

*RED-LIGHT DISTRICT,
AMSTERDAM*

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ON LOCATION



PHOTO: SJORS SWIERSTRA

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A man at the bar, a camera, and a video monitor. Is a movie being shot here? Maybe it's a crime thriller. After all, the dimly lit bar is in Amsterdam's red-light district. Trouble's about to break out, because the film crew is looking to capture how crude jeering escalates into a fight. But the actors aren't doing a scene for an episode of *Law and Order*; they're here on behalf of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law in Freiburg.

Researchers from the Department of Criminology are also on site. At the Institute's MaxLab, researchers use this footage to study how people behave in violent situations like a brawl – and how they make decisions in the heat of the moment. To do this, participants at the MaxLab in Freiburg put on a VR headset that immerses them in the situation. That means the film sequence has to be recorded using a special technique to create a 360-degree shot; the screen in the foreground shows this.

Alongside smaller booths, MaxLab also has a large room where several people can interact in virtual reality at the same time. The researchers measure their reactions using eye-tracking, physiological measurements, biometric data, and surveys conducted in virtual reality. The research focuses in particular on the effects of anger and sexual arousal on aggression, as well as the behavior of bystanders. The findings could potentially improve police training and assist in the development of new security strategies.