# Public Space for Which Public?

## Towards Urban Design Beyond Binaries

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I hereby declare that this thesis is an original piece of work, written by me alone. Any information and ideas from other sources are acknowledged fully in the text and notes.

Amsterdam, 16 June, 2023

*Dedicated to all who have been made to feel out of place within spaces meant for all of us, due to the continuous saturation of various binaries across the built environment*

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# Introduction

Often, urban public spaces are stumbled upon, providing momentary respite from its bustling surroundings—a coincidental convenience. Though public spaces may seem banal, they are pivotal components to the urban environment; The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) considers "the connective matrix of street and public spaces" as forming "the skeleton of the city upon which all else rests".[1] Thus, public space is foundational to urban dynamics.

Urban public spaces do not only physically connect the streets of a city, they bring the communities of a city together, as well. However, while the former is predominantly a matter of urban planning, the latter requires a combination of multidisciplinary considerations. Urban public space has been considered the "building block" of community-building, yet numerous communities have expressed that they are not constructed with their lived realities in mind and, as a result, are inaccessible or unsafe.[2] Thus, for which public have urban public spaces been designed for, if various publics do not feel accommodated?

In order to frame the subject of this thesis, the term 'accommodate' is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as "to give what is needed to someone", which is the interpretation that will be employed.[3] In addition, the phrase 'public space' has been defined by UN-Habitat as "all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive". [4] When considering these two definitions together, it becomes apparent that for a public space to be truly accessible and enjoyable, it must provide each public of an urban

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[1] UN-Habitat, *SDG Indicator 11.7.1 Training Module: Public Space*, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlement Programme, 2018), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/07/indicator_11.7.1_training_module_public_space.pdf, 3.

[2] Laura Valdés, "Getting public space right: transforming society from the ground up", *Metropolis,* 17 March, 2022, https://www.metropolis.org/blog/getting-public-space-right-transforming-society-ground#:~:text=It%20is%20the%20building%20block,between%20people%20and%20their%20surroundings.

[3] "Accommodate", Cambridge Dictionary, accessed 5 May, 2023, https://dictionary-cambridge-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/dictionary/english/accommodate.

[4] UN-Habitat, 9.

environment with what they need. However, alternative definitions of 'public space' will be reviewed in the following chapter, demonstrating how the aforementioned interpretation is not always put into practice. Every individual and community has varying lived experiences, thus a one-size-fits-all model will prohibit each from being accommodated; rather, for urban public spaces to be truly public, they must be equipped to adapt to the needs of various publics.[5]

This thesis will specifically analyse the extent to which urban public spaces accommodate trans and gender diverse people. The trans community includes individuals whose gender identity is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth, as opposed to cisgender individuals who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.[6] Gender diversity is an umbrella term including individuals who identify beyond the gender binary of male or female.[7] This umbrella term encompasses non-binary, gender queer, gender fluid, and all other gender identities which challenge the cisgender binary.[8] Throughout this thesis, the trans and gender diverse communities will be referred to through the acronym TGD.

Although the experiences of the trans community and the gender diverse community are not identical, neither are the experiences amongst individuals within each of these communities. Rather, both communities challenge cisgender norms and societally prescribed forms of heteronormativity—two belief systems that have historically guided the conceptualisation and design of our urban public spaces.[9]

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[5] Abygail Mangar and Lindsey Volz, "Fostering Safe and Healthy Public Spaces for LGBTQIA+, Women, & Non-Conforming Genders", National League of Cities, accessed 1 June, 2023, https://www.nlc.org/article/2022/06/28/fostering-safe-and-healthy-public-spaces-for-lgbtqia-women-non-conforming-genders/.

[6] "Gender Diverse Terminology", Penn State Center of Sexual and Gender Diversity, accessed 20 May, 2023, https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/csgd/explore-lgbtq-resources/identity-based/gender-terms.

[7] "What is Gender Diversity?" A Gender Agenda, accessed 5 May, 2023. https://genderrights.org.au/information-hub/what-is-gender-diversity/.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Arup and University of Westminster, *Queering Public Space: Exploring the relationship between queer communities and public Spaces* (London: Arup and University of Westminster, 2021), https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/queering-public-space, 1-19; Michael Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project", *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21 (2002): 254-266, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0739456X0202100.

The terms *queer* and *cishet* will also be employed throughout this research. The definition of *queerness* being used refers to the range of gender identities and sexual orientations that challenge heteronormative constructions, while also indicating a subversion of such constructions and the power structures underpinning them.[10] The term *cishet* refers to cisgender and heterosexual individuals.[11]

Due to the fact that historically, urban public spaces were designed by cisgender people—particularly, cisgender, white, upper class, men—the experiences of the TGD community have been neglected.[12] This demographic of urban planners, designers, and architects have had long-term control over the built environment, impacting and marginalising additional communities, as well; throughout this research, the ways in which accommodating the TGD community can simultaneously accommodate other communities will be discussed. It may seem impossible to accommodate every resident of a city; however, centralising diversity and flexibility within urban design processes can create public spaces that include, rather than exclude.[13]

The importance of researching the dynamic between TGD people and urban public space design is multifaceted. Primarily, there are likely not many, if any, urban public spaces that can claim an absence of TGD individuals—27 countries have reported that between 2-3% of their population identify as "transgender, gender fluid, non-binary, or other ways".[14] The methods behind collecting such data must be contemplated, as it is impossible to ensure all members of a population are being accounted for—particularly considering the safety necessary to feel comfortable self-identifying as TGD. Nevertheless, this statistic illuminates that transness and gender diversity exist internationally, thus the built environment should be conceptualised and designed so as to accommodate the gender spectrum, as opposed to the gender binary.

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[10] *Queering Public Space*, 3.
[11] "Cishet", Collins Dictionary, accessed 20 May, 2023, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cishet.
[12] Mangar and Volz, "Fostering Safe and Healthy Public Spaces for LGBTQIA+, Women, & Non-Conforming Genders".
[13] *Queering Public Space,* 18.
[14] "Share of people identifying as transgender, gender fluid, non-binary, or other ways worldwide as of 2021, by country", Statista, accessed 24 January, 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1269778/gender-identity-worldwide-country/.

Furthermore, there is a limited amount of research within the design discipline on transness and gender diversity that is written by an individual that identifies as such. As a trans person, I seek to fill this gap, while also aware of my inability to represent the entirety of the TGD community as I am restricted by my own perspective and positionality as a white trans person from the United States. I aim to contribute to the gradually expanding body of literature considering the role that design plays in enforcing the gender binary—as well as other binaries—thus enabling dynamics and encounters that cause discomfort and harm to TGD people. Simultaneously, I aim to normalise the inclusion of the gender spectrum within academia, as it is still customary for research to be structured according to the cisgender binary.

The consequences of the built environment historically being conceptualised according to the cisgender binary are apparent; aside from the ongoing legislative attacks on trans people across countries such as the United States, or the fact that, as of 2020, it was illegal to be trans in 14 countries, the rates of violence and assault that TGD people face within urban public spaces are consistently high.[15]

In addition to the physical and psychological harm that urban public spaces can cause TGD individuals, public space holds meaning, defining a city's culture and influencing how it is experienced.[16] Without accommodating transness and gender diversity, urban public spaces become representative of a culture that puts certain community members in dangerous situations for being themselves.

The discrimination faced by TGD people has been characterised as  "deeply intersectional"; more than 75% of the trans and gender diverse people that were murdered in the United States were Black or people of colour, and similar statistical patterns have been observed

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[15] "2023 anti-trans bills tracker", Trans Legislation Tracker, accessed 20 May, 2023, https://translegislation.com/; Serena Sonoma, "Report: It's Still Illegal to Be Transgender in These 14 Countries", them, 1 October, 2020, https://www.them.us/story/14-countries-illegal-to-be-transgender; "'I Just Try to Make It Home Safe' Violence and Human Rights of Transgender People in the United States", Human Rights Watch, 18 November, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/11/18/i-just-try-make-it-home-safe/violence-and-human-rights-transgender-people-united.

[16] Valdés, "Getting public space right: transforming society from the ground up".

across the world.[17] Furthermore, many TGD people are forced to leave abusive households due to their gender identities, making them socioeconomically vulnerable and in certain cases, without a home, placing them more at risk to violence across urban public spaces.[18] The dynamic between TGD people and urban public space is personal and situational, yet consistently unaccommodating.

The intersectional dimension to the dynamic between the TGD community and urban public space is additionally important because it exemplifies how the gender binary is not the only binary that urban public space prescribes; binaries such as white/non-white, homeless/homed, rich/poor, and local/immigrant, are also embedded within the histories and development of urban public spaces. Thus, this research simultaneously explores how urban design can move away from binaries and move towards accommodating the unpredictable spectrum of urban populations, rather than confining or ostracising it through such dualisms.

This thesis is guided by the research question: to what extent do urban public spaces accommodate trans and gender diverse people? This research question will be explored utilising two case studies in Amsterdam, the capital city of the Netherlands—the Vondelpark and Dam Square—-which exemplify urban public spaces with historical narratives and contemporary popularity.

This research will build upon existing literature on this topic in two ways. Firstly, in utilising two case studies, the relationship between a particular urban public space's history and consequential design, as well as the impacts that the two have upon TGD people, can be clearly exemplified. In addition, through the incorporation of interviews with TGD people, the findings of this research expand upon the conclusions drawn in pre-existing literature.

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[17] Human Rights Watch, "'I Just Try to Make It Home Safe' Violence and Human Rights of Transgender People in the United States".

[18] Mansi Singh, "Transgender Persons and Public Spaces: Lack of Protection from the Law", *Centre for Law & Policy Research*, 25 March, 2023, https://clpr.org.in/blog/transgender-persons-and-public-spaces-lack-of-protection-from-the-law/.

The first chapter will review literature on the conceptualisation of public space. Following, the relevant academic literature that has discussed public space's exclusive capacity and reliance upon binaries in terms of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality will be reviewed, demonstrating the varying arguments that have been made. The second chapter will describe the two theoretical frameworks—Queering Public Space and Urban Social Visibility—that will support this research. The third chapter will explain the methodology being used within the data collection and data analysis processes. Subsequently, the fourth chapter will share the findings derived from the data collection and data analysis processes, to be more thoroughly discussed in the fifth chapter. The fifth chapter will discuss the findings in relation to the research question and propose opportunities for the urban design field moving forward. The final chapter will conclude by summarising this research, indicating what previous literature has not discussed, and noting possibilities for future research.

# Chapter 1:

# Literature Review

## 1.1 The Conceptualisation of Urban Public Space

Due to the location of the case studies being analysed, this literature review will focus on the Western conceptualisations of urban public space, particularly within the disciplines of political science, urban planning, and architecture. Due to the multidisciplinary evolution of the term 'public space,' this literature review will begin by tracing how it was first identified and how its interpretation has varied.

The emergence of 'public space' as a concept has been attributed to ancient Greece; according to Astrid Lindenlauf, in ancient Greece, public space was referred to as the *agora*, deriving from the ancient Greek term *ageirein*, which means "to gather together".[19] The *agora* was a significant contribution to the ancient Greek landscape, as it represented a site "which no longer belongs to the gods…but consists of a community space".[20] This community, which only included "free men born in the city", could occupy the agora, transforming it into a "place of exchange and meeting".[21] The origins of public space reveal both its long-standing tendency to cater predominantly to certain demographics—in this context, local men—as well as to provide a communal site for congregation.

The agora is characterised as the "indicator of urbanisation" within the ancient world, being the first space where political, social, commercial, religious, and cultural events took place.[22] Further, the agora was a source of pride for ancient Greek society; within the *Odyssey,* Homer suggests that the agora represented "a form of order and civilization", characterising communities without such spaces as "lawless".[23] The agora demonstrates qualities that continue

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[19] Astrid Lindenlauf, "Agora in the Greek World", in *Encyclopedia of Global Archeology*, ed. C. Smith (New York: Springer, 2014), 69.

[20] Pedro Azara, "Notes on the Origin of the Public Space in the West", *Quaderns de la Mediterrrània* 26 (2018): 118, https://www.iemed.org/publication/notes-on-the-origin-of-the-public-space-in-the-west/.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Lindenlauf, 69.

[23] Ibid.

to be associated with urban public spaces, such as the predominant presence of local men, signs of urbanism, hosting of both political and recreational activities, and the enforcement of notions of civility.

The dual nature of public space, as both a political and social, has been discussed across various disciplines. For example, Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, two social philosophers, are known for their conceptualisations of 'public space' as a political condition, as opposed to a physical space. Thus, throughout philosophical discourse, public space has been associated with a *public sphere*—a phrase that Habermas has been accredited for establishing.[24]

Habermas defined the 'public' as a sphere of individuals that met to discuss public matters, composed of members of the bourgeois who believed to be representative of the general public.[25] Habermas' original term for the public sphere was *Öffentlichkeit*, which refers to "the features of openness and visibility".[26]

As the agora was considered a public, communal space, yet was only open to local men, Habermas' interpretation of the 'public sphere' regarded members of the bourgeois as capable of representing the general public. Nancy Fraser has disputed Habermas' analysis of the 'public sphere', rejecting the classism inherent to his definition of 'the public', while also conceptualising the 'public sphere' as a political entity composed of 'interpublic relations'.[27] According to Fraser, the 'public sphere' does not contain a singular 'public', but diverse 'publics', which ceaselessly influence one another.[28]

The conceptualisation of urban public space throughout the political sciences is relevant to this thesis because it demonstrates one of its most contested questions: to what extent is public

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[24] Charles Goodsell, "The Concept of Public Space and Its Democratic Manifestations", *The American Review of Public Administration* 33 no. 4 (2003): 362, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0275074003254469.

[25] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 27.

[26] Andrea Mubi Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*, London: Palgrave Macmillan (2010): 109

[27] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 58-60, https://doi.org/10.2307/466240.

[28] Ibid.

space truly public, if it accommodates one demographic more than others? This question has been contemplated throughout the fields of urban planning, urban design, architecture, and public art.[29] Oftentimes, this question emerges in response to the established conception that public spaces are representative of democracy.[30]

The association between public space and democracy is likely the result of public space's political dimension; it has been characterised as the site for public congregation, debate, and public affairs since its inception.[31] However, the association between public space and democracy has been questioned by Rosalyn Deutsche, who states that:

> *"the term 'public space' is one component of a rhetoric of democracy that…is used to justify less than democratic policies: the creation of exclusionary urban spaces, state coercion and censorship, surveillance, economic privatisation, the repression of differences and attacks on the rights of the most expendable members of society, on the rights of strangers and on the very idea of rights".[32]*

Examining contexts where urban public space is associated with the term *democracy* is important, since Deutsche explains how this comparison can also be used as a method of justification.

Ceren Sezer notes how the desire for democratic public space has been related to the rise of the modern city.[33] As cities became modernised, new typologies emerged within the built

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[29] Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project", 254-266; Pippa
Catterall, "Designing in Diversity: queering authorised public space discourse", *University of Networks Sharing Community Westminster*, 11 May 2021,
https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/difference/designing-in-diversity-queering-authorised-public-space-discourse/; Matthew M. Carr, "Urban Hostility: CPTED, Hostile Architecture, and the Erasure of Democratic Public Space" (University Honours Thesis, Portland State University, 2020), https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.913; Rosalyn Deutsche, "The Question of Public Space", transcript from seminar 'Public Space -
Contemporary Art Practices in Public Space,' delivered at the Iwalewa House, May, 2012,
https://iwalewapublicspace.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/rosalyn-deutsche-_-the-question-of-_pub lic-space_.pdf.

[30] Deutsche, "The Question of Public Space".

[31] Wouter Jan Verheul, "Placemaking and the Discourse of Public Space", The City at Eye Level in the Netherlands, 7 December 2017, https://thecityateyelevel.com/stories/placemaking-and-the-discourse-of-thepublicplace/.

[32] Deutsche, "The Question of Public Space".

[33] Ceren Sezer, "Visibility, democratic public spaces, and socially inclusive cities: The presence and changes of Turkish amenities in Amsterdam", (PhD diss., Delft University of Technology, 2020), 27.

environment, such as boulevards or plazas, where "ubiquitous and uncontrolled encounters of people and groups" began taking place.[34]

Although these typologies were not necessarily novel, considering the *agoras* of ancient Greece, the novelty of urban modernisation was the unpredictability that accompanied such drastic population growth.[35] The increased encounters with diverse social groups amidst rapidly modernising cities initiated the desire for democratic public spaces, which, in this context, refers to a public space that is equally accessible to a population.[36]

Peter Goheen characterises the transition into the 'modern city' as the moment when the urban environment became accessible to all residents, democratising the city, and making the 'public sphere'—perhaps both as a concept and as a physical space—more inclusive.[37] In describing how urban public space became democratised, Goheen cites specific attributes such as the protection of people's rights, accessibility to all, and provision of free movement.[38]

Although Goheen's interpretation of public space within the modern city expands upon the original conceptualisation within ancient Greece, wherein access was explicitly regulated, he does not interrogate the dynamics that urban public spaces facilitate. Although the public spaces of modernising cities were available to all residents in theory, that does not mean this took place equally in practice.

Sezer asserts that public space has never been free, democratic, or equally accessible to all, further illustrating the disjunction between theory and reality. However, Sezer proposes that the concept of 'visibility' can be utilised to encourage more democratic public spaces, specifically with regards to cultural diversity, suggesting that public spaces can become more just

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[34] Peter Goheen, "Public space and the geography of the modern city", *Progress in Human Geography* 22 no. 4
      (1998): 481, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1191/030913298672729084.
[35] Sezer, 27.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Goheen, 481.
[38] Ibid.

if the visibility of diverse cultures increases.[39] According to Sezer, the visibility of diverse communities within the urban environment manifests their right to participate in urban life.[40]

The emphasis on visibility within public space discourse and design is likely the result of theories such as the *contact hypothesis*, which postulates that if diverse groups are in the same physical space, prejudice could be reduced and social integration could be advanced.[41] Yet, such hypotheses flatten the realities that unfold within demographically diverse environments. Furthermore, as Kristine Miller states, it "is not particularly clear how to get from the encounter of people to the development of democratic and equal relationships between them".[42] Thus, the theoretical conceptualisations of urban public space and its physical forms and realities do not always match.

Additional arguments position visibility as a safety measure; Jane Jacobs, for example, asserted that urban design must facilitate "eyes on the street" to ensure a sense of security when navigating urban environments.[43] The concept of 'eyes on the street' has been adopted by crime prevention theorists who believe that designing visibility into the built environment—through surveillance measures and *movement control*—will reduce crime and fear.[44] Such theories do not acknowledge the subjectivity inherent to notions such as crime or fear, neglecting to consider the potential consequences that embedding such convictions into urban streets and public spaces can have.

The relationship between visibility and one's sense of safety is facilitated by one's perceptions or judgments of the strangers they encounter; Miller discusses how the public life of

[39] Sezer, 52.
[40] Ibid, 46.
[41] Santiago Rodríguez, 7.
[42] Kristine Miller, *Designs on the Public*: *The Private Lives of New York's Public Spaces* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiv.
[43] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House Inc., 1961), 54.
[44] "What Is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design?'" Design For Security*, accessed 15 April, 2023, https://designforsecurity.org/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design/#:~:text=What%20is% 20'Crime%20Prevention%20Through,and%20the%20fear%20of%20crime.

urban public spaces is managed by regulatory codes of conduct which not only control what can happen within, but who is welcome there, or who "constitutes" the public.[45]

Miller overviews how the enforcement of regulatory social codes occurs through various means; while design features can enforce literal, physical barriers, limiting access for certain people, zoning policies can further restrict access to public spaces which, in theory, are meant to be open for all.[46] Thus, Miller provides an important reminder that urban public spaces are not static physical spaces, but "constellations" of beliefs, policies, and actions.[47]

Karin Peters and Henk de Haan discuss the social dimensions of urban public spaces' implicit codes of conduct. They characterise urban public space as a site where the proximity to strangers leads to the indirect enforcement of subconscious rules and standards regarding normativity.[48] Peters and de Haan describe this dynamic as a public performance structuring how people behave in regards to their conceptions of what is normative.[49] Therefore, urban public spaces indirectly enforce the coordination of one's behaviour with what is considered socially acceptable within that context.

In reviewing the literature on the conceptualisation of urban public space, this section has referenced various interpretations of visibility, revealing discrepancies between the theorisation of urban public space and the realities of the social dynamics it facilitates. Thus, though urban public spaces may unify some populations, they can simultaneously exclude others.

## 1.2 The Exclusivity of Urban Public Space

This section will review literature discussing how urban public space can ostracise and harm certain communities, such as immigrant populations, houseless populations, cis women, and queer and TGD people. Therefore, this section demonstrates how visibility can be experienced as

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[45] Miller, x.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid, xi.

[48] Karin Peters and Henk de Haan, "Everyday spaces of inter-ethnic interaction: the meaning of urban public spaces in the Netherlands", *Leisure / Loisir* 35, no. 2 (2011): 172-173, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/14927713.2011.567065.

[49] Ibid, 173.

a weapon, targeting individuals depending upon their distance from established norms.[50] Moreover, this section will exemplify how the perspective from which urban public space is theorised and designed heavily impacts how it is experienced.

Although certain authors referenced in the previous section understood visibility as a method of crime prevention, Pavel Pospěch argues that one's sense of danger may actually be an aesthetic concern, in reference to the treatment of homeless people within public spaces.[51] Further, while certain authors characterise visibility as a method to encourage the acceptance of difference, Pospěch expresses how the visibility of homelessness has been considered "dirt on the clean image of public space, a signifier of moral inferiority, dysfunctionality, and abjection".[52] Thus, visibility is a quality whose meaning and impact significantly shifts depending upon one's proximity to established norms.

Pospěch traces how non-homeless people's discomfort with encountering homelessness within public space becomes framed as potential danger, leading to policies and design features aimed at controlling the lives of homeless individuals.[53] These regulatory responses encourage the informal, and formal, policing of social codes that infiltrates public spaces, as discussed in section 1.1. Since public space is often designed around visibility, it becomes a site where the distinction between what is visibly acceptable versus unacceptable is enforced.

Santiago Rodríguez' discussion of Latin Americans' consumption of and encounters in Amsterdam's public spaces notes how sociocultural differences have led to the mischaracterisation of large group congregations in urban public space with activities associated with criminals or gangs.[54] This further demonstrates the subjectivity inherent to the concept of visibility; while visibility may facilitate encounters with difference, the likelihood that this will result in tolerance or acceptance depends upon the viewer's perceptions.

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[50] Anureet Watta, "Who Really Owns the Public Space?" gaysi, 13 June, 2020,
    https://gaysifamily.com/lifestyle/who-really-owns-the-public-space/.
[51] Pavel Pospěch, "Homeless People in Public Space and the Politics of (In)visibility", *Space and Culture* 25, no. 4 (2022): 662,
    https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1206331220906091
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid, 663.
[54] Santiago Rodríguez, 27.

Rodríguez' analysis supports Pospěch's argument regarding the reframing of discomfort as danger when encountering differences in appearance or behaviour; the consequences of enabling this reframing can be severe for individuals that cannot, and should not have to, hide their distance from socially enforced norms.

In addition to class status or ethnicity, urban public space can distinguish, shame, or harm people on the basis of their gender and sexuality. As Jess Myer discusses, the preventative surveillance measures within urban public spaces meant to protect women and queer people do not necessarily make these spaces safer.[55] Myers discusses how the employment of "paternalistic security strategies" focuses on individual behaviours, rather than the systematic power structures that underlie certain behaviours.[56] As a result, such measures fail to adequately address the dangers that often circulate public spaces for women and queer people.[57]

Despite how the paternalistic safety strategies Myers discusses may seem to be contemporary add-ons to urban public spaces, they are reverberations of the various prejudices of the first urban planners and designers, who believed that cis womens' place was at home and gay and trans peoples' place was in the closet.[58] Thus, attempts to increase the safety of urban public spaces are often insufficient, as they implicitly sustain such historical narratives.

Michael Frisch explores the roots of urban planning practices, in turn illuminating how the exclusionary or dangerous qualities of urban public spaces today were deliberate upon creation.[59] Through his argument that "urban planning is a conscious effort to direct social processes to attain goals", Frisch exemplifies how policies emerged from the urban planning field to "advance heterosexuality" and suppress and ostracise the queer community.[60] For example, Frisch describes how, in response lesbians and gay men using urban public spaces for private

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[55] Jess Myers, "How More Security Makes Women and Queer People Feel Less Safe", Failed Architecture, 2 September, 2020, https://failedarchitecture.com/how-more-security-makes-women-and-queer-people-feel-less-safe/.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work", *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): S170, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173814; Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project", 255.

[59] Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project," 254-266.

[60] Ibid, 254.

matters, planning and public authorities either rezoned or closed these spaces, arresting or imprisoning the subjects of complaint.[61]

Frisch explains how modern urban planning practices developed from an impulse to bring order to urban chaos, and queerness was considered a "pathological" component to this chaos.[62] Referencing the writings of Lewis Mumford and Patrick Geddes, some of the earliest urban planners, Frisch demonstrates their belief that one aspect of cities' chaos was the "repulsive fleshly attractions between those of the same sex".[63] Frisch, thus, reveals how queerness has been equated with disorder and historically considered to be reversible through urban planning measures. As a result, the urban planning practice began structuring cities to accommodate a heterosexual lifestyle.[64] This belief that public space can serve as a tool for civilising the public resembles the interpretation of ancient Greek *agoras* discussed prior.

Frisch explains how twentieth-century urban planners referenced binaries between chaos/order and private/public in order to enforce the binary between heterosexual/queer, however, others depart from the usage of binaries when discussing the built environment, particularly when discussing gender and sexuality.

Kiri Crossland suggests that the notion of *queerness* can be employed to reference the subversion of dominant culture and the breakdown of its power structures—including the variety of binaries that have sustained these power structures, such as straight/gay or man/woman.[65] As a result, queerness can serve as the "ideal lens" for addressing a variety of social inequities within urban planning and design.[66] Thus, studying urban public space beyond binaries expands the scope for whom such discussions include and, as a result, ensures that any proposed solutions are as wide-reaching as possible.

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[61] Frisch, 261.
[62] Ibid, 258, 255.
[63] Ibid, 259.
[64] Ibid, 260.
[65] Kiri Crossland, "Sex(uality) in the city: Planning for queerer public space", MRC Agency, 19 August, 2021,
        https://www.mrcagney.com/about/blog/sexuality-in-the-city-planning-for-queerer-public-space/.
[66] Ibid.

Eva Schicker understands gender neutrality as an embodiment of the idea that the social and political structures, language, and behaviours of society must move beyond stereotypes regarding gender roles.[67] However, Federica Risiu asserts that gender-aware design, as opposed to gender-neutral design, should be the goal.[68] Risi further advises that gender should not be the sole focus, cautioning that gender-aware cities can continue to be inaccessible if other inequalities relating to residents' identity are disregarded.[69] This sentiment demonstrates the importance for another, more thorough, framework—which is why literature that discusses urban design utilising a queer framework is insightful.

Similarly to Frisch, Crossland understands that the nineteenth-century heteronormative agenda ensured that queer people would not be granted the same access to urban public spaces as straight people were.[70] However, Crossland adds upon Frisch's work by acknowledging that the existing discussions regarding sexuality and urban public space "relegate gender to an essentialist or binary concept where the only way for people to exist is as a man or a woman".[71]

Defining queer people as anybody who does not identify as *cishet*, Crossland argues that the inaccessibility of urban public spaces for queer people is more complex than these spaces' perceived safety. Crossland asserts that an absence of harassment or crime will not fix anything; instead, these spaces must be actively welcoming for people outside of cishet men.[72]

Crossland believes that urban public spaces can be queered by installing queer signage, so as to encourage new social norms.[73] Crossland, additionally, states that the 'eyes on the street' approach may not provide a sense of safety for queer people.[74] Alternatively, for queer people,

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[67] Eva Schicker, "Designing for gender neutrality", uxspot.io, 10 September, 2021, https://uxspot.io/designing-for-gender-neutrality.html.

[68] Thomas Ansell, "(Re-)designing gender-inclusive cities: How can we Make Urban Life Work for Everyone? With Federica Risi of EUKN", The Hague Humanity Pub, 7 March, 2023, https://www.humanityhub.net/news/re-designing-gender-inclusive-cities-how-can-we-make-urban-life-work-for-everyone-with-federica-risi-of-eukn/.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Crossland, "Sex(uality) in the city: Planning for queerer public space".

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

this sense of visibility can cause fear, stares, comments, or attacks, and as Myers illustrated, such surveillance measures ignore the power structures that sustain the dangers of urban public space for women and queer people.[75]

The National League of Cities (NLC) is an organisation based in the United States composed of civic leaders across the country working to improve the quality of life for their respective constituents.[76] Members of the NLC—Abygail Mangar and Lindsey Volz—wrote an article expressing how urban planners, architects, and developers are in privileged and powerful positions, capable of making decisions regarding the allocation of resources, the segregation of neighbourhoods, and the design and construction of public spaces.[77] Mangar and Volz explain the multifaceted impacts of these professions being historically dominated by white, cisgender men; for example, wastewater treatment plants are often built in close proximity to Black and Brown-majority neighbourhoods, and highway systems' construction often leads to the demolition of Black and Brown-majority neighbourhoods.[78]

Furthermore, Mangar and Volz express how the historical predominance of white, cisgender, male urban planners and designers has led to urban public spaces where the experiences of marginalised genders are not adequately considered, becoming unsafe or uncomfortable for them.[79] They assert that the process of planning and designing urban public spaces must incorporate these communities in order to become truly inclusive and safe.[80]

Mangar and Volz delineate certain features that could better accommodate the gender spectrum within public spaces, including: warm lighting, 'cosy corners,' non-gendered bathrooms, multi-use spaces, and visual signifiers representing the LGBTQIA+ community.[81]

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[75] Myers, "How More Security Makes Women and Queer People Feel Less Safe".
[76] "About NLC", National League of Cities, https://www.nlc.org/about/.
[77] Abygail Mangar and Lindsey Volz, "Fostering Safe and Healthy Public Spaces for LGBTQIA+, Women, & Non-Conforming Genders", National League of Cities, https://www.nlc.org/article/2022/06/28/fostering-safe-and-healthy-public-spaces-for-lgbtqia-women-non-conforming-genders/.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

Mangar and Volz's article demonstrates how organisations that include governmental leaders—such as the NLC—realise the impacts that urban planning and design choices have upon various marginalised communities, including trans and gender diverse people. This is significant as it exemplifies not only that the safety of TGD people within public spaces is being examined, but also that potential solutions are being contemplated. The World Bank's *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design* indicates how similar investigations are taking place on an international level.

The authors of this handbook acknowledge how urban planning and design practitioners have historically reinforced unequal gender roles, impacting mobility, access to public spaces, and safety for girls, women, and sexual and gender minorities.[82] According to them, many practitioners do not understand or accept that the lack of diverse voices involved in shaping the built environment sustains gender inequities; thus, they propose utilising access, mobility, safety, health, climate resilience, and security as points of contemplation throughout the urban design and planning processes, as a method for addressing and ameliorating gender inequities.[83]

Although this handbook being written from a top-down level represents significant progress, it is important to consider the intentions behind it. The authors posit that by making the planning and design process more gender-inclusive, women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities can contribute economic gains.[84] Thus, while notable that entities such as The World Bank are encouraging consideration of the gender spectrum, and the role that urban design and planning have in accommodating it, acknowledging the gender spectrum—and any community that has been historically ignored or ostracised—should stem from the belief in this community's right to comfort, happiness, and safety, as opposed to any potential economic benefits.

Another example of gender diversity being acknowledged within an institutional context is a written, and corresponding video, report led by Ammar Azzouz and Pippa Catterall. This

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[82] Chelina Odbert et. al, *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design* (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2020), www.worldbank.org/genderinclusivecities, 7-8.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid, 10.

report is entitled *Queering Public Space: Exploring the relationship between queer communities and public space* and was conducted between 2020-2021 as a collaboration between Arup and University of Westminster.

This report was the result of their research on the dynamics between public spaces and queer communities, guided by the following questions: "what are the key characteristics that contribute to queering public space? How do we protect what remains of queer memory in our cities? And how do we move beyond the gayborhood towards creating public spaces for all?"[85] This report will be discussed throughout the following chapters, as it is one of the theoretical frameworks for this research.

The literature reviewed in this section demonstrates how public space's exclusive dimensions have been discussed within various contexts. Further, it explored a growing body of literature studying the lack of accommodation for queer, trans, and gender diverse people across urban public spaces.

## 1.3 Urban Public Space in Amsterdam

As the case studies that will be analysed are based in Amsterdam, the following section will review literature discussing the development of public space and public architecture throughout this city. The origins behind the city's first public spaces and public buildings demonstrate how certain values guided their initiation and design.

In order to understand the histories behind Amsterdam's public spaces, it is crucial to identify what systems of governance were in place, since these administrative bodies are responsible for such public projects. Thus, Konrad Ottenheym's literature provides helpful insight; Ottenheym explains how throughout the seventeenth century, Amsterdam was ruled by "a class of wealthy merchants and bankers".[86]

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[85] *Queering Public Space*, 3.

[86] Konrad Ottenheym, "Amsterdam 1700: Urban Space and Public Buildings", *Studies in the History of Art* 66 (2005): 119, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42622380.

As Amsterdam became a centre for trade and commercial exchange, the population began to rapidly grow, thus tasking the city government with maintaining urban order—both physically, in regards to its expanding size, and in regards to its political, economic, and social dimensions.[87] Ottenheym describes how the aesthetic of Amsterdam became controlled by the city authorities, as they had established a connection between aesthetics and ethics, and thus, "the beauty of the city was regarded as an expression of good government", while also symbolising prosperity.[88] Public-facing design became seen as quintessential to maintaining the political, economic, and social order of Amsterdam.

Ottenheym traces the various top-down approaches that were taken so as to manage Amsterdam's aesthetic; first, they sought to achieve order and beauty through city extension projects which sought to regulate 'the character' of new urban areas through the scale of streets, town squares, and gardens.[89] Ottenheym describes the construction of the Town Hall between 1648 to 1665 as the pinnacle of all of the building activity taking place during this period (to be further discussed in section 4.1.3).[90]

Though focusing predominantly on the architecture of public buildings throughout the seventeenth century, Ottenheym's literature provides important historical context for this thesis; Amsterdam's government understood beauty as symbolic of power, and thus funded the construction of aesthetically pleasing public buildings and public spaces to solidify the reputation of the city and its government.

Burgers and Oosterman explain how the drastic population growth within Western cities brought discomfort amongst the bourgeois.[91] As a result, the upper class launched a "civilising offensive…regarding the urban underclass", on two fronts: within the home and within urban public spaces.[92]

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[87] Ottenheym, 119.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid, 119-120.
[90] Ibid, 130.
[91] Jack Burgers and Jan Oosterman, "Het publieke domein: Over de sociale constructie van openbare ruimte", *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 19, no. 1 (1992): 10, https://ugp.rug.nl/ast/article/view/23509/20963.
[92] Ibid.

Burgers and Oosterman express that the aim of this "civilising offensive" was to educate the 'underclass' on leading an orderly lifestyle inside and outside the home by propagating bourgeois behaviour.[93] Public spaces have been deemed the site for educating the public on certain behaviours, attitudes, and values for centuries—which have historically been guided by classist, elitist, and heteronormative beliefs.

Burgers and Oosterman explain how the bourgeois tried to "domesticate the people" within Amsterdam by domesticating public space; they explain how the "fear of leisure activities involving mass formation" influenced the abolition of carnivals that took place in Amsterdam's public spaces.[94] In 1871, a 'two-track policy' regarding leisure activities within public space was developed, wherein many popular public institutions were banned and alternative cultural and educational programming—that was considered 'high-standard'—became more accessible.[95]

For example, this same year, one of Amsterdam's popular carnivals was banned and the *Vereeniging tot Vereedeling van het Volksvermaak* (Association for the Promotion of Popular Entertainment) was formed, which began planning classical concerts in the Vondelpark.[96] This policy demonstrates how the tolerance for congregation within public spaces depended upon the proximity of the activity taking place to upper class preferences.

These two pieces of literature describe certain urban conditions, shifts, and decisions that took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while Jagoda Lintowski overviews how the perspective towards public space shifted within Amsterdam throughout the twentieth century.

Lintowski explains how, following World War II, "residents were seeking soothing, calming, safe, and inviting places to live in", and the municipality determined that public, green

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[93] Burgers and Oosterman, 10.
[94] Ibid, 11.
[95] Ibid, 11-12.
[96] Ibid.

space could provide this.[97] Prior to this period, Lintowski notes how urban greenery was predominantly a luxury found in more affluent neighbourhoods.[98] This illustrates how public green space became reconceptualised in the twentieth century.

Lintowski's analysis provides context for the Vondelpark's transition from being a private park to a public park in 1965 (to be further discussed in section 4.1.2). Simultaneously, Lintowski's analysis resembles sentiments recounted in Ottenheym's literature, wherein the city government utilised public-facing design features to relay certain messages to the public.

When considering the literature on the emergence and evolution of public space in Amsterdam, it is clear how the city's public spaces have continuously symbolised and relayed certain values to the public—whether that be in regards to the power, prestige, civility, or comfort of the city.

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[97] Jagoda Lintowski, "Amsterdam Extension Plan: Greenery organizing the city" (BA thesis, Delft
    University of Technology, 2022), 24.
[98] Ibid, 25.

# Chapter 2:

# Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks will contribute to analysing the dynamic between urban public spaces and trans and gender diverse people: Queering Public Space and Urban Social Visibility.

## 2.1 Queering Public Space

The *Queering Public Space* report by Azzouz and Catterall, mentioned in section 1.2, asserts how "public space is not controlled by the public or accessed evenly by its members".[99] Rather, they describe how the urban public spaces encountered today are the result of twentieth-century zoning practices which sought to "encode assumptions about gendered use of space", reflecting the historic ideological conception of "heterosexuality as the norm which marginalises and vilifies those who do not conform".[100]

This framework delineates the various consequences of public space's historical approach. For example, urban public spaces continue to be policed in ways which target queer activities, yet accommodate heterosexual activities, and terms such as "public safety" are often used to justify the surveillance of marginalised communities.[101] This framework argues that urban public spaces are treated as "heteronormative, middle-class, white spaces."[102]

*Queering Public Space*, thus, provides a multifaceted theoretical framework which, firstly, contextualises urban public space within its development throughout the twentieth century by white, cis male-dominated, and heteronormative professions, secondly, identifies particular design features within urban public space which exemplify the prescription and accommodation

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[99] *Queering Public Space*, 13
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.

of heteronormativity, and, lastly, offer 'micro-interventions' that acknowledge "humanity in its rich diversity".[103]

Azzouz and Catterall situate their framework, Queering Public Space, within the historical fact that urban public spaces have been designed by predominantly white cishet men and, as a result, are both controlled by and sustain the societal domination of this demographic—causing all others to potentially face discomfort or danger.[104] The interpretation of *queerness* employed in this thesis is derived from this framework—referring to the spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations that challenge heteronormative constructions as well as the subversion of such constructions and the power structures underpinning them.[105] Similarly to this thesis, the Queering Public Space framework understands how attuning to the perceptions and experiences of queer individuals will, in turn, attune to alternative communities who are impacted by heteronormative and exclusionary power structures.

This framework outlines various dimensions of the dynamic between queer people and urban public space, however, for the purpose of this thesis, only those pertaining to this research question will be incorporated. For example, *Queering Public Space* explains how queer people often need more privacy in public than urban public spaces are designed to provide; design features which intensify the visibility, and thus the vulnerability, of marginalised communities create public spaces which facilitate the domination of cis men.[106]

Azzous and Catterall note how, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban public spaces were reconfigured into rectilinear, enclosed, and monumental spaces, facilitating "enhanced sightlines", in order to control public order; yet, in reality, these features have fostered and sustained intimidating, male-dominated spaces.[107] Moreover, this reconfiguration has led to wide thoroughfares with increased visibility, "echoing soundscapes",

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[103] *Queering Public Space*, 13-16.
[104] Ibid, 14.
[105] Ibid, 3.
[106] Ibid, 14.
[107] Ibid.

and the placement of benches so as to gaze into the distance or at others—thus creating public spaces that, today, cause queer people feel the need to self-censor or avoid entirely.[108]

The data collection process will employ the Queering Public Space framework to examine what assumptions or intentions may have historically guided the design of the case studies and how certain design features may intensify the visibility, vulnerability, and discomfort of TGD people.

