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Amsterdam's Sexual Underground in the 1960s

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Publication date

2013

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Paris-Amsterdam underground: essays on cultural resistance, subversion, and diversion

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Hekma, G. (2013). Amsterdam's Sexual Underground in the 1960s. In C. Lindner, & A. Hussey (Eds.), *Paris-Amsterdam underground: essays on cultural resistance, subversion, and diversion* (pp. 49-61). (Cities and cultures). Amsterdam University Press.
<http://open.org/search?identifier=442549>

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Paris-Amsterdam Underground

Essays on Cultural Resistance, Subversion, and Diversion

Edited by Christoph Lindner and Andrew Hussey

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

This book is published in print and online through the online OAPEN library (www.oapen.org)

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Cover illustration: Sarah Guilbaud

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek, Amsterdam

Lay-out: Heymans & Vanhove, Goes

ISBN 978 90 8964 505 0

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 820 3 (pdf)

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 821 0 (ePub)

NUR 694



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 C. Lindner, A. Hussey / Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013

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4. Amsterdam's Sexual Underground in the 1960s

Gert Hekma

A sleepy town turns into a sex capital

Amsterdam witnessed a radical shock in the late 1960s when it changed from a rather sleepy provincial town into a vibrant city that became one of the main centers of the occidental sexual revolution. The Netherlands had been one of the more conservative countries of Western Europe where Christian parties set norms and laws, and it suddenly developed a worldwide reputation for being among the most free and tolerant. In Amsterdam in the 1950s, a sexual underworld served local people and, as a harbor city, sailors and other foreign visitors, including American soldiers on leave from occupied Germany. Jacques Brel sang the praise of its harbor whose sailors attracted prominent gay figures like Jean Genet. Amsterdam had a red-light district that was still very white in terms of race and a small gay scene that in those years quickly developed because of alterations in policing sex. In the 1960s, the sexual underground exploded: it grew enormously and parts of it entered the mainstream, often in different forms.

This chapter begins with Dutch sexual politics and Amsterdam's sexual underground in the 1950s and moves on to the late 1960s. Amsterdam was the symbolic center of these developments and attracted many Dutch and foreign people. The sexual revolution had effects all over the country and entered into the capillaries of its culture. The focus will be on the city but will sometimes drift into the country. The period of the 'sexual revolution' can be seen as developing over the long term, and historians who focus on changes in sexual behaviors regard it as the period from the end of World War II to the beginning of the AIDS epidemic (1945-1985). I focus instead on cultural aspects and want to stress its short highpoint in the late 1960s. It is amazing how much changed in the pivotal year 1968, which can be seen as the climax of the sexual revolution. This date will repeatedly return in this chapter as moment of change on many fronts. The sexual revolution was a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (unitary work of art) and resembled the 'unitary urbanism' of the Situationists (Pinder 128-30). It embraced all sexual orientations and included media, arts, literature, pop music and ways of dancing, social movements, novel types of spirituality, experiments with body, gender, and sexuality, communal and squatted housing projects, drugs, and a critique of traditional politics and religion. Dutch culture dramatically changed in a short period. An undercurrent of sexual desires suddenly came above ground but new

underworlds and subcultures emerged. The chapter will end by addressing the question of how the sexual underground and revolution subsequently developed.

From the 1950s on

Since the early-twentieth century, the Netherlands was a ‘pillarized’ society, where four main groups (pillars) set the political and social tone: Catholics, orthodox Protestants, socialists, and liberals. From 1960 on, this system started to break down. Society democratized, individualized, and secularized. Consumption started to compete with production as a main economic activity. Many people lost their political and religious faith and wanted to be independent of pillars, even to get rid of them. The Christian pillars also changed from the inside and played a central role during the transformations of the 1960s.

