

Thesis: sexual citizenship

Outing of affection in public: how place shapes the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in public space by young heteros and non-heteros in Groningen



Picture: Loonatic, Grote Markt Mei Kermis. Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Karst Berkenbosch – S2676672
University of Groningen
Faculty of Spatial Sciences
January 2019

Supervisors:
De Haas, B.
Oosterhoff, A. T.

Abstract

This research aims to uncover how place itself influences the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection, comparing between individuals who identify as hetero and non-hetero respectively. By examining socio-spatial factors in place (i.e. 'traces'), it is examined how place sets norms and how norms are interpreted by visitors. This paper contributes to the existing literature of citizenship by combining two main aspects of life: place and sexuality. Twelve on-site interviews were conducted on the Grote Markt in Groningen, one of the main squares of this city. Seven participants identified as hetero, five identified as non-hetero. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. It was found that norms concerning the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in place were largely set by the behavior of others in place. Behavior of others shapes norms in place in two ways: behavior shown by others and feedback of others on behavior in place. Additionally, it was found that people conforming to these (hetero) norms in place perceived it as more appropriate to out affection. However, this perceived difference between the appropriateness of hetero and respectively non-hetero affection was found to be very contingent and varying from person to person. Additionally, diversity of a place on different levels proved to blur borders of in- and out-of-place, opening up place for diversity on level of sexuality. For city planners and policy makers it is recommended to plan for diversity, as diversity on multiple levels shapes a place to be more acceptant to diversity on the level of sexuality.

Table of content

Abstract	2
Table of content	3
1. introduction	4
2. Theoretical framework	5
2.1 Defining ‘sexuality’	5
2.2 Sexual citizenship.....	5
2.3 Approaching place: traces.....	5
2.4 Conceptual model.....	6
3. Methodology	7
3.1 Study design	7
3.2 Recruiting participants.....	7
3.3 Data collection instrument.....	7
3.4 Ethics and positionality.....	8
4. Results	9
4.1 Traces shaping norms in place	10
4.2 Levels in outing of affection	11
4.3 Signs of transgression of norms in place.....	12
5. Discussion	13
5.1 Interpretation of results.....	13
5.2 Revised conceptual model.....	14
5.3 Reflection	15
6. Conclusion	15
6.1 Recommendations for planners and policy makers	15
6.2 Suggestions for further research	16
References	17
Appendix	19
A.1 Introduction to research for participants (Dutch)	19
A.2 Informed consent form (Dutch).....	20
A.3 Interview guide (Dutch)	21
A.4 Interview guide (English)	24
A.5 Debriefing after the interview (Dutch).....	26
A.6 Codebook.....	27

1. introduction

In current western European societies acceptance of non-hetero couples is rising (Pew Research Center, 2017; Smith, Son, & Kim, 2014). Continually more (social) rights are granted to non-hetero couples in the last decade (Smith et al., 2014). However, identifying as hetero is still the (social) norm, implying that all non-hetero outings in public are seen as different, are seen as 'other' (Hubbard, 2001; Hubbard, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Valentine, G., 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013).

This research is set in The Netherlands. Despite the tolerance of lesbian, gay, bi, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) in The Netherlands is one of the highest in Europe (Kuyper, 2017), Van Lisdonk et al. (2018) show that the Dutch society is at the same time tolerant to non-heteros and heteronormative. The concept 'tolerance' is complex: it is possible to be tolerant of and of an opposing opinion at the same time (Van Lisdonk, J. T. A., Nencel, & Keuzenkamp, 2018). The tolerance of others identifying as non-hetero does not necessarily lead to the normalization and acceptance of outing of non-hetero affection in public space (Kuyper, 2017; Van Lisdonk, J. T. A. et al., 2018). As a result of this paradox, even in a relatively tolerant country like The Netherlands, non-hetero persons and couples tend to hide their sexuality in public (Johnson, 2002; Vliet, Rademaker, & Tukker, 2015). This research aims to provide insights that can be used by policymakers and planners to shape places that provide an environment that is not only tolerant, but also open and acceptant to all.

In the field of social and cultural geography, work has been done on the experience of appropriateness of behavior in place and several studies have proved this experienced appropriateness to be important in shaping behavior (Anderson, 2015; Arnesen & Lægren, 2003; Valentine, 1992). For example, Arnesen & Lægren (2003) showed that location is important for shaping norms and (gender) expectations. As a result, behavior can vary per place. Other papers discussed the influence of heteronormativity on the behavior of non-hetero persons and couples in public. Findings suggest that heteronormativity leads to those who do not conform to this norm (non-heteros) being cautious showing affection in public (Hubbard, 2001; Valentine, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013).

Although a solid body of research on the topic of sexuality and place already exists, no research has been done on the role of place on the perceived appropriateness of showing affection of hetero compared to non-hetero couples in public space. This research contributes to the current body of literature by connecting already existing concepts and creating deeper understanding of how place and behavior interact.

This study explores traces - socio-spatial factors - that shape the appropriateness of showing non-hetero affection in public compared to showing hetero affection. Traces are all that is left behind by cultural life and can take both material and immaterial forms (Anderson, 2015). The concept 'traces' will be discussed more in-depth in section 2: theoretical framework. By examining norms in place formed by traces, the relation between place and perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place is examined. In depth interviews were conducted on site, including participants identifying as hetero and non-hetero.

One main research question was drawn, subdivided in three sub-research questions. The main research question is: *what traces determine the perceived appropriateness of outing of non-hetero affection in public space in Groningen compared to hetero affection?* This question will be answered using the following sub questions, first: *what traces are eminent in shaping the perceived norms concerning sexuality in place?* Second: *how do perceived norms in place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place?* And third: *how do hetero and non-hetero couples interpret the same traces differently?*

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Defining ‘sexuality’

This article uses two concepts to classify sexuality; ‘hetero’, which includes all participants that identify themselves as being ‘hetero’ and are attracted to the opposite sex only, and ‘non-hetero’, which includes all participants who identify other than ‘hetero’ and are attracted to the same sex or attracted to multiple sexes.

