



Breaking Norms and Navigating Spaces: Queer Men's Urban Mobility in Rotterdam

Master Thesis, Master of Science in Social Inequalities

Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences

GIORGIO PALLADINO,
560663

JUNE 23, 2024

Supervisor: dr. Samira Van Bohemen

Second reader: prof. dr. Renske Keizer

Wordcount: 9.885



Abstract

With societies being primarily urban, hence with most people living in cities, urban mobility can heavily impact access to resources, social networks, and community formation. The experiences within the urban space can therefore shape the dynamics of social inequalities among various marginalised communities. This research, grounded in existing literature on women's experiences with urban mobility and public space, examined the experiences of queer men in Rotterdam. Through 12 in-depth interviews and 'sketch mapping', an intersectional approach was adopted, considering sexual orientation, gender identity, race, and age. It was found that while queer men face the same 'unsafety of femininity' as women when breaking gender norms in the way they dress or behave, their experiences differ due to their identification as men. Additionally, the practice of 'cruising' emerged as a distinct experience for queer men, creating a space to bend gender and sexuality in a setting that becomes both private and public.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Perception of safety; Public space; Queer men; Urban mobility

Acknowledgements

Conducting research on queerness and queer individuals is never easy, as it requires categorising and labelling identities that are meant to be rather fluid. That being said, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the respondents who agreed to participate in the journey of my thesis project. You were understanding and supportive, and opened up about personal stories and anecdotes of your experiences in Rotterdam to someone you barely knew. I hope I respected your identities as much as possible, and accurately reflected your perspectives into this research.

I would also like to thank Jorn, Melissa, and all the people who took their time to meet and help navigate a rather new field to me. You were also essential by connecting me to organisations and communities to find participants.

Lastly, I could not have made it without the support of my thesis group, friends, and study companions. Thank you.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 Theoretical Framework	4
2.1 Mobility and its inequalities	4
2.2 Gendered mobility	5
2.2.1 Masculinity and femininity in the public space	6
2.2.2 Unsafety of femininity	6
3 Research Design	8
3.1 Sampling strategy	9
3.2 Sensitising concepts	9
3.3 Credibility, and Ethical Considerations	10
3.3.1 Ethics and anonymity	11
4 Findings and discussion	12
4.1 What affects their experience?	13
4.1.1 Intersection of Queer, Gender, Masculinity, Race, and Age	13
4.2 Moving in Rotterdam as a queer man	20
4.2.1 What makes an area safe?	20
5 Conclusion.....	26
5.1 Implications and Recommendations.....	27
Bibliography	29
Appendix.....	32
Appendix 1: Interview Guide	32
Appendix 2: City Centre Maps	34
Appendix 3: Privacy Checklist & Consent Form	40

1 | Introduction

In September 2023, the Municipality of Rotterdam published a report on the liveability of the city – ‘Actieplan Samenleven in één Stad’ (2023). Among other issues, the report emphasised the urgency of improving the safety of the public space, especially of streets and public transports. A particular focus was put on the LGBTQI+ community, whose members were found adapting their behaviours and mobility routes due to perception of unsafety (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2023). By looking at an earlier study done in collaboration with the Municipality of Rotterdam, it was found that members of the LGBTQI+ community rarely feel safe on the street (RADAR, 2020). The respondents of the study reported not feeling comfortable to be openly themselves and free to express and behave the way they wish:

“If I’ve had a day where I haven’t been shouted at or scolded and so I’ve just been left alone, I think ‘wow, thank goodness, I’ve had a good day again’. And sometimes there are days when things don’t go so well and this does happen. Then I also feel less safe.”
(RADAR, 2020, p. 12)

Both the quote and the report therefore emphasise the extent to which residents’ experiences may be hindered when practicing urban mobility (RADAR, 2020; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2023). Such phenomenon is particularly problematic in the global context in which today’s societies are primarily concentrated in urban areas, cities. To live, residents of cities have to move. They move to do groceries, meet friends, go to work, and attend cultural and social events (Urry, 2007). Therefore, mobility, understood as the physical act of moving within the urban and public space, is essential for the functioning of a city (Hidayati, Tan, & Yamu, 2021). That being said, safe and comfortable mobility is not a privilege that all citizens can claim to experience.

As in most aspects of society, inequalities exist. What is particular about mobility is that because it is so crucial in everyday activities, unequal access to it causes exponential difficulties in equal access to other resources, resulting in further socio-economic inequalities (Hidayati et al., 2021). Extensive research has been conducted on, for instance, how marginalised communities have unequal experiences of public space due to their race, gender, or physical ability (Valentine, 1989; Abelson, 2014; Hidayati et al., 2021). For instance, scholars such as Valentine (1989), and Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020) explored the experiences of women. By coining the term ‘spatial expression of patriarchy’, Valentine (1989) studied the role of fear of violence in predicting the differences in access to the public space between men

and women. She found that what allows men to be in control of the public space, and therefore increased access, is their absence of fear of violence. In relation to this, Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020) elaborated on the concept of ‘safety work’, which they found being the practice among women of adapting their behaviour by minimising their femininity – ‘unsafety of femininity’. These studies show that research on the experiences of marginalised communities in the public space is heavily binary, hence only limited literature covers the perspectives of, for instance, trans* men. On that note, Abelson (2014) found that, similarly to Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020), it is not often gender to predict one’s experience, but rather their femininity or masculinity. Thus, higher masculinity allows increased access to the public space, and perception of safety (Abelson, 2014).

Therefore, existing literature is missing two aspects that this study aimed at covering: firstly, taking a less binary approach, by including cisgender, transgender men, and various sexual orientations, and secondly taking an intersectional perspective, by exploring various ethnic communities and age groups. To do so, the experiences of *queer* men served as focus of this study. By also basing its framework on academic literature about women (Valentine, 1989; Vera-Gray and Kelly, 2020), this research explored the overlap with the experience of queer men, by aiming to understand in what ways they are similar to those of women, as well as how they differ due to their identification as men. Hence, studying the experiences of queer men is particularly interesting as the definition of queer also includes a fluid understanding of gender expression and breaking societal gender norms (Grzanka, 2019).

In particular, the Netherlands was chosen as a country to conduct this research due to their interesting stance on LGBTQI+ rights and acceptance. As broadly known, the Netherlands are among the most advanced and accepting countries in terms of protection of LGBTQI+ citizens (Pereira & Pereira, 2024). That being said, research has also found that such acceptance is reserved primarily towards White gay men and women, while other people within the community, such as people of colour (POC) or transgender and gender nonconforming people, are marginalised and alienated. This phenomenon is known as ‘homonormativity’, and is particularly present in the Netherlands (Robinson, 2012). Additionally, within the country, Rotterdam is the city with one of the highest percentages of population with a migrant background, namely 52% - particularly from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, and Dutch Caribbean (Onderzoek010, 2024). Because this research took an intersectional approach, and explored how aspects such as race also influence the experience of queer men in the urban space, Rotterdam made for a suitable location.

Therefore, to explore the experiences of urban mobility among queer men in Rotterdam, the following research question served as guidance:

What are the experiences of urban mobility among queer men in Rotterdam?

In order to delve deeper into their experiences, a sub question was formulated to better understand the contextual, structural, and identity factors that play a role in comprehending their perspectives: *‘How do contextual and structural aspects of cities, as well as elements of queer men’s identities shape their experiences of urban mobility?’*. To answer the research question and sub question, aspects such as race and age were explored, as well as racism, femininity/masculinity, and social and physical aspects of areas of Rotterdam. More specifically, this was done by adopting a qualitative approach through in-depth semi-structured interviews.

2 | Theoretical Framework

Because urban mobility is deeply intertwined with the functioning of society and its citizens, it can have important consequences when it fails to work properly, in a just and equitable manner (Hidayati et al., 2021). In the following, the concept of mobility will be elaborated upon by providing the various aspects and understandings of it, accompanied by the factors that can impact inequalities. More particularly, it will be explored how gender plays a role, thus how concepts based on the experiences of women are applicable to those of queer men, as well as in what ways they differ.

2.1 | Mobility and its inequalities

The phenomenon of mobility can take place in two distinct ways: as a ‘physical act’, and as a ‘social practice’. The first concerns the actual act of travelling, of moving from one destination to another, through human and mechanical systems. This can be studied and visualised, for instance, through a person’s travel time, their patterns, and distance. The second aspect of mobility concerns the broader element of the sociocultural constructs attached to it, and how freedom of travel and travel experiences are connected to such constructs (Hidayati et al., 2021). In practical terms, these can be understood as the narratives that have been constructed about mobility, an example being ‘walking tall’ as a sign of manhood (Cresswell, 2010). Although physical and social aspects of mobility are indeed different, they are often interconnected. For instance, the time that one can take to go from point A to B (physical act) can be conditioned by, looking back at the example of ‘walking tall’, the way one adapts one’s behaviour when walking in a specific way so to avoid judgement or even violence (social practice) (Cresswell, 2010; Hidayati et al., 2021).

These two types of ‘mobility practices’ can be influenced by a series of factors, which Hidayati et al. (2021) divide into intrinsic and extrinsic. They define ‘intrinsic’ the personal attributes such as gender, age, race, and ability, while ‘extrinsic’ the external spatial and sociocultural contexts shaped by society and the environment. An example of an extrinsic factor is ableism, and consequently how this is reflected on the infrastructure that is designed. While not being included in Hidayati et al. (2021)’s study, queerness, sexuality, and gender identity have been considered as intrinsic, while homophobia and transphobia as extrinsic. Additionally, while the two categories are distinct, they can overlap and are inherently interrelated. This can be understood, for instance, as one’s intrinsic attributes affecting a person’s bias and perspective: if public infrastructure and spaces are made from the perspective of and by individuals whose intrinsic attributes are those of a white, heterosexual, cisgender,

abled man, such space is also designed to be used by the same category of people. Or, on the other side, one's race can predict and affect how a certain neighbourhood is perceived, due to rooted racism (Abelson, 2014; Hidayati et al., 2021). Therefore, intrinsic and extrinsic factors are essential to understand how public space is designed for a specific category of individuals, as well as why spaces are perceived in a distinct way by certain people.