The authors provide several suggestions, referred to as 'micro-interventions', for urban public space design to cultivate a greater sense of belonging for marginalised communities.[109] These mico-interventions include the installation of street furniture that enables intimacy, as opposed to encouraging gazing and being gazed at; for example, benches placed across from each other, as well as the implementation of 'cosy corners', could allow those seated to see the space, and monitor if strangers are approaching, while still retaining privacy.[110] Cosy corners can be created by installing planters on either side of a bench, reducing the angles those seated can be seen from. Azzouz and Catterall also suggest the use of 'inclusive lighting', defined as softer, ambient lighting sources, as opposed to the intimidating security lighting often used.[111]

Importantly, the authors stress how "overplanning" should be avoided and rather, a queer urban public space "needs organic freedom to grow".[112] This organicism is further described as a lack of constraints on space usage; the respondents of their research described queer-inclusive spaces as having a "diverse feel", in terms of sightlines, scale, colours, and functions.[113]

The authors express that while their micro-interventions may seem to be merely features of good design, that is their point; these shifts are inherently not just for queer people, because attuning to queerness attunes to rejections of, or distance from, established and prescribed norms.

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[108] *Queering Public Space,* 14.
[109] Ibid, 18
[110] Ibid, 14, 18.
[111] Ibid, 14.
[112] Ibid 17.
[113] Ibid.

*Queering Public Space's* micro-interventions will be incorporated into the interview process so as to gather additional input from TGD people.

## 2.2: Urban Social Visibility

Urban Social Visibility is derived from Andrea Mubi Brighenti's book, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research* and offers insight regarding the dynamics and interactions caused by social visibility—the interplay of one's visibility in proximity to another's within public spaces. This will contribute to the case study analyses, when exploring what their designs' centralisation of social visibility may provoke, specifically for TGD people.

As a concept, urban social visibility is considered to be both relational and strategic, a quality that is "employed as a means of sorting, classifying and ranking" when encountering others.[114] Brighenti understands urban public space as "visible space", where social visibility serves as a tool to "test civilised and uncivilised behaviour" and determine what, or who, is 'in place' or 'out of place'.[115] This is defined as "street-level politics of visibility" which, Brighenti asserts, has led the 'modern city' to become "a large-scale conquest of visibility".[116] This framework, thus, understands visibility as a mechanism for establishing societal classifications.

Brighenti understands the public realm as "essentially categorial", a result of the societal inability to deal with strangers and "slender capacity to coexist in a civil manner".[117] This framework understands that urban social visibility facilitates the categorisation of behaviour within public spaces, a broader symptom of the societal difficulty to accept diversity.

Brighenti states that "no urban planning, urban design or architecture can dictate a single use of a given space; they can only provide a set of affordances, and…public space is constantly appropriated in a number of unforeseen ways".[118] The appropriation of public space is referred to

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[114] Andrea Mubi Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*, London: Palgrave Macmillan (2010): 44.
[115] Ibid, 119.
[116] Ibid, 137-139.
[117] Ibid, 119.
[118] Ibid,121.

as *territorialisation*, wherein visibility carves various invisible boundaries within the environment.[119]

Brighenti advises that analyses of public spaces should focus on the affordances taking place across various circumstances in order to understand how processes of social visibility unfold.[120] Thus, in employing Urban Social Visibility as a theoretical framework, the ensuing data collection process will analyse how the design features and affordances of each case study facilitate processes of social visibility and, consequently, forms of *territorialisation.*

These two theoretical frameworks productively intersect; in applying them together, the relationship between twentieth-century urban planners' conceptions of who the public entailed and how they should behave, the design of urban public spaces, and the dynamics that they motivate, become more explicitly clear.

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[119] Brighenti, 94.
[120] Ibid, 123.

# Chapter 3:

# Methodology

## 3.1: Data Collection

The case study method was used to investigate the dynamic between urban public space and TGD people. The case study method is defined by Robert Yin as an empirical exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.[121] The two case studies of this research are the Vondelpark and Dam Square.

The data collection process for each case study consisted of a mixed-methods approach, including historical overviews, spatial analyses, and interviews. As a result, three forms of data were collected: historical data, spatial characteristics, and the perceptions and experiences of TGD people.

Using literary research, the historical overview identified the demographics that initiated and designed each case study as well as the demographics they intended to serve. Further, *Queering Public Space* understands the naming of, and memorialization within, public spaces as the construction of a "public memory", indicating "what a society chooses to remember as significant".[122] Therefore, any presence of commemoration within each case study was analysed, providing insight into potential motivations guiding their development.

The spatial analysis employed two methods for analysing urban architecture and public space, simultaneously incorporating attunement to design features and aspects of social visibility that were identified within both theoretical frameworks.

Lastly, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview questions were inspired by the theoretical frameworks and methods of spatial analysis, however each interview slightly

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[121] Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishers, 2003), 13.
[122] *Queering Public Space,* 8.

deviated from the set of questions depending upon remarks made by the interviewees. The interview process provided qualitative data exemplifying TGD people's perceptions and experiences of public space and offering possible improvements within public space design moving forward.

### 3.1.1: Locations

The Vondelpark is considered a public "green oasis" within Amsterdam's city centre, offering views of water, opportunities to play sports, paths to walk, and plenty of lawns to sit or lay on.[123] Although currently, the Vondelpark is considered a public park, its history demonstrates how this was not always the case, and how its design was originally a tool for symbolising its exclusivity.

Dam Square was originally a purely functional dam created in the 13th century, yet has since developed into a bustling town square where a variety of markets, monuments, and protests have taken place over the last several centuries.[124] Dam Square is also surrounded by two pieces of architectural history—the Royal Palace *(Koninklijk Paleis)* and the New Church *(Nieuwe Kerk)*.[125] Although it has always been a public square, Dam Square has been appropriated by various publics throughout history, which remains the case today; the role that its name, design features, and the facilitation of social visibility amongst them, within this territorialisation will be deliberated.

These two urban public spaces were chosen as case studies for multiple reasons. Primarily, it is important to analyse different typologies of public space, as each is conceptualised, designed, and used differently. The Vondelpark was selected to represent the conditions, features, and interactions that accompany public parks, and Dam Square was selected to exemplify these aspects of a town square.

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[123] "Vondelpark", Gemeente Amsterdam, accessed 24 April, 2023,
https://www.amsterdam.nl/toerisme-vrije-tijd/parken/vondelpark/.
[124] "Dam Square in Amsterdam", Amsterdam Info, accessed 22 April, 2023, https://www.amsterdam.info/sights/dam_square/.
[125] Ibid.

An additional distinction between the two case studies emerged throughout their historical overviews and became increasingly apparent throughout the spatial analyses and interviews: the intentions which motivated each location's development. The Vondelpark was deliberately constructed to be a park of a certain landscape design, intending to offer a delineated set of functions for a particular user group. Alternatively, Dam Square evolved into a town square somewhat naturally and without a deliberate intention to function as such—thus, its design, corresponding features, and surroundings are relatively incohesive. This contrast provided important insight into the consequences of either over planning or under planning an urban public space, which will be discussed in later chapters.

Furthermore, these case studies were selected because they are very well-known spaces within Amsterdam for both local residents and tourists. Therefore, these sites are representative of spaces that various publics have sought out and territorialised throughout history.

Public parks and public squares differ in their conceptualisation, design, and usage. Parks are often constructed to provide momentary respite from the city streets, curating a natural, recreational, environment through the instalment of benches and the planting of flowers, trees, and lawns.[126] Public parks are also typically accompanied by a variety of rules regarding usage, thus simultaneously encouraging and controlling the public's ability to find comfort there. For example, within the Vondelpak, barbequing, campfires, any motorised vehicles, amplified music and instruments, nude sunbathing and sleeping overnight are prohibited.[127]

Alternatively, public squares have been considered to act as the "centre point for social and cultural life in the city", where the relationship between the square, the neighbouring buildings, and the sky "creates a genuine emotional experience".[128] Parks are frequently characterised as calm, relaxing spaces within otherwise busy, crowded cities, whereas public

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[126] BREC, "Learn why parks are important!" accessed 27 April, 2023,
https://www.brec.org/WhyParksareImportant#:~:text=Parks%20provide%20intrinsic%20environmental%2C%20aesthetic,and%20workers%2C%20and%20attract%20retirees..
[127] Dutch Amsterdam, "Vondelpark Amsterdam: the rules", last modified 11 January, 2023,
https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/278-vondelpark.
[128] Riham Nady, "What Makes a Public Square?" ARCH2o, accessed 27 April, 2023,
https://www.arch2o.com/reshaping-squares/.

squares are considered important precisely for their 'vitality'.[129] Thus, due to the various differences between public parks and squares, case studies that explored both contexts were selected.

Although the two typologies of public space are quite different, they share certain similarities. For example, both the Vondelpark and Dam Square have, or once had, large monuments commemorating aspects of Dutch history. Therefore, both of these public spaces uphold parts of the Netherlands' public memory. This feature of both public spaces will be analysed using *Queering Public Space's* interpretation of city monuments as demonstrative of the selective preservation of history, influenced by those with power over the built environment.[130]

The benches selected within each case study were based on their location within the site. Within the Vondelpark, a bench in front of the Vondel monument was selected, both to analyse the influences such monuments can have and because this bench was more recently installed, as will be discussed in the Findings chapter. Within Dam Square, there are not as many benches available, however one was selected that faces the two pieces of architectural history—the Royal Palace and the New Church—when seated on one side.

## 3.1.2: Historical overview

The first step of the data collection process was a historical overview of each location, which focused on how each public space was first imagined, by whom, and with what intended purposes—identifying where particular populations or demographics were mentioned, what design features were desired and why, and any attunement to social visibility within this processes.

The historical overview was guided by the two theoretical frameworks. Using the Queering Public Space framework, the identities and intentions of the figures that created or

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[129] Nady, "What Makes a Public Square?" https://www.arch2o.com/reshaping-squares/.
[130] *Queering Public Space*, 8.

designed each case study were considered, alongside their designs and the experiences their designs have since facilitated. The Urban Social Visibility framework encouraged contemplation over each case study's facilitation of social visibility through their design and provided affordances, as well as the history of territorialisation within the space.

### 3.1.3: Spatial Analysis

Following the historical analysis, a two-part spatial analysis of each location was conducted. The first part was based upon the Site and Place methodology from *Understanding Architecture*: *An introduction to architecture and architectural history* by Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch, which focuses predominantly on physical features.

Conway and Roenisch provide a set of categories to guide one's spatial analysis including: location/site/topography/orientation (providing a general overview of the location as well as how and where it situated) approach/setting (how the location is connected to its surroundings and adjacent spaces and how one enters the space) and density (how the location is composed and how condensed it is).[131] These categories structured the first component of the spatial analysis.

The second component draws from Siavash Jalaladdini and Derya Oktay's 'socio-spatial analysis' for urban public spaces.[132] In their methodology, they study both social attributes and physical forms.[133] The social attributes include user types (the various individuals and communities using the space), variety of activities (the different ways in which the space is being used), and safety (both physically, from natural, human, or non-human encounters, and psychologically, in regards to one's sense of security and control over their experience within the space).[134] The physical attributes include physical forms (the physical features found within the

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[131] Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch, *Understand Architecture: An introduction to architecture and architectural history* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 195-217.

[132] Siavash Jalaladdini and Derya Oktay, "Urban Public Spaces and Vitality: A Socio-Spatial Analysis in the Streets of Cypriot Towns", *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 35 (2012): 664-674, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.02.135.

[133] Ibid, 667.

[134] Ibid.

space), amenities of the space (the facilities, services, or resources the space offers), and variety of functions (the affordances provided by the space).[135]

Both methods of spatial analysis contributed to investigating the experiences that each case study's design facilitates. Further, the spatial analyses—especially in regards to the exploration of social attributes—assisted with questioning the extent to which urban public spaces accommodate TGD people.

Once the spatial analyses were complete, the resulting data was incorporated into the final step of the data collection process: the interviews. Six interviews were conducted with six people, all of whom identify as trans and/or gender diverse. The interviewees were acquired through personal networks.

The interview questions were based upon both theoretical frameworks—particular in regards to privacy, comfortability, self-censorship, social visibility, and territoriality. The design features and 'micro-interventions' identified by the *Queering Public Space* report were incorporated so as to explore how each public space's design did, or did not, impact the interviewees' perceptions or experiences and to what extent alternative features would, or would not, improve these perceptions or experiences.

Regarding the Urban Social Visibility framework, the interviewees were asked about their sense of social visibility and how this impacted their perceptions, behaviours, and/or experience. This framework was also employed to discuss the interviewees' interpretation and navigation of forms of territorialisation within the space.

## 3.2: Biographies of Interviewees

The interviews were conducted at varying times of day with the intention of acquiring data both while the sun was out and after it had set. In addition to biographical information of each interviewee, the location, date, and time of day of each interview will be noted in the following

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[135] Jalaladdini and Oktay, 667.

subsections. Varying transcription softwares were utilised due to financial barriers, thus the software used for each will also be indicated. The interviewees have been anonymised and will be referred to as: Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and so on.

## 3.2.1 Interviewee 1

Interviewee 1 (24 years old) is a non-binary person, using they/them/theirs pronouns. Their nationality is Japanese. They were born in Hillegom, a town in the Western Netherlands, raised in Haarlem, a city outside of Amsterdam, and moved to Amsterdam for university three years ago. Currently, they live in the Bijlmer area, studying for their Master's in sociology.

They were interviewed on May 12th at both the Vondelpark (22:10) and Dam Square (14:35). Their interview was transcribed using the software Descript (see Appendix for interview transcriptions).

## 3.2.2 Interviewee 2

Interviewee 2  (23 years old) is a non-binary person, using they/them/theirs pronouns. They originally lived in a small village on the outskirts of London, later moving to London. In 2019, they moved to Amsterdam and began studying for a Bachelor's in psychology.

They were interviewed on May 13th at both the Vondelpark (20:38) and Dam Square (22:45). Their interview was transcribed using the software Rev (see Appendix for interview transcriptions).

## 3.2.3 Interviewee 3

Interviewee 3 (23 year old) is a trans woman using she/her/hers pronouns. She's been living in Amsterdam for 10 months while pursuing her Master's in classics and ancient civilizations. Originally from Buffalo, New York, she considers herself an international within Amsterdam. She's also lived in Toronto and small towns in both Western New York and rural Ontario, and thus has a range of references for public spaces.

She was interviewed at the Vondelpark on May 17th (14:45) and Dam Square on May 20th (22:30). Her interviews were transcribed using the software Happyscribe (see Appendix for interview transcriptions).

### 3.2.4 Interviewee 4

Interviewee 4 (23 year old) is a trans non-binary person, using they/them/theirs pronouns. They are a local resident, having grown up in Abcoude, a town right outside of Amsterdam. They moved to Amsterdam in 2018 to study for a Bachelor's in media and communication and have been living there ever since.

They were only interviewed at Dam Square, on May 26th (17:00). Their interview was transcribed using the software Happyscribe (see Appendix for interview transcription).

### 3.2.5 Interviewee 5

Interviewee 5 (23 year old) is a trans non-binary person, using they/them/theirs pronouns. They are originally from Oslo, Norway, and moved to Amsterdam around two and a half years ago. They are currently studying for a Bachelor's in sociology.

They were interviewed only at the Vondelpark, on May 27th (17:45). Their interview was transcribed using the software Happyscribe (see Appendix for interview transcription).

### 3.2.6 Interviewee 6

Interviewee 6 (27 years old) identifies as a non-binary trans femme, using they/she pronouns. They moved to the Netherlands in autumn of 2022 from Ireland to study, currently residing in Amsterdam.

They were interviewed only at the Vondelpark, on May 27th (18:30). Her interview was transcribed using the software Happyscribe (see Appendix for interview transcription).

## 3.3: Data Analysis

The data collected through the aforementioned methods was analysed using a thematic analysis, a method that identifies patterns and themes within a data set. This thematic analysis was theory-driven, meaning the themes were derived in relation to the research question.[136]

Braun and Clarke outline the phases of conducting a thematic analysis as follows: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report.

Within this research, familiarisation with the data included revisiting the historical information acquired through the historical overviews, reviewing the conducted spatial analyses and the photographs taken throughout them, and carefully transcribing and relistening to the interviews.

The second phase consisted of generating initial codes based upon identifiable patterns across the historical overviews, spatial analyses, and interviews, and with association to the research question. These codes began rather broad and general; therefore, following this phase, the original codes were merged into more specific codes—which are listed in Figure 3.1.

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[136] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no.2 (2006): 6, http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
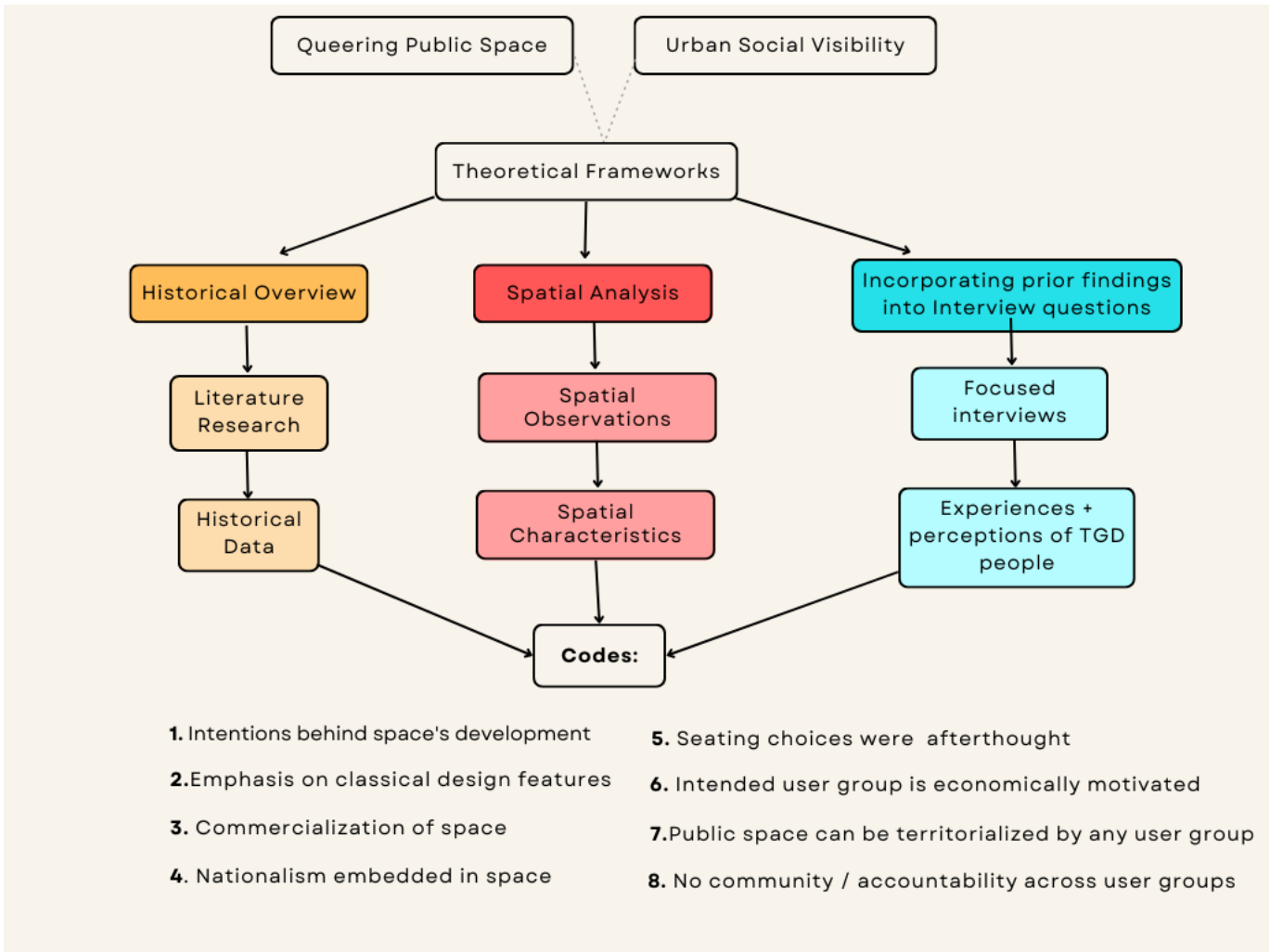
**Figure 3.1:** Second phase of Thematic Analysis, generating specific codes

In the third phase, themes and subthemes were searched for within the generated codes. These themes and subthemes were then reviewed, named, and described. The grouping of the codes into themes sought to specify the identified patterns and relate them more explicitly to the research question.  This phase is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

**Codes:**

1. Intended purpose/focus of space's development
2. Emphasis on classical design features
3. Commercialization of space
4. Nationalism embedded in space
5. Seating choices were afterthought
6. Paradox of visibility
7. Public space can be territorialized by any user group
8. No community / accountability across user groups

**Theme A**

The intentions behind the development of a public space impacts the perceptions and experiences of TGD people

**subthemes**

Public spaces without much conscious / intentional planning or design lead to spaces that feel threatening and unpleasant for TGD people

Public spaces that were historically private or exclusionary feel less welcoming or relatable for TGD people

**Theme B**

The orientation of public space seating can have a negative impact on the perceptions and experiences of TGD people

**subthemes**

Benches that are positioned outwards, or near busy thoroughfares, can cause TGD people to feel vulnerable due to the blind spots behind them or level of uncontrollable exposure

Benches faced outward can cause TGD people discomfort due to the inability to avoid eye contact with strangers

**Theme C**

The affordances provided by public spaces can negatively impact TGD people's' perceptions and experiences

**subthemes**

Public space typically offers limited options for seating/usage, restricting TGD people's ability to control their level of visibility, exposure, and proximity to strangers

The amenities offered by public spaces do not meet the needs of TGD people, as they tend to centralize nationalism, commercialism

**Figure 3.2:** Third phase of Thematic Analysis, production of themes and subthemes from generated codes

Following the third phase, each theme was further analysed in relation to its corresponding subthemes, producing certain findings, which will be demonstrated and discussed throughout the Findings and Discussion chapters.

## 3.2: Limitations of Study

Due to time constraints—both in regards to the amount of time living and forming a network within the Netherlands, and in regards to the set amount of time for conducting this research—there are certain limitations to this study.

Firstly, with additional time, this research could have benefited from a greater number of case studies, analysing a wider range of public space typologies. Furthermore, incorporating additional interviewees so as to expand the range in age, background, and gender identity would have contributed more variation in perspective. It may have also been insightful to have conducted interviews with a group of cishet men, so as to study contrasts in perceptions and experiences more directly.

Furthermore, the data of this research was limited by the inability to schedule interviews with every interviewee at both case studies. In addition, only half of the interviews were conducted during nighttime—when the user groups and usages of public spaces shift drastically—due to scheduling conflicts.

<div align="center">

Chapter 4:

Research Findings

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This chapter will first share the data derived from the historical overview, spatial analysis, and interviews of the Vondelpark and will then do the same for Dam Square. The themes, subthemes, and findings that were identified through the thematic analysis will be demonstrated within diagrams at the end of this chapter. In the following chapter, the relationship between the research findings and the research question will be discussed.

## 4.1. The Vondelpark

### 4.1.1 Historical Overview

The objectives that influenced the creation of the Vondelpark were a significant component to its historical overview. The interrelation between these objectives and the Vondelpark's design became apparent, exemplifying the impact that the intentionality behind a public space's development can have in general, and in regards to the perceptions and experiences of TGD people.

The Vondelpark was originally called "the New Park", first envisioned in 1864 by Christiaan Pieter van Eeeghen—an upper class, white, male businessman—alongside other "notables of the City of Amsterdam".[137] This name was likely chosen because Amsterdam had become "increasingly poor in nature"—due to urban expansion and the pressures this placed on land development—thus parks were rather rare.[138]

Van Eeeghen and his collaborators formed the "Association to Establish a Park in Amsterdam for Coaches and to Walk Around" *(Vereniging tot aanleg van een rij- en wandelpark*

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[137] "The history of the Vondelpark 1864-1884", In Het Vondelpark, last modified 17 May, 2023, https://www.inhetvondelpark.nl/geschiedenis-history.html
[138] "History of the Vondelpark", Het Vondelpark, accessed 13 April, 2023, https://www.hetvondelpark.net/Feiten/GeschiedenisVanHetVondelpark.

*te Amsterdam)* in 1864, which consisted exclusively of "the well-to-do bourgeoisie".[139] The same year, this association became a legal entity and, thus, the park was owned by a private, invite-only, administration until nearly a century later, when it was sold to the municipality in 1953.[140]

Before becoming a public park, the Vondelpark's exclusionary administration influenced its design and usage, as well; a "superintendent house" was installed at the park's entrance, monitoring who entered and whether they were allowed based upon their apparent class status—they were authorised to prohibit any "poorly dressed citizens" or "servants" from entering.[141] The elitism of the Vondelpark's origins carried into its physical and social dimensions, as well.

The name "New Park" did not last long; in 1867, a three metre tall, bronze, monument for the Dutch poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel was installed within the park, leading it to be re-registered as the Vondelpark.[142] The commemoration of a poet/playwright resembles the 'two-track policy' of the late 1800s, which banned certain public activities, such as carnivals, in favour of others, such as classical concerts within the Vondelpark (see section 1.3). Therefore, the memorialisation of Vondel was likely intended to sustain the characterisation of Amsterdam's public spaces as sites of particular cultural attitudes and interests.

Renaming the park after this figure exemplifies how those with power over the urban environment can determine what and who gets remembered; Vondel has been written into Amsterdam's public memory, allowing his life to become a legacy, a privilege that not many people are granted—especially those that are not white, male, or cishet.[143] Though the intentions behind the renaming of the park are not publicly recorded, this choice was likely made so as to

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[139] "History of the Vondelpark", https://www.hetvondelpark.net/Feiten/GeschiedenisVanHetVondelpark; "The history of the Vondelpark 1864-1884", https://www.inhetvondelpark.nl/geschiedenis-history.html.
[140] "History of the Vondelpark", https://www.hetvondelpark.net/Feiten/GeschiedenisVanHetVondelpark.
[141] "The history of the Vondelpark 1864-1884", https://www.inhetvondelpark.nl/geschiedenis-history.html
[142] Ibid.
[143] *Queering Public Space*, 8.

ensure preservation of a specific constructed urban history which, perhaps, the name "New Park" could not grant.



**Figure 4.1:** Plan for completion of the Vondelpark, by Jan David and Louis Paul Zocher, 1875

**Figure 4.2:** Drawing of Vondel monument after being unveiled in 1867

The Vondelpark's historical overview illustrates who and what motivated its creation, and how these intentions influenced the site itself. For example, from the very beginning, binaries of class status (bourgeois/commoner) were intertwined with the Vondelpark, limiting who could be involved in its administration and who could visit.

## 4.1.2: Spatial Analysis

The first component of this spatial analysis considered topography/orientation, location/site, approach/setting, and density, following Conway and Roenisch's methodology. This aspect of the spatial analysis illustrated various physical dimensions of this location and the selected bench within.

Analysing the topography/orientation of a site provides an overview of the location and any natural features within. The Vondelpark spans 470,000 square metres which is filled with a variety of trees, plants, lawns, and ponds, creating various ecosystems.[144] As a whole, the Vondelpark is not very elevated, however the selected bench is placed in an area that is elevated four metres.



**Figure 4.3:** Elevation of the Vondelpark upon topographic map, 2023

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[144] "Vondelpark Amsterdam", https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/278-vondelpark.

**Figure 4.4:** Elevation of the selected area for spatial analysis and interviews upon topographic map, 2023

By analysing the location/site, any commercial considerations that motivated the choice of location can be identified.[145] Prior to being developed, the Vondelpark was originally an empty plot of land in the peat meadows outside of the Singelgracht.[146] Once the land was acquired, the plot was transformed by garden architects Jan David and Louis Paul Zocher.[147]

The two designed the park in the Romantic English landscape style, which sought to mimic nature through "winding paths, unexpected places and graceful bridges".[148] This landscape style regarded nature as a source of sensuality, moral guidance, and religious insight, designing spaces so as to embed these qualities into one's experience there.[149] The layout of the Vondelpark is also considered to be in the *Serpentine Style*.[150]

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[145] Conway and Roenisch, 196.

[146] "Vondelpark Amsterdam", https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/278-vondelpark; "The Vondelpark: a gift from the elite", Gemeente Amsterdam, 11 February 2020, https://www.amsterdam.nl/nieuws/achtergrond/vondelpark/.

[147] "Vondelpark Amsterdam", https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/278-vondelpark; "The Vondelpark: a gift from the elite", https://www.amsterdam.nl/nieuws/achtergrond/vondelpark/.

[148] "The Vondelpark: a gift from the elite."

[149] "Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art, and Landscape Design", The Morgan Library & Museum, accessed 2 May, 2023, https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/romantic-gardens.

[150] "Vondelpark", The Garden Guide, accessed 11 May, 2023, https://www.gardenvisit.com/gardens/vondelpark.

The Serpentine Style creates continual curves within a space, thus one's approach into the Vondelpark is structured by curvilinear pathways.[151] These pathways are lined with trees and bushes or have been carved beside ponds, contributing to the sense of romanticism and sensuality intended by this landscape style. The approach, or route, to a space "sets the scene"; therefore, the pathways throughout the Vondelpark represent the broader atmosphere of the site.[152]

In approaching the selected bench from any direction, one walks through and along various curvilinear paths. Trees and bushes line the parameters of the routes and bikers, skaters, joggers, and pedestrians populate them. The selected bench is placed around the bend of one of such curvilinear paths.

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[151] "Serpentine Style", The Landscape Guide, accessed 11 May, 2023, https://www.gardenvisit.com/history_theory/garden_landscape_design_articles/historic_design_styles/serpentine_garden_design_style.
[152] Conway and Roenisch, 201.

**Figure 4.5:** One curvilinear path approaching selected bench, circled in red

The Vondelpark is placed within an urban setting, as it is located within the borough of Amsterdam-Zuid. Urban density considers the compactness of spaces such as squares or parks in relation to surrounding buildings; although the Vondelpark is nestled within Amsterdam, claiming a vast amount of space, it still contains a sense of urbanism due to the visibility of surrounding buildings, the sounds of the cityscape, the presence of buildings throughout the park, and the active nature of the park itself.[153]

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[153] Conway and Roenisch, 203.
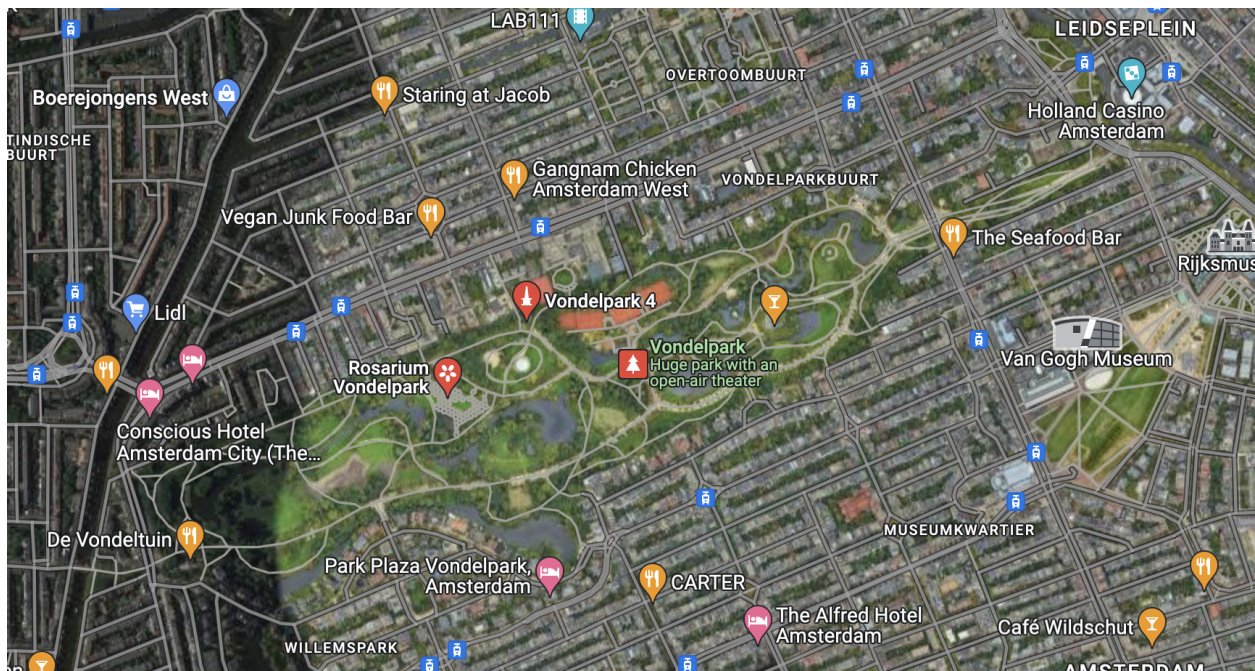
**Figure 4.6:** Aerial perspective of the Vondelpark in relation to surrounding area, Google Maps, 2023

The physical attributes of a socio-spatial analysis include the space's physical forms, amenities, and variety of functions. The predominant physical form at this location was the selected bench, which was sat upon for the spatial analysis and interview process. Additional, surrounding amenities include waste bins, the restaurant *Park Zuid*, the Vondel monument, two porta potties, other benches, and large lawns. Each of the surrounding amenities hosted varying functions depending upon the user group.

The selected bench was part of a custom line of park furniture made for the Vondelpark, all of which was constructed using cast iron.[154] This commission was part of a park renovation program in 2011; updating the park furniture was included in this project as they are considered to play a "critical role in the impression of the park".[155] Emphasis has continuously been placed upon the design of the Vondelpark in regards to the impression it grants the public.

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[154] "Vondelpark Furniture", Anouk Vogel, accessed 5 May, 2023, https://www.anoukvogel.nl/work/vondelpark-furniture.
[155] "Vondelpark", Archello, accessed 5 May, 2023, https://archello.com/project/vondelpark.

The designers behind the custom line of park furniture expressed that their work was inspired by the Vondelpark's Romantic English landscape style.[156] They sought to combine elegant ornamentation with simple materials so as to create comfortable, functional, and durable benches.[157]



**Figure 4.7:** Various designs created for the Vondelpark benches by Anouk Vogel, 2011

This bench's design is, therefore, symbolic and communicative; it exemplifies the municipality's continued commitment to designing the Vondelpark as a site of elegance and ornamentation. Further, the bench's physical form is relatively prescriptive: although it's devoid of arm rests, which would divide the bench so as to prevent lying down or sitting close to another person, its structure consists of a backrest and a seat, therefore there are not many options for usage.

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

**Figure 4.8:** Design upon the selected bench

A waste bin is placed to the left of the bench, as was observed at various benches throughout this site. It has been suggested that placing benches close to other amenities can cause them to become "a catalyst for social activity".[158] The sense that this bench is meant to provoke social activity is intensified by its placement between two benches on either side, about half a metre apart.

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[158] "A Primer on Searing", Project for Public Spaces, 31 December, 2008, https://www.pps.org/article/generalseating.

**Figure 4.9:** Proximity of selected bench (encircled in red) to waste bin and other benches

Behind the bench is the restaurant *Park Zuid*, consuming a large amount of the visual landscape through its architectural design. The bench has been placed and oriented to face the Vondel monument, which is not necessarily an amenity, although its outer wall provides informal seating space for certain user types, as is the same case for the lawn below it.



**Figure 4.10:** Restaurant Park Zuid, photo by Pieternel Hulsenbek

**Figure 4.11:** User types seated upon monument and lawn below, as seen from selected bench

As mentioned within *Queering Public Space*, historically, urban planners reconfigured organic spaces into rectilinear, enclosed, and monumental spaces to control public order, simultaneously fostering male-dominated spaces.[159] Although this area is not strictly rectilinear, the selected bench is placed between various walking paths to its backside and additional walking paths, an open lawn, and the Vondel monument to its front. Therefore, it is relatively enclosed within a highly designed and monumental rectangular formation.

The lawn and the Vondel monument, which the bench faces, serve as informal amenities while also offering an array of potential functions. These functions, in turn, enact different forms of territorialisation, as they enable various individuals or groups to claim and appropriate parts of the space. The assertion of one's territory depends upon one's comfortability navigating the social visibility which permeates this area and these spots in particular.

Upon the lawn, a diverse range of user groups partake in numerous activities. Some examples include individuals reading alone, groups of friends having picnics, families playing, and younger men drinking and playing music from large speakers. Each individual or group utilises the high degree of social visibility to claim their spot; the invisible territory lines are made discernible by the visibility of the area. Although these territory lines seemed to be mostly respected, on multiple field visits, men were observed biking through the lawn and disrupting others' territory—demonstrating the penetrable form of territorialisation that urban social visibility creates.

At the centre of the lawn is the Vondel monument, designed by Louis Royer and its pedestal designed by Pierre Cuypers.[160] Vondel was sculpted sitting in a chair with an open book in one hand and an ink pen in the other, his head decorated with a wreath. Around the pedestal's corners are four sandstone angels, each symbolising parts of Vondel's work: tragedy, satirical

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[159] *Queering Public Space,* 14.
[160] "Vondelpark in Amsterdam", Amsterdam Info, accessed 7 May, 2023, https://www.amsterdam.info/parks/vondelpark/;
        "Memorial (D6) Vondel Monument", Monumenten Register, accessed 7 May, 2023,
        https://monumentenregister.cultureelerfgoed.nl/monumenten/504742.

poem, didactic poem, and sacred poem.[161] The monument is enclosed by a decorative, wrought iron fence and a stone barrier surrounds the monument's circular terrain.



**Figure 4.12:** Vondel monument shown from the side

Vondel's portrayal honours his role within the Dutch public memory, through the monument's large size, expensive materiality, and the Romantic style of its ornamentation. Individuals sit upon the outer wall, some individually and some with groups, either talking, eating, playing music, or sitting and gazing outwards.

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[161] "Memorial (D6) Vondel Monument", https://monumentenregister.cultureelerfgoed.nl/monumenten/504742.

Jalaladdini and Oktay understand the safety of an urban public space as one's sense of protection from physical harm—including natural, artificial, and human elements—as well as a sense of psychological security—including feeling a sense of control over one's environment and the ability to maintain privacy.[162]

The selected bench is not covered, therefore it would not provide much protection from natural elements, such as rain or snow. However, due to how the Vondelpark is regulated, it innately provides protection from artificial elements, including cars and other motor vehicles, which are banned from the park—excluding police vehicles, which were seen driving through this location on various field visits.

The bench does not provide safety from human elements; as outlined within *Queering Public Space*, benches that stand as sole entities, and which are oriented so as to face directly outwards, do not feel safe for many demographics, including TGD people.[163] The exposure that this bench subjects one to results from its openness, further intensified by the placement of other benches beside it and its close proximity to multiple thoroughfares.

This bench is incapable of providing much psychological security; it is not possible to feel in control of one's environment when only facing one direction, with one's back to a range of people, amenities, and movements. It is also not completely clear how to exit the park from this location since there are multiple paths without clear signage as to where they lead.

Further, there is no sense of privacy at this location. By sitting at this bench, one is exposed to those throughout the lawn and upon the Vondel monument, while also visible to those on either side and behind them.

During the course of the day, the sun's brightness guarantees the visibility of every guest in this area. Once the sun has set, there is only one lamp post nearby. The lack of adequate

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[162] Jalaladdini and Oktay, 667.
[163] *Queering Public Space*, 14.

lighting reduces one's visibility, yet simultaneously makes the space feel less secure; the Vondelpark does not provide the ambient lighting discussed within *Queering Public Space*—which, according to this framework, contributes to the male-dominated nature of public spaces.[164]

## 4.1.3: Interviews

The exclusionary and class-conscious intentions behind the Vondelpark were sensed by various interviewees, though centuries old. These interviewees perceived and/or experienced a sense of intolerance or indirectly enforced etiquette, which they felt was facilitated either by the landscape and bench design, the unavoidable social visibility, or the surrounding amenities.