It is recognized that sexuality knows multiple forms (e.g. Van Lisdonk, J. T. A. et al., 2018). This categorization (over)simplifies the possible categories concerning sexuality – if this should or can be categorized at all – since there is no single ‘hetero identity’, neither is a single ‘non-hetero identity’ (Hubbard, 2008). Although aware, it was chosen to make a binary grouping in the participants’ sexuality. As stated earlier, society is considered to be heteronormative, meaning that identifying as ‘hetero’ is the norm (Hubbard, 2001; Hubbard, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Valentine, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013). To be able to identify groups as conforming to this norm or opposing this norm, this binary grouping was found necessary.

2.2 Sexual citizenship

Over the last decades, sexual citizenship has become an important topic within the field of geography (Binnie & Valentine, 1999; Hubbard, 2008; Richardson, 2004), building upon the more established interest in citizenship (Richardson, 2000). Sexual citizenship is defined as the rights granted and social acceptance given to a person to freely identify oneself within the field of sexuality and at the same time being accepted and recognized as a full member of society (Brown, 2006; Richardson, 2000; Weeks, 1998). As stated before, for non-heteros, outing sexuality and showing affection in public is not always self-evident (Hubbard, 2001; Hubbard, 2008; Richardson, 2004; Valentine, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013), therefore, full citizenship is not always possible for these groups.

2.3 Approaching place: traces

Anderson (2010) provides a theory of place being ‘build’ out of traces. Traces are defined as all that is left by cultural life. Traces can be both material and non-material and can be divided in to three categories: natural, normal and novel, as shown in Table 1: Defining traces. Natural traces are traces that are not even considered to be possibly different; they are imbedded in our sense of what is ‘right’ and what is ‘true’. Normal traces are more contingent; they change more easily over time and place. Anderson (2010) provides the example of pop-music: it is generally accepted to be ‘okay’, but is still subject to change over time, and per place it can depend if pop-music is perceived as suitable. The third category of traces is novel traces. These traces stand for everything that is ‘not right’, all that is ‘out of place’ and what is perceived as rude or inappropriate.

Table 1. Defining traces.

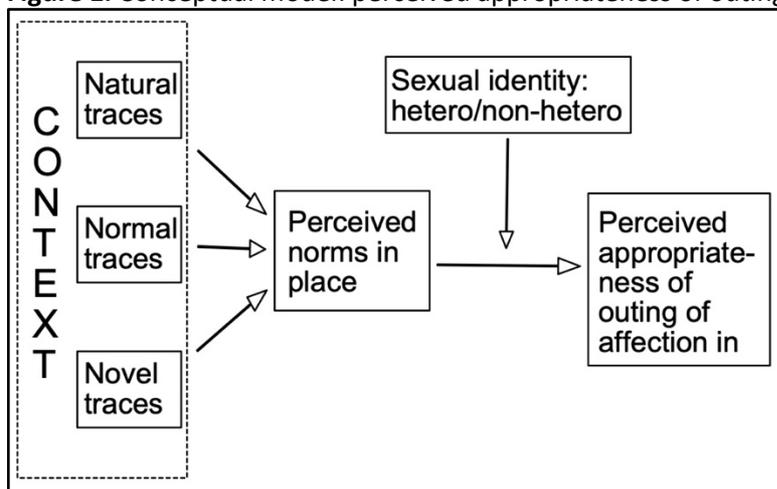
‘Natural’ traces	↔	‘Normal’ traces	↔	‘Novel’ traces
Doxa		Orthodox		Unorthodox
Essential		Popular		Different from the ‘norm’
The only way to be		Mainstream		‘Other’ than expected
Everyone		Us		Them
Conforming		Appropriate		Inappropriate
In place		In place		Out of place
Common sense		Conventional		Controversial
Natural		Clean		Polluting
True		Right		Wrong
Ordinary		Good		Evil

Source: Anderson, 2015 (page 81).

The model of traces provides an instrument for investigating ‘place’ as a social construct. Anderson (2015) describes the concept of ‘place’ as “*ongoing composition of traces*” (p.5). Visitors are able to re-shape place by setting out their own, novel, traces. If these traces become generally accepted, the trace shifts from novel to normal. In time it is possible for a normal trace to become natural (Anderson, 2015). Place being a social construction is also argued by other authors (e.g. Arnesen & Lægren, 2003; Massey, 1994) and can be seen as ‘mainstream’ in contemporary human geography (Cresswell, 2009). Arising from this view, the heteronormativity that proved to be omnipresent in society can be seen in diverse traces (For heteronormativity, see: Hubbard, 2001; Hubbard, 2008; Richardson, 2004; Valentine, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013). This can range from very specific traces, for example public advertisements that show hetero content, till more abstract traces, like buildings or statues referring to a (political) power that is not recognizing, or even opposing, non-hetero rights. Additionally, the absence of traces confirming non-hetero identity can be just as important in making place heteronormative (Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013).

2.4 Conceptual model

Figure 1. Conceptual model: perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in public



Source: author.

Based on existing literature, the following conceptual model was derived, see figure 1: Conceptual model. On the left the context; the place providing the traces. These traces shape the perceived norms that apply in place. The norms influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place. The influence of norms on the eventual perceived appropriateness of outing affection in public is influenced by the sexuality of the person.

It is expected that most traces will be hetero normative (Hubbard, 2001; Hubbard, 2008; Richardson, 2004; Valentine, 1992; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013). The heteronormative experience of this place is expected to influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in public.

The concept of traces as presented by Anderson (2010) will be used in three ways. First, natural and normal traces will set the norms and rules in a certain place. Second, the categorizing of traces will be used as a predictor of behavior in place. The more novel a trace is perceived by a person, the less appropriate it will seem to act to it. And third, traces left by others present in place can place provide feedback on behavior, enabling this person to judge the appropriateness of this behavior.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study design

This research fits in the post-structuralist approach to qualitative research. This paradigm allows for subtle nuances and recognizes that there are numerous possible perspectives (Clifford, French, & Valentine, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were conducted on-site. This method allows the researcher to be flexible in using the predefined questions and hook-in on topics that are brought-up by the interviewee. Additionally, this method proved to be useful for researching meanings, identity and power in the field of geography (Clifford et al., 2010).

In contemporary literature, place is seen as a social construct and needs human experience to take on values (Anderson, 2015). Therefore, it is important to implement place itself in the research method, this can be achieved by conducting interviews on-site (Anderson & Jones, 2009). Additionally, interviews on-site also provide an opportunity to include objects that are in-place (Van Hoven & Trell, 2010).