In 1911, Christian parties introduced new sex laws that criminalized abortion, pornography, and pimping, and created a higher age of consent for homosexual relations than for heterosexual relations (21 versus 16 years, in Article 248bis). They wanted to differentiate themselves from those who held more liberal legal attitudes and introduced stricter legislation influenced by Christian values. This put a stamp on the Netherlands as sexually conservative country. In the 1950s, however, it was Catholic and orthodox Protestant psychiatrists and clergymen who proved to be pivotal in a change of mind that transformed society in the Netherlands. As practitioners in the newly developed fields of social work and psychiatry, they treated clients who suffered from the suffocating sexual morality of the churches: unmarried women who got pregnant, people dealing with the taboos on pre- and extramarital sex, gays and lesbians who felt rejected by religions that condemned their love. Forced marriages, illegal abortions, imposed adoptions, and other family dramas were the rule of the day (Develing). Priests engaging in pedosexual relations were unimaginable. Although liberals and socialists had more lenient attitudes toward sexuality, contrary to what one would expect, it was Catholics and Protestants who put questions of sexual morality on the social agenda (Oosterhuis). With their criticism, the professionals contributed significantly to the erosion of the pillars. Once the two religious clusters lost their rigid and dogmatic views on social morality, the constraints they had imposed on the other pillars disappeared and public opinion made a complete turn from opposing to supporting various sexual freedoms (see the surveys of Noordhoff and Kooy). This created sexual space in society.

The pillars were not the only part of society to be transformed. Like other Western countries, the Netherlands saw a radical change in its sexual culture in this period. The main transformation regarded sexual desire. While in the past, lust was only imaginable between opposite poles (male/female, active/passive, old/young, client/prostitute, butch/femme, queer/trade), the trend was in the direction of equality. Feminism and socialism that strived for gender and social equality respectively began to have influence. This meant that women should have more sexual and social autonomy. The genders became increasingly equal partners in hetero-erotic relations and women became more independent from

their husbands. The feminine queers of the past who had preferred sex with masculine straight men became masculine gay men and pursued each other, while butch lesbians stopped pursuing feminine heterosexual women. A new generation of gays and lesbians wondered why an older cohort so strongly identified with the other sex while they preferred their own sex. They wanted to be normal, and as they said, they were only different in bed where sexual roles would be interchangeable (Hekma, *De roze rand*). The drive for equality was most beneficial for gay and lesbian relations that generally show more gender parity than straight ones. It was negative for those groups who desired unequal relations: pedophiles, zoophiles, sadomasochists, sex workers and their clients, and straight couples with traditional, unequal power dynamics (Hekma, 'The Drive').

When the weekly *Vrij Nederland* did a survey among 'new adults' in 1959, the young generation still expressed a conservative morality in which marriage was central. The youngsters were not asked about sex, but about going on vacation together before marriage. Yes, they responded, they could, but most respondents indicated that it should be in the company of third parties. Divorce was possible but care for children should have first priority. 'Two religions on one cushion', or sex between those of different faiths, was deemed unacceptable by 56% (Goudsblom).

Male Youth Cultures: Nozems and Provos

From the 1950s on, a male youth culture of Pleiners and Dijkers (referring to higher-class Leidseplein and lower-class Nieuwendijk), or Nozems, developed in Amsterdam. 'Nozem', a word of unknown origin, meant that both groups were trouble makers. Nieuwendijk was close to the Red Light District, while Amsterdam's artist scene was to be found near Leidseplein, with its French existentialist penchants. This square was also the location of one of the two main gay dance halls in town, the Schakel, with Leidsestraat ('*rue de vaseline*' in gay slang) leading to the other dance hall, DOK, on Singel, in those times the main location of male street hustlers. The French style of the Pleiners was close to that of queens in Schakel and DOK while Dijkers with their macho manners resembled leather men of the newly emerging kinky scene in the Red Light District's Warmoesstraat. They were more oriented toward the United States, pop music, blue jeans, and leather than the Pleiners and Sissies, who preferred more feminine French elegance and chansons.

In the late 1950s, the first ripples of new times were visible with the Nozems. The gay scene and sexual politics of the local police also changed. While vice squads of the past harassed queer bars out of business, they now decided that it was better to keep homosexuals in their clubs than cruising on the streets for straight men, which only led to public nuisances. This policy of toleration in semi-public places, such as bars, led to a rapid development of the gay scene. Where a few transient bars existed before the World War II that were often mixed (gay, lesbian, sex workers and their clients), now the number of specialized places suddenly increased. Mixed bars disappeared and sexual differentiation between

homo- and heterosexual space and identity became stricter. When social integration of gay and straight became unimaginable, erotic integration faded away. Both the gay sexual use of public toilets and the visible presence of male hustlers on streets abated in the 1970s. In the 1960s the city had two co-existing gay undergrounds: on the one hand a lively but shadowy street culture of past days, and on the other a new subculture with bars that remained hidden behind closed doors. Both worlds were visited by men for whom the whole world was a 'closet' with no exit. 'Coming out' had yet to receive a meaning: it was still a straight world.