2.2 | Gendered mobility

As widely demonstrated by literature (Valentine, 1989; Law, 1999; Abelson, 2014; Hidayati et al., 2021) gender is one of the main (intrinsic) aspects that can affect one's experience of mobility and the public space. Therefore, a contextual understanding of what gender is is essential. By looking at Abelson's (2014) study, gender can be understood as a multilevel system, which operates at three levels: structural, interactional, and individual. The interactional level is the most relevant one in relation to public space, as it concerns the interactions between people. It claims, in accordance with other scholars (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988), that gender is *done*. That can be understood as gender being a social construct which is manifested in the way a person portrays themselves and interacts with others. Such 'performance' can take place in three parts: (1) orientation, (2) assessment, and (3) enforcement. Firstly, the orientation consists of the thoughts and behaviours about how one fits within the monolithic normative practices and expectations; secondly, during the assessment, the individual assesses theirs and others' behaviour and appearance; and lastly, during the enforcement stage the 'interactional consequence' takes place, hence the consequences of fitting or not fitting into the hegemonic categories of gender that are shown in the interactions with others (Abelson, 2014). As the author argues, these three parts are interrelated, and they influence when, where, and how a person feels safe.

Therefore, by being inherently based on the interaction with others, gender plays an important role in conditioning one's experience in the public space. Scholars such as Abelson (2014) and Valentine (1989) have argued that such experience can be determined by the presence or absence of a sense of safety, which can predict access to public space. Abelson (2014) found that sense of safety, or as she calls it, 'fear of violence', is influenced by a series of intrinsic factors that one can have. One of them being gender. More specifically, hearing about women being harassed and consequently the narrative that incentivises women to be careful when alone in a public space, especially if in the evening, is the primary cause that deprives them of the same privileges that men have to exist and move in such spaces, resulting in unequal power distribution and control (Valentine, 1989). Similarly, the absence of

vulnerability and fear of violence experienced by men is what allows them to have increased access and control of the public space (Abelson, 2014).

Concerning the social control of space and time, as termed by Valentine (1989), both formal and informal elements can play a role. The formal is the rather more evident and planned, for instance in the case of the presence of police officers or security guards, but also store employees, bus conductors, and other authorised personnel who provide a public service. The informal social control is more uncertain and unplanned, it manifests under the form of potential intervention of others. Therefore, this depends more heavily on the neighbourhood in which one is – whether one has a social network within the area – and the possibility of knowing people in the surroundings (Valentine, 1989).

The neighbourhood is therefore an element which can also define the geography of fear of violence. The network and connections within the public space in which one is can condition the perception of safety. Research defined two types of neighbourhoods, a place of residence and a multi-use community space. In a place of residence, one merely just lives, but does not work there, study there, or form a community there. Everyone is then a stranger. On the opposite, a multi-use community space is an area where one does not just habit, but has connections, friends, and acquaintances. Therefore, when walking alone at night, which is considered a highly dangerous time and space, the fear of violence is lower, because no one is a stranger, they are either acquaintances or friends of friends (Valentine, 1989).

2.2.1 | Masculinity and femininity in the public space

While Valentine (1989) studied fear of violence by exploring the experiences of women, and their relations to men, other scholars have taken a different approach. For instance, Abelson (2014) explored the role of masculinity by studying the experiences of trans* men. She found that within the category of ‘men’, a hierarchy exists which shapes their experiences in terms of perception of safety in the public space. Such hierarchy is made of a series of different levels of masculinity: (1) hegemonic, (2) dominating, (3) complicit, and (4) subordinated. As the terms indicate, the levels go from higher to weaker masculinity, with ‘hegemonic’ intending generally cisgender, heterosexual, masculine men who belong to the ethnic majority, to ‘subordinated’ such as trans*, gay, or black men (Abelson, 2014). This is particularly interesting for this study, by deepening an understanding on how these experiences may differ.

2.2.2 | Unsafety of femininity

Similarly to Abelson (2014), other scholars have explored the way femininity shapes people’s experiences in the public space, such as Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020). Within their research,

two concepts are particularly inherent to this study: ‘safety work’ and ‘unsafety of femininity’. The concept of ‘safety work’, coined in relation to studies on the experiences of women in the public space, entails the action of adjusting one’s appearance, behaviour, or route when the environment is perceived as unsafe or uncomfortable. This can look like someone wearing a hoodie to cover a specific outfit, walking more tough, or avoiding specific dangerous areas. While this phenomenon is particularly manifested by women, the overlap with queer men stands in the ‘unsafety of femininity’. Appearance characteristics that are stereotypically associated with femininity, such as jewellery, painted nails, make-up, or gendered clothing, are elements that have been found to put women in vulnerable positions in the public space (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). However, feminine appearance does not only involve physical objects, but it may also be perceived based on one’s behaviour, such as the previously given example of ‘walking tall’ as a sign of masculinity. Therefore, ‘unsafety of femininity’ is in accordance with the hierarchy of masculinities by Abelson (2014). As a consequence, adapting feminine features by adjusting them to be more subtle or absent, is a form of safety work which can be found among queer men as well (Abelson, 2014; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

Consequently, these aforementioned theoretical concepts and scholars formed a basis which helped this study explore the research question and sub question. Hence, to explore the experiences of urban mobility among queer men in Rotterdam, and the contextual and structural factors that shape their perspectives and opinions.

3 | Research Design

A qualitative and inductive approach has been chosen for the purpose of this study, in order to best answer the following research question: *‘What are the experiences of urban mobility among queer men in Rotterdam?’* and sub question *‘How do contextual and structural aspects of cities, as well as elements of queer men’s identities shape their experiences of urban mobility?’*. Exploring the experiences of urban mobility and public transport among queer men in Rotterdam, as well as their perceptions of the public space and how these can be explained, were therefore the focus of the data collection. This data collection has combined two methods: in-depth interviewing and ‘sketch mapping’. In-depth, semi-structured interviews explored the experiences of the queer participants (Knott et al., 2022); during the interviews, ‘sketch-mapping’ consisted of providing a map of Rotterdam to the respondents, so that they could visualise the answers given to the questions by drawing the routes they were most familiar with, the areas they considered the most dangerous, and so on (Curtis, 2016).

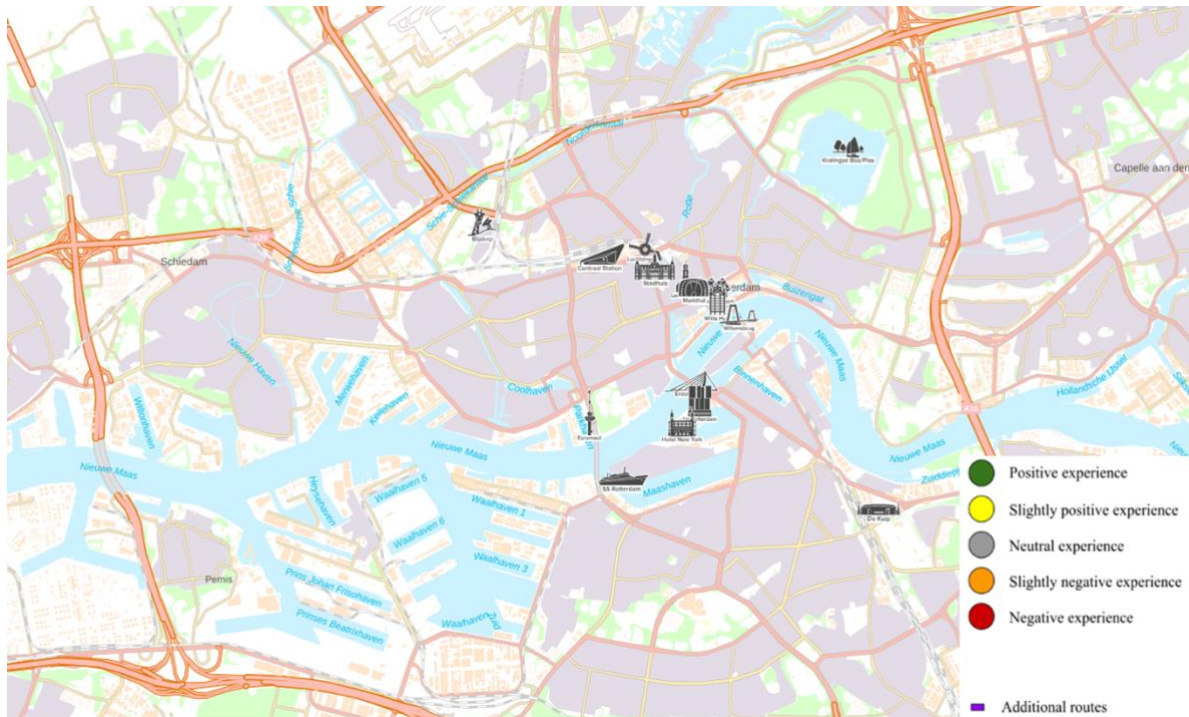
The combination of sketch mapping with interviews was the perfect fit for this study, as it allowed to picture the spatial perception and knowledge of the interviewees. It is generally used to give voice to marginalised communities, such as in this case, by having them mark and draw on base maps. This provided a clear understanding of how processes and mechanisms, both implicit and explicit, interact spatially, as well as to explain the relationship between the environment and behaviour (Curtis, 2016). More concretely, the method consisted of providing a map of Rotterdam, and a legend with colours linked to emotions, as seen in Figure 1.1¹. Through colour categorisations, respondents could communicate the areas they felt safe and unsafe in, and in the interview explain the circumstances and reasonings (Saarinen et al., 2012).

Following the interviews, the transcripts and maps were coded and analysed through Atlas.ti. A combination of inductive and deductive coding was adopted, with an initial inductive phase of open coding, followed by axial and then selective, which were partly based on the theoretical framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). During this process, 179 inductive codes were created, which were then categorised into 12 code groups. Also, the maps have been recreated on the software Aino, which allowed to reproduce them in a digital version to better visualise them in the findings.

¹ The map is a zoomed-out version of the ones provided to the respondents, which included more details and streets.