The place of choice was the 'Grote Markt', a historical market square in the center of the city of Groningen. It is expected to be known by all respondents since lot of daily life in Groningen, both during the day and during the night, is structured around this place. On four days a week a market is hosted on the Grote Markt. It was chosen to also conduct the interviews on market days as well as on non-market days. The market will possibly influence the traces perceived in place, but this is not expected to influence the results negatively. Also, the 'character' of this square is also in its ever-changing nature.

The dates and times of the interviews were in consultation with the interviewees, but were restricted to times during the day between morning- and evening rush-hour (± 9 AM till $\pm 4:30$ PM). During rush-hour it is expected to be noisier than during the rest of the day, leading to more distraction for the interviewee and more noise on the recording. Interviews were aimed to last around 30 to 45 minutes.

3.2 Recruiting participants

Participants were recruited by asking the social spheres of the author if they could suggest someone for this research. To expand the number of interviewees, the snowball-effect method was applied, where respondents are asked to suggest other respondents (Bettinger, 2010). Valentine (1992) showed this to be an effective method to get in touch with persons being less open about their (non-hetero) sexuality.

Persons identifying as hetero as well as persons identifying as non-hetero were included. Aimed was to include only people being in a relationship. Persons being in a relationship were thought of to make a better estimation of how appropriate a situation would be. Interviews were done one on one, based on two arguments. First, making an appointment with two people is thought of to be more difficult than making an appointment with one. Second, by doing the interviews with only one person of the couple, inter-relational power dimensions will be left out (Valentine, Gill, 1999). Although it can be interesting to investigate how the power relations between two halves of a couple can influence experiences, it is possible that this influences perceptions. Additionally, it was aimed to interview adolescents, ageing from roughly 18 up to 25 years old. This was due to practical considerations, as will be discussed more in depth in section 3.4, ethics and positionality.

3.3 Data collection instrument

As discussed earlier, it was chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews. To help structuring the interviews, an interview guide was constructed. Based on the information needed to answer the

research questions, questions were thought of. Questions addressed what the participant found important in this place, how the participant perceived this place in terms of vibe and attitude towards this place. The perceived appropriateness of outing of affection was addressed by asking a respondent on their opinion on fictional situations in place. The full interview guide can be found in the appendix.

3.4 Ethics and positionality

As stated earlier, this study involves young adolescents, age 18 up to \pm 25. This age group was selected for multiple reasons. For me, as a researcher, I expect to be able to 'level' more with this age group and have at least some similarities to them, making it easier to gain trust and mutual understanding and making an ongoing conversation easier. Additionally, I expect it to be easier to get in touch with this age-group, since my social network mostly covers this age group. I am aware that at the same time this can be a down side as well; more similarities will lead to more of an in-group relation with interviewer and interviewee, instead of the interviewer being an outsider. This can lead to biases and falsely presumed mutual understandings (LaSala, 2003). From the perspective of sexual preference, I will be an insider to one half of the participants, and be an outsider to the other half. This can lead to biases in both groups (LaSala, 2003). Therefore, I consider it important not to speak or show anything of my own sexuality before or during the interview, for as much as possible.

Sexual minorities can be seen as vulnerable groups within society (Bettinger, 2010), therefore it is important to consider the ethics surrounding research on this topic. For this research it was decided to stick to the minimum of information gathered from the participants. Additionally, confidentiality is very important, especially when doing research on non-hetero groups (LaSala, 2003). To prevent harm to the participants, in the final paper, only the first names, if allowed by the participant, were used and all respondents were given the option to do the interview anonymous.

As Bettinger (2010) pointed out, it is important that all respondents are informed about the goal of the study to gain confidence. The respondents were informed in advance of the scope of the study, details were open for discussion after the interview. All respondents read and signed an informed consent, stating that all questions can be skipped and that withdrawal is possible at any moment.

The second theme, 'levels in outing of affection', is deductive and contributes to this research by providing insight in the nuances that come with the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection. It also describes how these nuances differ between people identifying as hetero and people identifying as non-hetero. This paragraph contributes to answering the second sub question (how do perceived norms in place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place?) and the third sub question.

The third theme, 'signs of transgression of norms in place', provides insight in how traces of others (in the form of signs of transgression) help shaping norms in place. This can be seen as feedback on behavior in place, and implementations will be discussed more in section 5.1: revised conceptual model.

4.1 Traces shaping norms in place

4.1.1 Diversity

The Grote Markt was described as diverse in multiple ways. First, diversity in purpose as events and festivities change the purpose of this square over time. This change was visible within different times of the day, but also visible between days and even weeks.

Second, the people scrolling the square were described as very diverse:

"In the beginning I said that there are mostly young people, but I need to revise that ... at the moment right now ... it's not just young people, but a mixture of all people"
(Toby, male, identifying as non-hetero)

Additionally, also the appreciation of participants of the square was diverse. Some found the square boring and ugly, others described it as a lively place and beautiful. Also, within this place it varied how beautiful people found it, some parts, mostly the older, were identified as more beautiful than other parts. In general, the vibe at the Grote Markt was described as easy going. Participants stated that they fitted in to this place quite good, as 'merging in'.

4.1.2 Locations within a place

Within the Grote Markt, the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection on macro level is shaped by several dimensions. Visibility proved an important factor, as it was found that participants tend to rate places that are a little out of the open as more suitable than places that are in the center of the square. Kissing in public was seen as an act that is out-of-place (as will be discussed later). Therefore, if one would like to do so, it would seem most appropriate to do so out of sight:

"Yes, it feels less attractive to do so [kiss] over there [...] maybe that when you're in the square, you're still quite much in sight, and if you move towards the side ... then it would stand out a little less"
(Dieuwertje, female, identifying as non-hetero)

The quote above illustrates that being too visible renders a place unattractive for (intensive) outing of affection. Additionally, the vibe was stated as important to kissing in public. In the center of the square this vibe was not perceived as suitable.