Nozem was soon replaced by Provo (provocateur) which referred to a new politicized group of young people who became active from 1965 on. Provo initiated a radical cultural and political shift and stimulated vital social changes. It has become synonymous with major transformations in Dutch society in the late 1960s such as secularization, democratization and individualization, and the rise of a youth culture. Their public activism started taking as an example the weekly 'happenings' of their predecessor Robert Jasper Grootveld whose innocuous events in 1963-1965 had made the authorities and the police very nervous. His happenings took place at the Lieverdje (The Little Darling), a statue of a street urchin on the centrally located Spui (Duivenvoorden). Anarchist Provo youth copied his street activist methods. They stood for resistance against the authorities, and were in favor of squatting, communal living arrangements, drug use, ecological solutions, 'white' (that is, free) bicycles, and public transportation instead of cars, which were both dangerous and polluting. They opposed the neo-colonial wars of NATO and support for dictatorships. Provos heartily embraced the sexual revolution. They were in favor of, as one of them said in the first issue of their journal *Provo* (1965), free love and 'complete amoral promiscuity'. The leading Provo intellectual Roel van Duijn (1985) drew upon the work not of the straight Wilhelm Reich but of the queer Marquis de Sade – whose works were translated in the late 1960s – which he liked for its libertinism rather than for its violence. In addition to creating a *witte fietsen* plan for free bicycles, they also developed a *witte wijven* plan ('white', that is, free women plan; *wijven* being a negative term for women) for female sexual emancipation, and a *witte homofielen* plan for homosexual rights (unlike *wijven*, 'homophile' was the most conventional term for homosexual; see Van Weerlee). It was a broad program that also stressed spontaneity, desire, playfulness, urban renewal, police officers as social workers, and strongly resembled the Situationist one (Pinder). In 1966, Provo became a political party and joined the Amsterdam city council with one seat. Provo received international attention through various public events, most famously in 1966 with demonstrations against the royal marriage of Princess Beatrix to a German squire. Pictures of a smoke bomb that struck the golden carriage went around the world (Kempton).

Many artists supported this counterculture of provocation. Author Simon Vinkenoog became its unorthodox spokesperson. Composer Peter Schat offered the basement of his house for meetings. Jan Cremer and Jan Wolkers – an author and a painter – wrote *I, Jan Cremer* (1964) and *Turkish Delight* (1969), pivotal literary texts of the sexual revolution (see Calis). A revolution in the art world preceded Provo: CoBrA (Appel, Corneille and Lucebert), architectural utopia

'New Babylon' of Constant Nieuwenhuis (Kennedy, Pinder), artist group Nul (Zero).

Provo was short-lived (1965-1967) but had a major impact. It inspired many groups in politics and the squatters' movement, and led to all kinds of alternative initiatives: bookshops, printing and publishing projects, bars and restaurants, galleries, pop groups, communes, and so on, often in squatted places. With the Man-Vrouw-Maatschappij (Man-Woman-Society, 1968) and the more radical Dolle Mina (Mad Mina, 1969), the second wave feminist movement started. They were mainly active in the field of gender politics while their main sex-related issue was abortion, being 'boss of your own belly' (Ketting; Vuijsje). In May 1969, students occupied the Maagdenhuis, the University of Amsterdam's bureaucratic center, and asked for more democracy – another memorable moment of the 1960s. Art students directed actions toward concert halls and theaters. Most of these demonstrations were radical and *ludiek* (playful). Urban protests concerned large-scale developments that destroyed the fine structure of inner cities. When in the early 1970s Amsterdam's government demolished parts of the old town for a new subway, violent riots broke out. In the late 1960s the city was in the mood for major changes in gender and sexual politics, the arts, city planning, and environment.

Sexual Movements

Since 1946, there were two kinds of sexual movements in the Netherlands. The Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming (NVSH, Dutch Society for Sexual Reform) had been largely concerned with family planning. In the 1960s it changed its aims to focus on sexual reform. The NVSH became a major social force in the 1960s with over 200,000 members at its high point (Nabrink). The Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (COC; Center for Recreation and Culture) represented the homosexual movement; it became junior partner of the NVSH during the late 1960s (Tielman).