Figure 1.1

Map of Rotterdam and colour instructions



Source: Gemeente Rotterdam (2024)

3.1 | Sampling strategy

Concerning the research sample, a purposive sampling strategy was undertaken, combined with a snowball approach. The first concerned contacting queer organisations and spaces, or organisations who have worked with queer people, such as ‘Queer Rotterdam’, ‘Queer gym’, ‘Humankind.’, and ‘QuEUR’, and searching for respondents that met the criteria needed for the study: a self-identifying queer man, who is at least 18 years old, and lives in Rotterdam. Efforts were made to find respondents from diverse age groups, residence areas in Rotterdam, and cultural backgrounds. The snowball sampling was applied by finding additional respondents through acquaintances of those directly contacted in the organisations (Knott et al., 2022).

3.2 | Sensitising concepts

Even though no clear variables have been formulated, the concepts of *queer identity* – in relation to *queer mobility* – and *perception of the public space*, were explored, as well as their relationship. The first two concepts, queer identity and mobility, are based on the research by

Weintrob et al. (2021) and Hidayati et al. (2021), whereas the latter are based on studies by Valentine (1989), Abelson (2014), and Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020).

Concerning the queer aspect of the research, thus its identification and mobility, the interviews were structured to first explore the queer aspect of the respondent: their gender identity (and expression), sexual orientation, and the interviewee's relationship and journey with these. Consequently, bridging with queer mobility, the conversation moved on to the concepts of *urban* and *public spaces*, and thus to *perception of the public space*. In this section of the interviews, sketch mapping took place, and the experiences of the respondents were explored (Valentine, 1989; Saarinen et al., 2012; Abelson, 2014; Curtis, 2016). In relation to the *perception of the public space*, the factors influencing the respondents' experiences were categorised as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*, in accordance with Hidayati et al. (2021). Within the first category, elements such as the person's gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and race were included, whereas the socio-cultural constructs that were brought to the fore, such as homophobia, racism, and transphobia, were categorised as extrinsic (Hidayati et al., 2021). When making use of sketch mapping, the concepts of *place of residence* as opposed to *multi-use community space* were analysed, in addition to the respondents' experience and perceptions of *formal* and *informal* social controls of space and time (Valentine, 1989).

3.3 | Credibility, and Ethical Considerations

To best ensure the credibility and validity of the research, an interview guide was designed based on the concepts discussed in the theoretical framework and reported hereabove (see Appendix 1). While this is an inductive study, basing the interview guide on existing literature can ensure a higher validity. As validity can be both external and internal, both have been taken into consideration. As the sample is highly diverse, in terms of age, race, and places of residence in Rotterdam, external validity is ensured. Secondly, because in-depth interviews and sketch mapping allow a deep understanding and exploration of the studied concepts, the connection between the concepts is clear, allowing for a high internal validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Being a qualitative study, the combination of in-depth interviews with sketch mapping has been chosen as an ideal way to reach saturation of discourse, hence reaching an amount of data which provides a full understanding of the topic. Therefore, by interviewing 12 respondents, with different identities, experiences, and insights, it was possible to collect a rich and wide amount of qualitative data. Through their stories, connections have been made, and

patterns were explored, so to build a theory that is currently missing in the field of mobility inequalities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hidayati et al., 2021).

3.3.1 | Ethics and anonymity

Finally, the ethical considerations have been taken seriously when conducting the research, given the sensitive topic of the study. To ensure so, anonymity was granted by creating pseudonyms, and a consent form was signed by the respondents prior to all interviews, through which they were informed of the recording of the interview, transcription, and storing of the data. It was also clearly communicated that at any moment during the session, they were allowed to withdraw their consent and interrupt the interview.

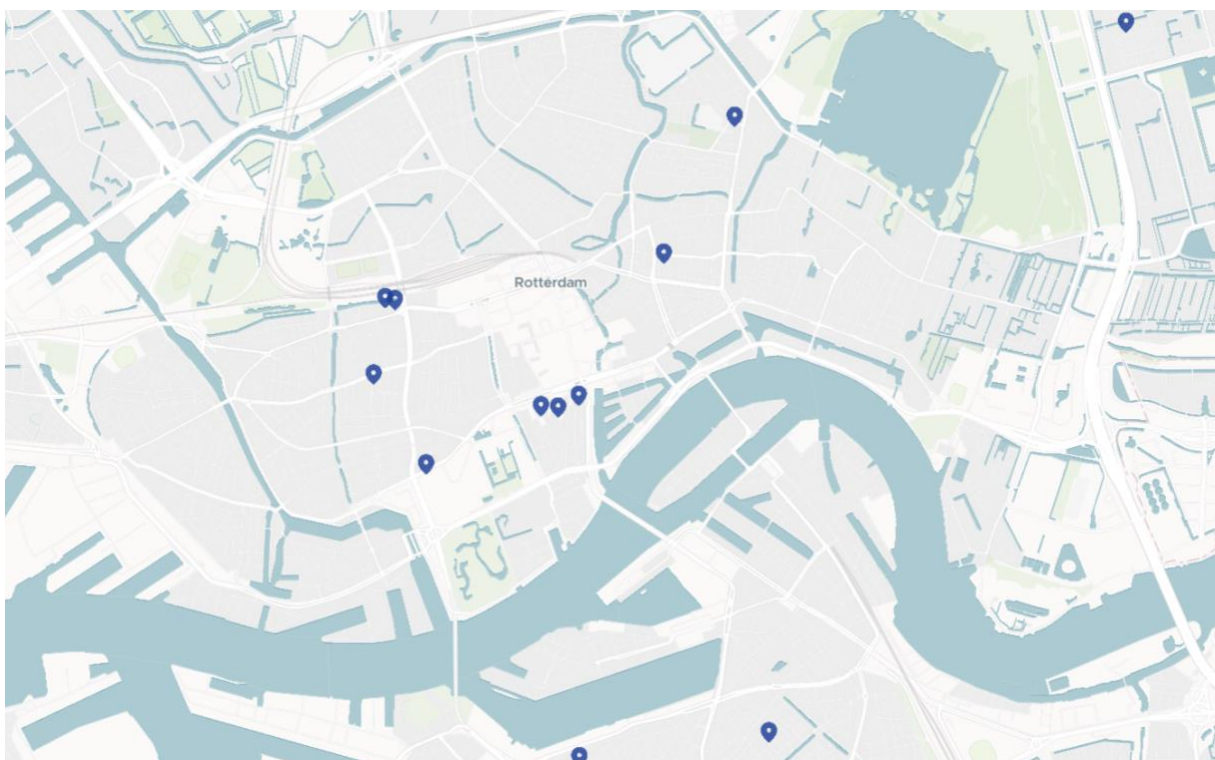
Additionally, it is essential to recognise my positionality in relation to the topic under analysis. I am a White queer man who does not speak Dutch. I am therefore partly involved in the queer aspect of the research, while also having limitations on the communication with the respondents by not speaking the local language. An additional ethical consideration must be made in relation to the deeper meaning of the concept of *queer*. Conducting academic research on such an element is rather contradictory, given that research and data collection inherently involves categorising and labelling aspects of the respondents, which contradicts the fluidity and multiplicity of queer identities (Gorman–Murray et al., 2016; Grzanka, 2019). Efforts were made to take the respondents' preferences into account as much as possible, but this must be recognised as a limitation of the research.

4 | Findings and discussion

Before thoroughly delving into the findings of the data collection phase, it is important to introduce the respondents, as they stand at the core of this study – while keeping their identities as anonymous as possible. As aforementioned, 12 respondents participated, with various cultural backgrounds, ages, areas of residence within Rotterdam, and sexual orientations. More specifically, in terms of cultural backgrounds, the sample includes White, Asian, Latino, Black, and POC men. Ages range between 22 to 42, resulting in interesting insights concerning how age affects individuals' experiences. In terms of gender identities, all respondents identify as men (as that was one of the criteria to participate), but one respondent (Max) is transgender, and two respondents do not only use He/Him as pronouns: Ryan uses He/They and Alex He/She/They. Concerning the sexual orientations of the participants, the majority identifies as gay, while two as queer and two as bisexual. Lastly, an element that is particularly relevant towards the experiences in the urban space, the areas of residence of the respondents is rather diverse: as seen in Figure 4.1, the majority lives in the city centre, while two live in Rotterdam Zuid and two in the area of Crooswijk - the pins show *approximately* the areas of residence of respondents. Additionally, the scanned versions of the maps drawn by the respondents can be found in Appendix 1.

Figure 4.1

Approximate areas of residence of participants



The following section has been structured according to the concepts introduced in the Theoretical Framework: the findings will be reported in combination with a discussion which aims at reflecting to what extent the experiences of the respondents share the same reasonings given by the scholars in Chapter 2.

4.1 | What affects their experience?

In the Theoretical Framework, Hidayati, Tan, and Yamu (2021)'s distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors was elaborated upon to explain how different elements can influence mobility inequalities among citizens. Intrinsic factors entail one's age, race, gender, and sexual orientation, whereas extrinsic are external, such as homophobia, transphobia, and racism. Indeed, according to all respondents, these are all elements that in some way can predict the perception of safety in the urban space, or shape specific experiences they lived.

Nevertheless, although all respondents have their identification as queer in common, their experiences and perceptions differed: that was found to be due to the intersectionality between queer, and other identity characteristics such as their race, age, or gender. Consequently, intersectionality plays a crucial role, with queerness affecting their experiences differently depending on the other intrinsic factors of the participants.

4.1.1 | Intersection of Queer, Gender, Masculinity, Race, and Age

To show how the intersectional aspects of the respondents' identities are at the core of their experiences, and how their perception of the public space is influenced intersectionally, it is useful to hear how Max described his thoughts when accessing the public space:

"I need to pay attention that I'm Black, I need to pay attention that I'm Caribbean, I need to pay attention that I'm trans, and I need to pay attention that I'm queer. So all of those boxes are going to be checked before I go somewhere actually. So I guess that's my way of defence mechanism so that I don't end up somewhere that I'm going to have a bad experience" (Max)

Therefore, in Max's case, his queer identity is not the only factor affecting his experience, but it intertwines and overlaps with him identifying as Black, Caribbean, and trans*. This applies to all respondents; reason why, for instance, different areas of Rotterdam have been assessed differently concerning perception of safety and comfort.