Also, buildings with history and sacred places tend to be perceived as less appropriate places for outing of affection. For example, the Martini Church and the old City Hall were often stated as places less appropriate for outing of affection. The following quote exemplifies that certain buildings can that prevent one from outing affection:

“The church is a little more ... yeah, being neat, behaving adequate [...] I’m personally a little less dissolute in a church. I would think like ‘ooh, I’m in a church’. You really enter something.”
(Jelmer, male, identifying as hetero)

This quote exemplifies that buildings can have certain meanings rendering the surroundings unsuitable for outing of affection. However, the importance of certain buildings was not found in all interviews.

4.1.3 Time of the day

The time of the day was found to be important for setting norms. For example, during the night, outings of affection were either more or less appropriate compared to outings of affection during the day. Alcohol consumption and the vibe seemed to play a role in this. Especially for non-hetero couples the time of the day was also found to be important. For people identifying as non-hetero, outing affection was sometimes perceived as making one more vulnerable. Therefore, especially when the ‘vibe’ was perceived as less positive, people identifying as non-hetero tended to not show outings of affection, as the following quote exemplifies:

“During the night I would not do that [holding hands] ... if people go out over here ... there at the corner, a lot of drunk people gather, so in that area I don’t want to walk hand in hand. But during the day, I would do so for sure.”
(Michelle, female, identifying as non-hetero)

For people identifying as hetero, this was mentioned less explicit in the interview as such, indicating that this was less of an issue for them.

4.2 Levels in outing of affection

It was found that the outing of affection knows certain levels that differ in appropriateness. Holding hands for example was found to be, in general, perceived as a very accepted form of outing of affection, especially by people identifying as hetero. One exemplary reaction on the question if it would be appropriate to be walking hand in hand at the Grote Markt:

.... This is really something I’ve never actually thought about but I think it’s I think it’s actually never inappropriate if people walk hand in hand.
(Sasha, female, identifying as hetero)

This response was found to be a very typical response for people identifying as hetero. It was often stated that walking hand in hand was very ‘normal’, not even something to possibly be considered inappropriate in public space.

People identifying as non-hetero generally gave a more reserved answer on this question, often indicating that it would be possible, but only under certain conditions. During the night and when certain groups of people were present, this was perceived as less appropriate.

Well, yes I think it should be possible in any case ... and for me ... it’s possible here as well but ... we don’t walk hand in hand that often, [...] not because we’re scared of violence or so, but especially during the night there are ... certain groups of people And then we go and walk separately.
(Niels, male, identifying as non-hetero)

One of the questions concerned the perceived appropriateness of kissing in public. This can be split in two main levels of intensity. First, a casual ‘see you later’ kiss, commonly described as ‘quick’ and low of intensity. And second, ‘making out’ kissing. Intense and long outings of affection were perceived as

'out of place' and disturbing. This was found for both hetero and non-hetero affection. Participants often stated that they wouldn't do so themselves, and also if others would do so they would feel disturbed:

I think I would be surprised if they [virtual couple] would be fully making out [...] no, I personally don't like that, wouldn't do that myself either. A small kiss however is fine ... or a goodbye kiss [...] ... yes, I think that would be okay
(Nienke, female, identifying as hetero)

Intensive kissing in public therefore can be seen as an act that is not welcome in public places. All participants agreed that the Grote Markt was not the place to do so.

Additionally, it was noticeable that some interviewees stated something similar to the following about their motivation why not to kiss in public:

I would personally not do so, I'm not that eh ... how to say, I wouldn't call it lovey-dovey, but eh, I wouldn't do that often. [...] It's more that I'm not into that, but no, if you would ask me to do so now, I would certainly do so.
(Bjarne, male, identifying as hetero)

As described in this quote, the motivation for not making out in public was not so much extrinsic, as are most of the following results, but was more intrinsic of nature. Statements like the one above point out that it didn't suit their personality so much, or that they found it disturbing if others would do the same.

4.3 Signs of transgression of norms in place

Several signs of transgression were found during the interviews. One of the most prominent signs was the staring of others that were in the same place. The opposite was expressed as well: if nobody would look-up this was a sign that an outing (of affection) was conform the norms. Examples given by participants ranged from being looked at when walking in a small village as an outsider to 'not being looked at for too long' as a sign that others are 'okay' with a certain action. The following quote exemplifies that not being stared at is a sign that one is conforming to norms in place:

"[...] if we talk about the Grote Markt and its direct surrounding, I think that if for example a gay or lesbian couple would pass by, that no one would look surprised ... I think so ... but I can't say for sure"
(Stijn, male, identifying as hetero)

Additionally, respondents also stated that the duration of the stare was an indication of how 'strange' or out-of-place an action was, as exemplified by the following quote:

"A rather subtle thing would be ... not being looked at for too long. [...] if it happens for too long and if you feel like people are watching you, then you would recognize. I think you kind of would feel it"
(Toby, male, identifying as non-hetero)

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of results

In this section results will be interpreted using the research questions defined in the introduction. First the sub questions will be addressed. The main research question will be answered in the last paragraph.

What traces are eminent in shaping the perceived norms concerning sexuality in place?

Traces identified as important to setting norms in place were behavioral traces of others and traces referring to diversity. The category of behavioral traces of others was found to consist of two main categories. First, shown by others. What others show or don't show influenced the perceived norms in place by participants. Second, response of others to traces left in place. If one transgressed a norm, this became clear by response of others. These signs of transgression were found to function as response on behavior and traces left in place, providing feedback to get to know norms in place.

Additionally, diversity was identified as a trace influencing norms in place. Along with diversity, it was found that participants felt 'imbedded' and easily merging into the public at the Grote Markt in Groningen. As Creswell argued, *"the more clearly the world is ordered into discrete places the more people and things that exist outside of these places are likely to be labeled as disorder – as out of place"* (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Meaning, the 'narrower' a place is in terms of diversity, the easier it is to judge something as out-of-place. This was for example seen at the church and the city hall on this square. This statement by Creswell (2009) also implies the opposite; the more mixed a place is, the more difficult it is to judge what or who is in- or out-of-place. Diversity allowing for diversity might seem as circular reasoning. This, however, is not necessarily the case since a place can be diverse on multiple dimensions. If a place is already diverse on one dimension, for example diversity in nationalities, this blurs the line of in-and out-of-place, opening a door for diversity on another dimension, for example sexuality, to step in. Therefore, the diversity of traces in the Grote Markt contributes to somehow 'wider' norms on sexuality in place.