Interviewee 3 stated, with regards to the Vondelpark being designed according to the Romantic English landscape style, that the space "feels that way", noting how the park doesn't feel natural and, instead, contains a certain "prestige", which made her feel as though "it's designed to have someone at the centre looking out over everything".

Interviewee 5 noted how the Vondelpark is "very curated". Similarly, Interviewee 6 expressed that the Vondelpark felt "artificial and manicured", further expressing how, when seated at the selected bench, they wouldn't feel comfortable reclining or lying down, since they feel like they "should be more proper", due to "what seems appropriate to be seen doing on this exposed bench".

Thus, the historic intention to create a park that idealised and romanticised nature through a particular landscape style remains noticeable through its continued artificial and curatorial aesthetic, influencing how interviewees perceive the space.

The landscape design and ornamentation of the Vondelpark has also facilitated certain social dynamics. This is demonstrated, for example, by the discomfort expressed by Interviewee 6 to sit in any alternative fashion due to the prescriptive design of the bench.

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[164] *Queering Public Space*, 13.

Additional comments regarding social discomfort arose in regards to the bench's placement upon a thoroughfare. The omnipresence of benches upon pathways throughout the Vondelpark is another result of its landscape design; narrow, curvilinear pathways are a common feature of Romantic English landscapes, as discussed in section 4.1.2, therefore the placement of benches upon such thoroughfares likely seemed to be the only option. However, the benches' placement is also connected to a larger trend across public spaces, wherein benches are placed and oriented in highly visible positions.

The selected bench—as well as nearly every other bench within the Vondelpark—is oriented so that when seated, one is positioned to gaze at the thoroughfare, the lawn, and the Vondel monument. The curvilinear pathways of a Romantic English landscape in tandem with the benches' forward-facing orientation create an experience, for those sitting upon the bench, of intense social visibility. This orientation creates a dynamic wherein both the seated individual is highly exposed to those in front of them, and those in front are highly exposed to those seated.

Every interviewee made note of the bench's close proximity to the thoroughfare and orientation towards the lawn, though each had different perceptions and experiences of the sense of social visibility that this facilitated.

For example, Interviewee 5 stated that the selected bench felt "very exposed", which they attributed to it being on a thoroughfare, noting there being "people in every direction". Interviewee 1, who was interviewed at the Vondelpark after the sun had set, stated that their sense of exposure was "a bit in the middle", explaining how we were not on the park's main road, but acknowledged that "the fact that we are facing a pathway and we're facing a big patch of grass where people are sitting" made them more visible. They, further, felt how the darkness provided by the time of day added "a level of privacy", which they enjoyed, stating how "it's very nice, to just be invisible". Thus, the time of day can cause one's sensed degree of exposure to fluctuate.

However, other interviewees' comments regarding the bench's orientation had less to do with their visibility to others and more to do with the experiences it created, which opposed the experiences that they desired.

For example, Interviewee 6 expressed, "I honestly wouldn't choose to be sat in the path, I feel like I'm sat in the thoroughfare". They further express how:

*"The placement, right here, facing the grass where all the people are. You're not facing out into the nature, really. I mean, sure, there's nature. I mean, nature is a strong word. There's greenery everywhere. There's trees everywhere. But it's kinda weird to me not to be looking at the lake".*

Interviewee 3, also, noted how this bench would not be the kind of seating she would have chosen, explaining how a bench facing nature, as opposed to other people or in close proximity to a thoroughfares, would be her "ideal", further expressing how the "landscape model makes it harder to appreciate the nature because it feels more like a square that, incidentally, has some grass and trees". Evidently, both the orientation of the bench and the landscape design of the park are not providing the interviewees with the experiences they would prefer.

Interviewee 2 similarly noted how this bench's spot felt "super visible, because of the pathway", expressing a lack of control over this visibility since their back was "facing a whole area of the park".

Comparably, Interviewee 6 made note of how their back was to the restaurant, *Park Zuid*, and to two curvilinear pathways, making them feel not "as aware of my surroundings as I might want to be", explaining how the bench's placement makes them feel as though they would not have much control over a confrontation were one to arise, since there is a large pond on one side and only a few pathways to run towards, causing the bench to feel as though "your back is against the wall".

An additional component to the orientation of the selected bench pertained to its elevation; Interviewee 5 communicated how, when sitting upon the bench, it felt as though they were positioned above those seated on the lawn in front, looking down at them, as opposed to when one is seating on the lawn amidst strangers and can feel "more on the level of everyone else" and vice versa. As overviewed in section 4.1.2, this area of the park was slightly elevated, so this could be a result of both topographic and design features.

Interviewee 2 stated, "I'm definitely looking at people, so I expect that people are looking at me". This bench's facilitation of reciprocal social visibility was perceived differently by Interviewee 3, who expressed:

> *"Something I think about a lot with these benches is that it's like, in addition to feeling like I'm being people watched, I feel very self conscious about people watching others. I don't know where to look because I don't want other people to feel surveilled. But there's really no other option when you're at one of these benches".*

Interviewee 6 expressed similar sentiments, noting how they felt "at a remove" from those upon the gross in front of us, in turn making them feel as though they were "surveilling everyone", expressing that "it feels almost voyeuristic to be facing all the people on the grass".

Despite how the interviewees shared varying levels of discomfort with the bench's orientation, they all noted how they typically choose a more secluded spot near nature when visiting public parks.

Each interviewee expressed that they would have preferred a spot that was more disconnected from the pathways and closer to nature, such as "overlooking the water…on the grass" (Interviewee 2), or "somewhere with a view" (Interviewee 6).

Interviewee 2 expressed how there are particular spots within the Vondelpark that they know queer people tend to congregate at, which is where they would have gone had we not been there specifically for this research. This form of territorialisation demonstrates how public space

can be informally queered; TGD people can reappropriate space through the affordances provided throughout the Vondelpark.

Although fortunate that the Vondelpark offers a variety of affordances due to its extensive size, many interviewees noted how the differing forms of territorialisation taking place around us were not equal—which, perhaps, is what motivates TGD people to seek out more secluded spots.

For example, Interviewee 5 noted how they feel more inclined to sit on the grass than upon a bench since this is often where there are "groups of men who are sitting and smoking". Interviewee 6 brought up how, although the forms of territorialisation around us were relatively equal spatially, this was not the case "in terms of consideration of the space", mentioning how "there's at least two or three different people blasting their music".

Along similar lines, Interviewee 3 explained how she considers there to be two main groups that most strongly assert their territory within the Vondelpark:

*"You often see older people who take a bench or take a seat and people watch in a way that I've always found kind of strange and surveilling. A lot of the times that I have gotten nasty looks from people or verbal comments, it has been older people".*

With regards to the second group, she explains:

*"Usually groups of young men form these little, like, colonies. And then it's always like, okay, I see that from a distance. I'm like, I'm going to take this route. I'm going to go away".*

When Interviewee 2 was asked if they would sit at this bench with a group of TGD friends, they responded, "I feel like we would also probably move just slightly away from the very hetero group", in reference to a large group of people drinking alcohol, smoking, and dancing to their music on the lawn in front of us.

Thus, although the Vondelpark provides a large amount of space, and thus offers a great variety of affordances, for TGD people, the option chosen cannot always stem from personal desire, but must be motivated by their sense of safety and comfortability within a spot and in relation to the user types nearby.

The interviewees were asked if certain micro-interventions offered within the *Queering Public Space* report could increase their sense of safety or comfort at the selected bench.

With regards to the micro-intervention suggesting benches be placed across from other benches, rather than facing outwards, Interviewee 1 expressed that they would feel less comfortable, explaining how they are usually "not in the mood to talk to strangers all that much, and that really invites it". Similarly, Interviewee 5 felt that this would feel "very confronting… Then you're forced to be in interaction with the people on the other bench".

Interviewee 6 felt that if they were with a group that was large enough to fill both benches, it could be "a nice little intimate space", however if that was not the case, they stated, "it would be really strange…it would be like being on the subway where you have to politely avoid people's eye contact".

Alternatively, Interviewee 3 expressed that this would make her feel more comfortable and "a bit more safe", explaining how this mainly would provide her with "social comfort", since she would not have to feel "self conscious about people watching others".

There were varying thoughts in response to whether 'cosy corners' would increase the interviewees' sense of comfort and safety. Interviewee 3 responded:

> *"I would absolutely love that…that would be very cool, both in the perspective of privacy and also just in the sense of like, I don't know, that just sounds kind of pleasant. Just like having plants framing the structure feels a little bit more like a structure instead of just like a weird outpost".*

Interviewee 3's responses to these micro-interventions differed at Dam Square, where she was interviewed after the sun had set—so the time of day, and the spatial context, is crucial when considering the implementation of such features. However, other interviewees, who were interviewed at the Vondelpark while the sun was still out, had a different perspective. For example, Interviewee 5 responded:

*"I don't know because then you're also losing vision….I don't know, I feel like being a visible trans person or being a visible queer person requires you to be on guard a lot. I think it might make me feel nervous if it's actually just some plants and then people are around me. I think I might feel less in control because I can't see who's around me or what's going on".*

Interviewee 6 explained:

*"I mean it depends to what degree it impedes vision. My first instinct is, that sounds nice. I just like plants. I feel like this is the thing, I just want to look at the plants and be surrounded by the plants…I think in terms of, if they're sufficiently large and dense to make me feel less exposed, then that makes sense. Like if someone coming from either path can't just glance and be like.. and see who is sitting here, then that does seem nicer. Again, I would like it not to be to the detriment of my own field of vision, but I guess that's a trade off".*

There are evidently a variety of considerations that should accompany such micro-interventions.

Although many of the affordances provided by the Vondelpark are oriented towards sitting or reclining—such as its lawns and benches—since these activities often accompany one's visit to a public park, alternative amenities are also offered, such as cafés, trash bins, porta potties, and monuments. Some of these amenities serve more functional purposes and others, more recreational. However, it became apparent that the more functional and seemingly crucial amenities (such as bathroom facilities) were given the least thought. This could be due to how functional amenities are funded through municipal budgets, whereas recreational amenities are privately funded.

All interviewees stated negative perceptions of *Park Zuid*, stating it seemed "kind of fancy" (Interviewee 2) or "pretty overpriced" (Interviewee 3) and would likely not visit. Interviewees 5 and 6 had entered the café prior to the interview to use the bathroom. In regards to this experience—which cost €1, enforced by an attendant standing outside of the bathrooms—Interviewee 5 explained:

> *"It's like either you do the porta potties, which are absolutely filthy and disgusting, or I pay money to go to a very, kind of, fancy spot where it's like, the toilet is not only gendered. but it's also guarded. So you have someone observing you go in, which I always hate because one thing is when I can, like, slip into a gendered toilet and run in, do my thing, run out. But when you have someone there who's seeing you go into a certain bathroom…"*

Interviewee 6 expressed:

> *"The toilet situation is deeply unpleasant. The porta potties are just disgusting. They're not maintained at all. There's nothing to wash your hands with. And there's just, like, not enough. There's so many people here and there's two or three portaloos and a weird urinal thing that grosses me out. The cafe is very, like, unapproachable is too strong a word, but it's not…it's huge. And you just have a queue of people waiting for a table and then everyone at a table. Like it's clearly not a public amenity. And going in there, I was very aware that I'm not quite sneaking in because people don't care that much. But you know, you're asked when you use the bathroom, are you a guest?"*

Evidently, for reasons both pertaining to gender binaries—of male/female—and class binaries—of guest/non-guest—this amenity did not accommodate the TGD interviewees as it was both unapproachable as a café, financially and architecturally, and uncomfortable as a bathroom.

The other amenity at this location was the Vondel monument, positioned directly in front of the selected bench. Interviewee 1 stated they "don't really care" about it and "don't even know who" it represents. Interviewee 2, also, expressed that they "didn't even know who that statue was". Interviewee 3 noted that she would not sit upon the outer wall of the monument—as others

were doing throughout our interview—"for public and exposure reasons" and, also, that she did not find it "visually interesting".

The interviewees were asked how, or if, it would change their experience for the monument to be replaced with one of a TGD figure, as proposed by *Queering Public Space*. Interviewee 1 expressed how they'd think, "oh, that's very nice, good job Amsterdam", but that it probably wouldn't affect them "in their core". Interviewee 2, similarly, said that they would think "ah that's nice", but that "after like the fourth time, it wouldn't really matter". Interviewee 3 explained that:

*"That would probably make me feel a bit more comfortable. It probably wouldn't be that huge just because it's easy to pay lip service with that kind of thing. But yeah, it's definitely better than what is there. And it would definitely add—at least I would be thinking, if someone was being transphobic to me right now, at least it'd be a fun, ironic element to the story \*laughs\*".*

When asked about other forms of queer signage, similar responses were received. Regarding rainbow crosswalks, as mentioned within *Queering Public Space,* Interviewee 3 notes that, "half the time I never notice it", and that their presence "doesn't make that big of a difference" to her. Interviewee 2 similarly responded by noting how such additions wouldn't increase their comfortability, though they could potentially feel more inclined to sit there. Interviewee 6 responded by explaining:

*"My first impulse with regard to signage in general is just that it's not sufficient in and of itself. I think, at the same time, if it's something that would lead queer and trans people to congregate here because of that, then it would become a more comfortable space".*

When asked if such features would increase their comfortability, Interviewee 1 expressed:

*"I don't think so because, I don't know, for me that kind of stuff to a certain degree feels kind of performative, and like again, the thing I said about, there's always a risk of*

*someone who is queerphobic being in here, and the fact that this path is rainbow coloured will not stop them from coming here".*

Interviewee 5 stated a similar perspective:

*"Honestly, I don't think it does that much. It's like the rainbow benches. It's like, it's just there, but you can get harassed on the rainbow bench. It doesn't really affect how people act".*

Similarly, when asked if rainbow flags or crosswalks would increase their comfortability, Interviewee 6 stated:

*"Eye roll for the record…No, not in the slightest. Like the rainbow crosswalk shit in particular, I'm like, this is just a waste of public money. Put it somewhere that's actually useful. Give it to a queer org, or give us a fucking hostel or something, you know? It's lip service, it's hollow, like, spectacle, and it's self congratulatory".*

The interviews' sentiments resemble the cautionary advice written within *Queering Public Space* in regards to explicitly queer symbols; they note how "care should be taken… to avoid such interventions becoming tokenistic cliches, so thinking about images which speak of diversity and inclusion for all may be a better solution".[165] The authors indicate public art as one opportunity for producing less tokenistic interventions within public space—yet, certain interviews expressed how more practical interventions could promote inclusion more productively.[166]

Interviewee 2 said that they liked the idea of more gender-neutral signage, although not because it would increase their comfortability, but because, as they state it, "let's normalise diverse and also not as gendered signage". This resembles the comments made by Interviewees 5 and 6 regarding how gender neutral bathrooms would improve their experiences in public spaces for practical, rather than aesthetic, reasons.

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[165] *Queering Public Space*, 18.
[166] Ibid.

These sentiments demonstrate how public spaces can better accommodate TGD people through establishing design features that recognise and support their identities and corresponding lived experiences, rather than simply incorporating imagery associated with queerness. Consequently, while the current amenities surrounding the selected bench within the Vondelpark did not accommodate the TGD interviewees, explicitly queer signage or references would not have significantly changed this.

Several interviewees stated that there are not any design features capable of entirely reducing the risk that accompanies being visibly trans or gender diverse in a public space. Both Interviewee 1 and 3 explained these perceptions in regards to the potential for intrusion or danger. Interviewee 1 stated, "you are in public, so you never know how other people might react", and when asked if they felt that design could hypothetically mediate this sense of risk, they responded, "I don't know, I mean, hypothetically there could always be homophobic or queerphobic person walking towards".

Interviewee 3, similarly, stated how her sense of discomfort when thinking about sitting at this spot with a group of TGD friends or a TGD partner "goes back to that feeling of being watched", expressing how "it only takes one person to step in, but it also only takes one person just to intrude, and if that happens, that tends to disrupt the vibe in a way that's hard to get back". Interviewee 6 explained:

> *"When there's a lot of people and a mix of people, I feel like there's at least bystanders. I feel generally more confident in that scenario. But at the same time, it's not the most inviting of places. Like I said, it's a very exposed feeling. You never know. It's a lot of people out here drinking and smoking".*

Therefore, regardless of the affordances granted by a public space—whether they be explicitly queer, or from centuries prior—TGD people feel the need to stay on guard due to their awareness that queer/transphobic occurrence could happen anywhere.

When asked if they thought it was possible for public space to be queered, Interviewee 5 provided important insight, stating:

*"Maybe with major societal shifts, I don't know… I think it's difficult. I think when I've been at queer events in public space, then maybe I feel that a little bit…. But I think it's very much about the people".*

They explained, thus, how urban public spaces may not be able to be queered through design, however they can be experienced as queer during queer events hosted there. This is likely due to how the user types of these urban public spaces become predominantly queer during these contexts.

The interviews at the Vondelpark demonstrated both a diversity in perspectives and experiences, while simultaneously revealing certain pivotal similarities—both of which will be further elaborated upon in the Discussion chapter.

## 4.2: *Damplein* (Dam Square)

### 4.2.1: Historical Overview

Dam Square has been considered the Netherlands' national square and the political and economic centre of Amsterdam for centuries, however its development was not as intentional as the Vondelpark.[167]

This case study's current name—Dam Square—derives from its initial function as a dam within the river Amstel, laid during the mid-1200s.[168] The dam was gradually built up, eventually becoming wide enough to serve as a town square.[169] However, it was not named Dam Square

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[167] "Dam (National Square)", Amsterdam HV, last modified 10 March, 2022, https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/damplein.html; Ottenheym, "Amsterdam 1700: Urban Space and Public Buildings", 122.

[168] "History of the Dam", Amsterdam Museum, accessed 27 April, 2023, https://www.amsterdammuseum.nl/tentoonstelling/de-dam/34389; "Dam (until c.1600)", Amsterdam HV, last modified 3 June, 2023, https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam1600.html.

[169] "Dam Square", Wikipedia, last modified, 31 May, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dam_Square.

until 1957, prior to which it was referred to as *Revolutieplein* (Revolution Square), *Napoleonplein* (during the time of Napoleon), *Vissersdam* (Fisherman's dam) and *Vijgendam* (Fig dam).[170] This evolution illustrates the square's vernacular nature; these informal, yet descriptive, names suggest that the square's title has naturally shifted alongside its usage, as opposed to being officially registered by the municipality.

The adaptation of the square's name to its corresponding purpose illustrates the forms of territorialisation that have taken place throughout history. Its current, less descriptive, name—Dam Square—indicates an open-ended functionality. This is reflected in its usage over the last several decades which has included political demonstrations, live music, parades, and a range of other events.[171]

The square's current name also commemorates its origins as a dam, which has been historically linked to the initial development of Amsterdam.[172] Therefore, similar to the Vondelpark, Dam Square contributes to the preservation of a certain public memory.

In 1856, the Netherlands' first National Monument was erected at Dam Square, further evidencing its nationalistic dimension.[173] This monument, *Vrouwe Eendracht* (Lady Concord), paid tribute to the Ten-Day campaign—an unsuccessful military operation led by King William I attempting to reunify Northern and Southern Netherlands—that had taken place about twenty years prior.[174] This monument was also considered a "a symbol of the national spirit of 1830-1831 and Dutch unity".[175]

[170] "Dam (after 1900)", Amsterdam HV, last modified 3 June, 2023, https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam2000.html.
[171] "Dam Square", NL Netherlands, accessed 27 April, 2023,
https://www.holland.com/global/tourism/discover-the-netherlands/visit-the-cities/amsterdam/dam-square.htm.
[172] "Was Amsterdam named after a dam in the river Amstel?" Dutch Amsterdam, last modified 22 November, 2022,
https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/1106-amsterdam-dam-square-history.
[173] "Dam (until c.1910)", Amsterdam HV, last modified 2 June, 2023, https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam1900.html.
[174] Ibid; Enne Koops, "Ten-Day Campaign (2-12 August 1831)", Historiek, last modified 20 December, 2022,
https://historiek.net/tiendaagse-veldtocht-geschiedenis-verloop/150238/.
[175]" Naatje van de Dam – The first national monument on Dam Square", Historiek, last modified 25 April, 2023,
https://historiek.net/naatje-van-de-dam-monument-amsterdam/93144/.

**Figure 4.13**: Lady Concord, 1856, photographed by Pieter Oosterhuis

The memorial was enclosed by a fountain which served as a "gathering, hanging and sitting place for shoe shiners, scissor sleepers and the unemployed".[176] In the 1910s, the Amsterdam City Council believed that Dam Square needed to adapt to "the modern time", overhauling the square and removing Lady Concord.[177]

The manner in which Lady Concord was reappropriated into a space to gather—particularly for men, as suggested by Figure 4.9—demonstrates ways that Dam Square has been territorialised throughout history.

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[176] "Dam (until c.1910)", https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam1900.html.
[177] Ibid.

**Figure 4.14:** Individuals seated upon the outer wall of *Vrouwe Eendracht*, 1910

Similar to the evolution of its name, the physical development of Dam Square was based on functionality. The overhaul process of the 1910s intended to enlarge the square and create a wider passage to the Rokin—the street running parallel—by demolishing various building blocks.[178] Thus, the modernisation of Dam Square involved creating additional access points and granting it more space to occupy within the urban environment. Due to its practical approach, social considerations did not influence this process.

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[178] "Dam (until c.1910)", https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam1900.html.

**Figure 4.15:** Demolition of surrounding old buildings, 1914

The current spatial layout of Dam Square was finalised in 1915, however, many of the buildings that surround the square date back to as early as the fifteenth century.[179] Therefore, Dam Square represents both the Dutch approach to urban modernisation as well Dutch architectural history. These structures embed alternative historic intentions into the space.

The first of these buildings is The Royal Palace, constructed in 1648 as Amsterdam's Town Hall, becoming the Dutch royal family's palace in the mid-1800s.[180] The structure was designed by architect Jacob van Campen and is considered one of "the most important Dutch historical and cultural monuments of the Golden Age".[181] The Amsterdam Golden Age was a moment of economic prosperity and the architecture of this period was meant to "reflect the

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[179] "Dam (until c.1910)", https://www.amsterdamhv.nl/wiki/dam1900.html.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.

city's wealth, cultural standing, and global significance".[182] Therefore, this structure's architectural design intended to communicate a certain perception of the city to the public.

During the seventeenth century, when this structure was constructed, the municipality considered Amsterdam's aesthetic to symbolise the power and prestige of the city and its government.[183] The Royal Palace's architecture has been characterised as "classical…with a maximum demand for magnificence".[184] Though brick was a common architectural material during this period, its facade was constructed in stone, its interiors in marble.[185] Therefore, the Royal Palace's architecture represents the city government's values and intentions during this period, remaining materialised within Dam Square.

[182] Tom Coggins, "Where to Find Dutch Golden Age Architecture in Amsterdam", Culturetrip, 19 May, 2020, https://theculturetrip.com/europe/the-netherlands/articles/where-to-find-dutch-golden-age-architecture-in-amsterdam/.
[183] Ottenheym, 119.
[184] Ibid, 131.
[185] Ibid.

**Figure 4.16:** Front facade of Royal Palace, photographed by Eugenio Merzagora, 2022

The second building is The New Church, which first opened in 1408, hosting various events over the centuries, including church services, markets, and concerts.[186] It has faced three fires since the fifteenth century, therefore, it underwent an extensive restoration in the mid-twentieth century.[187] This restoration process preserved various historic architectural elements including: a brass choir screen, ornamented organs, decorative frescoes, and stained glass windows from various centuries which illustrate the church's changing values.[188]

In preserving various historic features, the New Church's restoration simultaneously preserved historic perspectives. Primarily, the church's ornate nature resembles the approach taken with the Town Hall, wherein magnificence was used to communicate power and prestige.

[186] "History", De Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam, accessed 2 May, 2023, https://www.nieuwekerk.nl/en/de-nieuwe-kerk/history/.
[187] Ibid.
[188] "Interior", De Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam, accessed 10 June, 2023, https://www.nieuwekerk.nl/en/de-nieuwe-kerk/interior/.

Additionally, the presence of organs within a Protestant church was considered controversial during the seventeenth century, however, Amsterdam's city government "emphasised the educational value of music", commissioning elegant organs and hiring organists to perform concerts.[189] Thus, similarly to how the Vondelpark began hosting classical concerts as part of the bourgeois' attempt to 'civilise' the working class (see section 1.3), music was considered an educational tool within the New Church.[190] This comparable approach to music demonstrates Amsterdam's interpretation of public space as a site of education and reform.

The architectural history surrounding Dam Square demonstrates how architectural design intended to convey Amsterdam's power and values to the public. Other historical buildings bordering Dam Square have become reappropriated into luxury retail stores, sustaining the area's representation of affluence.

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[189] "Organs", De Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam, accessed 10 June, 2023, https://www.nieuwekerk.nl/en/organs/.
[190] Burgers Oosterman, 11-12.
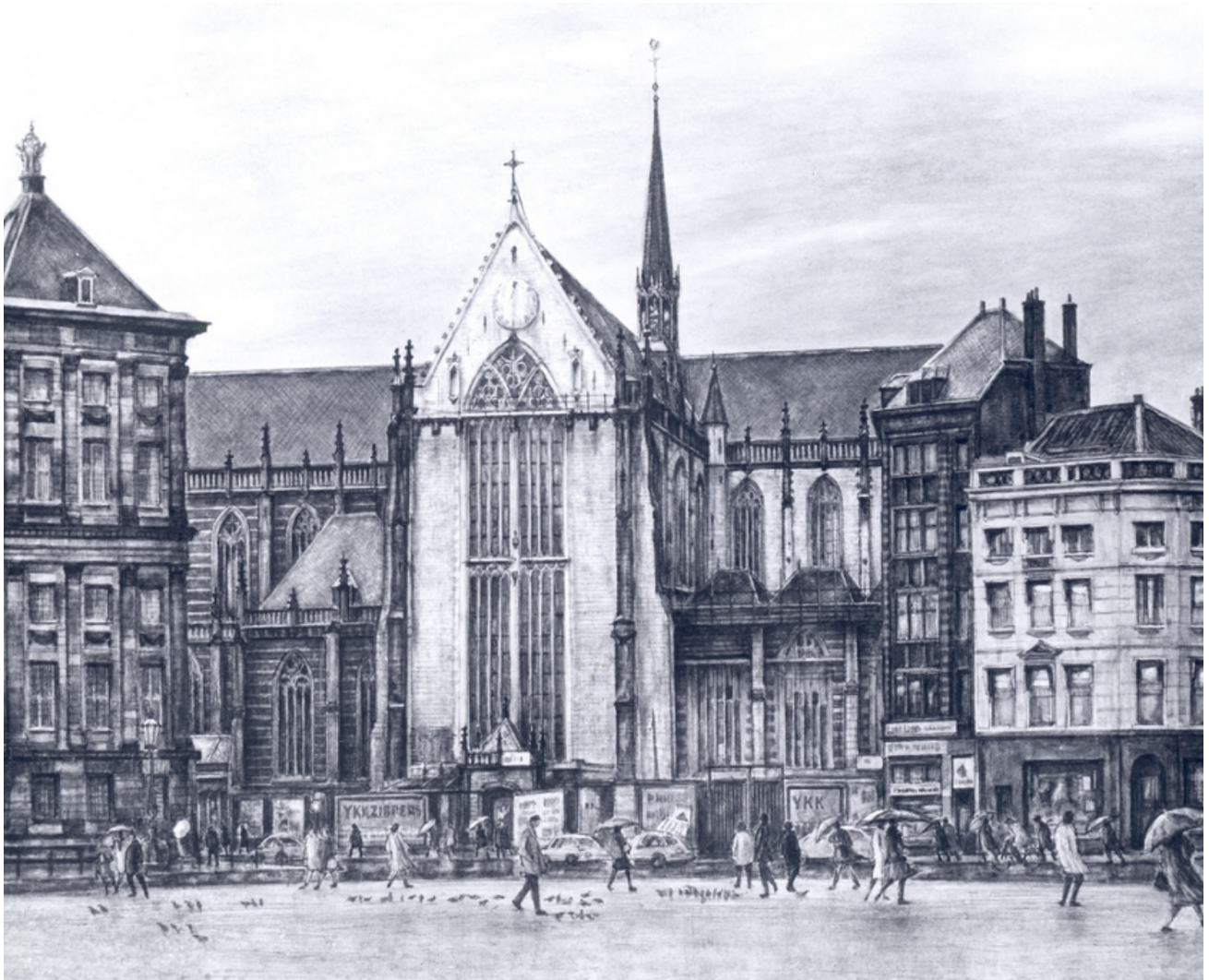
**Figure 4.17:** The New Church, by C. Kemper, 1970

## 4.2.2: Spatial Analysis

The spatial analysis of Dam Square will follow the same structure as that for the Vondelpark, first considering topography/orientation, location/site, approach/setting, and urban density, exploring socio-spatial elements afterwards.

The topography of Dam Square is nearly completely flat, thus it is easily accessible amidst the city centre. There are no natural features within the square, perhaps due to how deeply embedded it is within the city, or because this was not a consideration during its redevelopment.

**Figure 4.18:** Aerial view of Dam Square with selected bench encircled in red

Dam Square is rectangular in shape; it stretches nearly 200 metres from west to east and about 100 metres from north to south.[191] The square's rectangular shape demonstrates urban public spaces reconfiguration throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into rectilinear, enclosed, and monumental spaces.[192] From the selected bench, one is seated on the perimeter of this rectangular, upon its south end.

The orientation of Dam Square grants physical, visual, and sensorial access to the surrounding urban environment. Dam Square's open-access nature was intended by the redevelopment process of the early 1910s, hence why, today, this is such a central feature of one's experience.

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[191] "Dam Square", Wikipedia, last modified 31 May, 2023,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dam_Square#:~:text=It%20is%20roughly%20rectangular%20in,the%20Munttoren%20(Mint%20Tower).
[192] "Queering Public Space", 14.

Location/site refers to any economic considerations behind a space's development.[193] As previously mentioned, Dam Square evolved into a town square as the dam was progressively built up; therefore, while there was a distinct economic consideration behind the dam—which encouraged sea trade—there are no identifiable intentions behind the dam's evolution into a square.[194]

When seated upon the side of the selected bench that was seated upon during each interview, one is oriented towards the New Church, with the Royal Palace to the left of one's field of vision. The design of this bench, however, allows one to face any direction, due to the lack of any barriers or backrests.

There are multiple entry points when approaching Dam Square, as a result of the renovation project which enlarged the square in the early 1900s. To arrive at the selected bench, one can cross a variety of crosswalks and, depending upon from which street one enters, will have to cross through a particular portion of the square. Conway and Roenisch explain how the routes provided into a space determine how one is able to approach it and, thus, what scene they are confronted with.[195] The various routes available for entering Dam Square demonstrates its accessible and public nature, suggesting that it can be open for anybody at any point, without any physical or material barriers.

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[193] Conway and Roenisch, 196.
[194] "Was Amsterdam named after a dam in the river Amstel?"
        https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/1106-amsterdam-dam-square-history.
[195] Conway and Roenisch, 201.

**Figure 4.19**: Selected bench, 2023

The number of options for entering Dam Square contributes to its bustling and disorienting nature, as it feels as though there are non-stop movements and noises. Dam Square is a highly dense location as it is surrounded by buildings and multiple forms of traffic including pedestrians, bikes, trams, and cars. Due to the redevelopment process of the mid-1900s focusing predominantly on Dam Square's enlargement and interconnectedness with surrounding streets, the social and psychological consequences of such an open square were likely not contemplated.



**Figure 4.20**: Side of Dam Square connecting with Rokin, to left of selected bench, 2023

**Figure 4.21:** Side of Dam Square connecting with Paleisstraat, to back of selected bench, 2023

The physical attributes that a socio-spatial analysis considers include the space's physical forms, amenities, and variety of functions. The physical form of the selected bench consists of a rectangular marble slab that appears grounded to the square and is absent of any back or arm rests. As a result, there is no prescribed direction to face; one has the option to turn and face the Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, The New Church, or the National Monument.



**Figure 4.22**: Selected bench upon Dam Square, 2023

There are a variety of amenities surrounding the selected bench. For the spatial analysis and interviews, the bench was sat upon facing the New Church. When seated this way, one faces hot dog stands, as well as stores such as Dior, Swarovski, and the high-end department store Bijenhof. The majority of the nearby amenities are considered luxury stores and thus are not affordable to the general public.

**Figure 4.23:** Placement of Dior amidst Dam Square, 2023

**Figure 4.24:** Placement of Swarovski amidst Dam Square, 2023

**Figure 4.25**: Placement of De Bijenkorf amidst Dam Square, 2023

In addition to providing retail-oriented amenities, the New Church and Royal Palace are open for visitors, therefore Dam Square also offers amenities targeted predominantly at tourists. This also pertains to the Madame Tussauds Wax Museum and the WWII National Monument, both of which are also in close proximity to Dam Square.

Although the amenities provide clearly delineated functions—shopping, touring, or sight-seeing—Dam Square offers a spectrum of other affordances due to its openness and predominantly unfurnished nature. Throughout the field visits, individuals were observed holding demonstrations, dressed in costumes, playing instruments, smoking, selling crafts, sitting on the ground, on benches, or on the steps of the Royal Palace. Similarly to the selected area within the Vondelpark, one's comfortability with exploring the potential functions of this space is subjective and circumstantial.

The range of usages observed throughout Dam Square corresponds with the wide range of its user types, some of which appear to be political organisers, entrepreneurs, musicians, tourists, or local residents.

Regarding the safety provided, the bench does not offer protection from natural elements because it is not covered. Since the bench is placed within the rectilinear enclosure of the square, there is a sense of protection from artificial elements, such as the nearby forms of traffic. However, simultaneously, the selected bench is still in close proximity to the road, and thus, to cars and other motor vehicles.

**Figure 4.26:** Close proximity of selected bench (encircled in red) to road, 2023

There is no sense of safety from human elements due to the bench's lack of barriers, thus one could be sitting in close proximity to a stranger without choosing to. Further, there are no borders between the bench and the rest of the square, therefore sitting upon this bench makes one susceptible to a variety of unpredictable interactions.

In terms of the psychological security experienced within this space, there is no apparent way to receive any privacy because of the highly populated and active nature of the square. However, the square's openness makes it clear how to quickly enter or exit the space.

## 4.2.3: Interviews

Each interviewee noted how Dam Square did not feel like a public space, but rather, characterised the location by stating, "it's not a destination, for me, it's very much something I go through", (Interviewee 1), that "it's not so much a sitting area", (Interviewee 2), or how the bench "feels kind of just plopped in the middle of a square…It feels more like, we need to put a bench somewhere where a lot of people are". (Interviewee 4).

Interviewee 3 observed how "everyone seems to be rushing to and from wherever they're going", expressing:

> *"I feel like the benches seem actively designed to make you not want to sit on them, so that kind of is adding to my discomfort. It just doesn't feel like anyone is really supposed to be here".*

The interviewees' discomfort within Dam Square was also attributed to their exposure. The interviewees conveyed varying perceptions and experiences of their sense of social visibility upon the selected bench.

For example, Interviewee 1 explained how, although they "technically" are "very visible"—referencing how there are "no obstacles or trees or anything", making them feel "very

open to everyone"—they simultaneously expressed that "everyone's so go, go, go, I don't feel like people notice".

However, the paradoxical nature of one's visibility at Dam Square—wherein one was highly exposed, yet simultaneously surrounded by movement—felt threatening or unnerving for others. For example, Interviewee 3 expressed how the spot and space felt "very public without having a sense of mutual accountability", explaining that:

> *"It feels like everyone is minding their own business, which has it... I guess it's nice in the sense I don't really feel gawked at at all. But it also doesn't have that sense of like, oh, you'd step in for me, I'd step in for you. I don't really feel that".*

The interviewees expressed various outlooks on the orientation of the bench. For example, Interviewee 4 noted how the bench places them "in the middle, so people can walk around you", whereas they normally find a bench where they aren't facing the street or where there is something directly behind them, so they do not have to be cognisant of any movement that they cannot directly see.

Interviewee 3 identified how the bench's orientation—being in a horizontal line with other benches—decreased her sense of safety, since she felt "naturally obscured from the people further down". She expressed how the selected bench's placement made her feel highly exposed since it was surrounded by "major thoroughfares", and since "no matter how I'm sitting, there's people behind me, which feels weird". She attributed these features to her "lack of feeling of safety".

Interviewee 2 noted how, due to the business of the area, they desired awareness of their surroundings, but explained that, "I don't feel like I'm not aware of anything, except for behind me, but I can easily turn around".

Interviewee 3 expressed how the bench's placement facilitated her "unwillingly making eye contact with people walking by because I'm just trying to look forward". Interviewee 4 commented on the level of the bench, which they found "very low", in turn, "you're like a bit beneath other people", contributing to a sense of being out of control, since you are not at "eye level" with those in front of you.

The orientation of the bench intensified the interviewees' sense of social visibility and contributed to feeling slightly out of control, while also obscuring their awareness of their surroundings due to being open on every side. For some interviewees, this was not too much of an issue, because they felt as though they could turn around if necessary, however for others, it created an overall discomforting experience.

The orientation of the bench was also commented on with regards to the interviewees' typical choice to find public space seating that faces nature, as opposed to facing people or an open square. For example, Interviewee 1 felt dissatisfied with the bench's orientation and the field of vision it provided, noting how "it's just very sparse", and that "if there were a few trees that would already make it a lot better". Interviewee 4 stated that a bench facing nature is always their "ideal bench", and Interviewee 3 expressed that "some greenery would be really nice".

The interviewees were asked about micro-interventions offered by the *Queering Public Space* report. Interviewee 1 felt that the installation of 'cosy corners' would improve their experience, but more so because of their belief that "any kind of greenery" would add a more positive or cosy experience, while also adding "a bit of privacy, which would be nice in such an open area". On the other hand, Interviewees 2, 3, and 4 felt that the visibility that would be lost by installing 'cosy corners' would cause them to feel more vulnerable.

Interviewee 2 explained how they would feel less comfortable because "then you're just taking away visibility, but it's not like people can't see us, because it's still really open". When asked if a 'cosy corner' would increase her comfortability and/or safety, Interviewee 3 communicated that:

*"Physically, probably more so. It's nicer. I think in terms of safety, it would probably be a net wash because on the one hand, it's nice to, like, be able to hide a little bit. But also like, at least at night, right now, it also would make me a bit worried about, like, decreased visibility, like what's going on?"*

In a similar vein, when asked the same question, Interviewee 4 responded:

*"I kind of feel like it would make me less comfortable because I feel like it would obstruct my view of my surroundings and it would make me feel like I couldn't see what's happening beside me, which, I don't know, if something's happening beside me, I would like to know"*.

The interviewees also expressed mixed feelings regarding the micro-intervention of placing a bench across from the bench we were seated at. Interviewee 1 expressed how, if this were the case, you "don't really have an option" in regards to interacting with strangers. Similarly, Interviewee 4 stated that this would make them less inclined to sit there, explaining how:

*"You would have to, in a more personal way, interact with the people that are facing you. When, like, now I'm facing people too, but they are just going about their business. When people are sitting down, it's a lot more likely that they'll interact with you, which I don't necessarily want from cis strangers"*.

Due to the fact that there are very few amenities offered within Dam Square other than the square itself and ten benches, the interviewees noted a certain discomfort towards the surrounding user groups. For example, Interviewee 3 commented that "it doesn't seem like there's any reason at all" to be at Dam Square "other than just walking through it", and, in turn, she states:

*"So, like, everyone I look at is a little part of my brain that's like, why are you here right now? Are you on the prowl? What's going on?"*

Interviewee 4 expressed, "I feel like I'm a minority in a space where the majority is mostly around", which feels "overwhelming, especially when you're alone….anyone could

approach me at any time for no reason". Interviewee 2 expressed that, because Dam Square seemed to be mainly populated by tourists and families, and the surrounding amenities seemed to cater to these demographics, they felt that the nearby user groups were "all just, like, looking at the buildings and stuff, not so much at the people".