Being the only trans* man amongst the respondents, Max allowed to give an insightful perspective on the role of gender and masculinity in the urban space. He explained how his

experience, in many ways, has not particularly changed since he started transitioning. For example, he reported still being perceived as a woman, and his ‘feminine features’ are often the cause of harassment or being approached in public transport:

“It’s not being queer, but it’s men sexualizing women all the time, and this is what I’m struggling with daily. Since I’ve started developing the body, this is something that I’ve been struggling for the whole time, everywhere I go. [...] If you’re sitting alone in a metro or something, they always want to talk to you, want to know your phone number or whatever” (Max)

Research, such as Valentine (1989), Abelson (2014), and Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020) have shown how femininity and masculinity are crucial players in assessing one’s experience, and through the interviews it was found how similar the experiences of queer men and women are. For instance, Abelson (2014) has elaborated on how it is not being a man or a woman that predicts one’s experience, but rather femininity and masculinity. She ranked a series of levels of masculinities, which she argued possess different power dynamics: (1) hegemonic, (2) dominating, (3) complicit, and (4) subordinated. Consequently, to adapt their appearance and behaviour in order to shift from a feminine to a masculine perception, the queer men interviewed reported adjusting certain aspects of themselves for safety reasons:

“When I’m together with my boyfriend, I am very vigilant of scanning the room, scanning the metro that you’re in and being like, oh, if I see a group of people, then I would make sure that we aren’t sitting too close to each other. Also, when I’m walking in the street [...] I have to make sure to walk extra tough” (Paul)

“I noticed sometimes when I walk here at night with a hoodie on and women cross the street that I know...I mean, it’s kind of sad because I’m not going to do anything to them, but that gives me an idea that I’m considered a dangerous straight man, which in my case sometimes is good, so that no one bothers me.” (Carlo)

As Carlo describes, being perceived as a straight man is therefore considered positive in terms of safety. Adapting his appearance by wearing a hoodie, or taking off his earrings, is a concept widely researched in literature on the experience of women in the public space, known as ‘safety work’ (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). What is interesting about Carlo’s quote is that safety work applied to queer men, by making sure to be perceived as more masculine, allows them to

be less of a target from straight men, while being seen as a threat by women. Such an overlap between women and queer men shows an interesting intersectional element between their experiences: queer men are on one side more exposed than non-queer men because of their often-feminine aspects, while more privileged than women because of their masculine side. This concept was interestingly brought up by Antony:

“Gender is a tricky thing, right? In my personal case, often I see it as a sort of an outfit that sometimes you can choose to not wear but not all the time. I think I’m lucky enough that being a White male already kind of granted me access to so many different rooms, without even being asked more questions” (Antony)

Antony describes gender and gender expression as an “outfit” that can be adjusted, tuned up or down depending on the circumstances, but he is still always perceived as a (White) man, which he recognises as a privilege. It is seen as a privilege because, as Valentine (1989) argued, men have more access to the public space, as explained by Antony as well.

Therefore, as seen in the various abovementioned cases, gender plays a role through the way it affects the interactions with others, and it can be adjusted by ‘wearing different outfits’. In accordance with gender performativity by Butler (1988) and the notion of the interactional level of gender by Abelson (2014), it was found to be particularly evident during the enforcement phase. Such a phase is thought to be one out of three, within the interactional level: (1) orientation, (2) assessment, and (3) enforcement. The latter is the moment in which gender is portrayed as the most performative, by adapting one’s portrayal of gender in the urban space. It was reported by respondents how they believe it plays a crucial role in their everyday experiences.

In relation to the differences and similarities between the experiences of women and queer men, Antony elaborated on a story which marked him in acknowledging his privilege to be able to “wear an outfit”, as he said, but always being perceived as a man. For instance, he often goes running, and when having a conversation about it with a female friend, he recommended a route describing it as peaceful and pleasant. However, his friend told him she always avoids taking such a route because of the presence of men sitting on benches who tend to catcall her and putting her in unsafe situations. He then told me how he would not have even acknowledged it, being a man himself.

Keeping into consideration one’s queer identity, gender, and masculinity/femininity, two additional factors were found to add different perspectives and experiences to the

respondents: age and race. Race was found to have an important role, in conditioning queer men's experiences, as well as in relation to their femininity. All respondents explained how they believe their racial background, which has consequences both on how they perceive the public space, as well as how people perceive them, plays a crucial role in their experiences of the different areas of Rotterdam. As also argued by Hidayati et al. (2021), intrinsic and extrinsic factors can sometimes overlap, for instance the elements of race and racism. One's race can predict the perception of safety of specific areas due to implicit racism among citizens. In the case of Rotterdam, two streets have generally been described as the most uncomfortable or unsafe, Middelandstraat and Nieuwe Binnenweg. Both streets have a high presence of ethnic minorities. To confirm the relationship with race, Carlo (POC), explained thoroughly how he believes race influences queer men's experiences, as well as how he perceives areas differently being a POC:

“As a queer person, I think you do have implicit, I would say racist connotations, because we attach [...] hatred or crime towards LGBT people in relation to, for example Islam, which is then usually related to brown people because not a lot of white people are Muslim. I think we make these subconscious connections between groups of people and religions, and therefore we must feel unsafe as queer people when we see a group of dark-skinned men, for example” (Carlo)

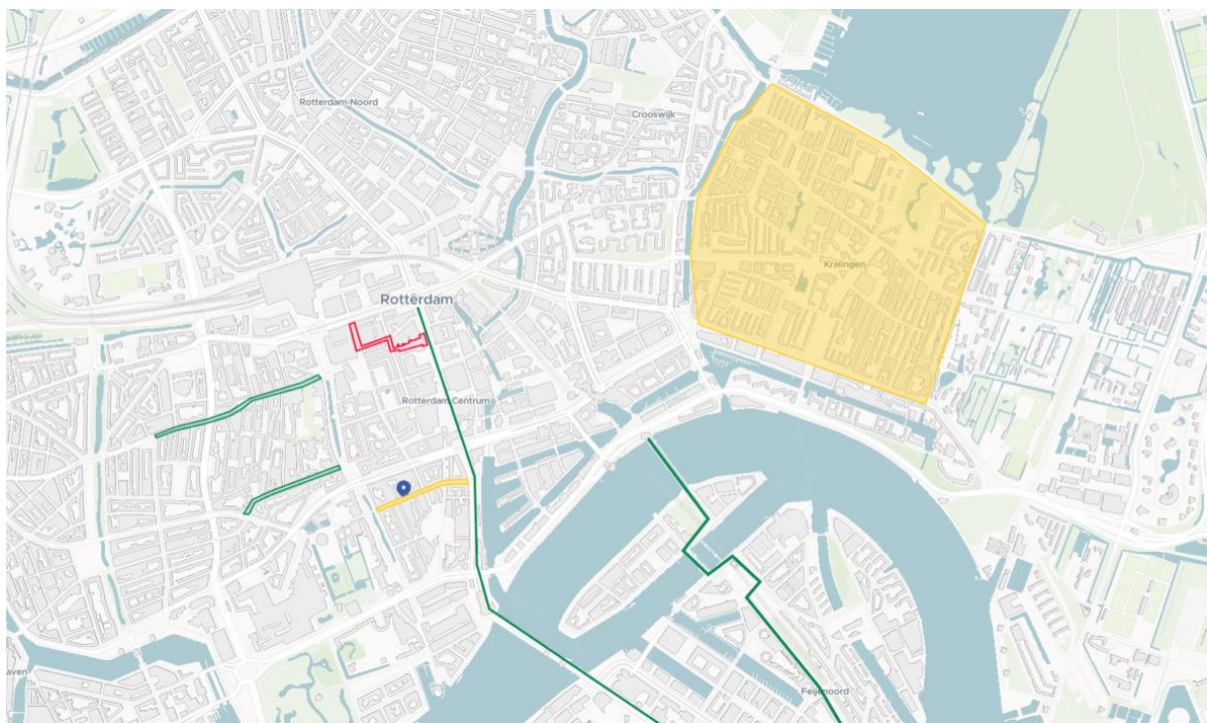
As explained, race has a particular influence in assessing which areas of the city are perceived as safe or not, given the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic aspect of Rotterdam. Specifically, the intersection between race and queerness is evident in Carlo's words, as he believes subconscious racist connotations towards Muslim residents in Rotterdam are due to perception of unsafety in relation to one's belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. For instance, the area of Kralingen has often been referred to as safe, and marked with the green colour, except by non-White respondents. As is visualised in Figure 4.2, Carlo claimed feeling safer in areas with brown people, such as Middelandstraat and Nieuwe Binnenweg, compared to areas with a majority of White people such as Kralingen – the integral version of Carlo's map may be found in Appendix 2. He also specified that Kralingen hosts multiple student fraternity houses, which generally include White Dutch men, a category which he reported finding particularly intimidating and making him feel unsafe:

“The streets to me are a bit too quiet, so I always feel a bit uneasy going through there. It's a slightly negative area, I would say, and it's especially because there's a lot of students living there, like student associations and fraternities.”
(Carlo)

“Compared to White people, I feel less unsafe around ethnic groups, minority groups, rather than other people. Because I know from friends and I don't think it's a bad thing. It's just inherent to who we are that you feel unsafe when you see a group of, let's say, 10 Moroccan people standing on the street you right away think ‘ohh they must be anti-gay, so I must be in danger’, which I don't blame them for that. It's a fair way of thinking, but because I don't identify as White, I feel like they're less of a threat, they're not going to harm me. So I tend to feel more comfortable in that than, for example being in Kralingen and seeing drunk White students on the street screaming, because those terrify me more sometimes, and what they're capable of” (Carlo)