The NVSH's political demands were formulated in 1967 in a speech given by its chair, Mary Zeldenrust-Noordanus. On a legal level she requested the abolition of laws restricting homosexuality, abortion, pornography, prostitution, and divorce, and asked for easy access to contraceptives for all women above 16 years old. She hoped this might be realized by the year 2000. In fact, most of these changes came about within a decade through either legal change or 'tolerance', meaning that the state did not prosecute those who engaged in officially forbidden acts – a typically Dutch way to deal with controversial topics. Abortion became an accepted medical practice in 1968 (Ketting). Zeldenrust-Noordanus's main point, however, was broader. She was in favor of ending gender and sexual binaries. At that time, hippies celebrated androgyny, young men had long hair and wore shiny shirts, and girls started to wear jeans – the 'masculine' trousers once forbidden to them by local regulations that also forbade male drag. There was sexual openness among the new generation, but it did not last long. NVSH may have suggested legal changes and transgressing gender and sexual dichoto-

mies, but, while laws and regulations were abolished or modified, these binaries became in fact stricter from the 1980s on.

Parallel to these sexual movements, Amsterdam's sexual and gay scenes started to grow in the 1960s. The Red Light District developed into a tourist destination, and venues such as cinemas, sex shops, and erotic clubs opened across town. The number of gay bars doubled in this decade, with a main upsurge in 1968. To the distress of the city government, gay tourists started to flock to town as a result of its new tolerant reputation. Flower children slept on Dam Square and in the Vondelpark. From 1968 on, Amsterdam was a city of love, sex, drugs, and rock music.

Mediatization

Media contributed to the sexual revolution, television in particular. Television entered all households in the 1960s, with 75% of Dutch households having a TV in 1966. In 1964, a program featuring the poet Remco Campert was censored because he read a poem with the word *naaien* (meaning to sew, but also to screw; Calis 34). Times changed, however, and the satirical program *Zo is het toevallig ook nog eens een keer* (1963-1966) (Ferdinandusse) and *Hoepla* (1967) (Verhagen) could be more explicit. The first was made by famous Dutch personalities like author Gerard Reve, and the second by artists Willem de Ridder, Wim T. Schippers, and others. The broadcasting of both programs resulted in questions being raised in parliament, *Zo is het* for blasphemy and *Hoepla* because it featured the first appearance of a naked woman on Dutch television. In 1966, *Zo is het* is also notable as the first Dutch TV program to use the word *neuken* (fuck).

The television broadcasting company VPRO, the NVSH, and the weekly *Vrij Nederland* (Free Netherlands) were mainstream organizations or media outlets that were supportive of the sexual revolution. The largest Dutch morning paper, the right-wing *Telegraaf*, was a staunch opponent of the trend. Sex became front-page news in various ways. Jan Cremer (straight) and Gerard Reve (gay) were authors who, through their books, interviews they gave to the media, and TV appearances, injected the news with a healthy amount of sex.

The NVSH published a monthly journal, *Verstandig Ouderschap* (Prudent Parenthood), that changed its title in 1968 to *Sextant* and completely transformed its contents. The monthly developed into a mouthpiece of the sexual revolution. It offered special issues on birth control, sexually-transmitted diseases, love, pornography, and sexual dysfunctions – vacillating between tame and daring coverage in order to accommodate its broad readership. Each issue had two pages of letters to the editor and another two with questions and answers. These features were among the most popular found in the journal and provide an indication of the concerns and attitudes of its readers. Marital problems and questions about sexual preference issues were dealt with in the advice section ‘*Wij willen weten*’ (We Want to Know), and received pragmatic medically-informed answers. The letters indicated strong differences of opinion between NVSH's more mainstream and radical members. Some opposed the attention given to pornography or ho-

mosexuality, while others complained that most of the erotic imagery was of women and not men, or that it was too tame. In the 200,000 households where the monthly was delivered, youngsters could read about information like this possibly for the first time (Röling).