How do perceived norms in place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place?

Norms in place were found to influence the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in two ways. First, they set borders for what is seen as appropriate and what is seen as inappropriate. Some outings of affection, like for example intensive kissing, are not welcome in public. Second, if an outing of affection would take place, they direct how and where this would be the most (and least) appropriate. Intense outings of affection were seen as even less appropriate when in full sight compared to a little more out of sight.

Findings show that outings of hetero affection were perceived more to be in the 'natural' and 'normal' spectrum compared to outings of non-hetero affection respectively, providing evidence for heteronormativity in place. Similar findings of heteronormativity in society were also found by Van Lisdonk et. al. (2018) for The Netherlands and by Hubbard (2008) and Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow (2013). Absence of non-hetero traces in combination with the knowledge of people identifying as non-hetero being a minority in society in general, led to the impression that place was heteronormative, even though participants couldn't directly point out traces confirming hetero identity in place.

How do hetero and non-hetero couples interpret the same traces differently?

Participants identifying as non-hetero were found to be more cautious when outing affection to their partner compared to participants identifying as hetero. This can be ascribed to heteronormativity in place, rendering all outings of non-hetero affection as different from the norm. As an extreme, in some situations, it was perceived more suitable to hide non-hetero affection, and try to stay neutral concerning the norms of sexuality in place. This coping strategy of avoiding non-hetero outings in situations perceived as insecure or hostile was also found by Valentine (1992) amongst lesbian women.

Main research question: What traces determine the perceived appropriateness of outing of non-hetero affection in public space in Groningen compared to hetero affection?

Traces determining the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in public were found to be roughly the same traces as found in sub-question one: both behavior of others in place and traces referring to diversity on multiple levels were found important. Together with knowledge, history and previous experience this contributes to how a person perceives norms in place, and eventually perceives 'place' itself.

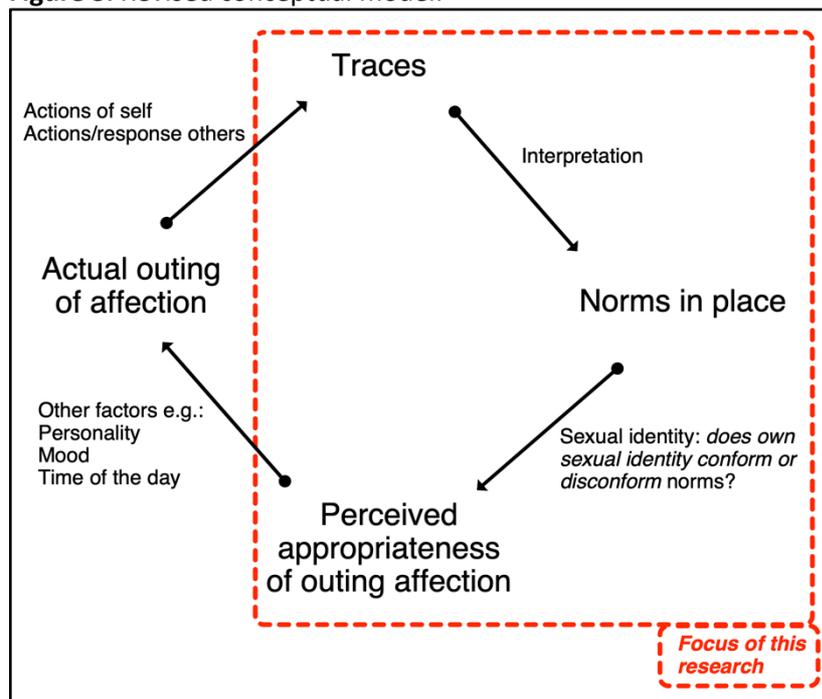
Traces in place were found to set norms, evidence for heteronormativity in place was found. People conforming to these hetero norms were found to be less aware when involving in outings of affection, whereas people opposing to these norms were found to be more aware when outing of affection, from times to times even cautious. So, due to heteronormativity in place, outings of hetero affection were seen as more appropriate than outings of non-hetero affection. However, this difference between appropriateness of hetero and non-hetero affection proved to be contingent, amongst others influenced by time, vibe and personality.

5.2 Revised conceptual model

The initial conceptual model, as presented in the theoretical framework (2.4), did not cover the contingency of the concept 'place'. This topic does not allow for simple, linear models, but requires models explaining more than only the direct focus of the research. Therefore, a new, circular conceptual model is presented in figure 3: revised conceptual model.

The right half of this model, marked in the red box, is in essence the same as the original conceptual model. However, where the original model was linear, this revised model is circular. The original model only focused on the traces towards the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection, neglecting the eventual outing of affection in place. This was found to be difficult to work with, since traces present in place are, at least partially, the result of such outings of affection. In the new model the actual outing of affection is added, providing the missing link between perceived appropriateness and traces in the original conceptual model. The actual outing of affection is very contingent; it is shaped by various other factors, such as personality and mood.

Figure 3. Revised conceptual model.



Source: author.

5.3 Reflection

This research contributed to the existing literature by investigating how place and norms concerning sexuality interact. Theories of heteronormativity were combined with theories of the social construction of place, resulting in new insights as presented in section 5.1 and 5.2. Additionally, some recommendations for planners and policy makers were thought of, which will be presented in section 6.1.

The method of choice, on-site interviews, was found useful for this research. It provided opportunities to include buildings in place and observations made at the moment of interview. It suited the exploratory nature of this research, as it allowed respondents the freedom to address their own topics and allowed the researcher to hook in on unforeseen directions.

There were also some shortcomings concerning the (selection of) participants. With one of the interviews the other person of the couple was also present. This interview was left in the dataset since the second person stayed very much in the background during the interview, and the influence was perceived to be very small. Also, one interviewee did not have a relationship at the time of the interview. It was tried to interview persons being in a relationship, as it was expected for them to be able to imagine vividly how appropriate outing of sexuality in a certain place would be. Not all respondents were in a relationship, as this proved to be more difficult to find.

For this research the snowball-effect method proved moderately effective. Most of the interviewees were introduced by friends and fellow students. Also, the timing of the interviews was difficult sometimes; the weather and events organized in place made it difficult to find a moment that suited both participant and researcher.