Figure 4.2

Carlo's map



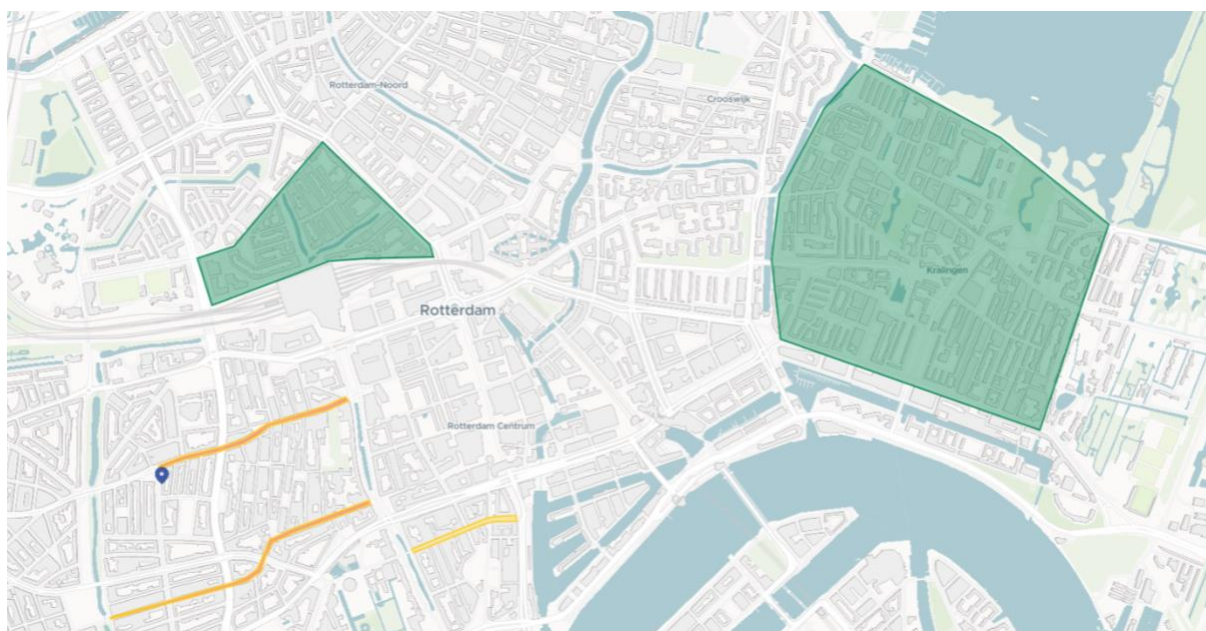
To confirm the way Carlo explained the reason why areas with a higher intensity of ethnic minorities are perceived as less safe, Troye, a White man, explained it by giving a comparable example:

“If there's a group of straight White boys, and there's a group of straight non-White boys, I would still, in my mind, think that the group of straight White boys is more, let's say, accepting to gay people than the group of non-White straight boys. Maybe that has to do with my upbringing and the fact that I was also told that, for example, Muslim people are always more conservative or all those stereotypes that are kind of deep inside the way I perceive others. I think it has to do more with whether I consider them progressive or not. And again, in my mind, wrongly possibly, a group of White people, on average, is more progressive than a group of non-White people. Especially straight boys.”
(Troye)

To visualise the difference between Carlo, a person of colour, and Troye, a White man, Figure 4.3 shows Troye’s perceptions and experiences in Rotterdam. As can be seen, the two streets with a high presence of ethnic minorities, Middelandstraat and Nieuwe Binnenweg, were marked in orange, while Kralingen was coloured in green.

Figure 4.3

Troye’s map



Additionally, racism was particularly evident when discussing the experiences in Rotterdam Zuid. The area below the river is where most ethnic minorities are concentrated, and is therefore, according to all respondents, often referred to as the dangerous side of the city. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the respondents has never had a negative experience in this neighbourhood. While two of them live in Zuid, and multiple ones have either lived there in the past or worked there, this area is primarily residential, resulting in citizens not going there frequently. In accordance with Valentine (1989), people tend to fear more areas which they do not often go to, or do not know people in. This is particularly emphasised when such areas are known to be dangerous due to either racism or specific cases of aggression that have been reported on the news. For instance, Antony, who reported feeling very safe when he used to live and work in Zuid, shared that he currently hesitates to go to Zuiderpark since negative things happened there:

“I think the only experience I was impacted by, not personally, but through proxy of friends, by a series of rape episodes that happened in Zuiderpark. So that impacted negatively, but not directly my persona, but more the fact that the trauma of this history kind of, uh, I carried with me every time that I was going there.” (Antony)

Interestingly enough, age plays a minor but insightful role. Four respondents are aged between 30 to 45, and their experiences differ in some specific ways from the younger men. For instance, a first difference is the way they understand and identify with the term ‘queer’. Chris (39) was maybe the most sceptical, saying he uses the term ‘gay’ as an umbrella term for anything and anyone who is related to the LGBTQI+ community. Louis (42), through new spaces and networks that he has been frequenting recently, has been learning more about the term ‘queer’, and had a more similar understanding to the younger respondents, thus as an umbrella and intersectional term, that is more fluid and inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ability, and other societal minorities and marginalised groups. Antony (33) has been discovering the term in the recent years, and currently identifies with it.

In terms of age as an intrinsic factor towards their experiences as queer men in the public space in Rotterdam, they claimed it does play a minor role (Hidayati et al., 2021). Especially Louis, who has lived in Rotterdam for 21 years, said he gradually started getting less harassed and put in unsafe situations by growing older. However, it also relates to them having less of a social life in terms of going to clubs and bars at night, which has been reported

as being the least safe time of the day, therefore they are also put less in situations where something dangerous may happen.

4.2 | Moving in Rotterdam as a queer man

In the prior section, the factors that cause queer men to generally adapt and adjust their behaviour in the urban space were elaborated upon. This following section will explain more specifically the consequences on their urban mobility within Rotterdam. Therefore, which spaces and areas are considered safe or unsafe and the explanations behind them.

4.2.1 | What makes an area safe?

This question was asked in different forms during the interviews. It was asked in relation to the area of residence of the respondent, as well as to areas in the city centre or where they work. Different things can be learned from their answers.

Place of residence vs multi-use community space

Generally, it was common among respondents to live in what is defined as a ‘place of residence’ rather than a ‘multi-use community space’. According to Valentine (1989), the first consists of an area in which one merely has one’s home, but does not connect with neighbours and does not spend any time in the area other than when one is at home; the latter instead concerns those cases in which one forms a community in the area where they live, by knowing the neighbours, working in the proximities, and spending extra time to form a network. Among the respondents, no one works within the same area where they live, and they generally do not hang out nor know their neighbours well. However, some respondents, such as Ryan, reported making efforts to ‘live’ their neighbourhood more, for instance by visiting nearby stores, going to nearby barbershops, or introducing themselves to their neighbours.

“I’ve been trying to, for example, go to my local hairdresser down, like in the corner of my street, getting to know them a bit better” (Ryan)

Even the respondents who explained that they only ‘reside’ where they live, but they barely spend any extra time in their neighbourhood, expressed that they would feel safer knowing that in case of danger or uncomfortable situations, it would definitely help knowing someone nearby to find refuge, or seeing familiar faces. As explored by literature on the experiences of women in the public space, this element relates to the concept of ‘safety work’, and represents an additional overlap between the experiences of women and queer men (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

Nevertheless, Antony had a particularly interesting view and experience of community and neighbourhood. He strongly believed in the concept that has been defined as a multi-use community space within the scope of this research.

“This idea of not only talking, but really connecting with your neighbours has always been quite important. [...] It definitely helps, also in terms of, you know, that's where I know that I can access another safe environment in case something was wrong. Sometimes I really felt, in the worst nights that I could think about where, which were the stops or the couches that you can sleep on if something goes wrong.” (Antony)

He explained creating deep connections with his neighbours, babysitting their kids, and staying friends for many years. As the quote shows, he believes this also plays a crucial role in the perception of safety of the area where he lives, because there are good chances he could find refuge in case of danger, or see familiar faces to seek help.

Similarly to Antony, also Chris and Louis have formed some sort of connection with their neighbours, although with a less active effort than Antony. Both of them have been living in Rotterdam for a rather long time, Louis for 20 years and Chris for almost 22. While neither of them has been going out at night frequently in the past months, Louis reported forming some sort of connection with the bouncers of the bars close to his house:

“I've been living there for 15 years, so I'm quite familiar with everybody already, the stores and everything, so for me it feels like a very safe environment, and also, when I was really going out, [...] the bouncers there knew me, they always had a little bit of an eye on me when I came back or I'm like ‘hey, I'm back’ and they're like ‘hey’, we never really talked, but, you know, this was kind of the feeling” (Louis)

Chris, who has been living in the same apartment in Crooswijk for 12 years, has formed connections with his neighbours, as well as their families:

“All my neighbours know me, they have seen my ex-boyfriend. We have even, like a lesbian couple in our building with four kids. All fine. I think the whole neighbourhood is fine. It's just people, kids, you know? Kids are kids.” (Chris)

And when asked whether knowing the neighbours improves his perception of the area, he answered:

“Yeah, of course, because I know that if I see the young guys and girls shouting at me [...] I tell them I know their mom. I've known them for 12 years, come on. I've seen them grow up, so I know who they are” (Chris)

Presence of people – Formal and informal control of the public space

In terms of presence of people, Valentine (1989) had distinguished two types of ‘controls of the public space’: formal and informal. By formal it is intended people such as police, security guards, store owners, and so on, whereas informal indicates more unpredicted presence of people, like store customers or passersby (Valentine, 1989). During the interviews, generally the presence of people was indicated as a positive factor when assessing whether an environment is perceived as safe: ten respondents explicitly specified feeling safer. Nevertheless, the majority also pointed out that it depends on the type of people. For instance, one of the factors that makes the night feel less safe is the presence of intoxicated people, who are therefore a manifestation of informal control which causes the public space to feel hostile, due to their behaviour being unpredictable.

That being said, two things were reported about Rotterdam: stores close latest at 18:00, and bars are concentrated in limited areas. These two factors combined, make many areas of the city less comfortable to walk through or stroll in because of the absence of people. Specifically, as seen in Figure 4.3, the area known as Lijnbaan is a shopping area located close to Stadhuisplein, which is instead a central area with multiple bars. Multiple respondents reported noticing how this combination, at night, creates a particularly uncomfortable dynamic, with drunk people going from the bars area to the Lijnbaan, where stores in the evening are closed, making it a very unsafe area to walk through. x

Figure 4.3

Stadhuisplein and Lijnbaan



Additionally, by some respondents it was emphasised how they believe society, in this case the population of Rotterdam, is considered to be rather individualistic. Particularly in the context of informal control of the public space, they believe that even in the case of being harassed by someone, it would be rather rare for a passer-by to intervene:

“I think [...] a big part of the vibe in Rotterdam is... it's very individualistic in a way, if you're walking on the street no one really bats an eye. Yeah, because everyone's just doing their own thing” (Paul)

This is specifically true for the city centre, as Carlo explained:

“I would say, in the city center, it's like a big city. No one talks to each other on the street. I don't even know other people that live below me or above me, never met them” (Carlo)

More specifically about the kind of people that are generally feared or considered the cause of hostile environments, a common opinion was present among the vast majority of respondents: drunk groups of men.