Although the interviewees perceived the surrounding user groups' intentions differently, they all interpreted the surrounding amenities as highly calculated. Interviewee 1 stated how the surrounding stores "capitalise off" the fact that tourists visit this area, expressing:

> *"If people who are living in Amsterdam could vote on what kind of stores, what kind of restaurants, what kind of stuff would, could be here, I feel like it would be way different".*

When asked if they would use the surrounding amenities, Interviewee 2 said they would not because of it being an "expensive touristy area". Interviewee 3 responded, "probably not, they all look very expensive". The sense that the surrounding amenities were targeted at a particular user group—upper class tourists—demonstrates how the historical intention to display the wealth and power of the city of Amsterdam through the built environment, in general and within this area, has not fully subsided.

The interviewees were asked if any explicitly queer signifiers would impact their experience there—an additional micro-intervention within *Queering Public Space*. Interviewee 2 responded, "I think based on the nature of this area, I probably wouldn't because it would just feel kind of performative". Interviewee 1 stated that "it would be a nice touch", but would not make them want to sit there.

Interviewee 3 stated how she would "appreciate the effort", however not because of the "direct queer representation", but because it would signal "investment in public space and that someone cares", which she felt was "lacking" at Dam Square, which felt "desolate". Interviewee 4 referenced recent events where such explicitly queer installations within public spaces were "completely destroyed by random people in the street", and thus expressed:

*"I wouldn't necessarily think that would make me feel more comfortable. I would kind of expect things to become damaged at some point, and that would make me feel less comfortable because then it's a very public display of hatred towards the community"*.

Thus, installing explicitly queer features would not directly increase the comfortability or safety of TGD people for two important reasons. Primarily, the commercialised atmosphere that surrounded Dam Square would make such gestures seem performative. Additionally, the presence of queer signage would moreso signal overarching attitudes—whether that be, as Interviewee 3 mentioned, basic investment in public space or, as Interviewee 4 mentioned, queerphobic attitudes leading to the destruction of such explicitly queer additions—rather than accommodating the communities they intend to acknowledge.

Similar to the Vondelpark, the interviews at Dam Square exemplified both diversity and consistency across TGD people's perceptions and experiences—both will be contemplated in the Discussion chapter.

## 4.3 Themes and Subthemes

Following the data collection process, the thematic analysis led to the identification of three predominant themes, each of which produced subthemes and corresponding findings—demonstrated in the following diagrams. These diagrams will be elaborated upon and discussed in the following chapter.
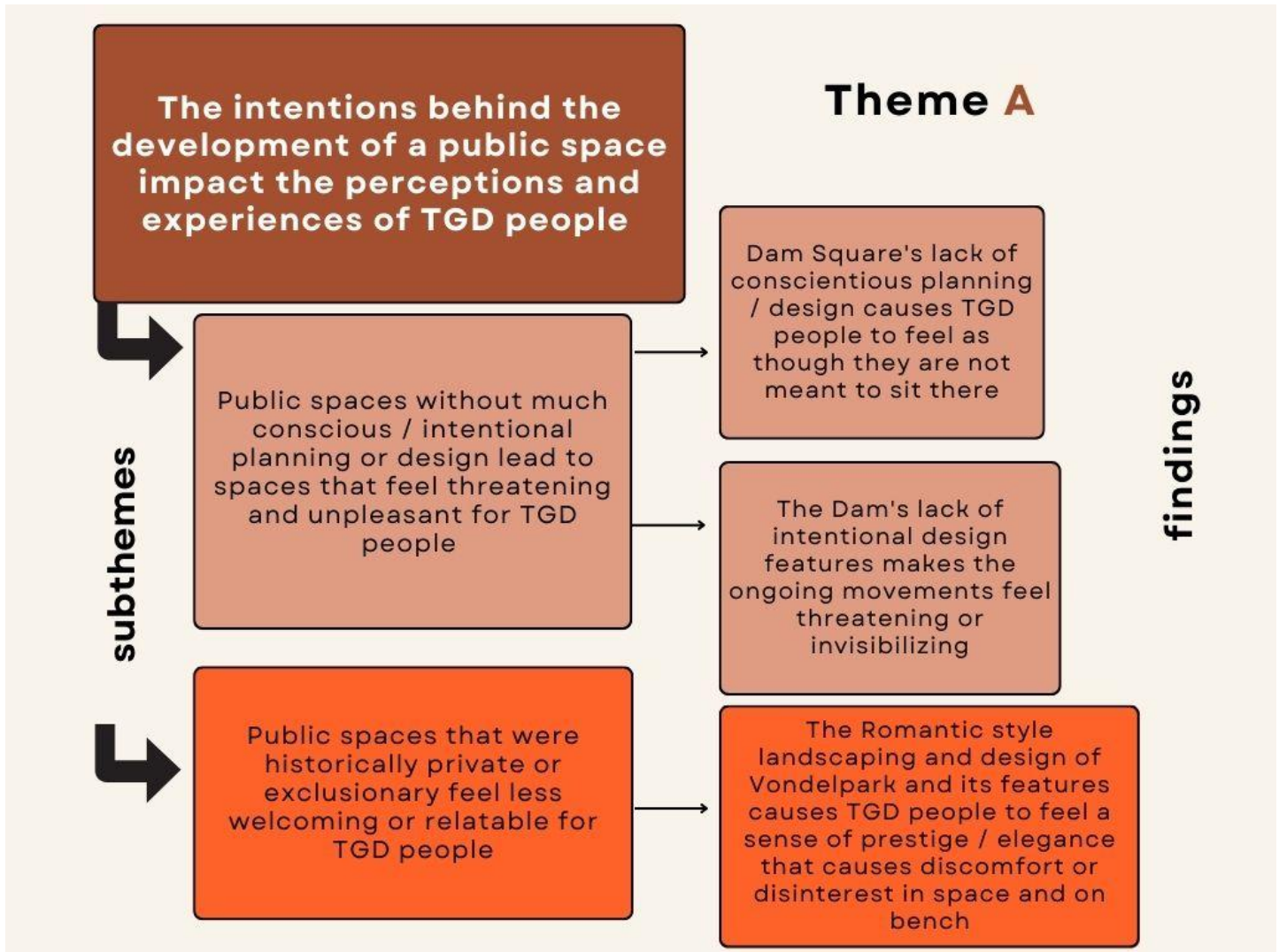
**Figure 4.27:** Overview of Theme A, with subthemes and findings
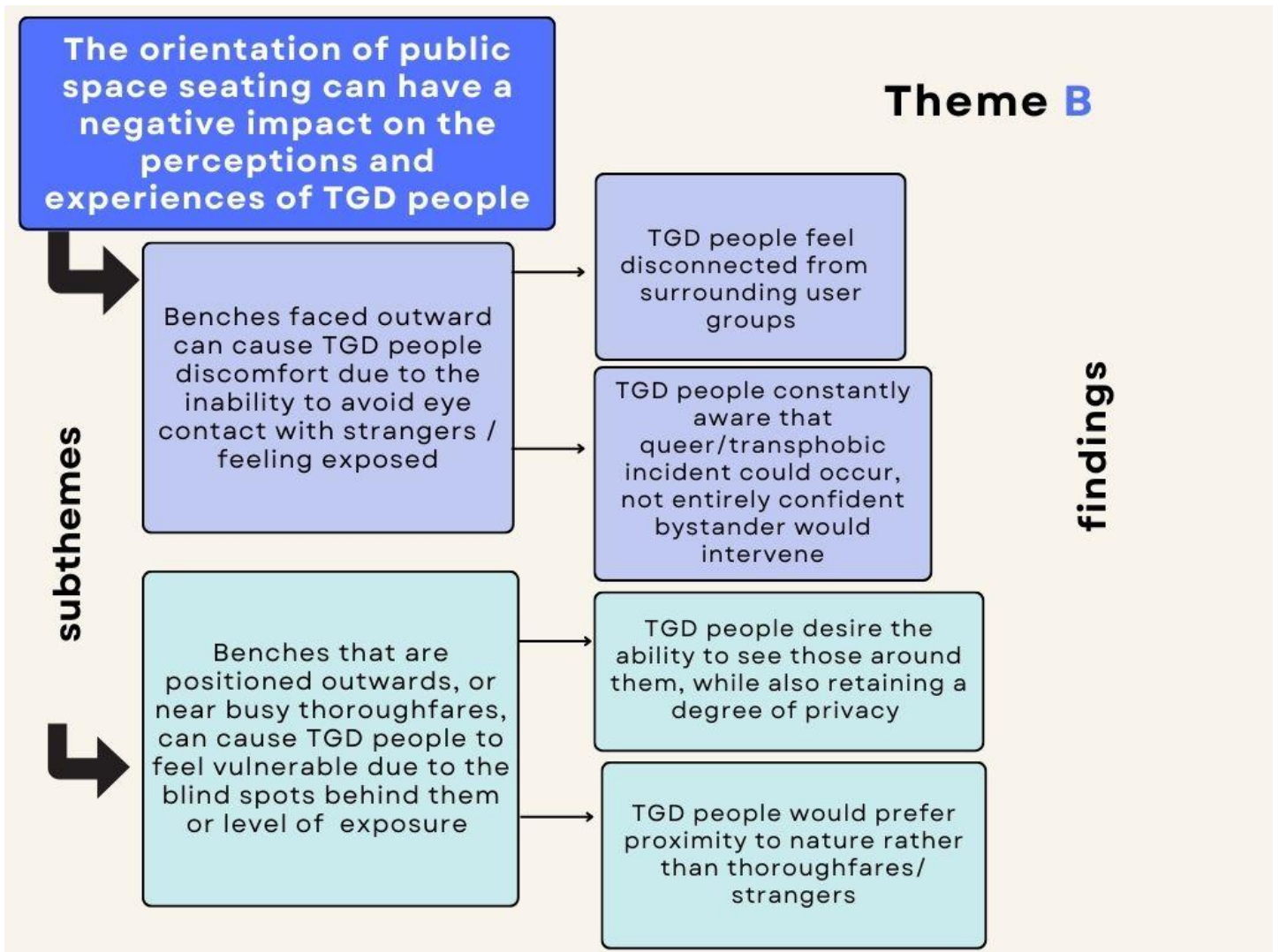
**Figure 4.28:** Theme B, with subthemes and findings
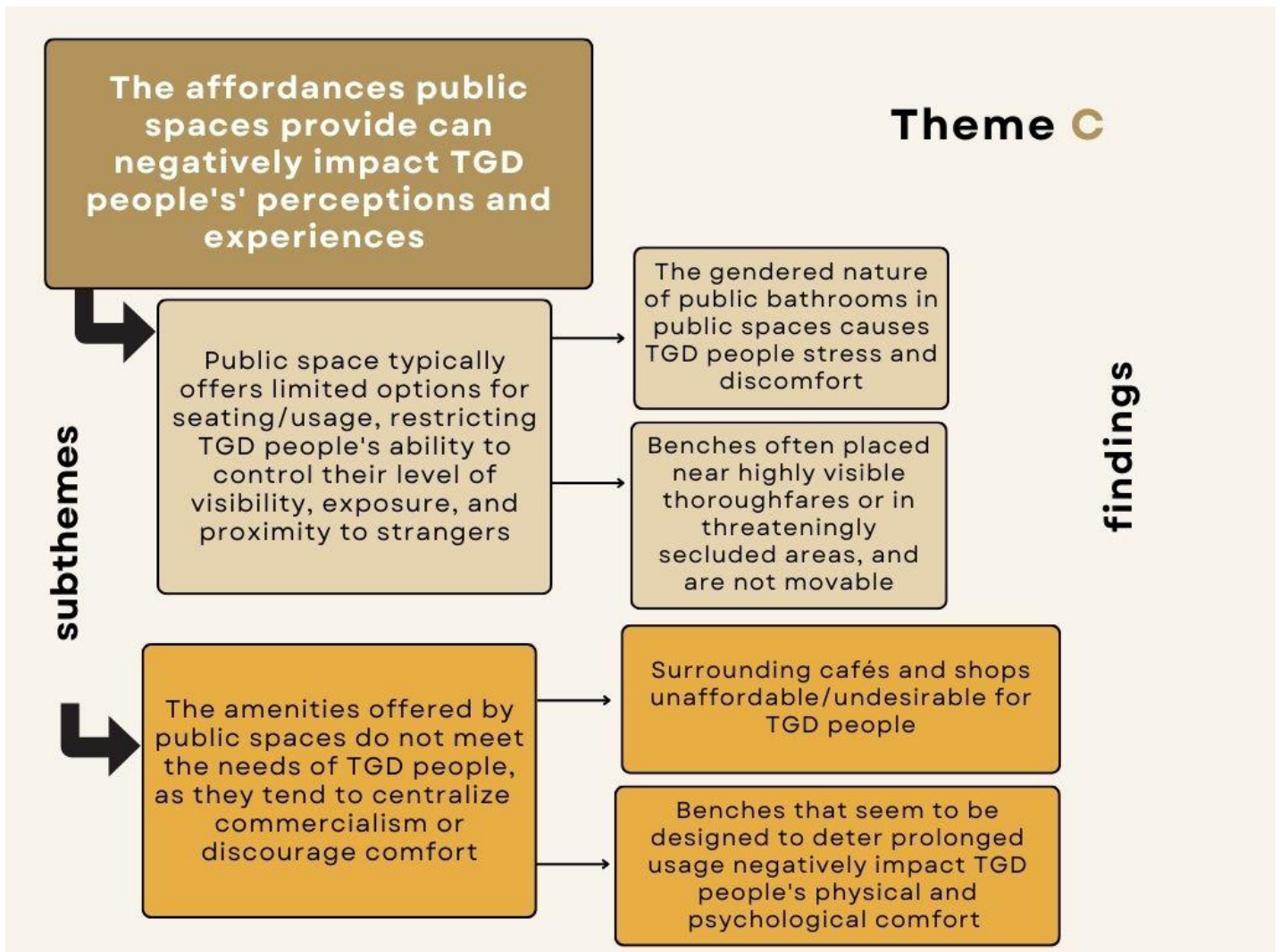
**Figure 4.29**: Theme C, with subthemes and findings

# Chapter 5:

# Discussion

The three, main, themes identified through the thematic analysis were: the intentions behind the development of a public space can impact the perceptions and experiences of TGD people (Theme A), the orientation of public space seating can have a negative impact on the perceptions and experiences of TGD people (Theme B), and the affordances provided by public spaces can negatively impact TGD people's' perceptions and experiences (Theme C).

Each of these themes produced subthemes and findings, which will be discussed in relation to the research question: to what extent does public space design accommodate trans and gender diverse people? In addition, this chapter will offer possible opportunities for improvement moving forward, so as to create more accommodating public spaces. The harm that urban public spaces can cause certain communities, including the TGD community, stems from historic power structures that will require significant social and systemic shifts to fully dismantle; therefore, the suggestions posed in this chapter are opportunities for reducing the consequences of such structures in the meantime.

## 5.1 Theme A: The intentions behind the development of a public space impact the perceptions and experiences of TGD People

The *Queering Public Space* report discussed the impacts and consequences that the origins of a public space, oftentimes from centuries prior, could have upon contemporary usage. Throughout the data collection process, the dynamic between the case studies' intentions and the perceptions and experiences of the TGD interviewees became an evident theme, with two subthemes: public spaces that were historically private or exclusionary (such as the Vondelpark) feel less welcoming or relatable for TGD people, and public spaces without much conscious or intentional planning and design (such as Dam Square) lead to spaces that feel threatening and unpleasant for TGD people.

## 5.1.1 Subtheme: Public spaces that were historically private or exclusionary feel less welcoming or relatable for TGD people

The historical overview of the Vondelpark demonstrated how elitist beliefs guided its development, becoming further apparent throughout the spatial analysis and interview process. For example, Interviewee 3 noted how the landscape design made it feel as though there was meant to be somebody at the centre of the park watching over everybody, which was somewhat the case originally, when a park superintendent controlled who could enter depending upon their apparent class status (see section 4.1.1).

The Vondelpark's landscape design caused social visibility to be embedded throughout the space, a quality that all interviews sensed. In addition, the frequent use of cast iron within European public space design has been attributed to its aesthetic resemblance to Renaissance art, as well as its perceived moral and social functions.[196] Thus, the Vondelpark has used design to indirectly enforce certain values and etiquette since first opening.

Therefore, as the Queering Public Space framework outlined, even minor design features within public spaces represent certain values, histories, or attitudes, which can limit their acceptance of diversity.[197] Interviewee 3 mentioning that the Vondelpark carried a certain prestige represents how intentions from centuries prior are still palpable.

Public spaces have historically served as sites where certain ideals are materialised with the intention of reforming those that encounter them; this resembles Frisch's argument regarding how twentieth-century urban planning practices were developed so as to bring order and rationality to urban environments, including the eradication of queerness (see section 1.2).[198]

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[196] C. Soffritti et. al, "Cast iron street furniture: A historical review", *Elsevier* 44, no. 3 (2020): 1,
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2020.100721.
[197] *Queering Public Space,* 7.
[198] Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project", 254-259.

The political interpretation of the term *public space* as a private *public sphere* composed of the bourgeois handling matters of the general public (reviewed in section 1.1) resembles how the Vondelpark was initially controlled by an invite-only administration of bourgeois members.

This administration, while explicitly classist, was likely also exclusionary regarding the race, gender, and sexuality of members. Thus, the unaccommodating nature of the Vondelpark that was mentioned throughout the interview process may be due to the fact that white, wealthy, cishet men made the majority of the decisions regarding how this public space would function—a historical trend regarding urban public spaces, as observed by the *Queering Public Space* report.[199]

This research demonstrated how various aspects to urban public space design do not accommodate TGD people. Further, the findings indicate that accommodating transness and gender diversity within public space design could simultaneously accommodate other marginalised communities, as well. Although it is impossible to accommodate everybody, there are certain design measures that are more wide-reaching than those currently encountered.

Although the historic intentions that guided the development of certain urban public spaces have been materialised into their landscape and design features, the degree to which these intentions are still sensible could be softened, in turn, making such spaces more approachable and comfortable.

For example, while recent additions to the Vondelpark have abided by its originally intended, elegant, aesthetic—such as the cast iron ornamented fixtures installed in 2011 (see section 4.1.2)—alternative styles could be incorporated that relate to other publics. This could be done through employing less prescriptive and symbolic designs and instead, centralising psychological security and physical comfort. A collaborative exhibit organised by the city of

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[199] *Queering Public Space,* 13.

Zurich in 2001 offers various examples; several artists transformed box-like structures into public benches, illustrating the numerous possibilities for creative, diverse, public space seating.[200]



**Figure 5.1:** Bench from Zurich's collaborative exhibit, 2001, from *Social Life Project*

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[200] Kathy Madden, Fred Kent, and Katherine Peinhardt, "How Seating Shapes Welcoming Cities", Social Life Project, 8 November, 2021, https://www.sociallifeproject.org/have-a-seat-how-seating-shapes-welcoming-cities/.

**Figure 5.2**: Bench from Zurich's collaborative exhibit, 2001, from *Social Life Project*



**Figure 5.3:** Bench from Zurcich's collaborative exhibit, 2001, from *Social Life Project*

**Figure 5.4**: Bench from Zurich's collaborative exhibit, 2001, from *Social Life Project*

This exhibit revealed how diversity in seating options allowed for "diversity in experiences", demonstrating "how a bench is a mirror to our interactions and behaviours in public spaces".[201] Such collaborative projects could take place in public spaces like the Vondelpark, where the seating options have continuously lacked variety and thus, prevent diverse experiences from comfortably taking place.

In addition, more affordable and inviting amenities could be developed so as to minimise the sense that the Vondelpark is an opulent public space catering to a specific public—the upper class, as was the case historically. Currently, many amenities throughout the Vondelpark cost money and are relatively expensive. However, if more free or affordable amenities were added, the Vondelpark's classist origins could be left behind.

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[201] Madden, Kent, and Peinhardt, "How Seating Shapes Welcoming Cities",
https://www.sociallifeproject.org/have-a-seat-how-seating-shapes-welcoming-cities/.

## 5.1.2 Subtheme: Public spaces without much conscious / intentional planning or design lead to spaces that feel threatening and unpleasant for TGD people

Due to the fact that urban public spaces are owned by the city's municipality, it is difficult to identify what the intentions behind certain design features were, which is why historical information can be illuminating. For example, since the Vondelpark was not always owned by the municipality, its historical background provides insight into why certain choices were made.

Alternatively, because Dam Square developed relatively informally, explanations for its design are unclear. Instead, Dam Square can be analysed using scholarship on Amsterdam's public architecture from the same period, while also utilising the collected data to form inferences.

For example, as Ottenheym outlined (see section 1.3), Amsterdam's government regulated the city's aesthetic during the seventeenth century due to their interpretation that beauty would represent a well-functioning government and a prosperous city.[202] Therefore, though Dam Square itself is relatively under-designed, the surrounding architecture is from the seventeenth century, thus representative of how the city government utilised design to represent their power.

Dam Square's lack of intentionality was noted by every interviewee; they expressed their distaste towards the space because of the limited affordances provided, which simultaneously caused disfavour towards the surrounding user groups. In addition, all interviewees were disinterested in the surrounding amenities, explaining how they seemed to capitalise off of the tourist-centric nature of this area.

Certain features of Dam Square—including the surrounding architectural history and upper class or tourist-centric amenities—indicate how this space has continuously been utilised to sustain a certain reputation of the city, rather than to create an accommodating square.

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[202] Ottenheym, 119-120.

The sparsity of the internal square provides an abundance of opportunities for improvement. The Project for Public Spaces has published "10 Principles for Successful Squares", many of which could be easily employed within Dam Square. For example, the importance of building in flexibility, so that usages can change "during the course of the day, week, and year", is noted, which could include having on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas, or games.[203] Although Dam Square does take on varying purposes throughout the year—being the site of demonstrations and live music—this could be developed further so as to become more adaptable on a daily and weekly basis, as well.[204]

In addition, they state, "an active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square".[205] The streets and sidewalks that surround Dam Square are constantly populated by pedestrians, bikers, and multiple forms of transit, while the surrounding shops are predominantly high-end clothing stores or tourist amenities. This outer square could be reimagined so as to balance out the current amenities with others which cater to other publics; Project for Public spaces use a library, bookstore, or cafe as examples, any of which would likely greatly benefit, and invite additional publics to, Dam square's outer square.[206]

## 5.2 Theme B: The Orientation of Public Space Seating Can Have a Negative Impact on the Perceptions and Experiences of TGD People

The interviewees indicated how the orientation of the case studies' seating options created discomforting perceptions or experiences—attributed to the sense of visibility and exposure that they facilitated.

Due to the interviewees' remarks, two subthemes were identified: benches faced outwards can cause TGD people discomfort due to the inability to avoid eye contact with strangers / feeling exposed, and benches that are positioned outwards, or near busy thoroughfares, can cause

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[203] "10 Principles for Successful Squares", Project for Public Spaces, 30 November, 2005,
https://www.pps.org/article/squaresprinciples.
[204] "Dam Square", Netherlands, accessed 27 April, 2023,
https://www.holland.com/global/tourism/discover-the-netherlands/visit-the-cities/amsterdam/dam-square.htm.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

TGD people to feel vulnerable due to blind spots behind them or levels of exposure. When considering the extent to which public spaces accommodate trans and gender diverse people, the importance of public space's seating options became increasingly clear.

## 5.2.1 Subtheme: Benches faced outwards can cause TGD people discomfort due to the inability to avoid eye contact / feeling exposed

Throughout both case studies, the majority, if not all, of the provided benches were placed so that, when seated, one's visibility to others (and vice versa) was unavoidable. Although it was not possible to locate any explanation from the municipality—the entity currently responsible for both locations—regarding this choice, it is possible to infer based on existing literature regarding public space design.

As was indicated throughout section 1.1, the emergence of public space within modernising cities has been explained by the sudden, heightened, visibility of diverse social groups. Ever since, urban public spaces have been discussed, planned, and designed with visibility as one of its core attributes—Sezer demonstrated how visibility can be a tool for acknowledging and embracing cultural diversity, whereas Jacobs and other crime prevention theorists have characterised visibility as a safety mechanism, maintaining "eyes on the street".[207]

Thus, the standard choice to position the benches of public spaces so that both those seated, and those nearby, are highly visible, could be due to historic interpretations of visibility. However, as both theoretical frameworks—Queering Public Space and Urban Social Visibility—explain, the ways in which individuals experience social visibility varies.

Although social visibility may provide some with a sense of recognition or safety, the *Queering Public Space* report illustrates how public spaces' seating facilitating gazing at others causes queer people to uncomfortably self-censor or avoid the space entirely (see section 2.1).[208] Furthermore, the Urban Social Visibility framework demonstrates how social visibility is a tool

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[207] Sezer, 52; Jacobs, 54.
[208] *Queering Public Space*, 5.

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for testing and classifying 'civilised' versus 'uncivilised,' or 'in place' versus 'out of place,' behaviour (see section 2.2).[209] By centralising social visibility within public space design, the certain communities—namely, those that have historically been considered 'uncivilised' or 'out of place,' in this research pertaining to TGD people—are effectively neglected.

The interviewees expressed how the orientation of the bench was discomforting, unnerving, and importantly, contrary to their preferences. Certain interviewees noted that their exposure made them feel as though if something bad were to happen, others nearby would at least be around to see, yet they simultaneously expressed uncertainty regarding whether such bystanders would intervene.

Therefore, the established connection between visibility and safety must be reconsidered; one's sense of safety is highly dependent upon how social visibility impacts them throughout their daily lives. For TGD people, social visibility is often accompanied by stares, snide comments, or harassment, eliciting danger rather than preventing it.[210] Moreover, designing public spaces that centralise visibility with the assumption that this will ensure social harmony and bystander intervention may be unfortunately optimistic.

Simultaneously, the social visibility enacted by public space seating intensifies the normative codes of conduct that accompany urban public spaces, as Peters and de Haan overviewed (see section 1.1). Certain interviewees expressed how the bench's design and placement made them compose themselves in a particular fashion so as to not draw more attention to themselves, implying that there were certain acceptable behaviours, and thus certain unacceptable behaviours.

Similarly to the opportunities introduced in the prior sections, disrupting the trend of embedding social visibility into public space design does not need to be difficult or intensive. Rather, it could include offering alternative seating options with varying degrees of exposure. As

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[209] Brighenti, 119.
[210] Singh, "Transgender Persons and Public Spaces: Lack of Protection from the Law", https://clpr.org.in/blog/transgender-persons-and-public-spaces-lack-of-protection-from-the-law/.

a result, individuals who find safety in social visibility could be accommodated, as could those who find safety in privacy. Currently, individuals who are uncomfortable with the provided seating options' level of exposure must seek out or create alternative seating options, demonstrating that public space is not designed to accommodate every public equally.

One's perceptions and experiences of social visibility do not directly correspond with gender identity; diversifying public spaces' seating options would likely benefit several publics, such as the disabled community, the homeless community, mothers, or any other public with lived experiences that are often disregarded within public space design.

## 5.2.2 Subtheme: Benches that are positioned outwards, or near busy thoroughfares, can cause TGD people to feel vulnerable due to the blind spots behind them or levels of exposure

In addition to how both case studies' seating options predominantly faced outwards, these seating options were also mainly placed in close proximity to thoroughfares, either being curvilinear paths (such as at the Vondelpark) or main roads (Dam Square). This resembles the observation made within the *Queering Public Space* report—public spaces are often accompanied by wide thoroughfares, causing high levels of visibility and echoing soundscapes (see section 2.1).[211] These characteristics were found in both case studies and were commented upon by every interviewee, illustrating how the common placement of benches across urban public spaces does not accommodate the lived realities of TGD people.

Similarly to the outward-facing orientation of public space seating, the placement of public space seating has been accepted without much critical inquiry, likely also due to the association between visibility and safety. Nevertheless, the interviewees' expressed how the benches' proximity to multiple thoroughfares was one of the features that made them feel the most uncomfortable or unsafe.

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[211] *Queering Public Space,* 14.

Primarily, the benches' close proximity to thoroughfares facilitated continuous visibility, exposure, and eye contact with strangers. Simultaneously, in both case studies, the benches' placement positioned those seated with their backs to other thoroughfares. The interviewees often stated how it was unsettling having their back facing roads, pathways, and strangers, as it made them unable to know if they were being approached from certain directions and what was taking place outside of their field of vision.

The 'eyes on the street' mentality which seems to guide many aspects to public space design must be revisited; in catering to people for whom high degrees of exposure are comforting, others are effectively only provided public spaces that cause discomfort.

The placement of benches is another feature of urban public spaces that could be easily adjusted. It would merely require the repositioning of some benches in more secluded locations—while such options do exist in the Vondelpark, they do not in Dam Square.

However, when such benches are offered in the Vondelpark, they are still in close proximity to pathways which, as was mentioned in section 4.1.2, is likely because of the landscape design of the park and its centralisation of curvilinear pathways. Nevertheless, secluded seating areas could be offered by creatively navigating the landscape design, making the Vondelpark more adaptable to various individuals' needs. Zurich's collaborative exhibition also demonstrates how privacy can be innovatively embedded into benches' designs, rather than necessitating that individuals who are uncomfortable by high levels exposure locate private areas themselves.

## 5.3 Theme C: The affordances public spaces provide can negatively impact TGD people's perceptions and experiences

The Vondelpark and Dam Square demonstrate different approaches to the affordances that a public space provides; while the Vondelpark prescriptively structures its affordances, Dam Square's are more open-ended. Nevertheless, both case studies demonstrated certain limitations.

The findings of this theme, along with those discussed in the subsections prior, illustrate how the predominant obstacle preventing urban public spaces from accommodating TGD people is their lack of options. This pertains both to seating and amenities—both of which shape the affordances provided by a space.

Due to being a park, the majority of the affordances throughout the Vondelpark pertain to sitting or reclining. Simultaneously, perhaps because of its bourgeois origins or because of its popularity for tourists, the Vondelpark provides various commercial affordances by offering cafés, restaurants, and a performing arts theatre.

Alternatively, due to being a town square, Dam Square provides both greater and fewer affordances. Since Dam Square is relatively under-designed, there are not many options for using the space, other than to walk through, or sit inside, it. Simultaneously, however, the emptiness of the square enables a variety of unexpected activities to take place.

The interviewees expressed limited interest towards Dam Square because of the discomfort that its openness and emptiness evoked. Therefore, urban public spaces can work towards establishing a balance between overly prescriptive design and underdeveloped design.

Striving towards this balance would, once again, not be very difficult. Rather, as the prior subsections suggested, it would involve the implementation of options, granting individuals agency over how they experience public space. Similar to the aforementioned suggestions, increasing the variability of the affordances within an urban public space would not only benefit TGD people, but others, as well.

### 5.3.1 Subtheme: Public space typically offers limited options for seating/usage, restricting TGD people's ability to control their level of visibility, exposure, and proximity to strangers

Although both the Vondelpark and Dam Square offered formal seating options while also providing space for informal seating options—such as lawns or steps—the limited variability within the spaces' seating options became an evident theme within the spatial analysis and interview process.

As indicated in the former sections, the high degree of social visibility that the benches throughout both spaces enforced was unappealing to the interviewees. They each expressed how, typically, when visiting public spaces, they seek out spots that are more secluded, in closer proximity to nature, and which do not orient them so that people are behind their backside. None of the interviewees expressed interest in sitting at Dam Square, perhaps because of the absence of secluded areas and of nature.

The problem with both the Vondelpark and Dam Square is that individuals who do not feel comfortable sitting in highly exposed locations either need to locate more private spaces themselves, or avoid the space entirely. The minimal variety across public space seating options is a trend outside of these case studies; it is uncommon to find multiple seating options, with differing degrees of exposure, within a public space. However, every member of the public has differing perceptions of and experiences with social visibility, thus public spaces should be designed so as to be prepared to accommodate this.

### 5.3.2 Subtheme: The amenities offered by public spaces do not meet the needs of TGD people, as they tend to centralise commercialism or discourage comfort

At both the Vondelpark and Dam Square, the interviewees expressed disinterest or dislike towards the surrounding amenities. At both locations, the interviewees' apathy towards the amenities was multifaceted. On the one hand, many, if not most, of the amenities were clearly

catering to upper class individuals. For example, the restaurant near the selected bench at the Vondelpark (*Park Zuid*) was upscale in its architectural design and menu prices. At Dam Square, the surrounding shops consisted mainly of luxury, high-end stores.

On the other hand, the interviewees explained their aversion towards the surrounding amenities through practical concerns. For example, at the selected bench of the Vondelpark, the absence of a comfortable public bathroom was a large problem for the interviewees; one either has to utilise one of two insufficiently maintained porta potties, or pay to use a gendered, and guarded, public bathroom within Park Zuid. Accessing public bathrooms is a constant struggle for TGD people, with both physical and psychological consequences.

Many TGD people experience urinary health problems from avoiding using public bathrooms, due to the harassment and judgement often encountered when doing so.[212] There are no public bathrooms in close proximity to Dam Square. The general lack of public bathrooms throughout Amsterdam is concerning and demonstrative of the municipality's priorities regarding public resources.[213]

When asked which amenities they would have liked, Interviewee 6 listed amenities that should be fundamental to public spaces, such as comfortable public bathrooms for all, water stations, or shower stations. Thus, accommodating TGD people within public space design does not mean that transness needs to be explicitly signified.

Importantly, none of the interviewees felt as though any explicitly queer/trans signifiers would increase their comfortability or safety within the case studies, or within public spaces in general. When queer/trans signage was deemed helpful, it was in regards to normalising non-gendered signage in public spaces. Shifting away from gendered signage would likely benefit everybody, as the symbols utilised in such signage are sexist, ableist, and likely

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[212] Aleece Fosnight, "Urinary health concerns in the trans community", Uqora, accessed 1 June, 2023, https://uqora.info/blogs/learning-center/urinary-health-and-transgender-community.

[213] "Still holding out? Amsterdam's toilet troubles continue", Dutch News, 5 November, 2022, https://www.dutchnews.nl/2022/11/taking-the-piss-amsterdams-toilet-troubles-continue/.

unrelatable for many cisgender people, as well. This finding resembles Kiri Crossland's sentiment that the introduction of queer signage within urban public spaces can encourage new social norms (see section 1.2).[214]

The interviewees expressed how queering public space is not a practical task to accomplish and, in fact, would be counterproductive if done on a governmental level. As Interviewee 3 stated, "queerness for me is defined by a certain deviancy from the expected norm and a friction there". Therefore, urban designers and planners cannot (and perhaps, should not) attempt to queer public space, as that is contrary to what queerness represents. Alternatively, public space design can be further developed so as to acknowledge and accommodate publics who represent various manifestations of queerness, deviancy, or subversion, all of whom have a right to relax within urban public spaces.

## 5.4 Findings in relation to research question

Although these research findings demonstrate various components to how public spaces do not accommodate TGD people, the interviewees' perceptions and experiences were not always identical. This variation is crucial for multiple reasons. Primarily, TGD individuals are not a monolith, therefore this community does not innately share the same perceptions and experiences regarding any topic, or regarding the lived experiences of their gender identities. Rather, it is important to acknowledge the varying perspectives and experiences throughout this community to ensure that viewpoints are not overlooked. Due to the limitations of this research (see section 3.2), there are many voices from the TGD community that are unfortunately missing, thus there are many opportunities for future research on this topic.

Simultaneously, although there were variations across the interviewees' outlooks, the similarities amongst them was significant. Though the experiences and perceptions of TGD people are not uniform, there are components to public space design that, evidently, widely concern this community. Thus, the identified themes motivate consideration over how urban design may be implicated in the discomfort and danger that TGD people experience across public

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[214] Crossland, "Sex(uality) in the city: Planning for queerer public space".

spaces and, simultaneously, how design could be employed to remedy this. Moreover, this research demonstrates how the perspective from which public space is designed can impact how it will function and, in addition, the harm that can come from assuming user types' preferences.

Both the landscape design of the Vondelpark and the architectural design surrounding Dam Square were led by cis, white, upper class men. The interviewees' comments that they often must seek out spaces that provide them with the experiences they desire demonstrates how the consequences of public spaces being designed with certain publics in mind. Interviewee 2's remark that there are spots within the Vondelpark that they know queer people often congregate at reveals how those who are not the intended public must find ways to carve out their own spaces. Although this research focused on TGD people, this is not the only community that this research applies to—many communities are not accommodated by public space design, urging the question: public space for which public?

Themes A, B, and C indicate the importance of increasing the variability within public space design; the research findings made apparent how both overly prescriptive and under-designed urban public spaces can cause TGD people to feel uncomfortable, vulnerable, or unwelcome.

By offering a diverse range of features and amenities, and thus enabling a variety of experiences, public spaces would not only become more accommodating for TGD people; rather, they would make additional publics feel welcome within public space, as well. There are various ways in which this could be incorporated into urban public space design moving forward; importantly, as the *Queering Public Space* report also notes, these shifts must take place on a governmental level, as urban public space is owned by a city's municipality.[215]

Governments' legislative guidelines and regulations regarding planning, building, and project management must be updated so as to require more inclusive design practices.[216] Azzouz

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[215] *Queering Public Space*, 7.
[216] Ibid.

and Catterall express how inclusive design practices extend beyond access and mobility issues and should consider "poverty, deprivation, and lived experiences", which are often neglected on the governmental level.[217] Revising legislative guidelines and regulations is pivotal to ensuring longevity in reapproaching public space design. However, governmental entities can begin by attuning to how their area's public spaces are, or are not, accommodating their publics.

In 2017, Amsterdam's city council published a document overviewing their visions and plans regarding public space development between 2025-2040.[218] This document explains the municipality's five main ambitions: designing for present and future use, supporting the international dynamics of the city, environmentally sustainable planning and management, high-standard maintenance, and transitioning the planning and management of public spaces into a shared task with citizens, organisations, and business owners.[219]

The existence of such a document is promising as it indicates municipal awareness of public space's significance. However, there are certain oversights, providing important considerations for any similar initiatives moving forward.

For example, although the municipality acknowledges that public space design must shift, since the usage of public space has changed "enormously", they characterise the primary functions of public spaces as "staying and moving".[220] Both staying and moving within urban public space is experienced differently between individuals, therefore simplifying them as such flattens the realities and dynamics that urban public space creates. Furthermore, other publics may seek out public space for alternative purposes, yet are effectively ignored through the municipality's interpretation.

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[217] *Queering Public Space*, 7.
[218] "Policy: Urban Space," Gemeente Amsterdam, accessed 2 June, 2023,
    https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/urban-development/policy-urban-space/.
[219] Gemeente Amsterdam, *Public Space Vision 2025: The Living Room of all Amsterdammers, Guidelines for Development and management of Amsterdam's public spaces,* (Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017),
    https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/urban-development/policy-urban-space/, 6.
[220] Ibid.

The municipality acknowledges the importance of individuals taking part in public spaces' planning process—the living room being "decorated together".[221] The document outlines how this process would involve the city's management committees, board committees, public space alderman, public space portfolio holders, and members of the city council, however, the process of facilitating collaborations between these administrators and city residents is not elaborated upon.[222] Yet, such municipally-run co-design projects are often inaccessible to many publics, since they require comfortability working with the government and the ability to commit one's time without pay.[223] The interest in co-creating urban public spaces is promising, however the process must be carefully executed in order to be a truly collaborative project welcoming diverse perspectives.

This document also lacks any mention of gender inequities, a significant problem affecting urban public spaces around the world (see section 1.2). Thus, this document sustains one of the largest issues regarding public spaces—the limited perspective from which they are envisioned and designed.

Although there are certain limitations to the municipality's visions and plans for Amsterdam's public spaces, the document's existence is encouraging. On a general level, this document indicates municipal investment in public space. More specifically, the noted intention to better acknowledge diversity suggests openness to expanding the publics that such spaces accommodate. For example, the document states the importance of increasing public spaces' accessibility for disabled communities through ensuring that the sizes of sidewalks and crosswalks are sufficient and ramp inclines are not too steep.[224] This remark, in addition to the aforementioned reference to variability in public space usage, demonstrates that increasing the inclusivity of Amsterdam's public space is being contemplated.

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[221] Gemeente Amsterdam, *Public Space Vision 2025*, 44-45.
[222] Ibid, 47.
[223] "Is it time to consider offering people payment for involvement and co-design activities?" Uberology, accessed 5 June, 2023, https://www.uberology.co.uk/is-it-time-to-consider-offering-people-payment-for-involvement-and-co-design-activities/.

[224] Gemeente Amsterdam, 31.