In the spirit of the time, COC initiated a journal in 1965 whose name indicated its message: *Dialoog*, referring to the conversation between the gay and straight communities. Gay activists stepped out of their underground, stopped using pseudonyms, 'came out' and started to fight for social integration. A letter from Gerard Reve in the first issue became controversial because in it he imagined Jesus returning to the world as a donkey he would have sex with out of celestial love. Clergymen connected to COC protested, and a member of parliament initiated court proceedings against Reve for blasphemy. The case went from the lower court to the Supreme Court. Reve was supported by theologian expert witnesses, who claimed that the donkey fantasy was his way of expressing his beliefs. The Supreme Court accepted this view and acquitted him. The case made headlines in the media, which discussed his homosexual preferences more than the depiction of bestiality with Christ that had started the procedure (Fekkes). Through his novels and media presence, Reve became the pivotal Dutch queer who engaged in SM and polyamory, or consensual non-monogamy. He was also a conservative who embraced Catholicism at a moment that many Dutch were leaving the church. Reve's case illustrates how quickly changes came. In 1966 when the court proceedings started, he was still a weird outsider; in 1968 when he won his case, public opinion had changed in his favor. He had become a national gay icon (Maas).

Many explicit sex journals started in the late 1960s. The most famous were *Chick* and *Candy*, both dating from 1968. *Chick* (1968-2008) was the highly successful enterprise of Jan Wenderhold who started it to make money for his family. Its initial print run of 5,000 rose to 18,000 by the second half of 1968, and a major (and still existing) concern about erotica grew out of the magazine. *Chick* was more than just a porn periodical since it covered general news and offered libertarian views. The colorful Joop Wilhelmus became its editor. He started his career by publishing Provo-like journals, edited books on bestiality and sexual variation, ventured into specialized areas like child porn with the magazine *Lolita*, and started sex shops. *Candy*, still published to this day, was *Chick*'s main competitor for the new sex market. Publisher Peter J. Muller edited another major journal of the sexual revolution, *Hitweek* (1965-1969), which later became *Aloha* (1969-74). These monthlies focused on pop music, and added drugs and sex to their fields of interest.

One of the most attractive and radical products of the Amsterdam sexual underground was the English language *Suck: The First European Sexpaper* (1969-74). Among the collaborators were Germaine Greer, Bill Levy, and Willem de Ridder. *Suck* was nicely illustrated and carried the work of people like Theo van den Boogaard, a major artist of Holland's sexual revolution. Contributors sent in sexually explicit narratives that dealt light-heartedly with most sexual variations from masturbation to incest and bestiality. It seemed a competition of who could tell the strongest story. The journal published Wystan Auden's cruising poem

'The Platonic Blow', excerpts from William Burroughs's *Wild Boys* (1971), and a close-up of Greer's vagina. The final issue featured the richly illustrated 'Virgin Sperm Dancer: An Ecstatic Journey of a Boy Transformed into a Girl for One Day Only, and Her Erotic Adventures in Amsterdam Magic Centrum'. *Suck* also organized the Wet Dream film festivals.

Several papers ran ads for people seeking straight, gay, and lesbian relations. In February 1968, *Vriendencontacten* (Friend Contacts) started with a run of 1,500 copies that went up to 20,000 at the end of the year. The Dutch were hungry for sex. When *Sextant* discussed 'sex by numbers' in its January 1969 issue, it provided a long list of journals that offered such ads. Not only new papers entered this market – old ones tried to revive themselves by offering sex-related content. *Vrij Nederland* would later become the main respectable paper to carry sex ads.

Nude Shows

The sexual revolution did not only happen on the pages of papers, on TV screens, or in bedrooms. On stage, nudity and sexual representations also became available. Amsterdam developed a tradition of sex shows that began in the Eyclers, a bar at Leidseplein. The happenings of the bisexual Grootveld had included exhibitionist travesties and in 1962 a public orgy had taken place in his gallery (Duivenvoorden 193, 207). The post-Provo society Kiets Konservatorium ('kiets' meaning 'kitsch') met at Eyclers, and on one occasion – in the quintessential year 1968 – the public undressing of a woman turned into a live sex show. Members of the group made this into a 'Depressive Erotic Panorama' for the Fantasio and Paradiso nightclubs. At the same time, the youth club Appeal organized a 'Rhythmic Pornography Show'. Painter Hans Frisch set up a 'Levende Opjekten Sjoor' (Live Objects Show).