“When a man's alone, he's nothing. When a straight man is alone, he is absolutely nothing. He's just awkward. But when a man is drunk with other five, six men, that gets a bit tricky” (Alex)

Alex described (specifically) groups of men as being the category of people that makes the public space the most uncomfortable. However, Ryan differentiated two types of perceptions, and consequently two types of sources of hostile environments: feeling unsafe, thus feeling like one's life is in danger, and feeling uncomfortable, thus a situation where someone may scream or comment, but no real threat of physical assault. According to Ryan, he feels uncomfortable in the presence of groups of men, whereas the feeling of unsafety is particularly strong in the presence of individuals who are visibly intoxicated, often homeless people with unpredictable behaviours.

Lastly, Antony made an interesting line of reasoning concerning his perception of the presence of people in the urban space, and therefore on the formal and informal control of the public space (Valentine, 1989):

“That somehow there was really a clash of communities often. I think that kind of exacerbated... it was incentivized by the fact that there were, you know, places like Worm and then other places like, I don't know, like a coffee shop. So, communities that often really don't intersect, they were really clashing.”
(Antony)

When explaining an experience of harassment that he lived in Witte de Wittstraat, he argued that situations of conflict are created when spaces are designed to make communities – that usually ‘live separately’ – interact, which end up in clashing. He explained that this is particularly evident in the higher presence of people, because the variables of something going on are increased.

Lastly, an additional form of control which provides safety was reported: cameras. According to Carlo, although he is aware that they do not prevent people from having violent behaviours, knowing that in case something happens, it stays on record, makes him feel more comfortable.

Cruising – the Space Between Public and Private

While this study has so far used urban and public space interchangeably, meaning the space within a city, but outside of private spaces, the boundary between private and public was rather more intertwined according to some respondents. For instance, the concept of ‘cruising’ was brought up by multiple respondents, and particularly Antony gave a rather interesting interpretation. The activity of ‘cruising’ refers to meeting in specific known areas of a city, generally outdoors, and have public intercourse. While so far there have been interesting

overlaps and intertwines between the experiences of women and queer men, cruising is known to be often connected with gay culture, giving an interesting insight and nuance to experiences in the urban space. Cruising generally happens at night, reason why, for instance, Louis explained that although streets in Rotterdam are generally well lit, parks are not, but he appreciates that because it allows for more privacy in the context of cruising. Concerning the specific areas, they will not be indicated on the map for privacy reasons, but Antony had an insightful elaboration on how the activity of cruising breaks the boundary between private and public space:

“Something in between, is the practice of cruising. In the LGBTQ... well, in the gay community mostly, from what I know, it's something that somehow... I feel that it's quite interesting because you create a safe space, even though you're outside [...] I think it's an interesting intersection, both in time and space where you can bend to gender and sexuality.” (Antony)

While it had not been included in the studies conducted by Valentine (1989) or Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020), this elaboration on cruising has an interesting connection with what makes a space feel safe. According to Valentine (1989) the presence of people is one of the main factors; in the case of cruising, the presence of the people around is particularly selected, and while it is not thoroughly organised, it is intentionally agreed upon. Cruising happens in spaces where only other queer men are present, creating a unique ‘bubble’ in a space that, in other times of the day, is public, but at night becomes a safe and hybrid version of it. Within such a time and space, sexuality and gender are ‘bent’, as argued by Antony, with complete comfort to manifest femininity or masculinity. Hence, in this context femininity is not considered as unsafe as Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020) argued.

5 | Conclusion

By interviewing 12 queer men, this research aimed at exploring their perspectives and experiences of urban mobility and the public space in Rotterdam. To do so, a research question was formulated: *‘What are the experiences of urban mobility among queer men in Rotterdam?’* To gather a richer understanding of the topic, a sub question was also explored, which aimed at delving deeper into which aspects of cities and of the queer men’s identities can shape their experiences: *‘How do contextual and structural aspects of cities, as well as elements of queer men’s identities shape their experiences of urban mobility?’*. Hence, an intersectional and more layered understanding of their perspectives.

As expected, based on Valentine (1989), Abelson (2014), and Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020), an overlap between the experiences of women and queer men was found. Generally, queer men reported fighting gender norms through tools of expressions such as earrings, painted nails, make-up, and clothes that may be associated with women. Therefore, through a feminine expression in the public space, the experiences of queer men were comparable with those of women. For instance, the phenomena of ‘safety work’ and ‘unsafety of femininity’, which were explained as toning down feminine features in order to be perceived as more masculine, were confirmed by this study.

However not all aspects of queer men’s experiences reflected those reported by literature on women, hence a nuance conclusion was reached: while having in common the aspect of femininity, queer men reported having the privilege to be – in most cases – able to hide certain features and ‘pass’ as straight men. This allowed them to better blend-in in spaces with a high presence of masculine groups of men. As also argued by the respondents, being able to adapt the way they are perceived to an extent to which they are not seen as a target, is a privilege that women do not have.

While 12 is a limited number of respondents, it was possible to understand that some patterns and common opinions were found due to their identification as queer men, while some perspectives were particularly different due to the other aspects of their identities. Identifying as a queer man can be therefore seen as part of one’s identity, which plays a different role depending on one’s gender expression, race, or age. White queer men perceived other White people as more progressive, and were therefore more uncomfortable or perceived unsafety in areas with a higher presence of ethnic minorities. On the other side, queer men from ethnic minorities felt that by doing ‘safety work’, thus removing earrings, hiding their painted nails, or acting more masculine, they felt safer around other people from ethnic minorities. Therefore,

also the perception on whether the presence of people improves the comfort of the environment depends on the type of people.

Additionally, the concept of ‘cruising’ was an interesting finding concerning the specific experience of queer men, in contrast with those of women. As Antony claimed, it is something particularly experienced within gay culture, and its practice highlights a unique intersection between public and private spaces, creating a context where queer men can express their sexuality more freely.

5.1 | Implications and Recommendations

Therefore, the findings and conclusion of this study are both academically and societally relevant. As argued above, this study confirmed literature on the experiences of women in the public space by exploring the ‘unsafety of femininity’ reported by queer men. At the same time, it added to existing literature by studying a minority of which literature on the experience of mobility and the public space was almost inexistent: queer men. This was particularly interesting because queer men belong on one side to a disadvantaged category in society, due to their gender expression and sexual orientation, and to a more privileged and feared category, men. Thus, the nuance of this research adds unprecedented findings to the academic realm.

Additionally, the impact of this study on society, and especially for the city of Rotterdam, is equally interesting. As explained, the focus of this research was queer men. That being said, improving infrastructure and experiences for disadvantaged groups requires an intersectional approach. Thus, this paper may be particularly relevant for such a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic city like Rotterdam, to learn how to address issues by looking at sexual orientation, gender, age, and race. Because, when inequalities are present within a city, mobility should be among the first issue to target: on the experience and practice of urban mobility, depend the resources one can access, the social networks one can create, the jobs one can enter. Therefore, it can be argued that while this study tackled *urban* mobility, its findings and conclusions are relevant and have consequences on *social* mobility as well, intended as the chances one has to climb the social ladder.

That being said, a series of limitations need to be elucidated concerning choices that have been made, intentionally or unintentionally, within the scope of this research. For instance, while the research was located in Rotterdam and studied the experiences within this city, all interviews were conducted in English. Thus, the population studied was limited to an English-speaking one. Additionally, while the initial goal was to include a broader range of perspectives, it was eventually not possible to reach queer men with disabilities, which

represents a lack of perspective, especially given the focus on urban mobility. Therefore, for future research, it is highly recommended to conduct studies (1) in the local language and (2) to include an even broader and accurate range of perspectives.

To conclude, being a queer man within a city represents a rather unique experience. Such experience can differ depending on one's race, age, or gender expression. These elements affect the social network one creates, the community one belongs in, and the transports one chooses to take. It is therefore essential to keep into consideration elements that influence the way that different communities interact within a city, and therefore the consequences that presence or absence of people have on different (intersectional) groups of residents.

Bibliography

- Abelson, M. J. (2014). Dangerous privilege: trans men, masculinities, and changing perceptions of safety. *Sociological Forum*, 29(3), 549–570.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12103>
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519–531.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>
- Cresswell, T. (2010). Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28(1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d11407>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches | Online resources. <https://edge.sagepub.com/creswellrd5e>
- Curtis, A. (2016). Transcribing from the Mind To the Map: Tracing the Evolution of a Concept. *Geographical Review*, 106(3), 338–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2016.12193.x>
- Gemeente Rotterdam. (2023). Actieplan Samenleven in één stad. In Gemeente Rotterdam. <https://persberichtenrotterdam.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2023/10/Actieplan-Samenleven-in-een-stad.pdf>
- Gemeente Rotterdam. (2024). Rotterdam op de kaart.
<https://kaartlaag.rotterdam.nl/#51.8665/4.3163/51.9621/4.6458/brt//>
- Gorman–Murray, A., Johnston, L., & Waitt, G. R. (2016). Queer(ing) Communication in Research Relationships. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 97–112).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315603223-7>
- Grzanka, P. R. (2019). Queer theory. SAGE Research Methods Foundations.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036767663>

- Hidayati, I., Tan, W., & Yamu, C. (2021). Conceptualizing Mobility Inequality: Mobility and Accessibility for the Marginalized. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 36(4), 492–507.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122211012898>
- Knott, E., Rao, A. H., Summers, K., & Teeger, C. (2022). Interviews in the social sciences. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43586-022-00150-6>
- Law, R. (1999). Beyond ‘women and transport’: towards new geographies of gender and daily mobility. *Progress in Human Geography*, 23(4), 567–588.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/030913299666161864>
- Onderzoek010. (2024). Onderzoek010 - Bevolking (gebied/buurt) - Afrikaanderwijk.
<https://onderzoek010.nl/dashboard/onderzoek010/bevolking--gebied-buurt->
- Pereira, C., & Pereira, C. (2024, April 23). Annual Review 2024 | ILGA-Europe. ILGA-Europe | Safety, equality and freedom for LGBTI people in Europe & Central Asia.
<https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2024/>
- RADAR. (2020, March 3). Onzichtbaar is veilig - RADAR.
<https://radar.nl/publicaties/onzichtbaar-is-veilig/>
- Robinson, B. A. (2012). Is this what equality looks like? *Sexuality Research & Social Policy/Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 9(4), 327–336.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-012-0084-3>
- Saarinen, P., Partala, T., & Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, K. (2012). Visualize your spatial experience (VYSE). *Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2399016.2399090>
- Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Polity Press.
https://books.google.nl/books?hl=it&lr=&id=uVwNYJlBxvgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=John+Urry&ots=EBabUyUlbg&sig=nxhcwBHK4qFbJsZGvvoF24mb8YQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=John%20Urry&f=false

Valentine, G. (1989). The geography of women's fear. www.jstor.org, 21(4), 385–390.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20000063>

Vera-Gray, F., & Kelly, L. (2020). Contested gendered space: public sexual harassment and women's safety work. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 44(4), 265–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2020.1732435>

Weintrob, A., Hansell, L., Zebracki, M., Barnard, Y., & Lucas, K. (2021). Queer mobilities: critical LGBTQ perspectives of public transport spaces. *Mobilities*, 16(5), 775–791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2021.1958249>

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. www.jstor.org, 1(2), 125–151.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/189945>

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. Introduction

- Purpose of interview / research
- (Repeat) Informed consent – any questions?
- Practicalities
- Gender & pronouns
- Questions?