Furthermore, the municipality's awareness that structural shifts across public spaces can make them more accommodating for marginalised communities—such as the disabled community—indicates their awareness that the lived realities of certain publics have historically been ignored. Therefore, it is possible that the municipality would be open to considering how this has been the case for the TGD community or, alternatively, how accommodating one marginalised community can be approached in a way that simultaneously accommodates others.

## 5.4 Moving Forward

Based upon this research, public spaces' lack of variability can exclude or harm the TGD community; yet, public space space can be reapproached and diversified, in turn increasing the psychological and physical comfort of individuals who desire alternative ways of enjoying urban public life—which is not only TGD people.

Moving forward, the perspectives guiding public space development must expand. The municipality of Amsterdam utilises the Amsterdam Thermometer of Public Space to measure the usage, perception, and quality of the city's public spaces every few years, providing data to inform their decision-making.[225] The municipality is evidently dedicated to offering satisfactory public spaces—thus, they have the tools and the commitment to expanding the inclusivity of this process.

Governmental entities can work towards remedying the variety of inequities—including gender inequities—that have been materialised into the built environment. Creative and diverse approaches can welcome creative and diverse usages; by moving towards forms of urban design that welcome variability, our cities can become less binary and more accommodating.

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[225] "Public space in figures," Gemeente Amsterdam, accessed 11 June, 2023,
https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/stedelijke-ontwikkeling/openbare-ruimte/cijfers/.

# Conclusion

Since the concept of public space first emerged, it has been interpreted and experienced differently depending upon one's perspective; this diversity in interpretation suggests the importance of diversity in design. Previous literature on such diverse interpretations has not thoroughly discussed how the historical intentions behind a public space can influence its design and, in turn, continuously impact how various publics experience it. Furthermore, there is limited research regarding this dynamic from the perspective of trans and gender diverse people.

Through tracing the development of two case studies, this thesis demonstrated the importance of attuning to urban histories when analysing public space as both a concept and a design. Furthermore, this thesis' incorporation of interviews with trans and gender diverse individuals offered insight regarding which aspects of public space design do not accommodate transness or gender diversity, while simultaneously illustrating how there are likely overlaps between this community's discomfort and other marginalised communities' discomfort.

The key themes that were identified within this research pertained to the impacts that public space design—in regards to the intentions behind its development, the orientation of its seating options, and the provided affordances—can have on TGD people. Future research can continue this exploration by studying alternative typologies of public spaces, continuing to speak with TGD people of all ages and backgrounds, and situating such an analysis within different geographic or cultural contexts. Furthermore, as future research on this topic continues, opportunities to share the findings with the entity responsible over the public space being analysed should be sought out—as I plan to do with these findings. If research on this topic continues to evolve, urban design beyond any and all binaries can become collectively imagined and materialised. Though this will not solve all forms of oppression, it is one step towards equalising access to spaces that are meant to be shared.

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## Chapter 5

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**Figure 5.3**: Bench from Zurcich's collaborative exhibit, 2001, from *Social Life Project,* https://www.sociallifeproject.org/have-a-seat-how-seating-shapes-welcoming-cities/.

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# Appendix A

Below is the information that was sent to each interviewee, following their expressed interest in collaborating with me on this research.

## Participant Information Sheet

"Hi! I am writing to invite you to collaborate with me on my thesis research. This collaboration includes visiting the two case studies of my research together— a particular bench within the Vondelpark and at Dam Square—and talking through some questions over a beverage and a snack of your choice.

It is important for me to confirm that you feel comfortable with me utilising the term **TGD [trans/gender diverse]** when referencing you. I selected this term because it's the most all-encompassing in regards to the gender spectrum, while simultaneously not centralising heteronormative constructions and interpretations of gender, as terms such as 'gender non-conforming' or 'non-binary' can do.

If you are uncomfortable with this term, **do not hesitate to let me know.**

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The research question of this thesis is: to what extent does urban public space design accommodate trans and gender diverse people?

The purpose of this research is to examine the dynamic between trans and gender diverse people and urban public space and, particularly, how this dynamic is mediated by urban public space's design. While I have my own experiences with and thoughts on public space as a trans person

and as a student with an interest in urban design, it is important to me to hear from others and broaden the scope of perspectives included. This will benefit and contribute to the discussion that my thesis will be guiding.

More broadly, the purpose of this research is to demonstrate the sociocultural impacts that design can have as a result of the decisions, values, or stigmas that historically influenced its creation. Therefore, my research will trace the history behind public space as a concept and as a design within our built environment—using two case studies as specific examples. **It is important to note that public space design harms various communities who have historically, and continuously, been neglected and mistreated, however this research will focus predominantly on the experiences of trans and gender diverse people.**

I am making the argument that public space has not been designed with trans and gender diverse people in mind because the urban planning and design industries have been cis male-dominated for centuries, therefore they have been shaped by the desires, experiences, and behaviours of this demographic. As a result, public space not only sustains the cis male domination of the built environment but allows for this demographic to feel in control of our public spaces. Therefore, not only can public space be uncomfortable for trans and gender diverse people, but it can enable dangerous interactions to take place because of its design's lack of consideration for trans gender diverse peoples' realities.

I will, therefore, be asking you questions about how the case studies' design makes you feel, how you feel able, or unable, to use or behave in the space, as well as your thoughts on specific design features that we will be interacting with/near. There have been certain 'micro-interventions' proposed by queer urban designers and scholars, so I will also be asking you about how you feel about these various propositions to study whether or not these would be beneficial and if not, what direction should be taken instead.

**Why have I been invited?**

You have been invited to collaborate with me on this, primarily, because you are someone whose insight I trust and value. I found it important to invite trans and gender diverse people who I already know, as it requires a degree of comfort and trust to engage in conversations around one's gender, experiences in public, and emotional responses to various scenarios. I hope that you feel comfortable to take part in these conversations with me, however it is important that you know that this is entirely voluntary and you are entitled to decline this invitation for any reason with no hard feelings <3

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you do accept this invitation, you should know that your participation will only require **1 day,** the day in which we plan to meet and begin these conversations. It will likely last at least **1-1.5 hours**, **as I would like to ask you questions both while the sun is out and once it has set**. However,  this is a complete estimate and depends on where my questions for you do, or don't, take us. I will accommodate your schedule as much as possible!

You should also know that I will be audio-taping and note-taking throughout our conversations so that I can be sure to remember and cite your **words, thoughts, and facial expressions correctly.** I am happy to use pseudonyms or anonymize you in any way. I am not planning to use or publish your personal information, and can introduce you however you feel most comfortable. It is, also, important to note that the audio recordings and notes taken will not be accessible to anybody other than myself. **If it would make you more comfortable, my audio recordings and notes can be erased or disposed of once this thesis is completed.**

Once I complete the interview portion, I will have the interviews transcribed and, then, will conduct a Thematic Analysis, where I will identify any themes or patterns found throughout the three components to my data collection process: historical overviews, spatial analyses, and the interviews. I will then use these themes to further discuss my research question.

**What will I have to do?**

Once we meet at the first case study, I will take you to a particular bench and, first, we will take about a moment to sit, observe our surroundings, and notice how we feel when doing so. We will talk about this for a bit afterwards, during which I will audio-record and take notes. I will then ask you the questions that I have prepared, during which I will be audio-recording and taking notes. Following this, we will go to the next case study and repeat this same process.

I will also ask you to **consider how you would like to be identified, introduced, and referred to** within my research by writing up a blurb introducing yourself, including your gender identity/pronouns, age, nationality/country of origin, occupation, and duration of time living in Amsterdam, and any other information you feel is important or relevant to your participation in this research.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

While I am hoping for this to be a comfortable and potentially thought-provoking experience for you, it is possible that the questions and experience could cause discomfort. I hope to create a space where we can discuss any potential feelings that may arise for you through this conversation. If at any point, you would like to end the conversation, please know that that would be perfectly okay.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Aside from us getting to spend some nice time chatting together, by taking part, you will benefit a new and developing area within urban design that considers and embraces queerness and gender diversity. I think this is an exciting thing to share together <3

**Further information and contact details:** If you would like any further information, feel free to contact my program supervisor at: j.m.tynan@vu.nl

**What's Next?**

From here, please let me know if you have any questions. If not, I will send you the consent form for you to fill out and sign. I will also provide you with various options for dates that we can meet and have our conversation".

# Appendix B

Below is the consent form that was filled out and signed by each interviewee. The completed and signed files are not included due to privacy reasons.

**MA DESIGN CULTURES, VU AMSTERDAM**

**Participant informed consent form (interviews)**

| *Please tick the appropriate boxes* | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **Taking Part** | | |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated DD/MM/YYYY. | □ | □ |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | □ | □ |
| I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and/or recorded (audio or video).[1] | □ | □ |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. | □ | □ |
| **Use of the information I provide for this project only** | | |
| I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. | □ | □ |
| I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. | □ | □ |
| *Please choose **one** of the following two options:* | | |
| I would like my real name to be used in the above | □ | |
| I would **not** like my real name to be used in the above. | □ | |
| **Use of the information I provide beyond this project** | | |
| I agree for the data I provide to be archived by the MA student | □ | □ |
| I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | □ | □ |
| **So we can use the information you provide legally** | | |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Mayim Frieden | □ | □ |

_____   _____   _____   _____
Name of participant      [printed]      Signature                        Date

Mayim Frieden
Researcher        [printed]      Signature _(signature)_      Date 4/05/2023

# Appendix C

Below, the transcripts of each interview are attached. 'M' indicates that it was a statement or question spoken by me, and the interviewee will be indicated by the number that they have been identified with throughout the thesis.

Interviewees 1-3 were interviewed at both locations, so the location, date, and time of the interview will be indicated at the top of the transcripts. Interviewees 4-6 were only interviewed at one of the locations, therefore there will only be one transcript for them, and the location, date, and time will be indicated at the top.

## Interviewee 1 Transcript
### Dam Square, 12 May, 14:35 (sun out)

(00:00)

**M:** Okay. Okay. So the first part is just for, like not that long, we're gonna just sit for a moment and just kind of like take in everything, which would include like spatially taking in, like just how it looks from where we're sitting and different things you see, and also socially in terms of like the different types of activities you're seeing going on, the different types of users you're seeing… yeah, how people are claiming certain spaces or not claiming spaces and just think about that for a second

(00:34)

**Interviewee 1:** Okay. Yes

(01:15)

**M**: Also, do you mind if you hold?

(01:16)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, yeah, of course, of course

(01:18)

**M**: Yeah. Okay. So now, thinking back to when we first got here and started walking over into the square…Did you feel like, did it feel sort of like, a welcoming environment as you were walking in, or did it, how did it feel in your path of approaching this, this spot?

(01:37)

**Interviewee 1:** Mhm..Mm. Appro, like welcoming? I don't know really, but I don't know. For me, the Dam is not really a place of like, it's not a destination. For me, it's very much like something I go through and I feel like a lot of, like if I look around, it's like. I mean, first of all, I mean this is an assumption, so I don't know, but I feel like it's mostly tourists and you know, people that are actually like looking and like, oh my God, this is so beautiful, blah, blah, are mostly tourists. And I feel like even then most of the people are just going through, like going from, I forgot that name of the street, but there to the Kalverstraat and I don't know, people that are like sitting, it's, I don't know. It doesn't feel like they're sitting here because, I don't know, maybe, maybe those people, but I again, feel like that's more like tourists, just like sitting, how do we say, um, like taking a break. I don't know, I feel, for me, it feels like no one's really here like, oh yeah, let's relax here. Like you go to a park or whatever. So in that sense, it doesn't really feel welcoming, I guess. It's also just the busyness doesn't also like, yeah, give, give, give a welcoming feel, I guess. Um, just the traffic going, like, they're going crazy here, going crazy. Also, just, the people going through blah, blah, blah. So I feel like all that, just not no, not really welcoming, I would say, but also not hostile, just, I don't know. It's, it's just like, for me, it's very much like, why would I be here if I don't need to be here? You know? So, yeah

(03:45)

**M:** Mhm, okay. Yeah. So the next question is, I think you kind of just answered this, but you can expand on it if you want. You don't have to though. So would you have sat in this spot if you were by yourself?

(03:56)

**Interviewee 1:** No *laughs*

(03:57)

**M**: Yeah, fair. I think you also just answered this, but like, so would you say that this feels kind of like a dense space? Like would you characterise this as like an urban space as opposed to being like a more secluded space?

(04:10)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, very much so. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Like, the amount of people, the amount of traffic, the amount of movement just very, yeah

(04:20)

**M:** Yeah. Cool, straightforward. So the next one, so yeah, thinking also about where we are and like the amenities that there are here. So that includes like, obviously the benches, but also like these food stands and also like all the stores. Do you feel inclined, do you feel like these are amenities that you personally would use, that suit your needs?

(04:40)

**Interviewee 1:** No, no

(04:43)

**M:** What kind of..

(04:44)

**Interviewee 1:** I mean, yeah, if there would be more cafes or like, I, I don't know. I, I try to think of like other squares that I've, you know, encountered that are more welcoming. But I feel like yeah, the fact that there's H&M there and, um, the Swarovski is there like, like it's, it's clothing stores everywhere. Bijenkorf also, it's like a big, um, how do you say, not a mall, I mean it's..

(05:16)

**M:** Department store?

(05:17)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, department store. Um, like there are almost no cafes. And if there are cafes, it's like, I don't know, they also don't, they seem a bit touristy. Um, yeah. And the hot dog stands, I mean the hot dog stands are great, alright, whatever. But I'm also not like, all right, let's get a hot dog every day. Um, and yeah, no, so, and like the benches are very much like on the outskirts, which again, if you think about, okay, this is, for most people, a place where they go through, that's great. If you have a shit load of like, benches everywhere, that's not like, for movement, that's not great, but you know, it would make it more welcoming or bit more like fun, I guess, or it would be more of a place to actually sit down and relax and maybe, you know, if there were more benches or something, I dunno. But yeah, all in all, no amenities, no

(06:20)

**M:** That makes sense. So do you feel like even with *moves closer to microphone* sorry, just wanna make sure I know which question I'm asking. With all the amenities or the, considering all what you just said, do you feel still as though you have some sense of control over this environment sitting here? Or do you kind of feel, I don't know, like, lots of things are happening, not necessarily to you, but like, do you feel like you have control over sort of your, your surroundings or your experience sitting here?

(06:53)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I'm not sure if I understand the question, like entirely

(06:59)

**M:** I guess, do you feel like..Mm, how do I rephrase, like in sitting here, do you feel a sense of like, security, like not safety, in a sense of security, but more, more like a sense of security that you're like, okay, I'm here and I know that if I need to leave, I can like, you feel in control of how sort of you can interact with being here

(07:21)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah. But I feel like, I don't know, I feel like I don't have a problem with that in general, but I don't know, maybe I just haven't encountered those spaces where that's not the case. I don't know. I feel like yeah, if I want to leave, I could

(07:42)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. It's, yeah, that's just like, um, for context, that's a metric for urban space designers of security is like if people feel in control of their environment

(07:53)

**Interviewee 1:** Mmm, okay

(07:54)

**M:** So like a badly designed space would be like, you don't feel in control of your environment cause you don't feel like, you know, you have much agency, I guess

(08:03)

**Interviewee 1:** And what kind of space…

(08:06)

**M:** Like, like a, I guess that could be a space where like, you know, the exits and the entries aren't super clear. It's easy to get kind of lost in things. Like..

(08:11)

**Interviewee 1:** Oooh, okay. Oh, okay. No, no, no. I feel like because it's very sparse and very open in that sense, you, it's also like very easy to see like, okay, there's a street there. There's a street there. There. There is where the cars are going. You know? So in that sense, the openness does give…yeah, a good overview, I guess

(08:32)

**M:** Okay. Gotcha. Yeah. Sorry, kind of confusing.. Okay. And then next, do you feel like in this position, you feel pretty visible to other people?

(08:43)

**Interviewee 1:** Hm hmm. I mean, technically yes, I would say, but again, because I feel like a lot of people are like, um, how do I say this? Again, like, this is, this is not some, this is not a destination for people. This is somewhere that they go through. So I feel like a lot of people don't really notice you regardless of like, so technically I'm very visible. I mean, on the other hand, we are on the outskirts, so maybe not as visible, but like other than that, like there's no obstacles or trees or anything, so in that sense, I'm very open to everyone, um, visible to everyone, but, because everyone's so go, go, go. I don't feel like people notice in that sense. I guess.

(09:36)

**M:** Do you feel like the lack of like obstacles or like the, the open field of vision makes you feel like, I guess you just said you don't feel noticed, but does that make you feel like a bit more in control of, of this space? Because you can kind of like.. because you're visible, that means also that everyone else is visible to you, at the same time

(09:54)

**Interviewee 1:** Mmhmm, yeah, yeah, yeah

(09:56)

**M:** Does that feel like, does that feel like it makes you more aware of your surroundings, or does it kind of feel slightly more disorienting?

(10:06)

**Interviewee 1:** Uh, um, mmm.. Wait can you, can you, one more time?

(10:19)

**M:** Yeah. Like, do you feel like, I guess you said that it doesn't really feel like noticeable, the visibility because of how busy it is

(10:27)
**Interviewee 1:** Yeah

(10:28)
**M:** But, does it feel. I don't know, like, I guess, does it feel almost kind of helpful that there's so much visibility here or does it almost feel like slightly restrictive or controlling or, anyway, there's also like, if neither…

(10:41)
**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, oh, okay. I mean, yeah, I don't know. I feel like, I don't know, this openness could also lead to like kind of disorganisation because they're like, so many ways that people can move. So it's a bit of a bit of a mess, I guess. Like, if I like focus on everyone, it's like, oh my God. It's like overwhelming, I guess.. Um. I dunno if that's..

(11:16)
**M:** Yeah, yeah! That's fine, that's fine. We're still recording, right? I just wanna make sure

(11:20)
**Interviewee 1:** Yes

(11:21)
**M:** Cool. Um, okay, so then I feel like you also kind of answered this before, but like, do you feel like there's, like, people are claiming, kind of, different territories within this? Like I know you pointed out that it seems like it's mainly groups of tourists, but does that make you feel less like you have like a right to be here? Or does it just kind of feel like this isn't a place you would want to be?

(11:42)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. The second part. I feel like, I don't know. This is maybe a very, I don't know, a very cocky or very, I don't know. I feel like the second I step into the city centre, I feel like an asshole, but kind of like, you know, the person's like, ugh, tourists, whatever. I hate everyone. Just, just go out of my way. Whatever. I won't go out of your way. Fuck you, whatever, blah, blah, blah. Um, so I feel like in a sense, like they don't have control over or like power over me or like, I don't feel as though I don't belong here. It's just that I don't want to be here. Like, I mean, it's, but yeah, that has to do with the fact that I don't like touristy areas. It's also just location, it's not within, you know? Um, but yeah

(12:38)

**M:** Does it feel like this area, or like this space, feels kind of like tourist territory or do you feel-–

(12:44)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Kind of, yeah. Yeah, yeah

(12:47)

**M:** Okay. Um, so it's like, you just kinda answered this, but do you feel like it's like an, an equally shared space, or do you feel like it's kind of mainly being territorialized by tourists?

(12:49)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah. And I feel like the stores around it also like capitalize off that and, you know, all the tourist traps, all the waffle places that are here and like all the cheese things and like, you know, all the shops, blah, blah, blah. I feel like it's, if people from, if people who are living in Amsterdam could vote on like what kind of stores, what kind of restaurants, what kind of stuff would, could be here, I feel like it would be way different

(13:33)

**M:** Mmhmm, okay

(13:34)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, so yeah. And that's a, yeah, tourist territory. Yes. I would say that's the case..

(13:41)

**M:** Okay, okay. Now this is like going in a slightly different direction, but let's just say, I mean, taking all that into account that you like, you definitely wouldn't choose to hang out here on your own accord, and don't enjoy hanging out here, but like let's just say you were to need to hang out here for some reason or whatever, this was like one of the only places that you could hang out with in a moment. Would you feel comfortable hanging out here with a group of friends who are all people who identified as gender diverse?

(14:11)

**Interviewee 1:** I..hmm, I don't know. I mean, I personally, luckily, have never experienced something to an extent that I would feel uncomfortable being here. But yeah, because it's so open, if we would hang out here, it would be very visible. Um, I would, I mean, maybe this isn't like really part of the question, but also, no, I don't know what I want to say. Like because it's so like busy, I also, yeah, again, wouldn't want to be here because it's like, I don't know, but that's regardless of the queer thing or it's, it's, it's just so chaotic that it's just not a relaxing place to be. But yeah, going back to the question, I wouldn't say no, but I also, yeah could see where it could potentially go wrong, maybe. Yeah

(15:29)

**M:** And so then like off that, kind of similar question, but also different, like, let's just say you were in a relationship with someone who is also gender diverse. Um, would you feel comfortable being here with them and like further, like if you were to be here with them, would you feel comfortable, like, I guess not necessarily like displaying outward affection, but like the way a couple, like this straight couple that's holding hands right now, you know? Like would you feel comfortable doing that here?

(15:57)

**Interviewee 1:** And sitting?

(15:58)

**M:** Yeah, in this spot

(15:59)

**Interviewee 1:** In this spot..Umm, I think I would be, again, I think going back to the fact that because people are, so, this is a place of like movement, I feel like not a lot of people focus on other people here. So in that sense, I would feel kind of invisible to the point that I would be comfortable, um, showing pda

(16:41)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so now I'm going to change, ask more questions about like more specific design features regarding this bench and the space.So on like physical and like sensory level, do you feel comfortable on this bench?

(17:00)

**Interviewee 1:** Hmm. Yeah, I think I would like the backrest. Yeah. Back rests would be nice, but other than that, yeah

(17:14)

**M:** You kind of already answered this, but like, do you feel like being here you have any sort of sense of privacy or do you feel like more a sense of exposure?

(17:28)

**Interviewee 1:** Mmm, yeah, I feel, yeah, like I said, I feel like it's kind of a paradox. Like on the one hand it's very open, so it does feel very like exposed. But on the other hand, because like, yeah, I've, I've said this multiple times, like, yeah, like, because it's a place of movement, people

are not really focused on other people.So I, yeah. So I don't know. Uh, on the one hand, yes, on the other hand, no, I would say

(17:59)
**M:** Yeah, okay. And you also kind of answered this, but just to ask again. Do you feel like when you're sitting here, you feel yourself self-censoring in any way? Like, do you feel like you are processing the way you're acting, knowing that you're very visible? Or do you feel comfortable kind of acting according to any impulse?

(18:19)
**Interviewee 1:** Um, I would say second option, but I don't know. I, I personally never really felt like I had to, like, tone down or hide any aspects of myself because I don't know, I feel, I feel like, no one will see me as like non-binary or like, you know, they see me as a woman so I feel like in that sense, yeah, it's not like visible to other people that I'm different. So in that sense, I don't feel that threat, I guess

(19:13)
**M:** Yeah, okay. And then, are you satisfied with what you see, like the field of vision from sitting here? Like do you feel like this is a nice view for you or do you kind of wish you had a different view sitting here?

(19:26)
**Interviewee 1:** Ummm, no, I don't like.. Um, it's just very sparse and very, I don't know, if there were a few trees that would already make it a lot better. Um, but yeah, it's just a lot of people

(19:46)
**M:** Yeah. Yeah.. And then, okay, so the next questions are gonna be about certain micro interventions that this group of queer, urban designers have proposed as ways for making public space more all-encompassing for all people, which they call queering public space

(20:06)

**Interviewee 1:** Okay, yeah

(20:07)

**M:** Which they think isn't just for queer people, but would be for like everybody, any marginalised group. So I'm curious what people actually think of, about these micro interventions

(20:16)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah

(20:17)

**M:** So how would you feel if instead of how this bench is facing out the way it is now, if it was facing another bench? Or, um, yeah, I'll start with that.

(20:31)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, wait, so you mean one bench here? One bench here?

(20:34)

**M:** Yeah. Instead of just being faced to let you look outwards, you'd be faced to be looking at another person.

(20:39)

**Interviewee 1:** Ooh. Ooooh. Ah. I dunno. I mean, I personally like the people watching in a sense. Um, and I don't know, I feel like on the one hand, like in a perfect world, like you sit here and not a person sits there, it's like, oh, hi hi hi. It's a conversation. It's fun, it's light, but I don't know. In that way, you don't really have an option, if you don't want that. I mean, if the bench also faces, like you have the benches facing each other, but also the opposite way, so you do have the option to just not interact with people. I guess that would be better. Um, but I don't know. I feel like maybe the nice thing with these benches is like, if you want, you could interact with other people, but if you don't, then you can just like, you know, face this way

(21:58)

**M:** Yeah. And then, so if, do you think, if that was the case, if there was another one that you were facing, would you feel, would that make you feel more or less inclined to, to sit there?

(22:11)

**Interviewee 1:** I would say if there was already another person sitting there, maybe less, um, yeah, but again, that depends on what kind of mood I am, I'm in. Um, yeah, I don't know. I do, I don't know, if there was a bench here and someone was sitting here and I'm sitting here, I don't know, A bit too intimate maybe or something. I don't know. Yeah. I don't know

(22:50)

**M:** And do you think that would make you feel more comfortable and more safe a person sitting across from you? Or would it make you feel less comfortable or kind of like less safe sitting there with a stranger across from..

(23:02)

**Interviewee 1:** I think less I, yeah, for me, a level of like, I guess I kind of see anonymity as safety maybe. I don't know.

(23:16)

**M:** Mmm, yeah. Okay. And then, so how would you feel if, how would you feel if this was, if this bench, like this would mean like it would be a totally different space, but just like hypothetically, if this space was not facing people and it wasn't facing their bench, but it was just facing like nature, like how would that feel?

(23:45)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, lovely. Lovely. More nature

(23:47)

**M:** And would that be, feel more comfortable and more safe?

(23:49)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, yeah

(23:51)

**M:** Okay. And so how would you feel if this bench had, so, okay, there's something that these, these people I was telling you about, they call cozy corners, which basically is when a bench has two big plants on either side of it so that it kind of creates like corners so that you're not fully visible on either side, so they're like big planters

(24:12)

**Interviewee 1:** So like one here, one on the other side?

(24:15)

**M:** Yeah, so that it kind of creates like some sense of like a corner, cause they're like constructed

(24:17)

**Interviewee 1:** Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Mhm

(24:21)

**M:** Um, how would you feel if, if this bench had that, like how would that change your experience if, if you think it would?

(24:28)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I don't know. I feel like overall it would feel, I don't know. I just feel like any kind of greenery would add like a positive, like, like a more cosier, more, yeah, I don't know

(24:48)

**M:** Do you think that, um, having like a sense of like, almost like a wall on either side of this bench would feel nice, or would that feel kind of uncomfortable?

(25:00)

**Interviewee 1:** No, I feel yeah, no, I do feel like it adds a bit of privacy maybe. Um, which would be nice in such an open area. Um, I don't know if you wanna, *church bells ringing* I don't know. I, I think you can still hear me, but yeah

(25:22)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. And do you think that you'd feel more comfortable sitting on a bench that had those on either side or would it kind of not make a difference or..

(25:31)

**Interviewee 1:** Uum, I mean, I don't think it would make a huge difference. But I would prefer it, I think. Just aesthetic wise, but also just, yeah, like I said, the privacy, um, and just nice. Nature's nice. Yeah. You know?

(25:54)

**M:** Yeah. Okay. This is actually the last question. Um, so just hypothetically, if there were to be like some really explicit queer signage here, like, so another proposition is like having rainbow crosswalks or, you know, trans flags or, um, like, you know, instead of having just like the normal like stick figure signage, it's like a gender neutral signage. Like, would that change at all your experience of sitting here? Or like, would it, what would you feel towards seeing that? Would that really, um, evoke anything or would it just be like..

(26:28)

**Interviewee 1:** I, I would think, oh, that's nice, but, for me personally, it wouldn't change all that much in like if I wanna sit here or not. Like that's just, yeah, that there's like bigger reasons why I

wouldn't want to sit here. Uh, so the, yeah, the. signage would be a nice touch, I would say, but nothing more than that

(27:05)

**M:** Yeah. Okay. That's all for this, this spot.

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

## Vondelpark, 12 May, 22:10 (sun down)

(00:00)

**M:** Okay, so we're gonna do the same thing as before. You can hold it

(00:03)

**Interviewee 1:** Yes, of course

(00:04)

**M:** And we're gonna start with the same thing of just sitting here for a second and think back to how you felt when we first approached this spot and sat down

(00:14)

**Interviewee 1:** Mhm

(00:15)

**M:** And also, yeah, just kind of take in. What's around us? What's in front of us? Behind us, just for a moment

(00:23)

**Interviewee 1:** Okay

(00:54)

**M:** Tell me when


(00:55)

**Interviewee 1:** Hmm?


(00:55)

**M:** Just tell me when


(00:56)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, yeah. Okay. Okay


(00:59)

**M:** So yeah, how did it feel or in approaching this spot, did it feel natural? Approaching this spot?


(01:07)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah, I think so. Yeah


(01:12)

**M:** Would you have chosen to sit here by yourself?


(01:15)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Yeah, it's a nice spot


(01:19)

**M:** Um, does this particular area, area we're in, feel like an urban area to you, or does it feel more like a secluded area to you?

(01:29)

**Interviewee 1:** Ooh. Um, I think maybe like a bit of both. Like it's a, like a secluded area within an urban area. Like, I don't know, just amount of people, the, there's still like a lot going on. But it does feel like, Yeah, you're, you are kind of tucked away from within that like urban area

(01:58)

**M:** Okay

(01:59)

**Interviewee 1:** But I wouldn't say like, this is like in the middle of nowhere or like, yeah, you know, that kind of stuff

(02:04)

**M:** Yeah. Right. And do you feel inclined to, or would you feel inclined to use the different amenities around us? So that would mean like these benches, trash can, the statue, the things behind us at restaurant

(02:17)

**Interviewee 1:** Mm. Maybe not the restaurant or like the statue. I also don't really care that much about that, um, but like the practical things. Yeah, I would. Yeah, yeah

(02:36)

**M:** Yeah, so this is kind of a similar question to last time, but do you feel like you're visible to other people sitting here right now? Also considering the time of day that's like, not generally, but like at this moment, do you feel visible to the people?

(02:53)

**Interviewee 1:** Mmm, again, 50 50 because we are facing a road, um, or like a, a pathway. Um, maybe if we were sitting like on the grass somewhere, I would feel, yeah, I would feel pretty like, yeah, invisible. Yeah. And, but the fact that there's, like, right here, there's like no, uh, no lantern.

Um, and this is also not like on the main road I would say, like, yeah, over there,  so in that sense, yeah, I feel pretty private, I guess

(03:33)

**M:** Does the sense of privacy or the, this mixed sense of privacy and visibility, does that make you feel like you're being recognized by the people that are passing by? Or do you almost feel like because you can see who's passing by, does it make you feel more kind of in control of your visibility?

(03:53)

**Interviewee 1:** Ooh, um. I think the second, the, the latter. Yeah. I feel, yeah, it's like a nice mix of I am in control of what I see, but because it's so dark, I can imagine that not, not a lot of people like notice, but it's not the same as before, because it's not as many people and there's not a lot of movements and there's also not a lot of people. So in a sense, I, yeah, yeah. I don't know. I, yeah. I don't know. Nevermind

(04:32)

**M:** Yeah! Yeah, yeah. No, that makes sense. So do you feel, in sitting in this spot, do you feel like you, you feel as though you have the right to be sitting here, or do you feel like this is maybe a spot that other people have claimed already as their territory? Or do you, sorry, do you feel capable of kind of claiming it as your own territory by sitting here?

(04:53)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. No, I, yeah, I don't feel as though I don't belong here. No, no, yeah

(05:01)

**M:** Does it feel like around us, other people are kind of claiming their own territory in other ways?

(05:06)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. I mean, there's like, groups of people like sitting, like with their, with their blankets and you know, but I feel like it's nice because there, I don't know, there's space for like a lot of people to claim their, like own little corner, and it's fine, you know? Also with the benches, like, yeah. I don't know. I feel like you can claim a, a certain amount of space and yeah

(05:39)

**M:** Yeah. Um, would you, again, same question as before. Would you feel comfortable sitting here with a group of people who were all gender diverse?

(05:49)

**Interviewee 1:** Ummm *sigh* I mean definitely more than the Dam, um, but I don't know. I guess this, it's, I don't know. I don't know if, like, if I would feel comfortable anywhere, to be be, you know, um, with a lot of queer people

(06:20)

**M:** Why, um, what would make you feel uncomfortable?

(06:24)

**Interviewee 1:** Not really uncomfortable, but more like the risk is always like whether you are, I mean, okay, if you're totally alone, then obviously not, but I mean, you are in a public space, anyway, so I feel like there's always just a little bit of danger or risk, I guess, in that sense. Um, but yeah, like I said, I do think that this feels already a bit more secure. Also, because it's a park, not you are supposed.. No. How do you say this? Like it's a lot more normal to have a big group of people here. I guess at the Dam it's just in general, not really a thing to be like, oh yeah, let's picnic at the Dam

(07:18)

**M:** That's fair. That's fair

(07:20)

**Interviewee 1:** So, but yeah, I would, yeah

(07:25)

**M:** What element, other than like, obviously like you said, it being a public space, what element, where do you think that sense or that, that the feeling of risk comes from?

(07:37)

**Interviewee 1:** I guess just because it's public, there's gonna be obviously other people around that you don't know how those people think about queer people. Um, so I guess that's what I mean. Like you are in public, so you never know how other people might react, but that's everywhere. You know? So I guess that's not really about the place more. I mean, the place can contribute. But yeah.. There's always..

(08:08)

**M:** Yeah, hypothetically, the place could like mediate the risk more. Do you think?

(08:16)

**Interviewee 1:** I guess… Uh, I don't know, I mean, hypothetically there could always be homophobic or queerphobic person walking towards, you know?

(08:30)

**M:** Very true. Design can't change that fact

(08:35)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah. I guess, I guess like, yeah, unless you have a park where there's security that asks, are you homophobic? You know, like, or unless you are in a field where, in the middle of nowhere, and you know that there won't be another person, you know? That kind of thing. Yeah. So I personally don't think that design could impact that much

(09:02)

**M:** Right. Yeah, yeah. Thank you. Um, this is just like, follow up to that last question, but would you feel comfortable if you had a gender diverse partner. Would you feel comfortable expressing, you know, just ordinary affection with that partner or, or I guess demonstrating that they're your partner in any small way at this spot?

(09:26)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, yeah. Yeah, I think so. Yeah

(09:31)

**M:** More so than the Dam?

(09:33)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Yeah. But also because it's dark. Yeah. So that adds a layer of privacy, I guess. Um, but, uh, yeah. I mean, I don't know to what extent, to what level of pda I would be comfortable, but, uhh, I don't know. I think, I think the, the darkness for me would help, yeah, feel more secluded and more, you know

(10:15)

**M:** Yeah, okay. So next we're gonna go through some specific design features of this spot. So again, like how do you feel regarding this specific bench in terms of its physical comfort, also thinking sensory wise, like I guess with material, but also yeah, just how it's located, orientation

(10:42)

**Interviewee 1:** Uh, nothing to complain about really. I don't know. I, I really like this to be honest

(10:48)

**M:** They're actually new, 2011 *laughs*

(10:49)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, well *laughs* did you know that? *laughs* okay, well, very nice. Very nice. Um. Yeah. No, I like it. It's, it's, I don't know, this, this spot again is like kind of in the middle of like, not too secluded, but you know, a bit bit secluded, like from the main area, blah, blah, blah, but there's like still a lot of people around. Yeah, I don't know

(11:18)

**M:** Mhm. So, uh, you kind of just touched on this, but do you feel, would you say this bench is giving you privacy or would you say it's giving you exposure to other people?

(11:29)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I would say, yeah, again, a bit in the middle.. Like I said, like it's not on the main road, but the fact that we are facing a pathway and we're facing a big patch of grass where people are sitting

(11:51)
**M:** Yeah, yeah

(11:53)
**Interviewee 1:** So in the middle somewhere

(11:54)
**M:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Uh, and again, do you feel, I know you kind of already answered this before, but pertaining to this bench, this moment, do you feel yourself self-censoring in any way by being here right now? Or do you feel like you're comfortable kind of expressing yourself, however you would?

(12:13)
**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, I think the latter, definitely

(12:15)

**M:** Okay. Um, and then I know you just talked about the field of vision, but do you feel satisfied with this field division? Like thinking about what we see, like, cause we're sitting and you kind of have to face this way

(12:24)

**Interviewee 1:** Mhm

(12:24)

**M:** Do you feel, how do you feel about this being your view?

(12:28)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I like it. It's like very open which is nice, but there is still a lot of, I don't know, op, not obstacles, but like, you know, there are enough things that also, uh, kind of obscure the vision. So it's like a nice 50 50, I guess, I mean, the statue, I mean, I, I don't know. For me, the statue doesn't really do anything

(13:02)

**M:** Yeah

(13:02)

**Interviewee 1:** Like I don't. Yeah. Uh, nothing negative, nothing positive. Like it's just there, neutral, yeah, neutral

(13:14)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Um, and so do you, now looking kind of to the sides of us, like do you enjoy that there's another bench on either side of us? Like, or does that make what, yeah, thoughts on the fact that they're there? I know right now there's no one sitting there, but like, you know, if there were to be, would you enjoy that or would that make you not wanna sit here as much?

163

(13:35)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I wouldn't mind. I mean, I guess it also depends. I mean, if I'm, maybe if I want more privacy, maybe when I'm with a partner or whatever, then I might, I mean, yeah, I think I would be aware of the fact that people are sitting there, maybe not show that much, like public pda. Um, but I don't know if that's because I'm afraid of like queer phobia or if that's just in general, just like, I'm in public, like, yeah, no one wants to see pda, you know? That kind of stuff. So I don't know for me how, yeah..like, yeah

(14:29)

**M:** Mhm, yeah. Okay. And then, um, thinking about like, I know you mentioned the lighting of this area, it's not super well lit. Do you enjoy that or would you prefer slightly more light or do you enjoy this level of lighting?

(14:44)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, again, I think depends. I mean, I generally don't feel, uh, like danger. Endangered. I don't know, like scared a lot of the times. Like I'm also, I don't know why, but I'm very comfortable just cycling through, you know, like at 3:00 AM just, you know, so I generally don't really feel that level of danger, I guess, so, but, no, yeah, I think I would, I, I don't know. Yeah. I do think I like this less lighted area, but I guess also if you want, there's like, there's a, a good mix I guess, in that sense. Yeah

(15:47)

**M:** Cool. Okay, so now we're gonna do the micro interventions again from that group. So how would you feel, regarding this space, this time of day, all that, if instead of the way this bench was faced, let's just say it was facing one of the benches that are next to us, would that make you more or less inclined to sit here? Would that make you feel more or less comfortable?

(16:12)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I think less, I, I think less comfortable. Um, again, usually I'm not in the mood to talk to strangers all that much. And that really invites, you know? Um, I think, I think it

would be nice if some benches were like that, but not all of them, and I probably would not sit there, no

(16:43)
**M:** Right. What if like, it was a one, one seater, and so instead of us facing out, we were to face each other. Like we could each be sitting in our own seat, facing each other?

(16:56)
**Interviewee 1:** Oh, like one? One seat, one seat

(16:59)
**M:** Yeah, rather than a bench facing out

(17:01)
**Interviewee 1:** Ooh, like that. Um, I mean, if, if I was with another person, so the whole thing would be filled already. Then may, I don't know. But that's also very, yeah, like direct, like very, I don't know. I, I like benches. I don't..
(17:24)
**M:** Yeah, that's okay

(17:26)
**Interviewee 1:** I don't know. I also like looking outwards. You know, um, yeah

(17:37)
**M:** Cool. Um, and so again, how would you feel if the bench wasn't facing an area where there were people, but it was just facing nature? So you weren't looking at people, but you were just looking, or people weren't looking at you, but you were looking at nature where there aren't people that could also be looking back at you

(17:55)

**Interviewee 1:** If the bench was like there and they're facing that way?

(17:57)

**M:** Yeah

(17:58)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I think that would be very nice. Yeah. But I think there are some, or I don't know, there should be

(18:05)

**M:** Yeah, there are some

(18:06)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Okay. Yeah, yeah. Oh no, I think I would like that. Yeah. There's a bit more peace. A bit more, yeah

(18:13)

**M:** And how would you feel, again, if this bench had planters on either side so that you were shielded on the sides from, cause we're, we're, we're on the side of two paths, so that way people, you know, coming on the path wouldn't necessarily see you sitting here?