All these shows consisted mainly of *ludieke* improvisations. *Ludiek* (playful) became a code word in those years for all kinds of events. The word had been introduced in *Homo Ludens* (1938) by the famous Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, who would have been surprised by its popularity among the 1960s radicals. His work had also inspired Constant in his project 'New Babylon' (discussed at length by Andrew Hussey in his chapter in this book). The nude shows were accompanied by music and actors were often stoned. They might pretend to be engaged in sexual activities, but the main aim was social critique. Sometimes the nude objects were put up in cages to indicate sexual repression. The Appeal show included two women and one man dressed in plastic that covered their naked bodies painted in the colors of the Dutch flag while playing the national anthem. This served to ridicule Dutch nationalism. On another occasion they used the German national anthem. Hans Frisch offered his show for all kinds of places, including churches, funeral homes, parks, and night clubs. The accompanying music was intentionally bad: he declared himself to be the director of the worst orchestra in the world with its 'stutter choir'. He also offered the performers in his show for rent by the hour. It was all meant to be *ludiek* and of course to shock

the petit-bourgeois, whom provocateurs called *het klootjesvolk* (testicle people).

The shows offered several sexual variations, and included not only heterosexual but also masturbatory, male and female homosexual, and sadomasochistic representations. Bestiality was only shown with toy animals that could be *ludiek*. The SM scenes that Ruud Kraamwinkel showed in his 'Depressive Erotic Panorama' were not popular with the public, so Hans Frisch left them out. Kraamwinkel's gay scenes were popular, however, in part because of his 'horse-dick'.

There may have been a new tolerance for sexuality on stage, but the shows were not always permitted. In April 1969, Kraamwinkel organized four evenings with an 'Explosive Erotic Panorama'. After the first day, the newspapers showed pictures of naked women behind bars and, at the suggestion of the vice squad, the mayor forbade them immediately. The organizers were prosecuted for public indecency and were ordered to pay a minor fine of fifty guilders each only in 1972. When the shows went into the countryside, they were forbidden in some places such as Nijenrode, the posh school of economics. Although the shows offered sex on stage, sex never took place off stage, and the presentations never became orgies, as rumors claimed.

After the mayor's interdiction, Kraamwinkel, philosopher Fons Elders, and a group of lawyers and doctors started the 'Erotisch Syndicaat' (Erotic Syndicate) that successfully brought the sex shows all over Amsterdam. The syndicate propagated tolerance and support for erotic imagery and play as a necessary antipode to the arms race and commercialization – a critical reference to militarism and capitalism, cornerstones of the existing order. They resisted sexual exploitation for anti-sexual aims. The shows included boys and girls playing school kids in shorts and with bare breasts, the boys at some point in cross-dress and wearing fetish clothing that could be bought on the spot and removed from their bodies – leaving the children nude. Elders liked qualities such as enthusiasm and amateurism in the sex shows. The city allowed these shows because the Syndicaat, as a membership organization, did not need official permission. There was too much nudity around for the city to make it stop: in 1967, the first female nude appeared on Dutch TV, actors came on stage in a 'natural state', streakers created excitement in the streets, and in 1972 the first nude beach was opened. It was amazing how suddenly the Dutch took to eroticism in 1968: with nude shows, magazines, sexual activism, or pleasures of the pavement.

The Dogmatic Turn

At the high point of the sexual revolution in 1967 to 1968, homosexual student activist groups were started in most cities. They made the same points as the NVSH, were against gender and sexual dichotomy and sexual taboos, and in favor of good sex education and abolishing antigay Article 248bis of the Criminal Code. They organized mixed dance parties for gay, straight, and in-between, and went to 'normal' discos to dance with same-sex couples – creating turmoil. And they continuously discussed sexual politics and experimented with erotic life.

In 1969, NVSH and homosexual student groups organized a 'love-weekend'.

Jos van Ussel, a historian of sexuality and the NVSH's philosopher, gave a talk and asked the organizers to replace chairs with mattresses to transgress standard, unsensual ways of lecturing. In his speech, he predicted the revolution would turn into a liberation of the penis, deteriorating into a 'narrow' sexual change and not liberating the whole human being. At night, the sixty mainly gay participants engaged in promiscuous sex. Some non-gay participants discovered their homosexual side, as the radicals desired (the reverse is not reported). But some participants also discovered something different: the group sex was forced upon them, and it was deemed an expression of the 'competition moral' – meaning the macho desire to outdo others now in bed. They in turn were criticized for still being so oppressed that they could not enjoy a night of pleasure. Mutual accusations of intolerance followed where tolerance should be preached. Sexual liberation was no easy task.