2. Queer

- Identification as queer;
 - personal journey and experience
 - understanding of queer
 - understandings of sex, gender, and sexual orientation

--> Provide Rotterdam map and explain the colours / legend. Questions?

3. (Queer) Mobility

- General experience of mobility in Rotterdam

Example questions:

- What modes of transports do they make use of?
- What areas do they generally have to reach?
- Deepen into the experience as a queer man
 - Have you ever felt unwelcome? Or a hostile environment?
 - What modes of transport make you feel more safe and which less? Why?
 - Do you work/study in the same area in which you live?
 - Do you ever hang out in the area in which you live?
 - Do you have a good relationship with your neighbours or people living in your area?
- Make sure to touch upon the following concepts:
 - Fear of violence
 - Intrinsic factors (i.e. gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and race)
 - Extrinsic factors (i.e. homophobia, racism, and transphobia)

- Place of residence / multi-use community space
- Formal / Informal social controls of space and time (what are the elements that help making a space feel safer/usable according to them?)

4. Ending

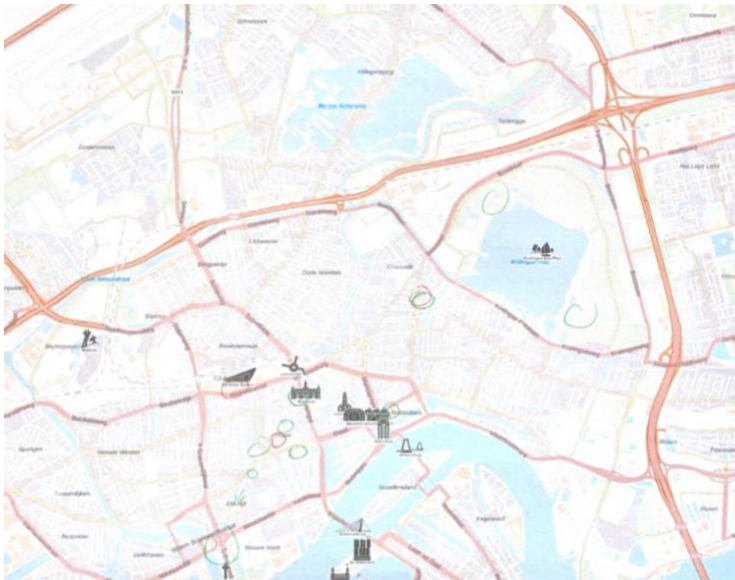
- Make sure you have:
 - Age
 - Sexual orientation
 - Nationality
 - Race [by contextualising it within the purpose of the study]
 - Residency [area of Rotterdam, respondent is kept free to decide how specific to be]
- Anything else to add?
- Any questions?
- End recording.