(18:28)

**Interviewee 1:** Mmm

(18:29)

**M:** Um, would that make you feel more or less comfortable or safe, or how would you feel about having those, that planter?

(18:36)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, I think for me, indifferent, I don't know. Yeah, no indifferent. I, yeah. No. No opinions on that

(18:53)

**M:** Fair. Um, okay, so now thinking about this statue. I know you said you feel pretty neutral towards it, but just hypothetically, do you think it would make a big difference on you or just what feelings would you have if this wasn't a statue of Vondel, but it was a statue of like a queer historical figure or gender diverse historical figure.. Would that change the way you interact with it or not?

(19:17)

**Interviewee 1:** Oh, I think, for me, it would be like, oh, that's very nice, good job, Amsterdam but not like, it wouldn't, probably wouldn't affect me like in my core, you know? Um, yeah. Because, yeah, I guess I also don't come here for the statues, or I don't like, yeah. I don't know. I, yeah. It's not something I perceive very like consciously. Um, so for me, I guess it wouldn't matter all that much who was standing there. Yeah. Um, yeah, I don't know. Yeah, I, yeah, no, like I don't even, I, I don't even know who that is *laughs* Like, like I, I just see a person and that's it, you know, like, and I'm like, I can guess maybe, but like, yeah

(20:11)

**M:** So it doesn't really like affect, like, even though it's like big and demanding, it's not like affecting the way you're perceiving this area really, so it wouldn't affect it if it was a different person?

(20:21)

**Interviewee 1:** No, no. For me it's, yeah, things that stand out are nature or you know, the people that are here and stuff like that. Yeah, yeah. It's not really, yeah, really not something I take into consideration or not consideration, but like I don't perceive it as, yeah..

(20:37)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, yeah! And so another suggestion that they had, um, for like parks or public spaces at night was not to have light like this, but to have more like softer lighting. Cause typically that lighting can be kind of harsh and like exposing. So they, they propose like certain, like ambient or like softer lighting.

(20:55)

**Interviewee 1:** Ooh

(20:55)

**M:** How would you feel, um, if this area was lit, but in this more soft way, would you enjoy that? Or would you rather it be in this somewhat like darker lit way?

(21:06)

**Interviewee 1:** Ooh, I think maybe a mix of all three, because I can see the positives from like the ambient lights. But I do really like, if you like, if you really want like a secluded, like dark, like, you know, area, then yeah. I feel like if there are options, within the park or public space, then you can, you have more options to be like, oh no, let's sit a bit more here, or like, but I, you know, with, I don't know, like that road needs to be, well lit, I, I don't know, I guess because it's a place of movements. Um, and I can also, yeah, I don't know, I can also imagine that some people feel more secure when it's well lit because they're more seen. So if something happens, then, uh..

(22:09)

**M:** That is what some people think

(22:11)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah. Um, but I can also imagine that, yeah, you want to be less seen. So I don't know, but I, I, I think in a perfect world, there's like a mix of everything. Because I, I dunno, I really do like the dark, like, I don't know. Yeah. It's very nice.. To just be invisible

(22:34)

**M:** Mhm. Totally. I like that too. Um, so again, like if there was, again, kind of similar to the statute question, but if there was like some explicitly queer signage here, like let's just say this path was painted a rainbow.. Or there was a trans flag flying or you know, that sign, I mean, I guess it is kind of gender neutral honestly, but things like that, would that impact your comfortability? Again, thinking about the question with like being here with a group of gender diverse people or being with a gender diverse partner, like, would that change your sense of place?

(23:12)

**Interviewee 1:** Hmm, I don't think so because, I don't know, for me that kind of stuff to a certain degree feels kind of performative. Um, and like again, the thing I said about you, there's always a risk of someone who is queerphobic being in here. And the fact that this path is rainbow coloured will not stop them from coming here. I think I, I don't know, maybe it will. Who knows?

(23:59)

**M:** If it was that easy…If only was that easy *laughs*

(24:03)

**Interviewee 1:** *laughs* honestly. Um, so I, yeah, I personally don't think, yeah, yeah, I don't know. It just feels a bit performative. Yeah. Um, yeah. Yeah, I mean, I mean like stuff like signage and like, like that being more neutral or diverse, I like that idea, but not for the reasons of like, oh, now I feel more comfortable. It's like, yeah, let's, let's, you know, let's make this, let's normalise a diverse and not as gendered signage. But yeah, like I said, not for the, it wouldn't be like, oh my God, now, now I feel at home, you know?

(24:51)

**M:** Right, right.. And that isn't in these senses of like symbolism of flags or things like that, but more so in representation of like bodies and identities or, or not even the lack of identification of gender.

(25:05)

**Interviewee 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah

(25:08)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Cool. Okay. So now like considering, like think back to how you felt at our spot, at the Dam, how you felt right now. Um, just thinking about those two experiences, did one of those spaces, obviously yes, time of day is a factor but–

*people in park nearby singing*

(25:26)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, wait, sorry. I just did not listen to you *laughs* sorry

(25:30)

**M:** *laughs*  No, it's okay. I was just saying, um, like obviously time of day is, is a factor in this question, but like, I guess just thinking, even like thinking about that, like, did one of those spaces feel more comfortable to you?

(25:44)

**Interviewee 1:** Um, yes. Um, no. I, I feel way more comfortable here. But like, regardless of time. You know, if they like, yeah. I don't know, like the Dam, but the Dam is just very chaotic and very not welcoming, very not not welcoming for like people who wanna relax, you know, or sit for longer. But yeah, I feel even like more comfortable here during the night than there during the day. But again, yeah. Yeah, I don't know. Like I said, I don't really feel much danger at night. So I don't know

(26:33)

**M:** Do you think that your sense of comfort, like I know you just said, has to do a bit with that it's slightly calmer here and there's more of a chance to like actually sit for long, but do you think that there is any role that your visibility plays in that sense of comfort, in the sense that you said

you feel a bit invisible here, where at the Dam, obviously it was during the day, but also because it was more populated, it's harder to feel invisible, I guess. Maybe it also felt, I don't know, did you feel invisible there in the same way that you feel invisible here?

(27:02)

**Interviewee 1:** No. There, I felt invisible because there were so many people and like no one would pay attention to you. But here it's more, invisible because yeah, we, we are not on the main, like there's not a lot of like traffic. There is, um, there's like yeah, secluded areas where you can see blah, blah, blah. And obviously the lights. Um, but yeah, I would say invisible in different ways

(27:37)

**M:** Totally

(27:38)

**Interviewee 1:** But I mean, in total, I would say I feel more invisible here, probably, which I like

(27:51)

**M:** Yeah. Okay. And I guess considering those different types of invisibility, do you feel like at the Dam or here, do you feel like, like you were talking about risk, thinking about risk, maybe even in the sense of like someone you don't know coming up to you, which of those spaces within that, that sense of invisibility, does that invisibility maybe feel more vulnerable for a stranger to like interrupt it?

(28:14)

**Interviewee 1:** Uh, I guess here, um, because there's not like other people that can like, intervene if something goes wrong. I mean, we were talking about it before, how even if you are in a very public or like very open space with a lot of people, if something goes wrong, not everyone will help

(28:41)

**M:** Right.

(28:41)

**Interviewee 1:** But, um, I mean, I, I do think I would feel more threatened if someone would talk to me here right now than during the day at the Dam. Also because at the Dam, because it's so open, you can just walk like, I I guess it's easier to walk away, like here, it's a bit difficult

(29:05)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Any other final or other thoughts on the two different experiences and like your sense of place there or your sense of security that you haven't said or that you feel like haven't touched on? It's okay if not also

(29:24)

**Interviewee 1:** Mhm. Mmm.. Right now no, I don't think so, no

(29:34)

**M:** Then we're all done! Thank you so much

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

## Interviewee 2 Transcript

Both of the interviews with Interviewee 2 were transcribed using the software Rev.

## Vondelpark, 13 May, 20:38 (sun out)

(00:00)

**M:** Okay, so if you could hold this, to hear both of us. Okay. I feel like we just were sitting here for a while, taking in the scene. That was kind of how I wanted to start but I feel like you've already kind of had the time to like, sort of take in like where the bench is, what's in front of us,

what's around us. Um, so thinking back to when we like approached this spot, would you say that it felt, do you feel like welcome in approaching this spot?

(00:35)
**Interviewee 2:** Um, do you mean like in terms of the people around or just the spot itself?

 (00:46):
**M:** I guess both. Like in, just in walking up, were you like feeling comfortable approaching this spot?

(00:51)
**Interviewee 2** Yeah. I definitely felt like, not like threatened or like, like I didn't, I was just like walking to the spot. In fact, I was trying to rush to the spot so these other two people couldn't take it

(01:05)
**M:** *laugh* Yeah. Um, okay. And this is less like, about this current moment. I mean, definitely with all the questions, think about the time of day right now, but like less necessarily, like exactly these people, you know, but just this general setting, keep in mind, but like, would you have sat in this spot if you were by yourself?

(01:25)
**Interviewee 2:** Um, I think I might have gone for a spot closer to like the water or like, I don't know, maybe not even like, I don't know. I think I would've gone like somewhere like overlooking the water. I know we can see the water, but I mean more like closer, like maybe even on the grass or something. I think I'm a grass person

(01:57)
**M:** Mm. Um, does this space feel dense to you?

(02:01)

**Interviewee 2:** No, not at all. It's quite open, like, there's a lot of greenery and stuff, but it's very open

(02:09)

**M:** Does it feel like an urban space to you?

(02:15)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, yeah

(02:18)

**M:** How so?

(02:19)

**Interviewee 2:** Well, there's like a cafe over there and stuff. You can see the street from here. Um, and I don't know cause I'm associating it, associating it with the, like the Amsterdam city then like nowhere here doesn't feel like urban

(02:43)

**M:** Fair

(02:44)

**Interviewee 2:** I mean, urban means like, like kind of like modern, well not modernised, but like peopleized?

(02:51)

**M:** Urban means like feels like a city essentially, is what I meant

(02:55)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, yeah

(02:55)

**M:** Speaking of like that cafe and also like looking at the statue and this bench, and would you, do you feel like these are the kinds of amenities that you would want to use in this space? Like you would use them?

(03:13)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, I've never been in the cafe. It looks kind of fancy. Um, but I, I do like this park and I like the amenities that we have. I'm probably more likely, I don't know if I can say this, but I'm probably more likely to pee outside than in the porta potties just cause they're probably gross

(03:36)

**M:** Yea, yeah

(03:37)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah

(03:39)

**M:** Um, okay, so in this spot, do you feel visible to other people?

(03:45)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, super visible, because it's like on the pathway

(03:51)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah. And does that visibility make you feel like you're being recognised by other people or does it sort of make you feel like, a bit like perceived or controlled by other people? Controlled in the sense that like they can see you without you really like having control over it?

(04:09)

**Interviewee 2:** Well, yeah, definitely. Like, cause my back is facing a whole area of the park, but I also kind of feel like, like I'm definitely looking at people so I expect that people are looking at me, but also like, mostly people are just looking at each other and like their friends and stuff. So not so much that I'm being observed, just that I could be glanced at in passing

(04:40)

**M:** Mm, okay. And do you feel like in this spot you have, do you feel control over your environment in the sense that, like, do you, do you feel like being here you have would have control over a situation if something were to happen, in three senses, one being like with nature, or one being with like non-human entities. So like transportation or, or human situation

(05:06)

**Interviewee 2:** Could you repeat the start of the question?

(05:08):

**M:** Yeah. Like, do you feel you'd have control over—one second *cough* sorry

(05:38)

**Interviewee 2:** That's okay

(05:53)

**M:** My throat's been so itchy from allergies

(05:58)

**Interviewee 2:** I can pause it?

*paused*

(06:09)

**M:** So like, do you feel like you would have control over a situation if it were to happen with, let's start with like another person?

(06:11)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, well in general I'm a very non-confrontational person, so I really don't know, but there, it's a very open space and there are a lot of other people around. So I would say like maybe 50, 50. I don't know. It depends on the situation

(06:38)

**M:** Yeah. Can you pause it? *coughs*

*paused*

(06:44)

**M:** Um, okay. So do you feel like you have, we have the right to be in this spot or do you feel kind of like we're encroaching on other people's territory?

(06:53)

**Interviewee 2:** I definitely think we have the right to be in this spot. Um, like in general. And also just like today, like when we first sat down, like the group of people directly in front of us feel like a very like, um, heteronormative and stuff. And I was like, oof. But then I'm looking around and I feel like there's a lot of like queer people like just nestled about. So like, I don't feel like encroaching plus it's a really big space

(07:19)

**M:** Yeah. Um, does it feel like people are staking like territory in different places around us?

(07:26)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, for sure

(07:28)

**M:** And how do you think they're doing that?

(07:31)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, I guess like some people are playing music. It's the, I mean there's lots of bikes everywhere. That's a, a big thing. Like people are like keeping their space with all of that. Um, I, yeah. So, um, yeah, I think, I mean I feel like even we're marking territory. I've got my bike like right in front of me, like yeah. But I don't think anyone's doing it in like a malicious way. I think it's just like the nature of being in a park

(08:03):

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Um, do you feel like you relate to the user groups that you see around us?

(08:16)

**Interviewee 2:** Like one

**M** (08:18)

*laugh*

(08:19)

**Interviewee 2:** Like one tiny group, yeah.

(08:23)

**M:** *laughs* yeah, yeah. Would you choose to sit in this spot with a group of friends who are all gender diverse?

(08:30)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, I think we would, but I feel like we would also probably move just slightly away from the very hetero group just because it's a strange vibe. No offence to them, yeah

(08:48)

**M:** *laugh* yeah, no I know. Um, would you choose to hang out in this spot with a partner who is gender diverse? And if you were, would you feel comfortable displaying affection for them here?

(09:02)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, um, I think it's like the same as the other question. Well, but that's the thing. Like, like, um, I mean every, that's also what I said earlier, like people could slightly glance at you, but everyone's also in their own world. So I think like if we like this spot and we wanted to like sit here, we probably would sit here and we probably would do that

(09:25)

**M:** Mm, mm

(09:27)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah. But maybe it just wouldn't be like the first choice to sit here

(09:32)

**M:** Mmm. Okay. Next I'm gonna ask just about some specific design features of this spot. So like physically, but also like sensorially, sensory wise, do you feel comfortable on this bench?

(09:51)

**Interviewee 2:** Yes

(09:53)

**M:** Okay. Do you feel as though this provides you with privacy or exposure?

(10:00)

**Interviewee 2:** Uh, exposure. Tons of it.

(10:03)

**M:** Mm. Um, do you feel that because of that, do you feel yourself self-censoring in any way? Or do you feel like fully comfortable to express yourself?

(10:12)

**Interviewee 2:** I think I feel fully comfortable

(10:14)

**M:** Are you satisfied with your field of vision at this bench? Like, what you see in front of you?

(10:20)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, yeah. What I see in front of me is like it's an add–well it's more an adequate view. Like it's got a lot going on. I think that's a church, there's a statue. Um, well it's more to look at than when you turn right behind cause that's just the porta potties, so

(10:38)

**M:** Yeah. Um, is there anything that you would change about the bench?

(10:42)

**Interviewee 2:** Probably make it just a bit longer. So like, um, width wise, not width, like, I guess width. I wanted to like, I want there to be more space for my legs while I'm sitting cross legged, but..

(10:59)

**M:** Yeah, that's, yeah. Okay. Next I'm gonna ask, so there's a group of designers who've made these micro interventions that they call, that they say would help with queering public space

(11:10)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah

(11:11)

**M:** So I'm gonna ask you what you'd think about these different micro interventions just cause I'm curious whether queer people actually would want these, these things. So how would you feel if instead of facing outwards this bench was placed, that it was facing another bench? Instead of facing outwards, you're facing like another bench?

(11:34)

**Interviewee 2:** I don't really know about that. Like have they said anything about the distance?

(11:40)

**M:** I think it, it would be to facilitate like face to like, so in a sense it could be like you and I could sit face to face

(11:45)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah. Um, I mean, I don't know, like, because I like, mm, I mean okay. Yeah, for the face-to-face aspect that would be nice. But in like this kind of environment of like the, we're in the park, like then I don't really get it. We could just sit on the grass. So I don't think I would like that, but I mean, if it was only some and not all of them, I guess it would be fine

(12:14)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense. And how would you feel if the bench was not facing like a view like this, but it was just kind of like facing nature? Would that make you feel more comfortable or less comfortable?

(12:29)

**Interviewee 2:** I think like, um, definitely not less comfortable. I do like looking at nature, so that would be fine. I don't know. I mean, I don't know if I would say more comfortable. Like, it's not like, I mean, I guess yeah, more comfortable, but not in the sense that being on this bench this way is not comfortable

(12:50)

**M:** Mm. And if it was facing another bench, would that make, would that influence your comfort at all?

(12:56)

**Interviewee 2:** Well, if it was facing another bench, then we couldn't see the nature, so

(12:59)

**M:** No. Yeah. But like, I'm going back to that one.

(13:02)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, like if I don't, I think I'd feel less comfortable if there was like a bench like, like..yeah

(13:10)

**M:** Um, and so another thing that they've proposed are these things called like, they call it cosy corners, which basically is that like benches would have planters on either side so that they kind of create like walls on each side so that you can't be really seen from the side. How, how would that make you feel? Would that make you feel more comfortable, less comfortable, more safe, less safe?

(13:31)

**Interviewee 2:** Well, I guess more safe if I did feel uncomfortable, like being viewed by other people

(13:38)

**M:** Mhm.

(13:40)

**Interviewee 2:** And I think it would look nice so

(13:44)

**M:** And would you, would you feel differently at all instead of that being a statue of Vondel, it were to be a statue of like a queer person or a gender diverse person?

(13:56)

**Interviewee 2:** What's the first part of the question?

(13:57)

**M:** If like, instead of being a statue of Vondel if it were to be a statue of,

(14:01)

**Interviewee 2:** But what, what would it, like–

(14:03)

**M:** Would you feel any differently about this spot, sitting at this spot? Or would you feel more inclined to sit here and would it make no difference or just would it impact your thoughts on this spot at all?

(14:14)

**Interviewee 2:** Well, honestly I didn't even know who that statue was, so I, unless like someone was like, oh, that's a queer person statue. And I went to look at it and I'd be like, ah, that's nice. And then I would probably sit here, but I feel like after like the fourth time it wouldn't really matter. Yeah. It'd probably go sit like overlooking the water more like I mean, but it would generally every time that I was sitting here, feel nice that that's the statue that I'm looking at. Yeah. So, yeah.

(14:44)

**M:** Okay. And then, um, this is actually the last question for this part. If there were any like, explicitly queer signage in this area, like kind of a similar question of like if there was like a

rainbow crosswalk on this path or a trans flag flying or something like that. Would that make you feel more inclined to sit here or more comfortable, anything like that? Or?

(15:07)

**Interviewee 2:** I don't know about more comfortable, but probably more inclined just because I would think it was nice. but I don't know if it would change my comfort in any way.

(15:16)

**M:** Mmm. Cool. Okay. That's that. Cool.

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

## Dam Square, 13 May, 22:45 (sun down)

(00:01)

**M:** Okay. Okay. So yeah, same as before. I feel like we've already been here for a moment taking in everything, so you've taken it in, um, so thinking back to when we came and sat at this spot, did you, did it feel like in approaching this spot, was it, did you feel, did it feel welcoming approaching this spot? Or did it feel natural approaching this spot?

(00:25)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, I think it definitely felt natural cause when we came there was already like people sitting down, but like, as soon as we sat down, like they didn't even matter to me anymore. And I guess because it's a very like, communal, it's a communal space, like you're meant to be here and stuff and so, yeah, it felt very natural

(00:45)

**M:** Mm. Would you have sat here if you were by yourself?

(00:48)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah. And I actually have *laugh*

(00:51)

**M:** *laugh* Does this space feel dense to you?

(00:54)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, no. Even though there is a lot of buildings around, the actual square is so large that I don't know, it, it doesn't feel dense, it feels very open

(01:13)

**M:** Mm. Um, do you feel inclined, so yeah, looking at the different amenities that are around right now with the stores or the palace or the new church, I know they're not open right now, but like, would you feel inclined to use these amenities?

(01:26)

**Interviewee 2:** No

(01:27)

**M:** How so? Or why not?

(01:29)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, well this is like the kind of an expensive touristy area. I don't even know like how you would get into the palace. I don't see an entrance, but I think it's a government building actually, I'm not sure

(01:44)

**M:** There's tours sometimes.

(01:46)

**Interviewee 2:** Oh. And then like behind us is Madame Tussauds and like I'd never go in there and like Dior like no. So this area, like even though I have come here, it's not like my, it's not where I would go. It's not where I would choose to go

(02:03)

**M:** Mm. Do you feel visible to other people sitting here?

(02:09)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, actually unless, like they did what I just did, which was to look sideways. Not really because all the benches are facing forward in a line. Um, maybe like people walking around, but because of like the nature of the area that it's like a touristy place and it's like tourists and families, like, I feel like they're all just like looking at the buildings and stuff, not so much at the people, so

(02:34):

**M:** Yeah. Does that make you feel more in control knowing that people might not, you might not be as visible?

(02:42)

**Interviewee 2:** I guess

(02:44)

**M:** So same questions before, like do you feel like you would have control over a situation with, um, another person if you were in this spot? If something were to happen?

(02:56)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, I think it's a very, um, well I guess like, like with the control thing, like personally I don't know, but I feel like it's a very policed area. So I do feel safe here. I don't know if that's the same thing. Like I don't really know what I would be in control of

(03:23)

**M:** Mm, okay. Do you feel like we have the right to be here or do you feel like we're maybe encroaching on other people's territory?

(03:34)

**Interviewee 2:** I think we definitely do have the right to be here. In fact, I feel like kind of sense of superiority to the tourists *laugh*

(03:42)

**M:** *laugh* Does it seem like people are sticking their territory around us?

(03:46)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, no. Not really. Yeah. Like when we sat down on the bench, like there was other people here and like it didn't really matter that we sat down

(03:55)

**M:** Yeah. Do you feel like you relate to the user groups that you see around us?

(04:00)

**Interviewee 2:** No. Um, cause of the tourists and probably rich people

(04:07)

**M:** Yeah. Would you choose to hang out here with friends who are also gender diverse?

(04:13)

**Interviewee 2:** No, they're, there's nothing really for us here, to be honest. Yeah. Um, thinking about the things that we have in common, also like, I don't know, like we'd probably pick like an actual dedicated like queer space to go than like, just like Dam Square

(04:29)

**M:** Yeah. Would you choose to hang out with a gender diverse partner? And if you were to, would you feel comfortable displaying affection at this spot?

(04:40)

**Interviewee 2:** If we had to hang out here or like if we just were walking and we decided to take a break, like I would sit here and I think I would feel comfortable like displaying affection. Like it's um, it's like the centre. Yeah. Like, I don't know, I don't think anything would happen

(04:55)

**M:** Mm. Okay. So next I'm gonna ask you about some specific design features. Again, do you feel comfortable, does this bench feel comfortable to you physically and sensory wise?

(05:06)

**Interviewee 2:** It does actually

(05:08)

**M:** Do you feel like this bench provides you with privacy or exposure?

(05:15)

**Interviewee 2:** Exposure? No. No privacy. Sorry. No privacy. No privacy. It's very exposed

(05:21)

**M:** Okay. Do you feel yourself self censoring in any way sitting here? Or do you feel completely comfortable expressing yourself?

(05:28)

**Interviewee 2:** I think completely comfortable

(05:31)

**M:** Are you satisfied with the field of vision that this bench is providing?

(05:37)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, it's very, it's a very open area. I mean, directly in front there's a lot to see. So, I mean on the sides, no, you'd have to look, but it's like, I don't feel like anything, I don't feel like I'm not aware of anything except for behind me. But I can easily turn around, so

(06:00)

**M:** Is there anything that you would change about the bench?

(06:07)

**Interviewee 2:** Maybe not make it granite. Cause it's kind of chilly, yeah

(06:09)

**M:** *laugh* Um, so since it's like nighttime now thinking about the lighting of the space, do you feel like the way that this space is lit makes you feel safer? Or is there, do you think that less light or more light would feel safer or more comfortable?

(06:27)

**Interviewee 2:** I think it's a really good amount of light. Like it's not overwhelmingly bright, yeah, but it's definitely safe

(06:34)

**M:** Mm. Um, and I know you said that this bench makes you feel exposed. I think you kind of answered this, but in terms of the lighting, do you think that it makes you feel more visible to other people or–

(06:47)

**Interviewee 2:** In the exact bench that we're on? Uh, not more visible than um, the middle of the square where the lights are facing.

(06:55)

**M:** Mm-hmm. Okay. So now again I'm gonna ask about the specific micro interventions. So how would you feel if this bench, instead of facing outwards, it was facing another bench? Would that make you feel more inclined to sit there? Less inclined?

(07:14)

**Interviewee 2:** Probably less inclined because just what I'm imagining seems weird also, cause it's such an open space, I feel like if there was a bench right in front of us and that's like coming into the space and taking away from the square and I guess it's not so much a sitting area, like there's benches for probably when you've had a long ass shopping day and you wanna sit down, but it's not really a sitting area

(07:37)

**M:** Yeah. And how would you feel if this bench was like not facing, you know, the square? Not facing people. Like I guess in this bench we can kind of face any way we want. But imagine if it was forcing you to face a certain way that wasn't facing people, um, let's just say hypothetically like facing a tree or something. Would you feel more or less inclined to sit there?

(07:58)

**Interviewee 2:** I think in this area I would prefer to face like people cause it's like, like I wanna see people around and stuff

(08:07)

**M:** Mm. Yeah. More like for people watching or like to know what's going on? Like what, what, what would make you–

(08:12)

**Interviewee 2:** For both, kind of like, for people watching but also like it's a very busy area. I don't wanna like be like not aware of my surroundings

(08:22)

**M:** Mm, yeah. Um, so again, how would you feel if the bench had like the walls on the either end so that you couldn't see to the sides of you? Would that make you feel more comfortable and more safe or less comfortable and less sage?

(08:34)

**Interviewee 2:** I think less comfortable just because like then you're just taking away visibility. But it's not like people can't see us, because it's still really open

(08:42)

**M:** Mm, yeah

(08:43)

**Interviewee 2:** Like they can see in front and behind.

(08:47)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah. Um–

(08:49)

**Interviewee 2:** Unless there was like a little cubicle, then that would be nice

(08:51)

**M:** Yeah, like fully enclosed?

(08:55)

**Interviewee 2:** Well except like then there it be like a bench facing forward and then also like stuff on the side and like maybe one entrance. That could be quite nice actually. I would definitely sit there

(09:03)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. So like more like complete privacy, than like this half privacy thing?

(09:08)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah. Yeah.

(09:10)

**M:** And again, would any like explicitly queer signage in in the Dam make you feel more or less inclined to come here? Like if there was like a rainbow crosswalk or if there's like a trans flag or-

(09:19)

**Interviewee 2:** I think based on the nature of this area, I probably wouldn't because it would just feel like, kind of like performative. Like I don't really know. But I guess like whenever there's protests and stuff here, then like you're like, oh I wanna see what's going on. But I don't think I would just come here like just because they had like a rainbow floor or something. I'd be like, okay cool. It's still like aghhh *laugh* still can't afford Dior so

(09:49)

**M:** *laughs* Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, so now thinking about like the experience you had here and the experience at Vondelpark. Just comparing them, did one of them feel more comfortable for you than the other?

(10:00)

**Interviewee 2:** Um, not necessarily, but I did prefer Vondelpark just cause there was a park

(10:07)

**M:** Mhm. Um, do you think that visibility or, like what role do you think visibility played in each of those experiences? Or how was it different in the sense that, like did the visibility feel different at Vondelpark versus here? Or was it kind of the same? Did you have kind of the same experience with feeling exposed, which is what you kind of said at both?

(10:25)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah. Well I think, uh, I guess like on the baseline, no cause you're both like equally exposed in both places, but maybe at Vondelpark, like you're, because it's like a park and people are just chilling, like you're less like likely to get looked at than like here where people are just walking by and probably will like glance at you cause you're in their like, maybe even in their immediate ..thingy. Yeah. I don't know, but they're both exposed

(11:01)

**M:** Yeah. Okay. Final question. Um, just like after both these experiences, do you think, like, what do you think of, cause this, the micro interventions came from a report called, um, Queering Public Space as like a verb, you know, like queering as like being done to public space. Do you think, as a queer person, like do you feel like public space can be queered?

(11:23)

**Interviewee 2:** Uh, um, I think so. I think like you can definitely do things to try and make it more like, um, inviting or accessible or something. But I feel like there's also already so much queer space.. I guess more wouldn't hurt like, but I also don't really, I mean, I guess the interventions are like for like, so that you don't feel like people are like staring or judging you and stuff. And maybe because I don't have this worry of being stared or judged that then like I don't really get that, that that's what they would be helping for. Plus I feel like it would just kind of take away from the space rather than add for me because like, I don't know, like I don't think you should like, have enclosed benches in like an open space like this. Maybe in the park, that could be nice, like what I was saying about cubicles and stuff. But then it would be like very like

urbanised, yeah, like taking away from nature. I don't know. Oh, if it was like wooden, like a little gazebo, that would be cute

(12:33)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. When you say that there are queer spaces, do you mean like queer bars and stuff? Or like–

(12:38)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah

(12:39)

**M:** So more like, private

(12:40)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, or even places in Vondelpark that queer people go to

(12:45)

**M:** Yeah, true, like reappropriating

(12:46)

**Interviewee 2:** Like under the tunnel or the Vondelbunker and stuff like that. That little garden, like I feel like queer people know where they would go

(12:52)

**M:** But they've already kind of, so in a way that's like the claiming territory thing. It's like they've already found ways to make those public spaces queer on their own

(13:00)

**Interviewee 2:** Yeah, definitely. Like so those kind of places I would probably like, if like we weren't doing like going to a specific spot, then maybe we go to like the little like garden by the Vondelbunker, cause I know that that's where queer and alternative people go

(13:17)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Perfect. Do you have any other thoughts you wanna share or do you feel like you've had, you've said most of your um-

(13:24)

**Interviewee 2:** I think I've said, I've said my thoughts

(13:26)

**M:** Okay, thank you so much.

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

## Interviewee 3 Transcripts

Both of the interviews with Interviewee 3 were transcribed using the software Happyscribe.

## Vondelpark, 17 May, 14:45 (sun out)

(00:00)

**M:** I'm also going to ask you to hold this for me so I can type..and so I feel like we've been here for a moment and now we're kind of  in a different position but just maybe take a couple moments to look around and take in who you see, what you see, how it feels sitting here, and thinking back to when we approached the spot and then I'll start

(00:42)

**Interviewee 3:** Okay

(00:44)

**M:** Okay! So thinking back to when we approach the spot, would you say that it felt welcoming and approaching the spot, or you could also just run through what it felt in approaching the spot and taking a seat here?

(00:57)

**Interviewee 3:** So I would say I always feel a little bit watched in public spaces. I think, yeah, sorry. I think, I mean honestly, just for trans reasons, I tend to always be a bit self conscious in public and think about like, oh, is that person giving me the stink eye or something. So I definitely think the openness of the space made me think about that negatively. But because it's such a ubiquitous thing for me, thinking about this space in particular, I would say because everyone is doing their own thing and there's so many different distractions around that kind of like mitigated it a little. Because at the end of the day, there's birds and…*bird chirps* God, that was well planned. There's birds and ponds and statues and stuff. So it's like, I don't know, it feels like people have other stuff to worry about

(01:48)

**M:** Mm. Do you think that you would have sat in this spot if you were by yourself right now?

(01:55)

**Interviewee 3:** Probably not. I tend to go to slightly more secluded areas than right along the main thorough way. I probably would have gone back around that way. I know there's side paths sometimes around here, and I would have... Or maybe even over there on the other side of the pond because it's a little bit less exposed than right here

(02:23)

**M:** Cool. Yeah, I completely understand that. Would you say that this spot feels dense to you? I'll start with that. Would you say that the spot feels dense to you?

(02:35)

**Interviewee 3:** Not right now. I don't think dense is the word I would use. Maybe exposed, but I think just because it's so spread out, I don't feel crowded in

(02:46)

**M:** Does this space feel urban to you? Do you feel as though you're connected to the city?

(02:51)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, very much so. I mean, I know it's supposed to be a park, but definitely very aware of the vague traffic sounds I can hear and seeing buildings all around the sides of the park

**(**03:04)

**M:** Yeah. So yeah, speaking of, like, what's around us, statue, there's a cafe behind us, just the different amenities that we are near. Do you feel inclined to use any of these amenities or do any of them feel like they suit your needs at all?

(03:24)

**Interviewee 3:** Well, I probably wouldn't be sitting up there by the statue. That just is not the kind of place that I would normally gravitate towards, yeah, just for public and exposure reasons. That cafe, honestly, maybe, but I tend to think of those places as pretty overpriced, and so I wouldn't use them. If I wanted a snack, I'd probably go to one like the little snack stands. Look a bit less like, I don't know, gentrified *laugh*

(03:54)

**M:** Yeah. Yup. So I know that you already said this, but do you feel visible in this spot and follow up, does that visibility make you feel like you're being recognized by the people around you? Or does it almost feel like you're being surveilled or under a sense of control because of the level of visibility?

(04:14)

**Interviewee 3:** I would say definitely yes to the first one. I feel very visible right now. And yeah, I definitely think control and, like, just anxiety and self consciousness is definitely something that I've felt when I've been in the Vondelpark in general. I think it's just the awareness of the fact that it's not just a public place, but it feels like it has a certain, I don't know, prestige isn't quite the word. But you know, there's older people here. There's generally somewhat more, like, moneyed people here. And it's so open and public that I like..you never know if there's somebody here with some conservative attitudes. Yeah, I don't know. It feels like a public square in a way that makes

me think that it's not intended for... Maybe not even that it's not intended for me to be here, but that I'm on thin ice

(05:09)
**M:** Mmmm, mmm, that's really interesting that you say that because it was originally a really exclusive part with a supervisor that could ask people to leave based off how they were dressed. So there is, I think, like prestige is totally fair to feel because they designed it to be prestigious and elegant

(05:27)
**Interviewee 3:** And I think a big part of that has to do with... Because I've read about the Vondelpark and how it's like an English garden

(05:35)
**M:** Yeah, Romantic landscape style..

(05:35)
**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, and it feels that way. And it's very weird to me because it's not what I would normally think of as a park. It doesn't feel natural. It feels like it's designed to have someone at the centre looking out over everything

(05:52)
**M:** Mmm..So, this is a bit similar to the last question, but do you feel like you have control over your environment and sitting here?

(05:59)
**Interviewee 3:** No, not really. And part of that is because I've been here before and I've had sometimes weird interactions with people. And it's been very apparent to me in those situations, like, oh, I don't, I can't stop anyone from just intruding on me. And if they are, then it's like, I don't know. I feel like people in these spaces tend to look the other way because there's no real

sense of community, it doesn't feel like people would step in if something started to happen that was negative. It feels like everyone is in their own world

(06:34)

**M:** Mmmm. Do you think that that's just a social thing about the nature of parks? Or do you think that design kind of facilitates that, or the design of this park, like we were just talking about, facilitates that sense of individualism and not stepping in the situation? It could be both, I guess, also

(06:51)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. So I would say, I mean, again, this gets into the issue of what my ambient feelings are, because I definitely think in general, I have a low faith in the idea that people would step in as a trans woman. I think maybe the openness of it makes me feel somewhat more like someone would step in just because it really only takes one person to step in and there's enough space that someone might see. But yeah, in general, I don't know if the design impacts all that much.

(07:24)

**M:** Right, right. Thank you. Do you feel like you have the right to be in this spot or do you have this sense that we're encroaching on other people's territory?

(07:36)

**Interviewee 3:** I definitely don't feel like I'm supposed to have the right to be in this spot. I feel kind of like I'm well, I guess to have the right morally, whatever, I feel like I have the right. But yeah, I definitely feel like a bit of an interloper. I feel like, yeah, someone who maybe was here more often might look at me and think like, ugh why this fucking person? Something like that, yeah

(08:03)

**M:** Yeah. Yes, I understand. Does it feel like people around us are staking territory in this spot?

(08:13)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. So I would say there's two major groups when I think of when I think about that thing. I feel like you often see older people who take a bench or take a seat and people watch in a way that I've always found kind of strange and surveilling. A lot of the times that I have gotten nasty looks from people or verbal comments, it has been older people. And then the other thing that is, I guess not so much trans related but like as a woman, groups of men, usually groups of young men form these little, like, colonies. And then it's always like, okay, I see that from a distance. I'm like, I'm going to take this route. I'm going to go away

(08:59)

**M:** Mmm, mhm, I think that's always a smart choice. I think the same. I think you answered this, but does it feel like we are equally sharing the space with the different territorialization we see happening around us?

(09:15)

**Interviewee 3:** No, I definitely feel like I have a little mental clock going in my head and it's like I need to get out of here at a certain point

(09:24)

**M:** I promise this won't be too long

(09:26)

**Interviewee 3:** *laughs* No, I don't mean like that

(09:27)

**M:** No, I know what you mean. I also think that you sort of answered this, but would you choose to sit in this spot, I mean, we're doing it right now, but would you choose to sit in this spot with a group of people who are trans or gender diverse?

(09:41)

**Interviewee 3:** Um, I probably wouldn't speak up if everyone else headed to this spot. I would probably just tag along. But if someone asked me, hey, where do you want to sit? I probably would not pick here, you know?

(09:53)

**M:** Follow up to that, would you choose to hang out in this spot with a trans or gender diverse partner? And if you were to sit here with them, would you feel comfortable displaying affection?

(10:08)

**Interviewee 3:** Again, it's something where it's like, if they chose to sit here, I probably would just go along with it. Probably wouldn't pick it on my own volition. And I probably would feel weird about displaying affection here

(10:20)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Why?

(10:22)

**Interviewee 3:** I guess it just goes back to that feeling of being watched, like, because like I said earlier, it only takes one person to step in, but it also only takes one person just to intrude and if that happens, that tends to disrupt the vibe in a way that's hard to get back

(10:44)

**M:** Yeah, exactly, yeah. Okay, so now I'm going to just ask about some specific design features of this spot. And again, this can be from any perspective. But in terms of comfort physically, but also sensorially, do you feel comfortable sitting here?

(11:02)
**Interviewee 3:** So, I mean, this bench is not all that comfortable *laughs* but I don't know if there's... I think it's just because it's a little bit slanted back in a strange way. Sensorially, I feel a little bit overstimulated with the amount of background chatter. Although I feel like I said this a bunch of times, but that's also just always a problem for me. So I don't know how much that's specific to here. If we weren't doing this interview, I take your plugs with me everywhere, and I'd probably would just pop those in. I think it's a little bit... I definitely think that the landscape model makes it harder to appreciate the nature because it just feels more like a square that, incidentally, has some grass and trees in it as opposed to a park

(11:56)
**M:** *laughs* That's very true

(11:56)
**Interviewee 3:** And also all the litter. I mean, there's a lot of very visible garbage, which also I think is why if I was on my own, I would probably pick a more secluded, forested spot. I think the one nice thing maybe about the tree layout is that there's a nice variety of shade and lack of shade that makes temperature regulation easier. Yeah, that's all that's really coming to mind right now

(12:31)
**M:** Yeah, yeah!

(12:32)

**Interviewee 3:** I think maybe one thing would just be that if I wanted to look at that statue, it's hard because the sun's in my eyes. Maybe, I don't know

(12:42)

**M:** We'll get to that, don't worry. You already answered this, but I'm going to ask again, do you feel as though this bench and the way it's designed provides you with privacy or exposure?

