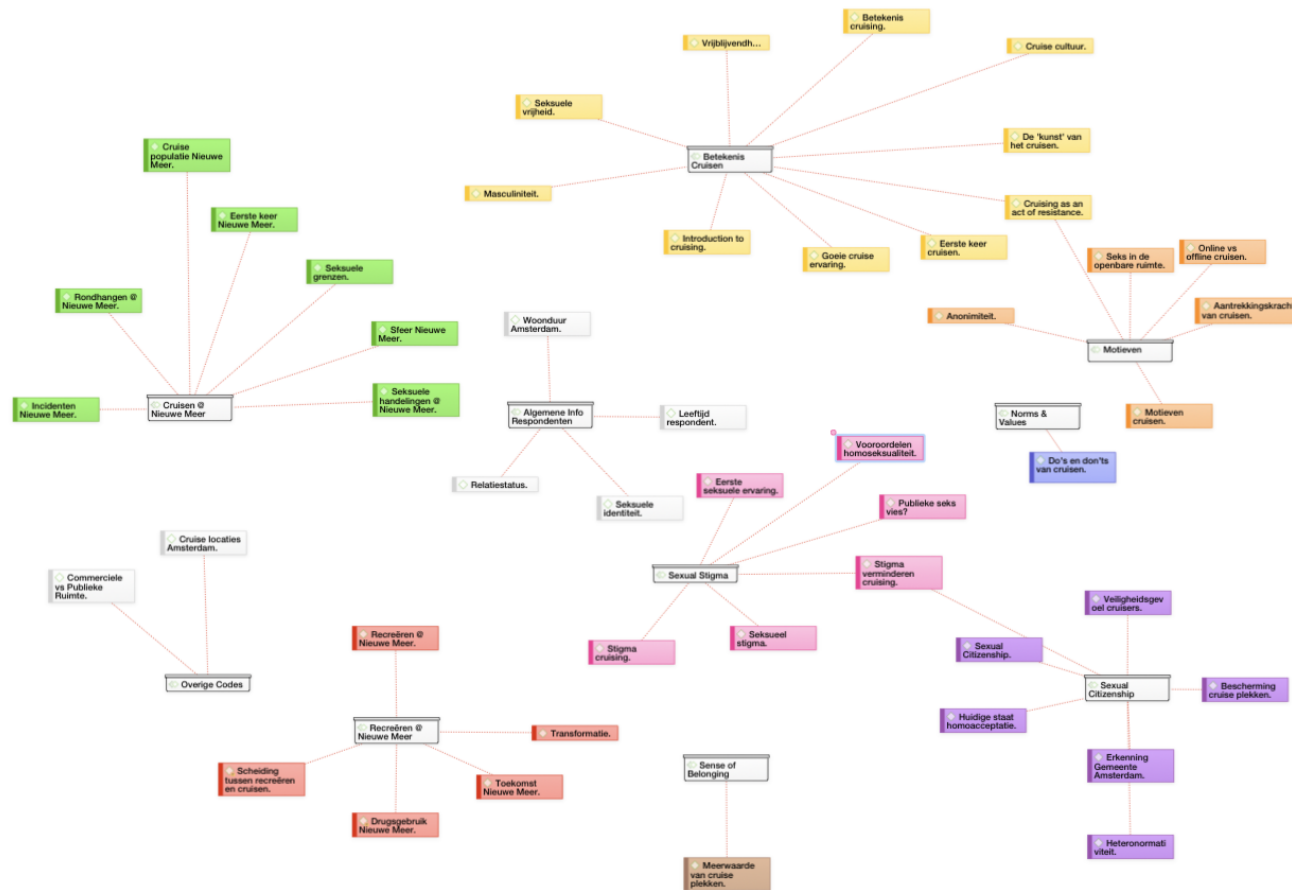
Sexual Citizenship

- Hoe vind je dat er in het algemeen wordt aangekeken tegen seksuele diversiteit? Kan je bijvoorbeeld open zijn over jouw seksuele voorkeuren met intieme partners?
- Park de Oeverlanden (*Nieuwe Meer*) wordt officieel erkend als *cruisegebied*, wat vind je hiervan?
- Heb je je weleens onveilig gevoeld tijdens het cruisen? Zo ja, hoe kwam dat?
- Is cruising in de afgelopen jaren toegenomen of afgenomen?
- Hoe kan het stigma rondom cruising worden verminderd? Zo ja, vind je dat ook nodig?

- Wat is volgens jou de meerwaarde van publieke seks ruimtes?
- Zie je een rol voor de Gemeente Amsterdam weggelegd om cruise-ervaring in te optimaliseren? Waarom wel of niet?

Ik wil je nogmaals bedanken voor je tijd en openheid – *het interview zit erop!* Als ik ons gesprek heb uitgeschreven, zal deze geluidsopname verwijderd worden. Tot slot, wil ik je (nogmaals) om toestemming vragen of ik ons gesprek mag analyseren en gebruiken voor mijn onderzoek.

7.5 Appendix 5: Coding *ATLAS.ti*



7.6 Appendix 6: *Old versus New Signs – spot the difference!*



(2009)



(2019)

7.7 Appendix 7: *Waste at Park de Overlanden*