Appendix 2: City Centre Maps

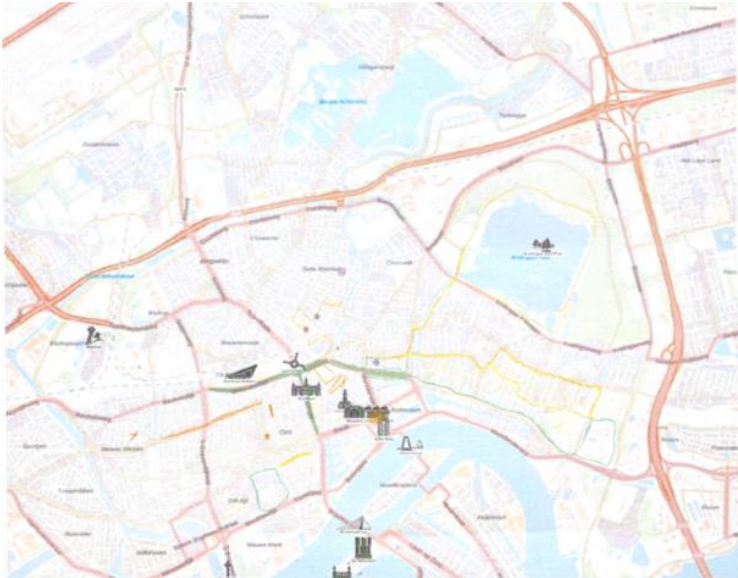
Ryan



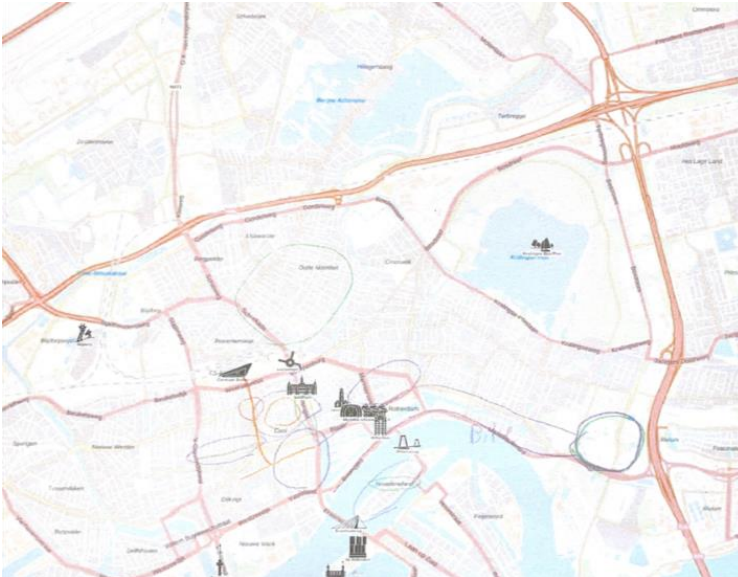
Chris



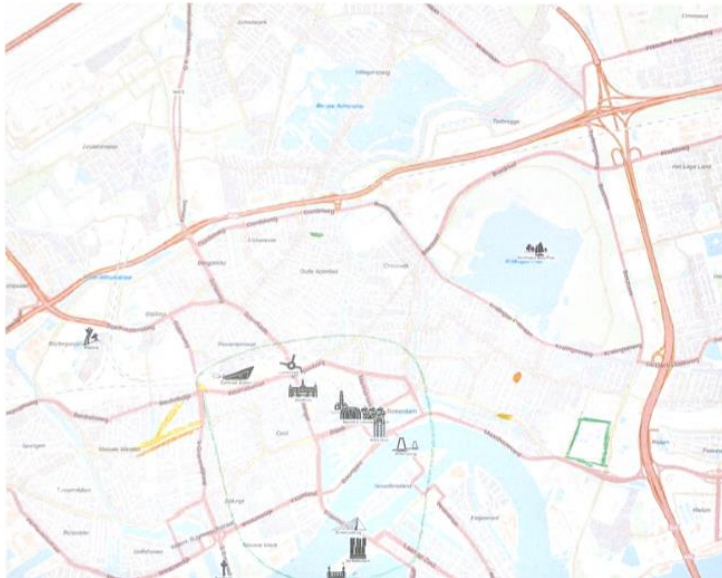
Edwin



Pierce



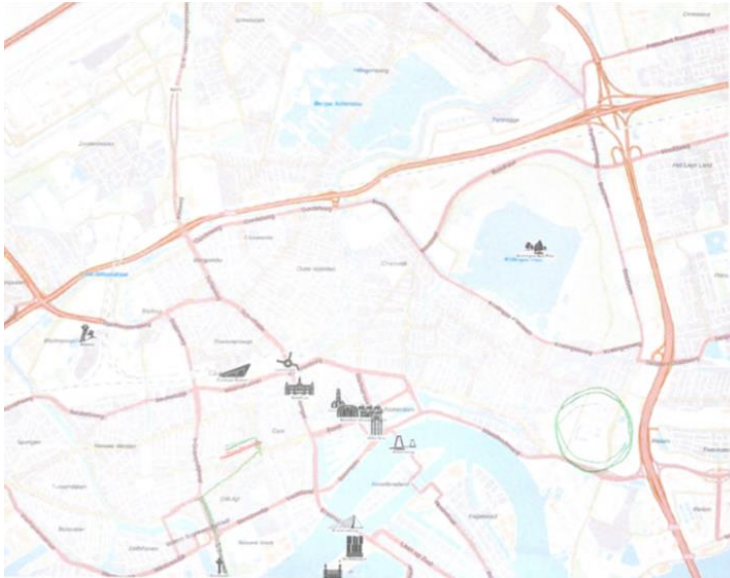
Paul



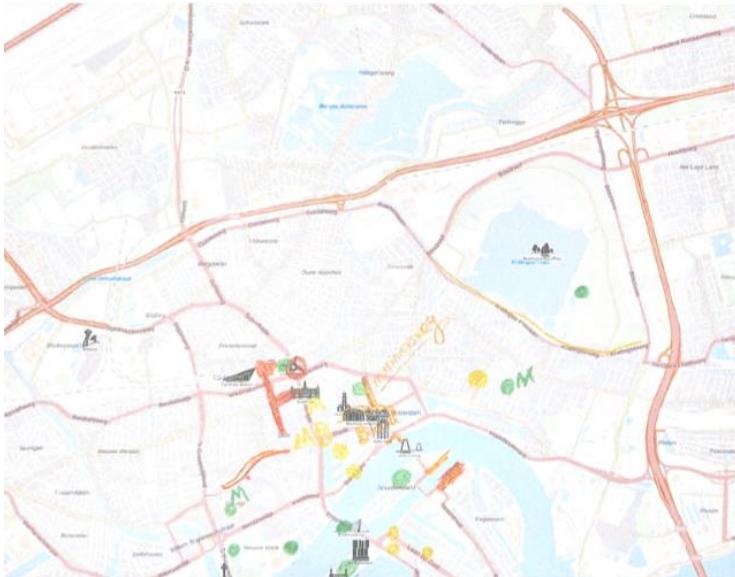
Louis



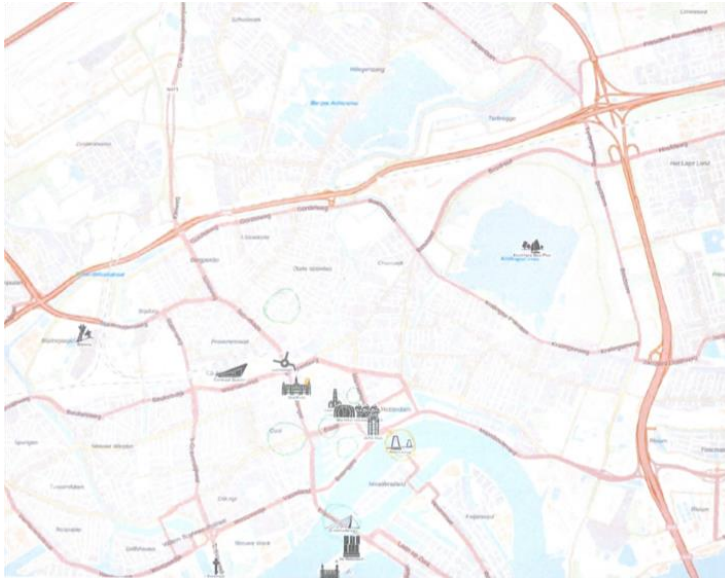
Joe



Alex



Max



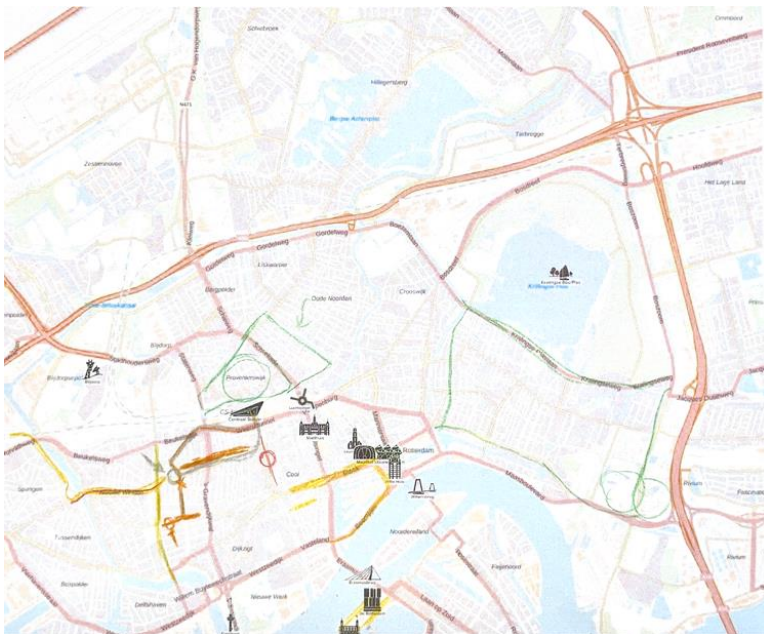
Carlo



Antony



Troye



Appendix 3: Privacy Checklist & Consent Form



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Queer Mobility - The Experiences of Trans* Men in Rotterdam

Name, email of student: Giorgio Palladino, 560663gp@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Samira Van Bohemen, vanbohem@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration:

Is the research study conducted within DPAS

YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

v. 1.2 (March 2023)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to an accredited medical research ethics committee or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

In order to answer the research question (*How does fear of violence towards queer men in Rotterdam affect their mobility practices and behaviour in the public space?*) it is unavoidable to collect some sort of information about the place of residence of the respondents. The extent to which this information will be detailed will be up to the respondent, but it is relevant to explore the areas and routes that respondents have been in, to reach theoretical saturation.

Additionally, to explore the circumstances in which queer men have experienced fear of violence, respondents may be asked to tell their stories about cases in which they have received violence, which may become an emotionally vulnerable moment. Nevertheless, no harm will be done to respondents, it will be a safe space in which they share only if they want to, in a voluntary manner, and with the possibility of changing question, as stated in the signed consent form.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

The participants will be informed of all the risks both before, during, and after the interviews. Participation is voluntary, they will be aware of the possibility to withdraw participation through the consent form.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

In the circumstance in which respondents have had experiences of receiving violence in public spaces, they may be asked to share the story.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

In Rotterdam, through in person interviews. The exact locations will be agreed upon with the respondents.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

Between 10 to 15.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

As no precise data can be found concerning the population of queer men residing in Rotterdam, here is an educated guess:

Around 320.000 men live in the city of Rotterdam. Based on the "LGBTI equality in the Netherlands" report, published in 2018, 10% of men does not identify as heterosexual. If this is representative for Rotterdam, there is therefore a population of 32.000 non heterosexual men. Additionally, according to the same report, 48.000 people identify as transgender in the Netherlands. Assuming that half of them identify as men, that would be 24,000. By making this proportionate to the population of Rotterdam, we can assume that there are 960 trans men in Rotterdam.

While this is an educated guess, and making the assumption that some trans men also do not identify as heterosexual, the population of queer men in Rotterdam is approximately of 32.500.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

OneDrive, for a maximum of 10 years. The maps will be scanned and only the digital version will be stored. Additionally, the signed consent forms, as in cases of breach they may hinder the anonymity of the respondents, will be stored in a file protected with a passcode, of which code only I will know.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

Myself (the researcher, Giorgio Palladino)

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

As often as possible, with the automatic back-up of OneDrive.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

By creating pseudonyms.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Giorgio Palladino

Name (EUR) supervisor: *dr. Samira v Bohemen*

Date: 18/03/2024

Date: *05-04-2024*

Giorgio Palladino

Sr Bohemen

Information sheet for thesis research “Queer Mobility: The Experiences of Queer Men in Rotterdam”

Under the supervision of Samira Van Bohemen, Giorgio Palladino is exploring the experience of queer men of mobility in Rotterdam, by studying their perception of safety and fear of violence in the public space. This research can be realized with the help of your participation. Giorgio is curious about your experience and personal stories about mobility in Rotterdam. There are no right or wrong answers.

Why this research?

This research aims at exploring how identifying as a queer men has negative consequences on the mobility experiences in the city of Rotterdam. How, because of one's identity, behaviour or attitudes are adjusted when using public transports or walking on the street. This research is being conducted from the Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

Process

You will participate in a study in which we will gather information through:

Interviewing you and recording your answers via audio or video recording. A transcript of the interview will be produced. Also, you will draw on a map the areas and routes that you consider safe or unsafe. The map will then be scanned and the digital version will be used for the purpose of the research.

Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy as well as possible. In addition to the student, only the thesis supervisor and a second reader will have access to all information you provide. That being said, your name and surname will be seen only by me, Giorgio Palladino, as a pseudonym will be created before transcribing the interviews. Therefore, the data that will be transcribed and used on softwares like Atlas.ti and Microsoft Office will be anonymised before. Your name will be shown only on this consent form.

No confidential information or personal data from or about you will be released so that someone will be able to identify you.

In the research you are referred to by a made-up name (pseudonym), unless you have given permission to use your name for quotes.

Voluntary participation

You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If you do not want to say something in a group, but would like to in private, you can e- mail or call Giorgio Palladino afterwards. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop whenever you want. If, during the research, you decide to terminate your participation, the information that you have already provided will be used until the moment that consent is withdrawn.

Do you want to stop participating in this research? Then contact Giorgio Palladino via 560663gp@eur.student.nl or +32 485153928.

Data storage

Anonymous data or pseudonyms will be used in the thesis. The audio recordings, forms and/or other documents that are created or collected in the context of this thesis (such as the maps of Rotterdam) will be stored securely on a One Drive.

The research data is stored for a period of ten years. Data will be deleted or made anonymous so that they can no longer be traced to a person at the end of this period, at the latest.

Submitting a question of complaint

If you have specific questions about how your personal data is handled, you can direct your question to Giorgio Palladino via 560663gp@eur.student.nl or +32485153928. You can also submit a complaint to the Dutch Data Protection Authority if you suspect that your data has been processed incorrectly. You may also contact the EUR data protection officer (privacy@eur.nl).

By signing this consent form I acknowledge the following:

Yes

No

1. I am sufficiently informed about the research. I have read the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions. These questions have been answered sufficiently and I have had sufficient time to decide on my participation.

☐☐

2. I volunteer to participate in this study. It is clear to me that I can terminate participation in the study at any time, without providing a reason. I don't have to answer a question if I do not want to.

☐☐

In order to participate in the study, it is also necessary that you give specific permission for various elements. Note that if you are younger than eighteen, a parent/guardian must also sign this form.

3. I give permission to process the data collected about me during this research as explained in the attached information sheet. This permission also relates to the processing of data about my health, race, ethnic origin, political views, religious or philosophical views, membership of a trade union, sexual behavior, sexual orientation.

☐☐

4. I give permission for audio and/or video recordings to be made during discussions and a transcript of my answers to be produced.

☐☐

5. I give permission for use my answers as quotes in the student's thesis.

☐☐

6. I give permission to store the data collected from me and to use it in a pseudonymized form for all further research where it can be used at a later date.

☐☐

7. I give permission to collect data about my sexual orientation.

☐☐

Name participant:

Name researcher:

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date: