

The International Conference "Centrality in The Age of Dispersion"

Understanding tactics and conflicts of urban marginalised women as facilitators to reclaim access to (im)mobile urban public spaces: Case studies from New Delhi and Hong Kong

This paper highlights the conflicts faced and the tactics adopted by urban marginalised women (UMW) while accessing central urban spaces in Asian global cities. By adopting qualitative methods of inquiry, comprising participant observations and semi-structured interviews, this paper reveals the issues concerning access to mobility and public spaces endured by two different groups of UMW. The first case focuses on the daily survival mobilities of UMW residing in the peri-urban areas of New Delhi. Within this context, women's mobility is impacted by the existing socio-cultural norms in addition to the non-inclusive spatial infrastructure of the city. Through this study, we highlight mobility as capacity, i.e., arising from the aspects of informality, the UMW use social interdependence to negotiate the socio-spatial exclusions and facilitate their daily mobility and access to otherwise inaccessible public spaces. The second case shares the endeavours of one of the largest dance groups funded by migrant domestic workers, low-income temporary live-in carers in Hong Kong. Zumba Feels taps into established power dynamics present in the oldest pedestrianised street in Hong Kong, Chater Road. We illustrate how the activities and space of one group co-exist with others and how the Zumba group's activities, sound and repeated occupation help to sustain UMW's presence and visibility in the city centre. Through these cases, the paper opens a discussion for leaving space in the city planning process for the emergence of bottom-up initiatives through (marginalised) stakeholder activities, thus making urban public spaces more inclusive.

Keywords: Gender and access, Conflicts, Urban spaces, Centre-periphery, Communities