The critique of sexual liberation would become stronger and many leftist supporters saw its limitations, as Van Ussel had; it was too narrow, only partial, not a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The great revolution for him was humanism, and for most students socialism. Sexuality could only be liberated when all of society and in particular its socio-economic foundations had changed in a socialist direction. Their sexual revolution resembled the unitary urbanism of Situationists: it should be total and not a minor change within liberal capitalism. This idea spread with the growing influence of theories of Marx, Freud, and, in particular, of the Freudo-Marxist Reich. A revolution that only included the sexual would lead to the commercialization and continued erotic misery of oppressed groups such as women in a liberal, capitalist society.

Sexual and gender repression were seen as secondary themes of socialist struggle after its primary focus on money and labor. It was unimaginable that the primary contradictions of society could be sexuality and gender, being seen as natural rather than social, or that they would have an equal status. This dogmatic leftist critique of the sexual revolution was intensified by the focus of Reich and his followers on coital sex and serial monogamy as socialist utopia. Sex radicalism weakened with leftist hairsplitting. Freudo-Marxism, and Marx more than Freud, was especially popular among a new generation of leftist students. Kees de Boer was a student leader who became the Dutch mouthpiece of Freudo-Marxism and got his own pages in *Sextant*. In those radical years, most universities devoted panels to the sexual revolution with the participation of students like De Boer, academics like Van Ussel, (anti-)psychiatrists, feminists, and gay and lesbian activists. But after all the excitement, the energy of the sexual revolution filtered out. Dogmatic Reich won out over free spirit Sade, socialism over libertinism. This quibbling, typical for many leftist and alternative groups, surely reduced their political success but not their symbolic influence.

Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution

From the moment of the Provos onward, Amsterdam had an important political and sexual underground. Young hippie tourists flocked to the city and slept in its parks. In addition to sex, narcotics (and, in particular, the tolerant soft drugs policy) became an important attraction. An emerging gay scene and the redeveloped Red Light District were other pull factors. Out of the squatting scene, an alternative world of communes, cultural institutions (the world famous live-music venues of Paradiso and Melkweg date from these years), galleries, cinemas, publishers, bookshops, bars, and restaurants developed. These underworld spaces facilitated new sexual possibilities like sex parties or nude shows. The city exploded erotically, but after the wild years of the late 1960s, most people went back to normal. An underground survived after the heyday of the sexual revolution, and its messages linger on to this day. In some cases it came above ground – as the music temples did – and drastically changed. The squatter movement shrunk noticeably because many squatted buildings were bought by the city or by tenants. In 2010, squatting was finally outlawed.

Nude shows, papers, and discussions of the sexual revolution abated in the 1970s, or continued without much innovation. The changing membership of the NVSH gives a clear indication of this decline of interest: after climbing from 10,000 per year in 1946 to 200,000 per year in 1965, it tumbled down to 170,000 in 1970 and 75,000 in 1975. Most heterosexuals simply left because most of the aims had been achieved, like access to abortion, contraceptives, divorce, and erotic material. The Rutgers Foundation, which was founded in 1969, quickly had 60 centers offering help to people with sexual problems, while the Schorer Foundation was addressing gay and lesbian life issues since 1968. The idea of a general and integrated sexual revolution (the *Gesamtkunstwerk*) was contradicted by what happened within the NVSH that lost its straight members but survived thanks to new subgroups with an interest in specialized erotic variations: SM, exhibitionism, pedophilia, and transsexuality. Homosexuality remained the territory of the COC. Rather than integration, differentiation along lines of sexual and gender preference was the future. For many people the excitement of those years was formative, but most soon fell back into the routines of earlier generations.

As previously mentioned, a major influential critique came from the new left. Roel van Duijn had quoted Sade as his inspiration in Provo in 1965, but in 1970 the marquis's work was seen as pornography rather than as political philosophy. The new stars were Freud-Marxists like Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. Their followers saw the sexual revolution as partial, and being more about money than pleasure. The sex industry now sought profits while disregarding the real desires of people. Sexuality was used for exploitation. There could be no revolution except one that included all fields and layers of society, Reich and Marcuse argued: the sexual revolution needed to be part of a total socio-economic change but it was not. Following Marx, Freud, Reich and Marcuse, the left lost its *ludieke* and anarchist character and became dogmatic and socialist. The left had always been rather conservative in its sexual morality with a focus

on the straight, nuclear family. Reich's radical and Freud-inspired goal had been greater heterosexual freedom for young people. He wanted divorce to be allowed for couples who had made wrong choices in love. But otherwise sex should be (serially) monogamous and heterosexual. Reich rebuked sex work, promiscuity, homosexuality, and other erotic variations. Many in the new left followed in his footsteps. From a quite different perspective, Michel Foucault gave a deathblow to libertine activities and promises by underlining the disciplinary and controlling outcomes of all talk about sex. Where defenders of the sexual revolution had seen progress and utopias of liberation, and Freudo-Marxist exploitation, he focused on greater controls by disciplines such as medicine and the social sciences, although his critique was voiced in the name of sexual pleasure against domination.