(12:54)

**Interviewee 3:** Definitely exposure. I feel a little like, well, so obviously there's the placement where it is. There's the fact that it's small enough that if someone else sat here that... Or I should say it's large enough that if I was to sit on my own, I would feel like, oh, someone's probably going to come over and sit here. And it's small enough that I would feel like, weirdly intimate to be sitting next to somebody. Like I almost wish it was larger or smaller. One thing that I always find funny, since I moved to the Netherlands, is just that if like... Because I'm not a short person, but my feet don't touch the ground when I sit on these *laughs* which is so funny to me

(13:38)
**M:** *laughs* Tell me about it

(13:40)
**Interviewee 3:** *laughs* I know. That makes me feel a little bit silly whenever I'm in these public places. I'm like a grown woman and I'm just sitting here kicking my feet *laughs*

(13:47)
**M:** *laughs* I understand, I really do. Okay. Thank you. Do you feel yourself self censoring in any way sitting here or do you feel like if you had any impulse to do anything, you'd feel fully comfortable doing it?

(14:04)

**Interviewee 3:** I definitely would be very self conscious about my actions and what I'm doing. I tend to be, in general, a pretty reserved person in public, so I don't know if there's any specific thing I can think of that I wouldn't be doing. But I don't know if, say, I suddenly realised that I had, I don't know, an itch underneath one of my articles of clothing, I probably would not try and scratch it right now because that would feel weird and like as a trans person, I'm very conscious about clothes. And so it would make me feel like I'd be drawing attention to specifically the thing that makes me self conscious. And also any bodily exposure, again, as a trans woman, makes me feel like I'm going to be accused of, I don't know, being a fucking pervert or something. So in that way, probably not. Yeah, I think that's probably the main thing I would think of is like, bodily censorship, like how I'm holding myself and what I'm doing with my body. I don't think, like, censorship in terms of what I would say

(15:06)

**M:** Right. Yeah. No, that makes sense, though. I think a lot of self censorship is for trans people very physical, just not feeling comfortable to take up space. I know we've touched on this also, but are you satisfied with our field of vision from this bench, the way that this bench is positioned in the field of vision that it's been positioned to provide?

(15:30)

**Interviewee 3:** Uhh, not really. I mean, I don't particularly find the statue very visually interesting. And that's like the main thing that I'm looking at right now. And just in terms of the incline of the ground, like the hill right in front of us blocks off and then all I can see in the distance is Porta Potties and a little snack stand, neither of which are particularly visually appealing. Yeah. So it's not the best view, I don't think, in the park

(16:03)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. So, overall, how is your satisfaction level with this bench and everything we just talked about? And would you enjoy this bench more or would you enjoy sitting here more if there was a different seating option?

(16:19)

**Interviewee 3:** I would say overall, my satisfaction is pretty low. This is probably if I was ranking all the benches in the park of where I would sit, this would probably be pretty low on the list. It has a lot of the things I don't like. It's like right on a major thoroughfare. It, like, doesn't have a good view. And in terms of alternate seating options, I might like... I'm trying to think about what alternative seating options there could be. I think it's possible that I might enjoy, I don't know, something that feels more like one seater or alternatively, more things like that, not in so prominent of place, but like that little ridge around the statue, something that sort of feels like a big continuous thing. I find the 2-3 person set up of the bench kind of compounds a lot of those things. It always makes me worried that I'm going to be in this weird contact with somebody. But for the most part, I would say the issues come down to position rather than the specific format of the bench

(17:21)

**M:** Yes. That's actually a great segue. Next, I'm going to start asking you about some micro... They're called Micro interventions, which is basically this group of queer scholars and queer urban designers have made a report on public space. They call it queering public space. So, they've, they've suggested these micro interventions for... They're proposing these to urban planners. So I think it's really important to check with, you know, actual trans and gender diverse people about these micro interventions because, I mean, obviously it's not a one size fits all thing. But yeah, just curious what you think about certain of their micro interventions

(18:15)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. Mhm. Absolutely.

(18:16)

**M:** So the first section is going to be about, again, the bench because they talk about benches a lot in the sense of a lot of things that you brought up positionality, how they're positioned to gaze. They're really designed to people watch, which is a weird phenomenon in my opinion also. So how would you feel if instead of facing out, this bench would be positioned to face another bench, or alternatively was maybe a smaller bench, so it was more of a seat facing another seat?

(18:44)

**Interviewee 3:** Hm. I really like that idea. I think, yeah, like a little... Yeah, if this was just rotated towards that bench, I would definitely like that. And if there was no one here, you could maybe spread out a little bit, you could maybe spread out a little bit more. No, I like that a lot

(18:59)

**M:** And so do you think that would make you feel more inclined to sit there? And that would make you feel a bit more comfortable or less comfortable, more safe?

(19:08)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. Yeah, it would definitely make me feel more comfortable, a bit more safe. But definitely, I think the main thing I would think I would be like social comfort rather than specific fears of safety. Because it's also like, and I don't think I mentioned this earlier, but something I think about a lot with these benches is that it's like, in addition to feeling like I'm being people watched, I feel very self conscious about people watching others. I don't know where to look because I don't want other people to feel surveilled, but there's really no other option when you're at one of these benches

(19:37)

**M:** Yes. Exactly. They prescribe it. How would you feel at this bench instead of facing, let's say, another bench, instead of facing people, it was just facing nature. Like, you were just facing trees?

(19:51)

**Interviewee 3:** I would love that. That's my ideal.

(19:53)

**M:** And that would make you feel more inclined to sit there and more comfortable?

(19:57)

**Interviewee 3:** Absolutely

(19:59)

**M:** Okay, so another proposal in these micro interventions, they call it cosy corners. Basically, they proposed that bench design could change so that on either end of the bench, they put two big planters so that it forms like half a cubicle in a way. So there's walls on either end. You're still open on the outsides, but on the sides so that you can't be as visible from the sides. How do you feel about that? Would that make you feel more inclined? How would that change your experience sitting there?

(20:27)

**Interviewee 3:** I would absolutely love that. That's yeah, I mean, that would be very cool, both in the perspective of privacy and also just in the sense of like, I don't know, that just sounds kind of pleasant. Just like having plants framing the structure feels a little bit more like a structure instead of just like a weird outpost

(20:49)

**M:** Mm, totally. So then another thing they talk a lot about, which I'm curious your thoughts on is representation, like very literal queer representation. So they think, they believe that having more explicit queer, trans representation would have an impact on usage from queer and trans people. Regarding the statue, for example, what change would it make for you if instead of this statue being of this guy Vondel, let's just say it's like a trans historical figure?

(21:20)

**Interviewee 3:** Uh, that would probably make me feel a bit more comfortable. It probably wouldn't be that huge just because it's easy to pay lip service with that kind of thing. But yeah, it's definitely better than what is there. And it would definitely add a, at least I would be thinking

if someone was being transphobic to me right now, at least it'd be a fun, ironic element to the story *laughs*

(21:45)

**M:** Right. And so they also talk about rainbow crosswalks. I'm curious what your thoughts are on things like that in the environment, of like rainbow crosswalks or when trans or rainbow flags are hung, how that impacts or doesn't impact your experience of a public space?

(22:06)

**Interviewee 3:** I find that the rainbow crosswalk thing, half the time I never notice it. It doesn't make that big of a difference to me. Yeah, I don't know. The rainbow crosswalk thing doesn't make that big of a difference to me. And in general, it just makes me feel like... Again, me going back to the thing, that's easy to say, I feel like it makes me think, oh, this is definitely a government that wants to appear that they support trans people. I don't know if I necessarily trust that, although I can be a bit paranoid sometimes. In terms of flags, I would say it depends a lot on where the flags are and how many there are. I would say it's like a multiplier. Definitely the more there are, the more comfortable I feel. But not in a linear way. It's like it needs to reach a certain critical mass before I start to feel like it actually impacts how I feel. And then also where they're hung. If they're on businesses, I really don't care. It doesn't impact anything. If it's a private residence, I'm like, oh, that's a person expressing their viewpoint. And if it's on a government building, I would say maybe it matters slightly more than if it's on a business. But still, yeah, if it's like a private residence or just somewhere where I know it's like a person put that up because it was something they felt rather than being a decision of an institution

(23:23)

**M:** So when you say, when you see more, are you referring to on private residencies?

(23:27)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, like if I walk into a neighbourhood and I see many flags on many houses, then I'm like, oh, okay. This is somewhere where I feel safe. But if it's just one house, then it's like,well, that's one person, but they are out of place, it feels like.

(23:46)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, totally. Okay, this is the final question. I know this is a hard or just an open ended question, but you can answer it however. But in regards to this report talking about queering as a verb, which is supposed to extend comfort to, you know, all trans people, all queer people, do you personally feel like it's possible to queer public space?

(24:18)

**Interviewee 3:** So in terms of being comfortable for all queer and trans people, I don't... Sorry. In terms of being comfortable to all queer and trans people, I don't think so. Just because I think, if something ever... And this is just, I guess, getting into my personal views on queer theory and stuff, but I think if something ever were to become truly comfortable with society, then it wouldn't... It stops being queer at a certain point because queerness for me is defined by a certain deviancy from the expected norm and a friction there. I think what really makes me feel like… rather than having big public spaces become queer friendly, which, I mean, that's good in its own way, but it has, I think, an upper limit. I feel like having more forms of spaces would make a bigger difference to me. Just more variety, more places to gather because within any minority culture, and I use that kind of broadly, just like any kind of group that is not the majority and that is made to be aware of that, I feel like what matters the most is having these little micro environments where you can be in the majority and you can feel that safety and community. Yeah, I definitely think that there's a hard limit to how much I think you can possibly queer in present societal circumstances, a public space.

(25:50)

**M:** No, I think that's a really good point. Also just thinking, yeah, queerness is subversion. If you subvert a public space, which is a huge large scale space, suddenly, it's not subversion anymore.

It's the norm, which, yeah, I think that's a really good point. Cool. Well, that's all for now. Thank you so much.

(26:08)

**Interviewee 3:** Of course.

(26:11)

**M:** Thank you. Thank you.

<center>**—END OF TRANSCRIPT—**</center>

<center>**Dam Square, 20 May, 22:25 (sun down)**</center>

(00:00)

**M:** Okay. I'm gonna give this to you again. So do you feel like you've had a moment to take in this scene or do you want to take another maybe 10 seconds, 15 seconds?

(00:15)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, I'll take a look around

(00:15)

**M:** Yeah, take it in. Think back to when you first got here and approached this spot, approached this area of the square. Yeah, think about how it feels being here, what it looks like, etcetera, what's around

(00:52)

**Interviewee 3:** Okay, yeah

(00:55)

**M:** So, thinking back to approaching this spot, did it feel welcoming when you first got here and approached this area? Or how did it feel, I guess, approaching the area

(01:03)

**Interviewee 3:** I felt pretty nervous. I feel like this time of night, generally, I'm kind of anxious. And then here, it's busy enough that it definitely feels like there's people and I have to keep my eye out. But I think just because it's so late, that doesn't make it feel any safer. It just kind of feels like, I don't know, I'm in a public place and I don't know who else is here. And also everyone's very like, everyone seems to be rushing to and from wherever they're going. And it doesn't feel like anyone is paying that much attention to what's going on around them in the sense of a public safety thing

(01:49)

**M:** Mmm. Would you have sat here on your own?

(01:51)

**Interviewee 3:** No

(01:54)

**M:** Why not?

(01:55)

**Interviewee 3:** Well, I mean, I might have sat for a second to, I don't know, check something, but to hang out, no, I think I just wouldn't feel safe. And I know there's also not much... It's just a big empty square. And any of the things that would attract me about this space during the day, like, aren't really here. It just feels barren and a little bit threatening

(02:19)

**M:** Yeah. Does this spot, space feel dense to you?

(02:25)

**Interviewee 3:** Not right now. I wouldn't say dense just because there's so much space. It definitely feels lively. I'm aware, I feel like on my periphery, I see people walking around, but in the square itself, no, it feels desolate.

(02:43)

**M:** Does it feel like an urban space?

(02:45)

**Interviewee 3:** Yes, very much so. It feels, yeah, even just the size of the square itself and then just, yeah, the awareness of everything that's going on around, you can hear music in clubs and stuff

(02:59)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Speaking of what you see around you, the different types of buildings, I know it's night so they all are closed, but the stores and things, do you feel inclined to use... Would you feel inclined to use or enter any of these amenities?

(03:17)

**Interviewee 3:** Probably not. They all look very expensive, so I feel like I wouldn't just casually walk into them, no. I guess that, whatever I don't know if that's a...

(03:32)

**M:** Palace

(03:43)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, whatever, if there was an interesting show there, I might go in there. But in general, no, I don't feel really inclined to.. Even these benches are kind of not very good

(03:43)

**M:** We'll get to that *laughs* Yeah, I don't know if you noticed it's a lot of the same questions

(03:49)

**Interviewee 3:** *laughs* I figured

(03:51)

**M:** But yeah, so do you feel visible to other people in this bench, or in this spot?

(03:57)

**Interviewee 3:** Yes and no. I feel like *laughs* maybe in all the worst ways, I feel like I'm very acutely aware of the fact that I can be seen, but I also feel like I don't have even the comforting thing of like, oh, there's a lot of people around, people could see if something bad started happening. I feel like I feel, I don't know. Yeah, like I said, worst of both worlds

(04:21)

**M:** Yeah, I think you just said this, but also do you feel like... Does this visibility feel like it's giving you recognition from other people, or does it feel like you're just under a sense of control or surveillance?

(04:35)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, I don't feel recognized at all. I feel very much... Yeah, like, yeah I feel controlled, maybe, but even controlled is not exactly... I feel menaced almost. Because control at least has the sense of there's some kind of security of some kind, but I don't feel that at all. I just kind of feel vaguely threatened

(05:03)

**M:** Mmm. You've kind of answered this, but do you feel like you have control over your environment sitting here?

(05:09)

**Interviewee 3:** No, definitely not

(05:12)

**M:** Do you want to expand or is that coming from the same things you were saying before?

(05:15)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, same basic things. It feels very public without having a sense of mutual accountability

(05:26)

**M:** Mmm. Mutual accountability in this sense of, like, between you and people passing?

(05:30)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. It feels like everyone is minding their own business, which has it... I guess it's nice in the sense I don't really feel gawked at at all. But it also doesn't have that sense of like, oh, you'd step in for me, I'd step in for you. I don't really feel that

(05:51)

**M:** Do you feel like we have the right to be here? Or do you feel like we're encroaching on other people's territory?

(05:57)

**Interviewee 3:** So this place, I would say, aside from the fact that I felt like, I guess, a bit rushed by the cleaning crews and everything, I think I feel like I can be here. It doesn't feel... It's a very eclectic crowd. The only thing, I guess, is that everyone... I feel like there's a lot of tourists, and so I feel like people are kind of mindless and I got bumped into once on my way here just by someone taking a picture *laughs* so in that sense, maybe it doesn't feel like it's super for me

(06:26)

**M:** Mmm. Would you choose to hang out here with a group of friends who are also trans or gender diverse?

(06:32)

**Interviewee 3:** It wouldn't be my first choice. I think similar to the park, if we ended up here and people seemed comfortable, I probably wouldn't rock the boat. But I would be a bit like, really? Here? *laughs*

(06:47)

**M:** *laughs* Yeah. So I guess similar questions, but would you choose or would you feel comfortable hanging out here with a trans or gender diverse partner? And if you were to be here, would you feel comfortable showing affection?

(06:58)

**Interviewee 3:** I would say, I wouldn't choose it, but I definitely would feel more comfortable showing affection here than in the park just because it's dark and it feels, yeah, like a very eclectic crowd. I feel like no one would care

(07:15)

**M:** Mmm. Do you think that your comfortability showing affection in the park would have been higher at night?

(07:23)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, probably. I feel like it just brings out a different demographic. I feel like there's less judgmental older people here, and I feel like that's a big... A lot of mental space goes to that

(07:36)

**M:** Yeah. Totally. Okay, so next, we're going to talk about some of the specific design features of this spot

(07:40)

**Interviewee 3:** Okay

(07:40)

**M:** So the bench

(07:42)

**Interviewee 3:** Yes

(07:43)

**M:** Does this bench feel physically or sensorially comfortable for you?

(07:46)

**Interviewee 3:** No, it's I think probably one of the worst benches I've been on. It's not comfortable, really, it's hard and there's no back and it's also slightly slanted so I feel like I'm actively having to force myself up. And also, even after they power wash it, it doesn't look terribly clean. And it's positioned in a place that feels very windswept…*wind blows* very well timed. There's very, yeah, it's not really comfortable

(08:16)

**M:** Do you feel like this bench is positioned to provide you, or do you feel like because of how it's positioned, it's providing you with privacy or exposure?

(08:25)

**Interviewee 3:** I definitely would say exposure, definitely even worse than the bench at the park because there's major thoroughfares like all around and no matter how I'm sitting, there's people

behind me, which feels weird. Definitely contributes to a lack of feeling of safety and kind of similar, like, I keep unwillingly making eye contact with people walking by because I'm just trying to look forward

(08:52)

**M:** Exactly, yeah. Would you feel entirely comfortable expressing yourself at this spot, or do you feel yourself self censoring in any way?

(09:03)

**Interviewee 3:** I definitely feel more comfortable expressing myself here than at the park because it just doesn't feel like there's a space..It's like it's a space with a lot of expectations. I don't really ever.. It's such an eclectic group. Again, I see tourists and young people and young tourists.. a lot of tourists

(09:22)

**M:** It feels like a more varied demographic?

(09:24)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah

(09:26)

**M:** Okay, yeah. How do you feel about the field of vision that this bench is providing you? Also, I guess you could think about the way because there's no back, you could face multiple directions. So, I guess speaking generally

(09:39)

**Interviewee 3:** I mean I definitely feel like I can see pretty far. I don't particularly enjoy what I'm looking at, it's kind of just a.. Weird, yeah, there's shops and then there's kind of a beautiful older palace but like yeah, I don't know. I feel like I can see a lot, but I don't really care about any of the things I can see

(10:02)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Would you be more satisfied with this spot if there was a different seating option?

(10:12)

**Interviewee 3:** Uh, yeah. I feel like the benches seem actively designed to make you not want to sit on them. So that kind of is adding to my discomfort. It just doesn't feel like anyone is really supposed to be here. It feels like it's designed for you to just walk through and go somewhere else

(10:32)

**M:** Mmm. So, how do you feel, so considering it's night time, about the lighting of this spot? Do you feel like the lighting design, the way they've chosen to design the lighting, makes you feel safer or less safe?

(10:45)

**Interviewee 3:** I definitely feel safer than I would if there were no lights. Um, it's a little... I mean, it's definitely like a... I don't know, like penal. It feels, I feel very dystopian, observed. But I guess I can't think of really a better alternative

(11:09)

**M:** We'll get to that. Okay. So, yeah, segue. We're going to talk about the micro interventions again in the context of this space. So with the bench again, would you feel more inclined to sit here? Would you feel safer, more comfortable sitting here if this bench was facing another bench?

(11:29)

**Interviewee 3:** Uh, yeeeah, probably. It's a little bit weird because the bench doesn't feel like it has a real clear way where you're supposed to.. So I feel like that would just be next to another bench. But yeah, probably, the kind of, the row arrangement definitely adds to the feeling of a

lack of safety. Because it's like the people that are sitting down are like, I'm naturally obscured from the people further down

(12:00)

**M:** Mmmm. How would you feel if the bench was not facing another bench? It was facing nature, hypothetically, would that make you feel more or less safe?

(12:06)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah. I mean, some greenery would be really nice

(12:11)

**M:** *laughs* yeah. And again, the concept of cosy corners, like when there's no planters on either end creating corners for the bench, would that make you feel more or less comfortable or safe?

(12:23)

**Interviewee 3:** So comfortable, like physically, probably more so, it's nicer. I think in terms of safety, it would probably be a net wash because on the one hand, it's nice to be able to hide a little bit. But also like, at least at night, right now, it also would make me a bit worried about, like, decreased visibility, like what's going on?

(12:46)

**M:** Mmm, mhm, yeah. And so back to the lighting. So they've proposed softer, more ambient lighting for public spaces so that it doesn't feel like you said, like kind of penal or you're under surveillance, but it's it's lit, it's dimly lit, but it's lit in a way that's like, you don't feel like you're under a spotlight in a way, it's kind of just more like ambience, that's the word that they use. Do you think that would make you feel more or less safe or comfortable?

(13:12)

**Interviewee 3:** I think that would make me feel a lot safer. I think the harshness of the lighting contributes to the feeling of danger. I don't know. It just feels like... Yeah, it's threatening lighting.

It's not.. I mean psychologically, I feel like lighting has a big impact on both how I feel and how I feel like other people are going to act. And if it was ambient lighting, I definitely would feel less like, I don't know, like I was in what was about to be a crime scene

(13:43)

**M:** Yeah, definitely. And again, would any explicitly queer or trans signage make you feel more comfortable here? Let's just say there was a rainbow crosswalk or a trans flag flying. I literally feel like I see a sticker of one over there. But like, let's say it was huge, they did things like that, more explicit. Would that make you feel more comfortable or more safe here, or would that have any impact on your experience here?

(14:06)

**Interviewee 3:** It might just right now, I feel like it would…Yeah, I feel like it would contribute to a feeling of even... It's hard to exactly to... I'm trying to frame this or phrase this correctly. I feel like for me, rainbow crosswalks and rainbow flags, beyond the simple direct queer representation, it also to me has a connotation of investment in public space and that someone cares, which I feel like is the big thing that's lacking here is it just kind of feels desolate. So I feel like it would make me feel better. But I don't know if that would be necessarily because I felt represented so much as it just would make me feel like, oh, this is a place that is invested in that people care about

(14:52)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. It's consciously created

(14:55)

**Interviewee 3:** I would appreciate the effort, I'll say that

(14:57)

**M:** *laughs* Fair. Okay. Now, thinking back, I know you've talked a bit about Vondelpark versus this experience, but thinking more about those two experiences in general, did one feel more comfortable than the other?

(15:13)

**Interviewee 3:** I would say I probably felt more comfortable in the Vondelpark

**M** (15:16)

Okay, and where do you think that came from? Do you think that visibility played a role in that? I guess, maybe what do you think makes you feel that way?

(15:27)

**Interviewee 3:** I feel like for me, the main difference just has a lot to do with, like, just being a woman out at night versus during the day, more so than a visibility thing, because I definitely feel like there's as many, if not more people here. But I just feel like there's more of a wholesome feeling to the Vondelpark during the day. It's like a family environment, which as much as a trans person that has its own inhibitions, as a woman, I feel like it makes me feel safer in other ways, if that makes sense

(16:06)

**M:** Yeah, of course. There's nuance. Of course. Do you think that this place would feel differently during the day?

(16:09)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, for sure. I would feel very safe just because there's so many goddamn tourists it would feel like Disneyland. Nothing's going to happen here. Maybe I'd be worried about a pickpocket for that reason

(16:23)

**M:** So you think that one of the biggest factors in your sense of safety or security is not even just the presence of people because there are people right now, but the way that that presence of people is being facilitated in a way, like here it just feels fleeting?

(16:44)

**Interviewee 3:** Yeah, that's a big thing is it feels like everyone is just trying very hard to mind their own business and get where they're going here, which makes me feel a bit less safe. It's like how many people are going to step in versus they're just going to look down and keep going

(17:03)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Cool. Do you have any other thoughts on the... Well, not cool, but do you have any other thoughts on the two experiences, thinking back to the Vondelpark or do you feel like you touched on your comparison?

(17:18)

**Interviewee 3:** I guess the one other big difference would be that it's like in Vondelpark, it's like I know why everyone's there, which is that it's a park and it's nice. But here it doesn't seem like there's any reason at all to be in this park other than just walking through it. So, like, everyone I look at is a little part of my brain that's like, why are you here right now? Are you on the prowl? What's going on?

(17:40)

**M:** Mmmm. That's a really good point. Yeah. Those are all my questions, if you don't have any other...

(17:47)

**Interviewee 3:** None in particular, no

(17:49)

**M:** Okay! Well, thank you.

(17:51)

**Interviewee 3:** You're welcome.

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

## Transcript of Interviewee 4

This interview was transcribed using HappyScribe.

## Dam Square, 26 May, 17:05 (sun out)

(00:00)

**M:** Okay, I'm going to have you hold this just to make sure I can hear you. Okay. So to start, we're just going to take 30 seconds for you to just take in the space, take in this bench, take in this bench in relation to the space and to the other benches and just what you see, who you see, how you feel. And also thinking about when you first got here and walked over to this spot, remembering that. Just let me know

(00:33)

**Interviewee 4:** It feels like we're taking a moment of silence

(01:03)

**M:** *laughs* Thinking back to when you got here and you approached this spot, how did that approach feel? Did you feel comfortable approaching this spot or just what was the experience?

(01:15)

**Interviewee 4:** I mean, I was pretty comfortable. There was someone sitting next to you who moved out of the way immediately, so that was kind of nice *laughs* yeah, I feel like the initial sit down was pretty chill

(01:30)

**M:** Do you think that you would have sat in this spot by yourself?

(01:34)

**Interviewee 4:** No, I don't think so

(01:36)

**M:** Does this space feel dense to you?

(01:41)

**Interviewee 4:** Dense? I mean, it's pretty busy. Yeah, I don't know. It feels pretty out in the open. I don't know if I would describe it as dense

(01:54)

**M:** Does it feel urban?

(01:56)

**Interviewee 4:** Yes *laughs*

(02:00)

**M:** I had to ask that one, okay? Looking at the different buildings and amenities that you see, like the hot dogs, the bench, the stores, do you feel inclined to use the amenities around this space?

(02:13)

**Interviewee 4:** Honestly, not really. Definitely not the food stands. I don't think that's my cup of tea. Also, the stores, it's just big chains, and that's not necessarily my thing either. I don't know. I've been to the Niewe Kerk for exhibitions before, that's about it

(02:39)

**M:** Do you feel like sitting here, you're like, this is the spot you're meant to sit at and be at?

(02:46)

**Interviewee 4:** As a person?

(02:48)

**M:** Yeah

(02:49)

**Interviewee 4:** I don't know. It feels kind of just plopped in the middle of a square. It feels more like, we need to put a bench somewhere where a lot of people are. I don't know if I would have... I mean I guess it makes sense that it's on the side of the square, but that's about it

(03:08)

**M:** Do you feel visible to other people sitting here?

(03:14)

**Interviewee 4:** Very much so

(03:16)

**M:** And does that visibility feel like... Does that make you feel like you're being recognized by the people around? Or does it make you feel vulnerable or out of control? It could be neither

(03:29)

**Interviewee 4:** I don't feel recognized because I feel like I'm a minority in a space where the majority is mostly around. I don't know. I think it can feel overwhelming, especially when you're alone and not in this context because I know we're doing something with a meaning here. But if I would just sit down to chill somewhere, I would not pick this because I would feel very like, anyone could approach me at any time for no reason

(03:59)

**M:** Yeah. So it does kind of, this sense of visibility or exposure makes you feel out of control because somebody could...

(04:07)

**Interviewee 4:** Yeah, I feel like I generally pick benches that have something, like, I don't know, here you're in the middle, so people can walk around you. I would normally pick something either that I'm facing not into the street or where... Where there's something behind me that doesn't allow people to walk behind me

(04:35)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, we'll get to that. Do you feel…so, I think you just touched this, but I'm just going to ask again. But do you feel control over your environment sitting here? Which means in the sense of with people, with nature just in general, do you feel you have control over the situation in this spot?

(04:51)

**Interviewee 4:** I mean, other than sitting down here and leaving, not really *laughs*

(04:57)

**M:** Yeah, fair. Do you feel like we have the right to be here, or do you feel like we're encroaching on other people's territory, other people's space?

(05:07)

**Interviewee 4:** I feel like spaces like this feel very tolerated.  Like, you feel very tolerated, or I feel very tolerated. I don't necessarily feel super welcome, but I do feel like I have a right to be here because it's such, everybody's here

(05:26)

**M:** Is that what you mean by the tolerated thing, because it's like everyone's–

(05:28)

**Interviewee 4:** Yeah, it's not like I feel very embraced and accepted, but I don't necessarily stand out in a crazy way

(05:38)

**M:** Does it seem like people around us are staking pieces of territory?

(05:52)

**Interviewee 4:** I mean, I think  today, not really. I mean, the police are out *laughs* I feel like normally there's a lot of street performers here, which is always interesting. I don't know. There's a lot of tourists that are just standing in big groups. And then there's just a bunch of guys, I mean just the guy in the chair there. I'm like, what's happening, you know? *laughs

(06:12)

**M:** *laughs* yeah, yeah, so that is kind of in a way, claiming territory

(06:18)

**Interviewee 4:** Yeah, I would never ever do that, like, just bring a chair and sit on a square with my little group of dudes, I don't know *laughs*

(06:25)

**M:** Yeah it's also interesting that the police officers are just trying to like, what are you looking at? Why are you–

(06:31)

**Interviewee 4:** People, something to annoy *laughs*

(06:34)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Would you choose to hang out at this spot with a group of friends who are trans or gender diverse?

(06:41)

**Interviewee 4:** No, like not.. if we need a place to sit down and we were here, then yeah, maybe. But not as a first choice or something, no

(06:51)

**M:** Yeah. Would you...  kind of similar question, but would you choose to sit here with a partner who is trans or gender diverse? And if you were to, would you feel comfortable displaying affection? And that could just be the most simple affection like now, this straight couple who's about to walk past us holding hands. Like that.

(07:07)

**Interviewee 4:** *laughs* I mean, the thing is I think I'm pretty... I do that everywhere anyway. Do I always feel super comfortable doing it? No, but I don't feel comfortable not doing it either, if that make sense

(07:21)

**M:** Yeah, totally. Okay, so now we're going to just talk about some more specific design features of this bench. So physically, sensorially, do you feel comfortable on this bench?

(07:32)

**Interviewee 4:** It is, again, very loud all around, and there's a lot going on both visually and auditory. So it could be more comfortable *laughs*

(07:47)

**M:** You kind of just said this, but do you feel like this bench is providing you with any privacy or just exposure?

(07:53)

**Interviewee 4:** Just exposure

(07:55)

**M:** And how do you feel about the way that the bench is oriented so that we're facing this way, but we could hypothetically face that way or that way?

(08:03)

**Interviewee 4:** I kind of already said this, but yeah, I would rather have a way of having that be one, or maybe three focal point, but it's not like... I feel like having your back, like, open, which is just not great

(08:19)

**M:** Yeah. It's vulnerable. How do you feel about the benches, because there's this line of benches, all being in a horizontal line. Does that do anything for you?

(08:29)

**Interviewee 4:** I think I prefer it over sitting opposite of random other strangers. But I don't know, it doesn't really do anything for me either

(08:42)

**M:** Do you feel yourself self-censoring at all sitting here? Or do you think you feel entirely comfortable expressing yourself or following any impulses here?

(08:51)

**Interviewee 4:** I feel like it falls into the same thing with public display of affection. I feel like I don't necessarily censor myself, but I would maybe if I'm alone or if there's something happening around me that maybe makes me feel uncomfortable. But I don't feel completely comfortable being hundred percent myself, but I feel like that's in any big public space

(09:12)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. How do you feel about the field of vision that this positioning on this bench is providing?

(09:20)

**Interviewee 4:** It's very like, I mean it's a bench, but it's very low, so it's very, I don't know, a bit, I don't know how to explain, but you're like a bit beneath other people, so maybe not the most, again, in control feeling of, yeah, eye level..

(09:44)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Do you think that you would enjoy this space more if there was a different seating option? Or do you think that it's like...

(09:51)

**Interviewee 4:** *laughs* I mean, I kind of think it's a lost cause, but maybe. I think it can always be better. It's not going to be perfect because this is what it is, but yeah

(10:01)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Well, segue *laughs* Now, I'm going to ask you about some micro interventions that this group of queer urban designers and scholars have proposed for public space which they

think can queer public space. I think it's important to actually hear how people think about them before just doing it. So, you kind of talked about this, so I think you have some thoughts. But one thing they suggest is that benches, instead of facing outwards so that you're gazing, they would face another bench. I know you just said you wouldn't love that *laughs* but do you think that if there was another bench, that would make you feel less inclined to sit there and less comfortable or safe?

(10:50)
**Interviewee 4:** *laughs* I feel like it would make me less inclined to sit there because you would have to, in a more personal way, interact with the people that are facing you. When, like, now I'm facing people too, where they are just going about their business. When people are sitting down, it's a lot more likely that they'll interact with you, which I don't necessarily want from cis strangers. You know what I mean?

(11:12)
**M:** Yeah, of course. Yeah. And so another thing they proposed is instead of facing the people and instead of facing another bench, just facing nature

(11:24)
**Interviewee 4:** That's always my ideal bench

(11:28)
**M:** And would that make you feel more safe and more comfortable?

(11:32)
**Interviewee 4:** Yeah, it just makes me feel more relaxed, I think. Just feel more inclined to just do my own thing

(11:38)

**M:** Yeah. And then so another thing they proposed are called cosy corners, which is that a bench would have two planters on either side with like tall plants, so that it creates walls on either side of the bench. And the idea there is that you would feel less visible while also being able to have some visibility. But it definitely takes away some visibility at the same time. So I'm curious what you think about that, if that would make you feel more comfortable and more safe or less comfortable?

(12:12)

**Interviewee 4:** I kind of feel like it would make me less comfortable because I feel like it would obstruct my view of my surroundings and it would make me feel like I couldn't see. what's happening beside me, which, I don't know, if something's happening beside me, I would like to know, you know what I mean?

(12:27)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah, totally. So then, another thing I'm curious about your thoughts on are, so they also think that some more explicit queer signage can make queer people feel included, so that includes rainbow crosswalks, trans flags so like, literal... This space is very historic, obviously, that's why there's so many tourists, they propose, in spaces like this, there could be like a new monument paying honour to a queer trans figure. Do you think that that would impact your desire to be in this space more or your comfort here more? What would you feel like—Would that change your thoughts on this space?

(13:12)

**Interviewee 4:** I mean, I think with, I don't know, even recent shit happening, where there's been photo projects being completely destroyed by random people on the stree

(13:24)

**M:** Oh, here?

(13:25)

**Interviewee 4:** In other places, but yeah, I wouldn't necessarily think that would make me feel more comfortable. I would kind of expect things to become damaged at some point, and that would make me feel less comfortable because then it's very public display of hatred towards the community. And yeah, I don't know, flags are nice, I guess, but if I just see a flag somewhere, I'm not like, I feel that that's helping the…no.. So, also, I would not, if there was rainbow benches specifically for… I wouldn't sit

(13:58)

**M:** Yeah. How come?

(14:00)

**Interviewee 4:** Because you're like very—I'm already very visibly queer and that would just be like, I'm on the gay bench actually *laughs* There's actually one rainbow bench and I've sat on it because someone else was sitting on it that I was going to meet. But I would never consciously be like, that's the bench

(14:21)

**M:** Yeah. No. Yeah. And it is funny thinking about visibility, though, because it also makes you so visible

(14:26)

**Interviewee 4:** Yeah. And yeah, not necessarily, I mean it depends on the situation, but not always in the way you want to be, I think

(14:35)

**M:** Yeah. Okay. And then I'm curious if you think, because this report and these suggestions come from this idea that you can queer public space, do you think that's possible?

(14:46)

**Interviewee 4:** No. I mean, I think it's like any institution that can't really be changed unless you change from the base up. You can't just be like, oh, let's plant some flags somewhere, then it's, now it's queer. It needs to be completely redesigned structurally. Because even then, it's still a public space. And how are you going to make that accessible for everybody? I don't know

(15:15)

**M:** Do you think that for you, there's things that public spaces could do to become more accommodating, that would make you feel more comfortable or safe or relaxed?

(15:27)

**Interviewee 4:** I mean, I don't know. I feel like there's things at night that are just ways to make it more comfortable and relaxed, like just light, like make it lit and in that way make it feel safe. But during the day, I don't really know. Like, what I said, have benches that just face away so you can just mind your own business. Yeah. I don't really know

(15:56)

**M:** Yeah. They have another proposition about lighting for night time, but I only ask it at night

(16:04)

**Interviewee 4:** At night, fair enough

(16:05)

**M:** Because the lighting here at night is super bright and feels kind of punitive almost because it's so bright. It's like stadium lighting. And they have a lighting designer who has all these suggestions about ways for it to be softer so that you can still be visible, but you're not under a spotlight

(16:21)

**Interviewee 4:** Yeah. But again, I would never choose to sit here at night. I'm thinking more for example, walking or biking through a park or a street or something

(16:32)

**M:** Yeah, definitely. Yeah. That's all, thank you!

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**–END OF TRANSCRIPT–**

## Transcript for Interviewee 5

This interview was transcribed using HappyScribe.

**Vondelpark, 27 May, 17:40 (sun out)**

</div>

(00:00)

**M:** I'm going to ask you to hold this so I can make sure I hear you. Okay. So first, I know we've been in this area already for a while, but just maybe take a second to take in the nature of this particular bench and what you see. Yeah, what you see, who you see, and how you see people using this space and how you feel sitting in this space physically but also sensorially. And then I'll ask some other questions

(00:35)

**Interviewee 5:** Okay

(00:54)

**M:** Yeah?

(00:55)

**Interviewee 5:** Mhm

(00:55)

**M:** So yeah, thinking back to when we first sat here, or also you can think back to when we first got to this general area in general, how did it feel for you approaching this spot? I'm just going to move that closer to you

(01:09)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know. I think it's always when I'm leaving a group, I get more aware of my surroundings. When we sat down here, I could see someone looking at me. I was, like, yeah, you know?

(01:28)

**M:** Mmm. Yeah, totally. So you think it's different approaching a spot with less people than with a group or leaving a group and being with less people?

(01:44)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah. I think when I'm in a group, I feel very protected in a way. I think a lot of the time when I'm outside with people, I don't try to look too much around me, if that makes sense. I think it's a way to feel safe for me

(02:14)

**M:** Okay, so yeah, would you have sat in this spot if you were by yourself?

(02:19)

**Interviewee 5:** Probably not, honestly, because it's very exposed. There's people in every direction and you're very central here.

(02:32)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, yeah definitely. Does this particular area feel dense to you?

(02:40)

**Interviewee 5:** Densely populated?

(02:41)

**M:** Densely populated or densely designed, like things are consolidated, or it doesn't have to, or not

(02:52)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know. Now it feels dense because it's so full of people. I think yes, because it's a very curated park. There's benches everywhere and there's things placed everywhere. You have a trash can on every corner

(03:12)

**M:** And does it feel still like we're in a city when we're in the park? Or do you feel distance from the city? Or does it still feel urban?

(03:22)

**Interviewee 5:** It definitely feels like a city to me because it's very different from any park where I am coming from, which is also a city. But it's so full of people in a way that I just can't conceptualise it being anywhere but the city, honestly

(03:40)

**M:** And also thinking about, I mean, there's obviously parts of the city that poke out, but even like, the next question is about the amenities of this spot. So, you already mentioned the trash cans, which is a basic one. But also thinking about the restaurant over there and the statue over here, these would be considered the amenities of this area. Do you feel inclined or would you feel inclined to use these amenities? Or do these amenities seem to cater to you? Do you feel like they accommodate what you would need or want in this area?

(04:17)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know, I just went to a cafe. My first thought is like gendered bathrooms or where to go to the bathroom. It's like either you do the Porta Potties, which are absolutely filthy and disgusting, or I pay money to go to a very, kind of like, fancy spot where it's like the toilet is not only gendered. but it's also like guarded. So you have someone observing you go in, which I always hate because one thing is when I can, like, slip into a gender toilet and run in, do my thing, run out. But when you have someone there who's seeing you go into a certain bathroom, I'm always like...

(05:02)
**M:** Yeah, I completely feel that, feels like a test

(05:06)
**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, exactly.
(05:07)
**M:** Totally. And how did it feel entering that cafe otherwise, aside from the bathroom part, did it feel like a place you'd want to go back?

(05:18)
**Interviewee 5:** Not particularly. It felt kind of fancy to me. I felt a little out of place

(05:25)
**M:** Same. That's why I was like, I am not a guest, you'll tell

(05:28)
**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, exactly. There was like a private party happening upstairs, I think. So I was like, I don't know

(05:39)
**M:** Mmmm. Yeah. So I know you already kind of touched on this, but just to ask again, do you feel visible to other people in this spot?

(05:47)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, for sure

(05:49)

**M:** And does that sense of visibility for you feel like it's giving you, like, recognition from other people, or does it feel more vulnerable or you feel out of control in that sense of visibility? What does that visibility... How does it feel for you?

(06:08)

**Interviewee 5:** Mm. I think it's like more of a vulnerable thing, like in general. I don't know. When I think about it, I immediately think about like weird looks and like, which is just like... It's just part of being anywhere, I feel like

(06:31)

**M:** Mmm, yeah, I know. So It doesn't feel so much like... It doesn't feel like an empowering visibility where it's like, oh, people can see me and they're recognizing me in an accepting way. It's more like a–

(06:46)

**Interviewee 5:** I mean, it can be. Depends on who's looking, I guess. I think it can also be nice to be in a place where you can see the crowds and see different kinds of people. I think I feel safer in a space like this where it's a lot of people. Whereas if something uncomfortable were to happen, then there would be more eyes looking than if it's a closed off space with some people. I don't know. You know what I mean?

(07:22)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So yeah, it seems like you're getting at the two sides of the visibility where it's like, on the one hand, you feel really visible, but on the other hand, everyone is also visible to you and everyone has eyes on everyone. So it's like, safety but also vulnerability, in a way?

(07:37)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, that's a good way to put it

(07:38)

**M:** And so I guess off that, do you feel much control over your surroundings or your experience sitting here, do you feel if something were to happen, which could be with another person or just in general, something were to happen, would you feel in control of handling it in the way this is laid out? Would you feel comfortable handling it?

(08:00)

**Interviewee 5:** I think it's never comfortable to handle. I think I would probably feel less threatened here than in a more closed off space because I know that there are onlookers and I know people are more wary when that's the case, you know? I don't know. It's also quite an open space, so it's relatively easy for me to walk away

(08:32)

**M:** Yeah. I think that's an important part, too. Does it feel to you like in this spot, particularly or also in general in this area, we are encroaching on other people's territory? Or do you feel like everyone is staking their own pieces of territory?

(08:55)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know. I feel like it's quite an open space. You see a lot of people using the space. I don't know if I feel like I'm encroaching on anyone's space, especially not in the park

(09:10)

**M:** Does it feel like everyone's sharing the space equally?

(09:16)

**Interviewee 5:** Oooh, I mean, like are they ever? I feel like there's always power dynamics at play and who feels comfortable asserting themselves in the space. And I think like in any public space, I am probably more reserved about how I conduct myself than, like, a group of straight white men would be, you know?

(09:42)

**M:** Mmhm, yeah. How do you think in this area that inequality in territory is showing up, or do you feel like it is?

(09:51)

**Interviewee 5:** I think I'm like, who's playing loud music? It's like you see that group of guys over there with a big ass speaker and you see just their posture, very overlooking, spread out. I don't know. I think they feel entitled to the space in a way that I...

(10:12)

**M:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So funny to ask you this right now, but, because we were just hanging out with a group of all trans and gender diverse people, but thinking about this particular spot, this bench, would you choose to sit here with a group of trans or gender diverse friends?

(10:38)

**Interviewee 5:** I think I'd be more inclined to sit on the grass. I don't know why I feel like the benches are often like I don't know, maybe I have a bit of a, like, prejudice, I feel like the benches are often like you have like groups of men who are sitting and smoking and yeah, maybe not, like I think the grass is also different in that you're surrounded by people, like it's more, you're more on the level of everyone else. Whereas when you're on the bench, you're just like...

(11:19)

**M:** You're also looking out

(11:20)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, and like above

(11:22)

**M:** Yeah, that's a really good point. So follow up to that, would you choose to or feel comfortable sitting at this spot with a transgender, diverse partner and showing affection? Not even necessarily super intense affection, but just indicating that you're together

(11:43)

**Interviewee 5:** I think, I don't know, it's complicated because I would definitely do that and I do that frequently. But I think it's always like whenever I'm in public with a partner, it's always like a statement. Not a statement, but like... There's always a risk. And there's always an increased visibility when I'm with someone else, especially if it's someone I'm like, affectionate with. I probably wouldn't go here to canoodle *laughs* specifically, but I wouldn't be opposed to sitting down here and kissing or whatever

(12:26)

**M:** Do you think that it would feel different doing that and this spot versus on the grass, like you said you'd be more inclined to sit there?

(12:34)

**Interviewee 5:** I definitely think so.

(12:35)

**M:** How so?

(12:36)

**Interviewee 5:** I think same thing. It's like you're more equal to everyone else. You're less like... I think it's a little bit about the elevation. It's like you're up on the surface

(12:47)

**M:** Mmm, that's a really good point. So this is a good segue into talking more about the, I guess, design features or these are more design oriented questions about this bench and about this position. So I know you just talked about the elevation being uncomfortable, but otherwise, how does this bench feel for you in terms of physical or sensorial comfort? And that could be the literal bench or things it has or things it doesn't have that could be more comfortable

(13:14)

**Interviewee 5:** I think I'm too short for this bench *laughs* like I'm dangling in my legs. It's kind of nice though. But yeah, I think a lot of things in this country are for taller people like me. It's pretty comfy otherwise though

(13:31)

**M:** Yeah?

(13:32)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah

(13:33)

**M:** And you definitely already answered this, but do you feel like this bench is providing you with privacy or exposure?

(13:38)

**Interviewee 5:** I think more exposure

(13:41)

**M:** Yeah. And where do you think... I mean, other than what you've touched on, do you think there's other things that contribute to it feeling exposing?

(13:50)

**Interviewee 5:** Maybe just like being on a road where people are walking by

(13:56)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. And do you feel yourself self censoring in any way sitting here? Or do you think you feel entirely comfortable to express yourself or follow any impulse in expressing yourself?

(14:09)

**Interviewee 5:** I think I am always slightly reserved when I'm outside. Also, yeah, in general, I definitely think about and feel how I compose myself and how I use my body a lot

(14:28)

**M:** Yeah, same. Mmhm, I think that does come with the territory in a lot of ways

(14:31)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, it does

(14:34)

**M:** And do you feel that more so in certain seating spots in public space? Or do you think that's just like, no matter where, how in public space that comes with your experience?

(14:49)

**Interviewee 5:** I think definitely more so if it's a very populated area, you know? If I can find a little private spot and I'm just with someone I feel comfortable with, I think it's easier for me to let my guard down and chill

(15:05)

**M:** Yeah, totally, I relate. Do you feel satisfied with the field of vision that the bench is providing you with? The way that it's oriented?

(15:21)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know \*laughs\* I think there's some water here and I like to look at water. I would rather look at the water than the statue that I don't really know who that is, and it's probably some colonial bullshit

(15:45)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, a poet, but yeah, it still is. And do you think that you would enjoy this particular spot more if there was a different seating option? Or do you think it's not so much connected to the seating layout spot?

(16:02)

**Interviewee 5:** This exact spot?

(16:04)

**M:** Yeah.

(16:06)

**Interviewee 5:** I think it's not super connected to the bench, the materiality of the bench, yeah, I don't know

(16:15)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. How do you feel about the fact that the bench is placed in line, surrounded by a line of benches? How does that feel for you?

(16:34)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't know. It makes you surrounded by other bench people, I guess. If it was a singular bench, I think it would feel easier to like claim it and I don't know like, have it be a more private space, kinda. It's also kinda weird because you're like looking different ways, so I can't really see what's going on in the other benches. So you're like, I don't know. It feels a little out of control, maybe

(17:14)

**M:** Yeah, no, I know what you mean. I think that's also something for me with benches being in the line of it feeling like, I can't really fully know what's happening behind

(17:24)

**Interviewee 5:** Like that? *laughs*

(17:26)

**M:** Yeah, yup. Cool. *laughs* Okay, so next I'm going to ask you about this group of urban planners and designers, queer people, have been making these suggestions for public space design. They're calling micro interventions, which they think will help queer public space

(17:46)

**Interviewee 5:** Okay. Interesting

(17:47)

**M:** Yes. So I'm curious about what actual trans and gender diverse people think about these things and if they would or wouldn't influence your experience or comfort or sense of safety or not, you know? Just to know if these are even the directions we should be trying to go in the public space design. So how would you feel if rather than facing outward, the bench would be facing another bench?

(18:15)

**Interviewee 5:** I think that would be very confronting. I don't know. Then you're forced to be in interaction with the people on the other bench

(18:28)

**M:** Yeah, yeah exactly. And what about if the bench... I know right now it's facing nature in a way because we're in a park. But if it were to be facing... Right now, even though we are facing

nature, we're also facing directly a thoroughfare or a path. Would you feel differently if it was just facing completely nature and there was nothing passing in front of that?

(18:50)

**Interviewee 5:** Probably. Yeah. I would feel more relaxed with it. I think I seek that out when I'm finding a spot

(18:59)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. So another thing they are proposing is this thing called cosy corners, which is like placing large planters on either side of a bench so that it kind of creates, like, walls or blinders or something on either side, they think it'll make people feel like they are getting a bit more privacy when sitting in a bench like this, for example. But do you think that that would make you feel more comfortable? Or, how would that feel for you?

(19:26)

**Interviewee 5:** Hmm. I don't know because then you're also losing vision. I feel like... I don't know. I feel like being a visible trans person or being a visible queer person requires you to be on guard a lot. I think it might make me feel nervous if it's actually just some plants and then people are around me. I think I might feel less in control because I can't see who's around me or what's going on, but yeah

(20:00)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. totally. I think that's an important part of thinking about privacy is, like, how much control you lose. Like, you shouldn't lose control, that would not make it feel safe privacy

(20:11)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah

(20:13)

**M:** So, another thing that they talk a lot about is queer representation. So like for example, they talk about replacing monuments like this with monuments of queer figures or trans figures. So, I'll start with, do you think you'd feel any differently if you knew that that was a statue of a trans or gender diverse person? Would that make you want to come here more? Would that make you feel more comfortable here? Would it not do anything?

(20:38)

**Interviewee 5:** Honestly, I don't think it does that much. It's like the rainbow benches. It's like, it's just there, but you can get harassed on the rainbow bench. It doesn't really affect how people act

(20:53)

**M:** Yeah. And so it's funny you bring that up because the next thing was they also talk about rainbow crosswalks or flags or signage, explicitly queer, rainbow. I don't know if you want to expand more on what that doesn't do for you

(21:10)

**Interviewee 5:** I do.. I don't know. Maybe I'm a bit too simplistic with it because I do think that it affects me being in a city where you see pride flags and you see queer things everywhere. I think that does actually make a difference because it's some sort of sign that it's like, there's a community here, there are people here. As opposed to, like, yeah and like bathroom signs and shit. As opposed to when I'm like, at my grandparents, which is like in the middle of fucking nowhere in Norway where it's just like nothing. I don't know. I think it does make some difference

(21:53)

**M:** And do–sorry go ahead

(21:55)

**Interviewee 5:** No, no I was done


(21:56)

**M:** No, no, you were?


(21:56)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah


(21:55)

**M:** I was just going to say, do you think there's a difference between seeing that on streets, city streets in the cityscape versus a public space? Or is it the same that it...


(22:09)

**Interviewee 5:** I think it's kind of the same, I don't know


(22:12)

**M:** So, it would feel nice to see, but it wouldn't make you feel like...


(22:16)

**Interviewee 5:** It wouldn't necessarily make me feel more... I don't know. It's complicated. I don't think it's the thing itself that makes me feel more safe. But, like, being in a city makes me feel more safe. Yeah, I don't know


(22:32)

**M:** Yeah, because I think their idea is like, it's a signal that you're being included. But I guess it's like, is it really just a simple design feature that will make someone feel included, you know?


(22:50)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah. I think it's not enough, you know? It's like what I said, people are going to stare at me on the rainbow bench too. Yeah, I don't know

(23:04)

**M:** So yeah, I guess it's like—Sorry, were you going to say something else?

(23:05)

**Interviewee 5:** No

(23:06)

**M:** Are you sure?

(23:06)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah

(23:07)

**M:** I think the bathroom thing is a good point though, because that's like, you know with signage, I think that's a lot more of an impactful shift than just a sign that's just like, pride

(23:19)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah, like generic, doesn't really say anything, yeah

(23:24)

**M:** Yeah. And so do you think that... This is one of the last questions. With this idea they have of queering public space, do you think it's really possible for public space to be queered?

(23:43)

**Interviewee 5:** Hmm. Maybe with major societal shifts. I don't know. I don't know, I think it's difficult. I think when I've been at queer events in public space, then maybe I feel that a little bit like, we're going to do a little trans picnic. I feel like that's like, maybe would have that effect for me, but I think it's very much about the people, yeah

(24:18)

**M:** Yeah. So it's not really like the space that becomes queer necessarily

(24:23)

**Interviewee 5:** No. But also I'm thinking about pride and stuff. I do think it has some effect

(24:39)

**M:** What has some effect?

(24:40)

**Interviewee 5:** Like seeing queer signifiers around you, yeah I don't know

(24:48)

**M:** Yeah, so I guess I was going to ask also, this seems like not just you, but just generally this whole idea of queer public space. There's dimensions, obviously, where it's feeling included or feeling like getting these signifiers versus feeling safe and letting your guard down. Those aren't the same. And so for you, with what you're talking about feeling exposed and not having privacy, do you think—how do you find that in public spaces? When you, I know you said you find a secluded spot, but do you think there are ways public spaces provide… Or how do you think they provide those options of finding privacy? Or do you feel like they don't really provide... You have to kind of... How do you... Yeah, I don't know if that–

(25:33)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah. I don't know. In parks and stuff, I think I very much seek out when there's... If there's a couple of trees and then there's a little opening or space like that, you know? When it's summer, I'm trying to find somewhere to go swim. I'm always looking for somewhere that's like a little pocket. I think that's something that can be made. But yeah, I don't think privacy always offers safety because it can also... If it's half privacy and there's people around, then they can also be scary because no one's there to control what's going on. Like, if you stumble upon someone ill intentioned. Yeah, it's kind of complicated, I don't know

(26:21)

**M:** It is! Because it's like, how do you even know there is mutual accountability when there are people around, you know?

(26:26)

**Interviewee 5:** Yeah. Like you never know if someone's going to come help you if something goes down

(26:33)

**M:** Right. I guess that was the last formal question. But do you have any other thoughts about this spot or about this in general that is coming up for you?

(26:48)

**Interviewee 5:** I don't really think so. I think you've made me think about this spot more than I would if we didn't do this, so

(26:57)

**M:** That's good. Yeah. Well, thank you very much.

## –END OF TRANSCRIPT–

# Transcript of Interviewee 6

This interview was transcribed using Happyscribe.

## Vondelpark, 27 May, 18:30 (sun out)

(00:00)

**M:** Then we'll swap. Okay. And then if you could hold this so I can make sure I hear you. Okay. So first, I know we've already been here for a second, but just maybe take the scene in for a

couple of moments and, like, how it feels sitting here and what you see and who you see, how you see the space being used. And then I'll get into it. Yeah?

(01:19)

**Interviewee 6:** Mhm

(01:20)

**M:** Okay, alright, so thinking back to when we first approached this spot, how did it feel to come and sit at this bench for you?

(01:32)

**Interviewee 6:** I don't know. I was trying to bear it in mind, but I don't know that I had any particular feeling about it. I guess coming from being on the grass, I guess coming from being on the grass, it feels a little more removed. The grass feels like you're amongst the people. You're very much like... I guess here it's still public, but I feel very removed, now that I'm here. Approaching it, I guess I wasn't so aware of it, honestly, but it feels more like you're coming out of a very busy space with a lot of people. You're surrounded by people. And here, yeah, I feel slightly at a remove. I'm still, I guess, in the public space, but I feel less visible now that I'm here. And I feel like I'm observing others rather than being as much

(02:28)

**M:** Mmmm. You felt more observed in the grass?

(02:31)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah I don't think I was consciously aware of it, but I was surrounded by people. Whereas here I feel like now I am looking at them, you know, and most people are wrapped up in their own little circles. Whereas I am now surveilling everyone, it feels kind of like that to me

(02:45)

**M:** Mmm, yeah, that makes sense. Do you think that you would have sat at this bench by yourself?

(02:54)

**Interviewee 6:** No *laughs*

(02:57)

**M:** How come?

(02:58)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean I think when I look for somewhere to sit and chill, I usually, if I'm on my own, I want it to stay that way. If I'm not in a group of people, I... Yeah, cause like, I guess because I'm with you, it's different and because we've been with a group of people, if I was to come here on my own and sit on this bench, I would feel very exposed, confronted with groups of people I'm not familiar with. I think usually if I look for a bench, it's like somewhere with a view as well. I'd want to be looking at the water rather than at the people. I'd want to be like sat down looking at the canal or looking at the lake, maybe a little more spaced out rather than being confronted with a crowd of people

(03:40)

**M:** Yeah, totally. It always is interesting to me what a bench is placed to, like, be facing. So does this spot or this area feel dense to you?

(03:53)

**Interviewee 6:** In terms of people?

(03:55)

**M:** In terms of people or just generally, do you feel like... I know you said you feel like removed, but–

(04:00)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean, it's dense with people right now because it's a nice day out and everyone's come out. There's several benches all next to each other. They're not very used right now, but I guess, again, they're very close together, like I wouldn't choose to sit next to... Certainly not if I was on my own, but it feels like you'd be very close to other benches of people as well. I don't think I would necessarily choose that

(04:31)

**M:** Yeah, that was a question as well

(04:33)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah. I think like the space, like the trees and stuff, it's not very dense in terms of coverage. It's pretty open in that respect. It doesn't feel like you have much privacy.

(04:46)

**M:** Mmm, yeah. Does it feel still to you like we're in a city? Like does it still have an urban feel to you in the park?

(04:57)

**Interviewee 6:** Definitely, I think yeah, definitely. I don't know if that's just because it's full of people and there's music playing and everyone has their bikes and shit. But I mean, yeah, it's very artificial and manicured. I wouldn't feel like I was in the countryside or anywhere else *laughs* like I don't know where else I would place this. I mean I guess it could be the grounds of somewhere

(05:23)

**M:** It still feels manicured in that way?

(05:26)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, definitely and like I don't know the bins are around and everything, the signage, the cafes and restaurants and stuff

(05:32)

**M:** So speaking of the cafes and restaurants, the next question I wanted to ask you was about the amenities that are around this space, so that includes the trash cans, more basic one, the monument, or the cafe restaurant. Do you feel like those are the kinds of amenities that suit your needs in the space? I know that you went into the cafe. How did that feel? Using that amenity, do you think you would use it again? Do you feel like your needs are met by these amenities?

(06:08)

**Interviewee 6:** *laughs* No. I mean, bins, good, sure. I think the regularity of the bins is pretty good, I think, yeah, that's commendable. The toilet situation is deeply unpleasant. The Porta Potties are just disgusting. They're not maintained at all. There's nothing to wash your hands with. And there's just, like, not enough. There's so many people here and there's two or three Porta Loos and a weird urinal thing that grosses me out. The cafe is very, like, unapproachable is too strong a word, but it's not…

(06:52)

**M:** No, yeah. It's huge

(06:54)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, it's huge. And you just have a queue of people waiting for a table and then everyone at a table. Like it's clearly not a public amenity. And going in there, I was very aware that I'm not quite sneaking in because people don't care that much. But you know, you're asked when you use the bathroom, are you a guest? And you just lie and they don't care because they're not paid enough to care. But at the same time, it's very much a closed off thing that you're kind of like, feel a little like, naughty sneaking into covertly. It's not, it's definitely not a public amenity

(07:28)

**M:** Yeah, totally. What amenities do you wish there were here?

(07:33)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean, actual public bathrooms would be useful, facilities. I've heard that there are water stations in this park, but I have yet to see any. Just having your basic needs cover would be nice

(07:50)

**M:** And also, yeah, what kind of bathrooms we're dealing with

(07:53)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean, yeah, gender neutral ones, obviously. The urinal things that they have here, I get that they're useful, but I think they should be illegal in general. Urinals and just public urinals are just very gross to me. I'm like, I don't know. I'm pretty easy going in terms of like, I think it's pretty chill for people to go pee by a tree or a bush or something. But I don't know, urinals just disgust me

(08:20)

**M:** Yeah. I mean, I also think it's just so insane when there's public urinals everywhere and that's it

(08:26)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, exactly. Honestly, if you're going to go all the way, something like shower facilities and shit would be nice for, I don't know, people could do a little workout, people go for a cycle, do some yoga. I mean, if you wanted to make it like, if you want to really go in, you could have like, you know, changing facilities. You know, you could facilitate more activities in the park

**M** (08:50)

And that wouldn't be that far fetched, honestly

(08:52)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, just some rooms and some bathrooms. Yeah, I mean, there's little stalls and stuff around. I think it'd be cute to see more food and drinks type stuff. But at the same time, I appreciate this is not a very commercialised space

(09:13)

**M:** Right, right. So back to just more general questions. But do you feel visible to other people sitting here?

(09:19)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, very much so. Like I said, I feel like I am more of an observer than observed being on the bench rather than the grass. But like I said, if I was here on my own, especially, I'd feel so exposed. Yeah, I don't know, maybe that's me, but I feel like whenever I'm with people, especially when I'm clearly having a conversation involved, I feel more protected in a way. Whereas if I was just sat here on my own, again, it's very public, which generally I'm like, I don't know, I feel like shit's less like to go down when there's a lot of people around and a mix of people. Yeah, no, I think it feels very exposed

(09:59)

**M:** Mmm. Yeah. And does that exposure feel like... I think you've just got at this, but does it feel like you're visible in the way that it feels like you're almost being recognized by the people, or does it almost feel like just a vulnerable visibility that makes you feel more out of control? Or if those were the two ends of the spectrum, I guess, where would your feeling with this visibility fall?

(10:26)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, so like sorry, what's the one that's the other end of vulnerable?

(10:28)

**M:** Like recognition

(10:30)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah. I mean, generally, I don't think I get that in public space from feeling exposed. It's definitely more of a vulnerable feeling

(10:39)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, same. And do you feel like sitting here and you feel like you have control over your environment or you would have control over the situation and for it to happen?

(10:54)

**Interviewee 6:** I don't know what control over my... I don't know what control over my environment would look like. I definitely don't feel like I would have control of a situation. Like, it's a pretty open space. I feel like at least I could run in at least two or three different directions, you know, like the water's there so it's not super convenient for running away. I can just go one of two ways. Again, if I was here on my own and there was, I don't know, a group of people causing me issue, I would definitely not feel in control in any respect. Even if there's one person, honestly, I'd be like, with one person at least, I would feel relatively confident that I could probably run away because it's quite open. With a group, it wouldn't feel like... No, with a group, I'd be like...

(11:50)

**M:** Yeah, because there's... It comes down to the layout or just…?

(11:56)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean, again, with the water, you can kinda go left or right here in the direction of front of you, behind doesn't really feel like an option here. There's just other benches in the water. It feels a little like your back is against the wall here

(12:11)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. So do you feel like us being in this spot, does it feel like we have the right to be here? Or do you feel like we're encroaching on other people's territory? That could also be, again, two ends of the spectrum

(12:30)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah. I don't feel like I am encroaching on other people's territory, I think because it is quite removed from the rest of the public space, I'm like, you know, it's a public bench, it's made to be sat on. I don't feel any more or less entitled to it than anyone else. I don't feel like anyone would have a problem with me sitting here as such. Yeah. No, I guess I don't feel like I'm encroaching on people. At the same time, like I said, it feels almost voyeuristic to be like facing all the people on the grass

(13:15)

**M:** Mmm, yeah, Do you feel like... Because all the people on the grass are staking out their own spots. Does it feel like we're all equally sharing the space?

(13:25)

**Interviewee 6:** Like, in terms of the people on the grass, I think spatially, yes. The group sizes seem to be pretty uniform. It's between like two to... I mean, there's like five people there. That's like the largest group I've seen. And they're still pretty compact. But in terms of, I don't know, consideration of the space, there's at least two or three different people blasting their music. Which again, is wild to me that people feel entitled enough to be like, yeah, this is what the entire park is going to listen to *laughs* So I think spatially it feels pretty okay in terms of people respecting each other's space. Sonically, not so much

(14:12)

**M:** *laughs* Yeah, totally. Do you feel comfortable or would you choose to sit on this bench with a group of trans or gender diverse friends? I think.

(14:24)

**Interviewee 6:** I think yes, because this city... Maybe I'm naive, but this city seems pretty chill in that respect. And again, if I'm in a sufficiently large group, I feel pretty okay about that. And again, maybe somewhat naive. But when there's a lot of people and a mix of people, I feel like there's at least bystanders. I feel generally more confident in that scenario. But at the same time, it's not the most inviting of places. Like I said, it's a very exposed feeling. You never know. It's a lot of people out here drinking and smoking. I don't know. You see guys just ranting to themselves sometimes. The culture here is pretty queer friendly, but not consistently so. You get groups of fucking British men here for all the wrong reasons. I definitely wouldn't choose this bench. It's not the worst place, but I definitely would not choose it

(15:28)

**M:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And kind of a follow up to that, if you were to be... Or if you were to be here with a transgender diverse partner, how would it feel being their partner in public in the sense of holding their hand or showing affection in any way?

(15:47)

**Interviewee 6:** Again, I feel like I've just been doing that since I came to this city. I've thought about it, obviously, but just from hearing that Amsterdam is the safest city in Europe, I feel like I take it, not quite for granted, but I'm pretty confident with it or lay back about it. I think in this like specific day and scenario, again, it's sufficiently busy that I feel people are here to have a nice time and if people were acting in a way that's, like, ugly, I think I'd like to think people would, like other people, and bystanders would not be okay with that. But yeah, again, I definitely wouldn't choose to come and sit on this bench, like, facing all these random people and feeling very exposed. I feel like, especially being like static in a place, especially if it's just like me and a partner. Like there's just two of you. I think it's... Yeah, I feel less confident about that

(16:54)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. So next I'm going to shift talking more about just the more physical design dimension of the bench. So physically and also sensorially, how do you feel about this bench? It's physical features or it's lack of certain physical features, or, yeah–

(17:14)

**Interviewee 6:** Okay, I mean it doesn't have a fucking anti homeless bar *laughs* which is nice, bare minimum. It's got back support. I think that's nice as well, because that's the thing as well that is sometimes deliberately omitted to get you to, like, move on and not spend too long in a place. It does feel like it's made to actually sit and spend time on. Like you're supposed to just chill here for a bit and enjoy the park, I guess. Also, it's big enough to sit a group of people at, tt doesn't feel, yeah, I don't know. I don't think I have much to say, honestly, about the physical features of the bench

(17:54)

**M:** And do you think sensorially in terms of what it... The next question was about whether it makes you feel like you have privacy or exposure, but I think, you already said exposure. So do you think, what about the benches, like orientation or design, do you think contributes to that sense of exposure? And orientation also could mean where it is, where it's been placed and how

(18:16)

**Interviewee 6:** Okay. I mean, in terms of design, I guess it's just pretty minimal. You got the seat and the backrest, you know, there's nothing over or around it. I like that when I'm in a park. It's nice and open. But the placement, right here, facing the grass where all the people are. You're not facing out into the nature, really. I mean, sure, there's nature. I mean, nature is a strong word. There's greenery everywhere. There's trees everywhere. But it's kinda weird to me not to be looking at the lake when you're right here. I guess some of them are more oriented that way. But the placement is very much like.. it's a thoroughfare. Even if there weren't people on the grass. The cafe restaurant, the huge buildings right behind us, it's a thoroughfare here. Yeah, very exposing in that respect

(19:10)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Do you feel yourself self censoring at all sitting here, or do you think you feel fully comfortable acting according to any impulses or expressing yourself?

(19:20)

**Interviewee 6:** I'm not a very impulsive person, I don't think, but sitting specifically on this bench as well, I wouldn't recline. I wouldn't lay or like...

(19:33)

**M:** Mmm, yeah, that's what I mean by impulsive, like following what your body would want to do

(19:36)

**Interviewee 6:** I don't feel like... On the grass, I feel more comfortable to lie down however I want, sit however I want. But here it's very much like I should sit with my ass on the seat, my back on the rest, and my feet as close to the floor as I can get them. It's definitely like I should be more proper here. And again, part of that is just the physical design of what is comfortable. But also I feel like just what seems appropriate to be seen doing on this exposed bench. I feel like if I was lying down, it's more likely to attract. I don't even know, but negative attention in terms of people, it's just, I don't know

(20:18)

**M:** Totally, it feels more vulnerable. Completely. I think you also touched on this, but how do you feel about the field of vision that the bench has been placed to give you?

(20:32)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean, yeah, it's a large field of vision. I appreciate that. I don't feel like, yeah, I appreciate being able to see my surroundings and be aware of my surroundings. At the same time, my back is to the cafe restaurant, my back is to two paths behind me. So if it was a quiet time and I was on my own or with one other person, I wouldn't feel like, as aware of my

surroundings as I might want to be. But yeah, I feel like my field of vision is also mostly just surveilling the people here, which is interesting, it's not what I want, yeah

(21:18)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Do you think that you would enjoy this spot more if there was a different seating option, or do you think it's beyond the seating option?

(21:27)

**Interviewee 6:** Do you mean the placement of the seating?

(21:30)

**M:** Yeah. Like if we were in the same exact spot, but instead of it being this bench, it was like a different type of sitting option, hypothetically

(21:36)

**Interviewee 6:** Okay. Yeah…I think the orientation of the bench, I dislike. I would like to be facing the lake or something
(21:57)
**M:** Yeah, totally.

(21:58)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean I honestly wouldn't choose to be sat in the path. I feel like I'm sat in the thoroughfare

(22:05)

**M:** Yeah, totally. This is my segue into these micro interventions that this group of some queer, some non queer urban designers and urban design scholars have proposed in this report about like queering public space. I'm curious what you think about them and whether that would really, or if it would contribute to your experience and, like, how, in a good way or a bad way because who knows? I think it's important to know if they're going in the right direction. So first, how

would you feel if instead of this bench facing outwards, like with this, it was facing another bench?

(22:49)

**Interviewee 6:** Facing another bench…

(22:51)

**M:** And obviously, I think in this scenario, think less about the realistic nature of it because I know we're literally in a past that might not literally be possible. But just like, hypothetically, let's say this bench was moved back a little bit, and so then there was like two benches facing each other

(23:08)

**Interviewee 6:** Okay. Hm.. I don't know. I think if I was with a group of people sufficiently large to fill both benches, then it could make sense because it's nice, like a nice little intimate space. Like your face to face, you're conversing with each other. If that wasn't the case, it would be really strange because I'd be directly confronted with and have no... It would be like being on the subway where you have to politely avoid people's eye contact. Or you could make conversation with strangers maybe it would be lovely

(23:44)

**M:** Yeah. No, totally

(23:45)

**Interviewee 6:** Also, again, that wouldn't be my first choice rather than having like, hey, this is a little booth or something that seems cozier if that's what you're going for, rather than two of these just wooden benches

(24:02)

**M:** Yeah, yeah. Totally…And what about if the bench was... I think I know your answer because you touched on this. But if the bench was not facing another bench, it was not facing a pathway or a statue, but it was just fully facing nature, directly towards nature

(24:17)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah. I mean, I enjoy that because that's what I want to be looking at. I think in terms of safety, again, it would depend. If it was in a similarly busy location, I wouldn't... Or maybe similarly busy isn't the right word, but a similarly exposed location, I wouldn't necessarily be comfortable with that because I don't.. You know, it's nice to have one's potential exits in sight. But I think if it were looking at nature and I wasn't like... Yeah, if I also had, like, awareness that no one could like sneak up on me, either by that not being an option physically or that being somehow within my sight, then I would choose that

(25:06)

**M:** Do you think that would correspond with how busy the public space is or just the nature of how it's laid out, that like, you wouldn't have people behind you?

(25:19)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, I mean, generally, I don't like that. But I feel like if it's busy like this, like I said before, it's different as opposed to if it's kinda empty but someone could go there, you know, that's worse. That's what I mean

(25:30)

**M:** Yeah. So if it was a busy place facing nature, wouldn't feel as uncomfortable versus if it was like a more sparse?

(25:37)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, I guess

(25:38)

**M:** That makes sense. Another thing that they talk about are things called cosy corners, which is basically like at a bench like this, adding planters on either side so that there's almost like walls of plants. And I think the idea there is to give a sense of privacy in public spaces for people, particularly queer and trans people. Do you think that that would make you feel more inclined to sit at this bench, or would that make you feel safer, or would that impact your experience on the bench? How?

(26:13)

**Interviewee 6:** I mean it depends to what degree it impedes vision. My first instinct is that sounds nice. I just like plants. I feel like this is the thing, I just want to look at the plants and be surrounded by the plants. Yeah, I think in terms of if they're sufficiently large and dense to make me feel less exposed, then that makes sense. Like if someone coming from either path can't just glance and be like.. and see who is sitting here, then that does seem nicer. Again, I would like it not to be to the detriment of my own field of vision, but I guess that's a trade off

(26:53)

**M:** Yeah. Exactly. I think it also does go back to placement. Yeah. And so then they also talk a lot about queer representation and signage. They use queer in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. So for example, instead of this being this statue, do you think it would make you feel any more inclined to sit here, any more comfortable, or change your experience at all if it was actually a statue of a trans or gender diverse or queer figure?

(27:29)

**Interviewee 6:** My first impulse with regard to signage in general is just that it's not sufficient in and of itself. I think at the same time, if it's something that would lead queer and trans people to congregate here because of that, then it would become a more comfortable space. And like, I think it's better than nothing to see a flag somewhere, but yeah, I don't know. It doesn't mean much to me, I don't think

**M** (28:11)

Yeah. And they also bring that up in terms of...like, yeah, I think that you kind of just touched on rainbow crosswalks and flags *laughs* I wish I could have got your eye roll

(28:23)
**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, sorry *laughs* eye roll for the record

(28:26)
**M:** Yeah, so, would that make you feel any more comfortable in the space?

(28:30)
**Interviewee 6:** No, not in the slightest. Like the rainbow crosswalk shit in particular, I'm like, this is just a waste of public money. Put it somewhere that's actually useful. Give it to a queer org, or give us a fucking hostel or something, you know? It's lip service, it's hollow, like, spectacle. And it's self congratulatory. It's… Nobody wants it

(28:54)
**M:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so then I guess one of my last questions is, what do you even think about this idea of queering public space? What does that mean for you? Do you think that's possible? What would that look like for you?

(29:09)
**Interviewee 6:** I really don't know. Yeah, I really don't know. It sounds appealing in concept. I like the idea of taking public space and making it a queer space. I don't know what that looks like in practice

(29:39)
**M:** Yeah. It's also hard to know how possible that is. I mean, I think their idea with the queer signage is like, it will make people feel more included if they see that. And I think, yeah, would

that make you feel more included? Would that signal to you that it's a queer space or even a queer friendly space?

(30:04)
**Interviewee 6:** I mean it would signal intent to me, but not even, I don't think it actually would necessarily because I think there is just so much hollow, hollow symbolism nowadays just to like... Honestly, I feel like it's cynical, you know, it's pink washing type shit

(30:22)
**M:** Yeah, it is.

(30:23)
**Interviewee 6:** Yeah. No, I don't think it actually means anything. I think actually making it a space which is safer rather than a space which is just telling you that it's safer

(30:38)
**M:** Right, yeah, totally, no I fully agree with you. How do you think for you personally, public space could feel safer?

(30:46)
**Interviewee 6:** I don't know because I've been pretty reclusive historically and I feel like I don't spend a great deal of time in public space, even still. I tend to just go between where I live, to the shops, to school. I think part of that is... It depends on the day, it depends on my presentation. Whether I'm comfortable being very much in public, sometimes I just want to throw on a big jacket and cover myself up and go to the shops and not interact with anyone

(31:21)
**M:** Yeah, yeah. Totally. Do you think in that nature, though, public space would feel more comfortable for you if there was a way to enjoy, especially with parks, a way for you to have that

sense of privacy and that sense of lack of exposure while also getting to enjoy a park, or a square if that's what you wanted?

(31:42)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, that makes sense, that makes a lot of sense to me. I don't know what that would look like, but like I said before, when I think of where I'd like to be sat, I think of a little enclave. There's a bench and then there's trees all around it and I'm facing the lake and there's a pathway in front of me to the left and to my right maybe.

(32:07)

**M:** Mmmmm. No, that makes complete sense. I think that's the difference between designing a space around visibility, one's visibility, or designing a space around... like, I don't think the intention behind this space ever took visibility into account or safety. I think that would be the difference. The location of exits, what you see, how you see, that thing. Yeah. *loud music nearby blasting* Jesus. So, *laughs*, those were kind of all my structured questions. Do you have any other thoughts about public spaces and how they make you feel or how you wish they made you feel? Where you think queerness does fit into that and if you don't think it does, or transness?

(33:04)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, I don't know if I have a lot to contribute because I've like...

(33:08)

**M:** You've contributed so much!

(33:09)

**Interviewee 6:** Thank you. But I mean, I've only been out for like five minutes, you know?

(33:14)

**M:** That's okay!

(33:16)

**Interviewee 6:** So, I don't think I've spent a great deal of time in public space as an openly trans person. Yeah, definitely, like I said, being in this city, I feel very lucky because when it's a lot of people, I feel fairly confident. I don't know. This is such a lib city as well, you know? But when I feel like the most unsafe is definitely when it's late at night, there's no one around, it's..yeah, you know

(33:51)

**M:** In those situations, do you think, because they do talk about lighting design in this, but I only ask those questions when it's night time. Do you think a lack of lighting makes you feel more unsafe as opposed to really bright lighting? Or what role do you think lighting plays in your sense of comfort at night?

(34:13)

**Interviewee 6:** I don't know because, again, it's nice to be aware of one's surroundings and feel like you can have awareness of your surroundings. But at the same time, if you're walking on a lit path and everything around you is fucking dark, that's worse. I want to be in the dark looking out at the light because that's where I feel safest. I don't want to be the one person that's visible, you know? And then everything around me is dark and scary. So I don't know, I don't know

(34:40)

**M:** Yeah. So they have this lighting designer who's proposed some things about having widespread, they call it ambient lighting. So it's kinda soft lighting. So it's not pitch black, but it's also not like a spotlight on the person

(34:53)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, yeah, that makes a lot more sense to me

(34:56)

**M:** Yeah. Cool. Well, do you have any... If you have any other thoughts now is your time, if not..

(35:04)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, I don't know, I don't think I have anything... It's not something I thought much about in terms of physical space either. I think usually in terms of where I feel comfortable, it's usually just like, Who's in the space? Is it a bunch of fucking cis men blasting their music and posturing and drinking and shit? I've usually thought in terms of who is in the space

(35:24)

**M:** Yeah, I think that's really, I mean, you have so much to contribute and you don't have to have a lot of knowledge on the physical aspect because I think the experience of a space has... It's so tied to the physical aspect. You don't need to be able to identify the physical things. But I think where and what you notice says a lot about... That's what I think with the territoriality, it's like when you're visible and everyone's visible, it creates this social opportunity to be like, this is my space, don't encroach on it. And everyone does that in different ways. I think that just says that people are sharing the space. But like you said, it's not necessarily happening equally because people are using different ways. And like, yes, I think we're all being given the space, but it's also such an open space that I don't know for people that don't feel comfortable blasting music and this and that, it's hard to feel like it's an equal shared space

(36:18)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, that's very true. Like I wouldn't feel comfortable with a group of... Unless it was a huge fucking group of trans people. If I was a group of four, like they are, like blasting music and being very visible. I don't think that would go well

(36:32)

**M:** I almost feel like they'd tell us to turn our music down

(36:32)

**Interviewee 6:** Yeah, literally, that's what I'm saying. These guys would come fucking have a go at us

(36:38)

**M:** Yeah. Well, thank you very much, and yeah, I think the emotional or not even emotional, but the embodied experience in the public spaces, that's all the knowledge that's needed, not necessarily the physical aspect because the physical aspect creates the embodied aspect. Everything you've said, I've been able to trace, or think about tracing where that's coming from, why that's the way it is. Because everything here is manmade, obviously. This is a really intentionally created space and the intentions did not have, like I said, these things in mind. So, like, it makes sense why you don't like this bench, you know? Because it like wasn't made to feel comfortable socially, or at least not for people who don't like watching people

(37:31)

**Interviewee 6:** *laughs* Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

(37:35)

**M:** Thank you very much. Thank you.

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