6. Conclusion

Findings are very supportive of the concept of place being a social construct, as described by multiple authors (e.g. Anderson, 2015; Arnesen & Lægran, 2003; Massey, 1994). Behavior of others shapes norms concerning sexuality in place in two ways: behavior shown by others and feedback of others on behavior in place. Additionally, diversity of a place on different levels proved to blur borders of in- and out-of-place, opening up place for diversity on level of sexuality. So, diversity indirectly influences the perceived norms concerning outing of affection in place.

Evidence for heteronormativity of the Grote Markt in Groningen was found. Additionally, it was found that people conforming to these (hetero) norms in place perceived it as more appropriate to out affection. However, this perceived difference between the appropriateness of hetero and respectively non-hetero affection was found to be very contingent and varying from person to person.

6.1 Recommendations for planners and policy makers

Based on the findings of this research some recommendations for planners and policy makers are given. These recommendations however, target to make space more equal to all sexualities, not to be confused with place that is boundless in terms of outing of affection.

It is recommended to plan for diversity on multiple dimensions. Direct planning for 'gay' or 'queer' is virtually impossible, the 'gay-community' does not exist as a single entity. Planning for diversity on a broader level, however, can be done. For example, by implementing and mixing traces that refer to other cultures, times, ages and nationalities, city planners and policy makers could shape a place to be perceived as more diverse in general, opening a door for diversity on others levels, such as sexuality, to be more in-place as well.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

This research was very explorative of nature. Further research can be done more in depth on how meanings assigned to place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection.

Also, the actual outing of affection in place was not addressed in detail in this research. Research on the topic of attitudes, intentions and their eventual translation is already done in for example the field of psychology, but can be extended by insights from the field of spatial sciences.

On the topic of the perceived appropriateness of outing of affection in public, there are presumably more factors in play than addressed in this research. Also factors that were addressed in this research, such as diversity in place, can be addressed more in depth, gaining deeper understanding of the mechanisms regulating this perceived appropriateness.

References

Anderson, J. (2015). *Understanding cultural geography: Places and traces* (Second ed.). Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Anderson, J., & Jones, K. (2009). The difference that place makes to methodology: Uncovering the 'lived space' of young people's spatial practices. *Children's Geographies*, 7(3), 291-303. doi:10.1080/14733280903024456

Arnesen, K., & Lægran, A. S. (2003). Playing gender in public and community spaces. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 57(3), 164-172. doi:10.1080/00291950310002143

Bettinger, T. V. (2010). Ethical and methodological complexities in research involving sexual minorities. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 24(1), 43-58. doi:10.1002/nha3.10372

Binnie, J., & Valentine, G. (1999). *Geographies of sexuality - a review of progress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. doi:10.1177/030913259902300202

Brown, M. (2006). Sexual citizenship, political obligation and disease ecology in gay seattle. *Political Geography*, 25(8), 874-898. doi://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.05.004

Clifford, N. J., French, S., & Valentine, G. (2010). *Key methods in geography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cresswell, T. (2009). Place. In N. Thrift, & R. Kitchen (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of human geography* (8th ed., pp. 169-177). Oxford: Elsevier.

Hubbard, P. (2001). Sex zones: Intimacy, citizenship and public space. *Sexualities*, 4(1), 51-71. doi:10.1177/136346001004001003

Hubbard, P. (2008). Here, there, everywhere: The ubiquitous geographies of heteronormativity. *Geography Compass*, 2(3), 640-658. doi:10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00096.x

Johnson, C. (2002). Heteronormative citizenship and the politics of passing. *Sexualities*, 5(3), 317-336. doi:10.1177/1363460702005003004

Kuyper, L. (2017). *LHBT monitor 2016: Opmattingen over en ervaringen van lesbische, homoseksuele, biseksuele en transgender personen*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau/Netherlands Institute for Social Research.

LaSala, M. C. (2003). When interviewing "family". *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 15(1-2), 15-30. doi:10.1300/J041v15n01_02

Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from <https://rug.on.worldcat.org/oclc/476093557>

Pew Research Center. (2017). Changing attitudes on gay marriage. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>

Richardson, D. (2000). Constructing sexual citizenship: Theorizing sexual rights. *Critical Social Policy*, 20(1), 105-135. doi:10.1177/026101830002000105

Richardson, D. (2004). Locating sexualities: From here to normality. *Sexualities*, 7(4), 391-411. doi:10.1177/1363460704047059

Smith, T. W., Son, J., & Kim, J. (2014). *Public attitudes toward homosexuality and gay rights across time and countries*. (). Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia. Retrieved from Social Science Premium Collection Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1820793232>

Valentine, G. (1992). (Hetero)sexing space: Lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 11(1), 395-413. doi:10.1080/03098269985641

Valentine, G. (1999). Doing household research: Interviewing couples together and apart. *Area*, 31(1), 67-74. Retrieved from <https://rug.on.worldcat.org/oclc/7025605817>

Van Hoven, B., & Trell, E. (2010). Making sense of place: Exploring creative and (inter)active research methods with young people. *Fennia: International Journal of Geography*, 188(1), 91-104. Retrieved from <https://doaj.org/article/727c8e887b3749119b472e0aaea40065>

Van Lisdonk, J. T. A., Nencel, L. S., & Keuzenkamp, S. (2018). Labeling same-sex sexuality in a tolerant society that values normality: The dutch case. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(13), 1892–1915. Retrieved from <https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/2f527fef-d1fe-4d39-ad0b-825242ca9d38>

Vliet, L. v., Rademaker, G., & Tukker, S. (2015, Aug). Helft homo's: Ik durf niet hand-in-hand over straat. *Eenvandaag* Retrieved from <https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/panels/opiniepanel/alle-uitslagen/item/helft-homos-ik-durf-niet-hand-in-hand-over-straat/>

Weeks, J. (1998). The sexual citizen. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 15(3-4), 35-52.

Woodruffe-Burton, H., & Bairstow, S. (2013). Countering heteronormativity: Exploring the negotiation of butch lesbian identity in the organisational setting. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 28(6), 359-374. doi:10.1108/GM-01-2013-0015

Appendix

A.1 Introduction to research for participants (Dutch)

Introductie onderzoek

Ik ben Karst, 22 jaar en studeer sociale geografie en planologie in Groningen. Voor mijn scriptie doe ik onderzoek naar het uiten van affectie/liefde in het openbaar. Hierin wil ik onderzoeken welke rol een plaats speelt in hoe sociaal geaccepteerd dit is. Om hier meer inzicht in te krijgen doe ik interviews op locatie. Voor deze interviews ben ik opzoek naar personen die een (vaste)relatie hebben, zowel hetero als niet-hetero.