The sexual underground has a complex history. The Red Light District and the gay scene of the 1950s came above ground due to the sexual revolution after 1968. They remained distinct from the Provo movement that created its own underground, including issues of gender and sexuality. The avant-garde of Co-BrA, Constant, Situationists, or group Nul was part of another, parallel but older generation. Gay and lesbian students groups were more inspired by Provo than by the gay scene or COC and created their own alternative spaces. Like the old underground, the new one got socially integrated. Subcultural institutions entered the mainstream, Provos continued their political activities in regular political parties, squatters had their high point in 1980 with the riots around the coronation of Queen Beatrix and witnessed decline afterwards. The gay movement gained political influence in the early 1980s, in particular in relation to the AIDS epidemic. Undergrounds of the 1950s and 1960s became mainstream or, just as often, disbanded. And while old ones disappeared or moved up, new ones emerged: queer groups like Lesbian Nation and Red Faggots in the 1970s, alternative galleries like Aorta in the 1980s, the discos Roxy and Mazzo, and kinky parties in the 1990s. They were less spectacular and influential than their predecessors of the 1960s who had to make a larger jump, but they continued Amsterdam's underground.

The sexual revolution has a controversial and ambiguous history. Nowadays, many people deplore the so-called individualism or excessive freedoms of those years and argue that they have had a negative influence on present-day Holland, but at the same time sexual freedom and women's rights, which were won in those years, are regarded as characteristic of Dutch culture today. On both sides of the equation, the elements are highly dubious: both how individualized and also how gay- and women-friendly the Dutch are. The underground saw a quick and radical development in the 1960s, and while many dreams remain unfulfilled, others lingered on and were sometimes enshrined in laws, social conventions, urban practices, and self-images. Utopian desires followed the road of continual change as the Situationists imagined.

Afterword

The year 1968 saw a revolutionary situation that exploded in Amsterdam: an unexpected, brief wild fire that burned bright and ignited many people. In an underground of alleys, parks, bedrooms, bars, galleries, and magazines a revolution started. It was so successful and subversive because it embraced so much: a critique of state, religion, and personal life. Old politics and traditional religion were blown aside while a more liberated intimate gendered and sexual life became prominent. Unlike the Arab Spring of 2010-2011, where revolts were mainly against a 'secular' state while getting support from religious forces, and politics did not in general get personal, the 1960s revolution in the West was a *Gesamtkunstwerk* with the various critiques reinforcing, not opposing each other. The fire soon petered out but its results are still there: more openness for female and gay sexuality, legalization of sex work and pornography, politics reshuffled, and religion losing influence. While red-light districts once were the quintessence of vice in a city controlled by religious taboos and political regulations, sex is now more generally available all over the city, in the media, and online. This sexual explosion was soon smothered by dominant forms of feminist and socialist critique that fitted well with the ideas of recuperating political and religious groups that feared society getting lost in a decadent flood of sex and drugs. Quite another world got lost, however: utopian queer dreams about how sexual and gender dichotomies would break open.

Although the sexual revolution may have prevailed in many ways, and although several groups have profited from its results, the fight against commercial and familial sexploitation was lost. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* that the sexual revolution had hoped to realize was broken down into its constituent parts. The old sexual margins that were concentrated in red-light districts got grudgingly tolerated while new sexual undergrounds began as rhizomes elsewhere in the cityscape and on the Internet – or in other cities, like Berlin. Foucault may have analyzed the disciplining consequences of sexual liberation, but he also saw the erotic possibilities of resistance, friendship, dandyism, and the leather scene. Ideals of underground and revolution may have slowed down, but they continue to sprout new ways of thinking and doing in various locations.

Note

This chapter is based on Hekma, 'Kermis in Amsterdam'. The research was done in the International Institute for Social History where the archives of the NVSH and *Suck* are kept and based on interviews with people involved in the sexual underground. My thanks to Sasha Albert who helped with my thoughts and my language.