Wat kan je verwachten?

Een interview duurt ongeveer 30 minuten. De interviews zijn op locatie, de Grote Markt. We zullen tijdens het interview afwisselend op 'de trap' zitten en rondlopen over het plein. De tijd en datum van het interview zullen in overleg worden afgesproken, maar zullen ongeveer tussen 20 oktober en 15 november vallen.

Er zullen meerdere onderwerpen aan bod komen. Onder andere jouw ervaringen met deze locatie en hoe je deze locatie ervaart zal aan bod komen. Omdat het onderzoek probeert te achterhalen welke factoren van invloed zijn op hoe geaccepteerd het is om affectie/liefde te uiten zullen we het ook hebben over het uiten van affectie/liefde op en in deze locatie.

Deelname aan het interview is uiteraard vrijwillig. Je kan op ieder moment aan geven dat je ergens niet op in wil gaan en het is mogelijk om op ieder moment te stoppen. De interviews zullen worden opgenomen met een audiorecorder. Op deze manier is het mogelijk om ze uit te schrijven en later te analyseren. Alle opnames en uitgeschreven interviews worden zorgvuldig behandeld en veilig opgeslagen. Het is mogelijk om de interviews te anonimiseren.

A.2 Informed consent form (Dutch)

Deelnameformulier: overeenkomst van deelname

In het onderzoek: het uiten van affectie in openbare ruimte

Het doel van dit onderzoek is het achterhalen welke ruimtelijke factoren van invloed zijn op hoe geaccepteerd het is om affectie/liefde te uiten in het openbaar

- Ik heb de informatie betreffende dit onderzoek gelezen en begrepen.
- Ik heb de mogelijkheid gekregen om mijn antwoorden in te zien en zo nodig aan te passen.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek vrijwillig is en dat het mogelijk is om op ieder moment te stoppen. Mocht ik achteraf terug willen komen op een antwoord, dan is dit mogelijk
- Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek als vertrouwelijk zal worden behandeld. Er zal geen materiaal openbaar worden gemaakt waaruit mijn identiteit achterhaald kan worden zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming.
- Ik begrijp dat (anonieme)data voortkomend uit dit onderzoek wordt gebruikt voor een wetenschappelijk artikel, scriptie en presentatie.
- Ik begrijp dat alle informatie die ik verstrek veilig word opgeslagen: beschermd met een wachtwoord op een wachtwoord beschermde computer.

Omcirkel a.u.b. JA of NEE:

Ik geef toestemming om de audio van dit interview op te nemen JA / NEE

Ik wil graag anoniem blijven JA / NEE

Zo

Mijn voornaam mag gebruikt worden in dit onderzoek JA / NEE

JA:

OF

Een pseudoniem naar mijn keuze mag gebruik worden in dit onderzoek JA / NEE

Wilt u een kopie van de transcriptie (uitgeschreven versie) van dit interview JA / NEE

Zo JA:

Uw E-mailadres: _____

“Ik ga akkoord met deelname aan dit interview. Ik heb dit deelnameformulier ontvangen en ben op de hoogte van het onderwerp van dit onderzoek”

Handtekening deelnemer:

Datum:

“Ik ga akkoord met de bovengenoemde voorwaarden en beloof dat geen schade wordt toegebracht aan deelnemers van dit onderzoek”

Handtekening onderzoeker:

Datum:

A.3 Interview guide (Dutch)

Interview guide

Algemene informatie

Datum:

Tijd:

Opmerkingen over locatie:

Naam deelnemer:

E-mail (om op de hoogte te blijven over resultaten):

Leeftijd respondent:

Man / vrouw / anders

Respondent is geïnteresseerd in: mannen / vrouwen / beide / anders

Overige opmerkingen:

Introductie vragen

Wat doe de respondent dagelijks? Hoe komt hij of zij in Groningen?

- Kennismaken met respondent
- Andere vragen?

- Iets vragen over deze locatie: kennen ze het? Hoe vaak komen ze hier?
 - Hoe ken je deze plaats?
 - Heb je veel herinneringen op deze plaats /zijn hier belangrijke dingen gebeurd?

In-depth vragen

Sub-vraag 1 (*what traces are eminent in shaping the perceived norms concerning the appropriateness of showing affection in place?*)

- Laat de respondent beschrijven wat hij of zij ziet in deze plek
 - Wat zie je als je rondkijkt?
 - Als je dit ziet, waar denk je dan aan?
 - Waarom denk je dat dit hier staat?

- Haak in op antwoorden van respondenten. Waarom staat dit hier? Wie heeft dit hier neer gezet en waarom?

- Verwijst object X ergens naar? Wie heeft dit hier neergezet/wie heeft het ontworpen?
 - Heeft dit gebouw een betekenis voor jou?
 - Als dit object hier niet stond, zou deze plek dan anders zijn? Zo ja, wat?

- Wat maakt deze locatie anders dan andere pleinen en plekken (in Groningen?)
 - Voelt deze plek anders dan andere plaatsen?
 - Hoe pas jij in deze plaats?
 - Hoe verhoud jij je tot het andere publiek in deze locatie?

On sub-question 2 (*how do perceived norms in place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place?*)

- Zou het hier gepast zijn/mogen om met je vriend of vriendin hand in hand te lopen?
 - Waarom wel of niet?
 - Zou jij dit doen?
 - Stel, je zou dat doen. Hoe zou dat dan voelen?
 - Waardoor voelt dat hier zo ... (raar, goed)
 - Zou dit op een andere locatie anders zijn?

- Zou het hier gepast zijn om te zoenen met je vriendin of vriendin?
 - Waarom wel of niet?
 - Is dit anders dan hand in hand lopen? Waarom?
 - Stel, je zou dit doen. Hoe zou dat dan voelen?
 - Zijn er plekken waar dit anders zou voelen?

- Zou het hier voor een hetero/niet hetero stel gepast zijn om hand in hand te lopen?

- Zou het hier voor een hetero/niet hetero stel gepast zijn om te zoenen?

- Zijn er plekken waar dit (hand in hand lopen/zoenen) wel geaccepteerd zou zijn (in het openbaar)?
 - Wat maakt dat het op die plek wel 'mag'?
 - Wat zou er in deze plek moeten veranderen om dat wel geaccepteerd te maken?

- Als je op deze locatie zou gaan staan zoenen, waar op het plein zou je dan waarschijnlijk gaan staan?
 - Waarom daar?
 - Waar zou je absoluut niet gaan staan?
 - Waarom?

- Tot op welke hoogte ben je bezig met hoe en of je affectie toont?
- Is het mogelijk om te zeggen wat de norm is in deze plek qua seksuele-oriëntatie?
 - o Waaraan zie je dit?
 - o Beïnvloed dit hoe geaccepteerd het is om affectie/liefde te uiten? Hoe?
- Worden heteros of niet-heteros gerepresenteerd in deze plek)?
 - o Waaraan wel of niet?
- Zou jij deze locatie aanraden aan vrienden of bekenden?
- Zijn er nog dingen die je toe wil voegen? Heb je nog vragen voor mij of over het onderzoek?

- Danken voor deelname

A.4 Interview guide (English)

Interview guide

General information

Date:

Time:

Introductory questions

- What is the respondent studying / doing for work?
 - o Getting to know the respondent a little
 - o Other questions?

- Ask something general about the place: are they known? How often do they visit?
 - o How often do they visit this place?
 - o Does this place have a special meaning for them?

In-depth questions

On sub-question 1 (*what traces are eminent in shaping the perceived norms concerning the appropriateness of showing affection in place?*)

- Letting the respondent describe what they see in the place
 - o What do you see if you look around?
 - o What do you think of when you look at these buildings, objects?

- Hook-in on answers of respondents, let them explain what this object is, maybe what it stands for?

- Does object X refer to something? Who put that over there/who built it/who designed it?
 - o what does object X say about what is 'normal' in this place?
 - o What if X was left out in this place? Would it make the place different?

- What makes this place different from other places (in Groningen?)
 - o Are there any similar places?
 - o How do you relate to the public in this place?

On sub-question 2 (*how do perceived norms in place influence the perceived appropriateness of outing affection in this place?*)

- I'm investigating how place shapes affective behavior. Do you have a boy friend or girlfriend by any chance?

- How do you identify on this behalf? What would you say your sexuality is?

- If you would be here with your boyfriend/girlfriend, would it seem to be appropriate to walk hand in hand?
 - o Would you do so? Why would you or why not?
 - o How would you feel when you did?

- Are there places where this is different?
- If you would be here with your boyfriend/girlfriend, would it seem to be appropriate to kiss?
 - Would you do so? Why would you or why not?
 - How would you feel when you did?
- Are there places where this is different? Similar?
 - What does that place have that makes it feel so?
- How would this be for a hetero/non-hetero couple?
- Up till what extent are you concerned with how and if you would show affection in public?
- If you could change something in this place to let you feel more/less comfortable, what would that be?
- If you would be kissing in this square, where would you most likely stand?
- Is it possible to say what type of sexuality is the norm in this place?
 - Does this influence the perceived appropriateness? How?
- Any further remarks?
- Would you recommend this place to friends?

A.5 Debriefing after the interview (Dutch)

Bedankt voor uw deelname!

Dankzij uw deelname is het mogelijk om (sociaalgeografisch) onderzoek te verrichten. Voor mij persoonlijk betekent dit dat ik mijn scriptie kan schrijven. Hiervoor mijn dank!

Ik hoop dat u met plezier terugkijkt op dit interview. Wilt u op de hoogte blijven van de resultaten?

Laat dan uw E-mailadres achter op het deelnameformulier (gekregen voorafgaand aan het interview).

Mocht u achteraf nog vragen hebben over het onderzoek dan kunt u contact met mij opnemen via

k.berkenbosch@student.rug.nl

Tijdens het onderzoek kunnen gevoelige en/of persoonlijke onderwerpen aanbod komen. Heeft u achteraf het gevoel dat u ergens mee zit, advies wil of hulp nodig heeft, dan kunt u onder andere terecht bij de volgende websites en hulplijnen:

Met betrekking tot seksuele oriëntatie:

Switchboard

www.switchboard.coc.nl

020 6236565

Met betrekking tot discriminatie in het algemeen:

www.discriminatie.nl

0900 2354 354

Nogmaals, bedankt voor uw deelname!

Karst Berkenbosch

k.berkenbosch@student.rug.nl

A.6 Codebook

Main codes	Sub codes	Example	Source
Inductive codes			
Traces indexation	Natural	Not even considered to be possibly different; they are imbedded in our sense of what is 'right' and what is 'true'	Anderson, 2010
	Normal	More contingent than natural traces; they change more easily over time, and not in all places normal traces have to be 'normal'.	
	Novel	Everything that is 'not right', all that is 'out of place' and what is perceived as rude, inappropriate and wrong.	
Norms	Heteronormative	The concept that the societal norm concerning sexuality is to identify as hetero. This is seen as omnipresent by multiple authors.	Hubbard (2001), Hubbard (2008), Johnson (2002), Richardson (2004), Valentine (1992) and Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow (2013)
Sexual identity	Hetero		
	Non-hetero		
Participant	General info	Age, gender, sexuality	
	Conforming norms	Outings of participant conforming to norms, melting in	
	Opposing norms	Outing of participant opposing norms, standing out	
General description Grote Markt	General description Grote Markt	Description of the Grote Markt in other terms than traces	
Deductive codes			
Thoughts on outing affection opposite sexuality	Hetero on non-hetero affection		
	Non-hetero on hetero affection		
Material traces	Visibility	How visible someone is to others in place	
	Alcohol	Consumption of alcohol	
	Diversity	Diversity in terms of public in place and traces that are identified as 'diverse'	
	Students	Students in groningen	
Non-material traces	Shown by others	How others behave	
	Time of the day	Day/evening/night	
	Darkness		

	Memory	Norms or other ideas that are based on previous experience (in place)	
Transgression	Signs of transgression	Signs of transgression other than being stared at	
	Being stared at	Staring of others in place	