

# Gender and The City

Building feminist geography approaches to public life surveys in urban India.

Made in collaboration with Safecity / Red Dot Foundation.

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*A young girl sits on the shoulders of her father during a demonstration at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, India in April 2018. Her placard reads: “**You should protect us, not hurt us.**”*

*Demonstrations like these sprang across India as a reaction to two cases of sexual violence: against a 17-year-old young woman from Unnao and the subsequent death of her father in police custody, and the kidnapping, torture and killing of just 8-year old Asifa Bano.*

*The perpetrators are yet to be convicted.*

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## Resumé

I dette speciale beskæftiger jeg mig med kønnede byrumsproblematikker i det urbane Indien. Med udgangspunkt i feministisk geografi og urban teori, anskueliggør jeg forskellige måder at tilgå spørgsmål omkring hvordan byrum bliver kønnede, heriblandt hvordan de bliver formet af område- og kulturspecifikke forhold.

Jeg understøtter specialets formål ved at inddrage erfaringer og refleksioner opnået igennem feltarbejde i New Delhi, Indien gennem 2018 og 2019. I marts 2018 undersøgte jeg unge Delhiite kvinders forhold til kønnet mobilitet og sikkerhed på en plads i Syddelhi, SDA Market. De indsigter jeg opnåede deraf, gjorde mig interesseret i forskellige tilgange til at måle værdien af byrum. Herfra blev jeg bekendt med Gehl Instituttets *Public Life Diversity Toolkit*, der med en række forskellige værktøjer kan bruges til at lave studier af byrum på tværs af landegrænser og kulturer. Med dette in mente satte jeg mig for at undersøge, om toolkittet var i stand til at give substantielle indsigter i kønsforhold i New Delhi i Indien. Jeg tog tilbage til SDA Market i oktober samme år, og testede toolkittet. Af dette feltarbejde kunne jeg konkludere, at toolkittets design ikke var i stand til at give substantielle indsigter i hvordan køn og rum medkonstituerer hinanden.

Ud fra denne observation besluttede jeg mig for at udvikle et toolkit med et specifikt sigte mod at kunne undersøge kønnede byrum. I samarbejde med frivillige fra den indiske NGO *Safecity – Red Dot Foundation*, udviklede og testede jeg i marts og april 2019 dette toolkit.

Dette speciale indeholder præsentationer af centrale bidrag fra den feministiske geografi og urbane studier med forskellige kønsfokus. Jeg understreger vigtigheden i at inddrage feministisk urban aktivisme og deres måder at undergrave heteropatriarkatet i det offentlige rum. Yderligere viser jeg hvordan kønnede rumligheder i Indien er problematiske i en kontekst af udbredt seksuel vold og misogyni. Som et hele søger mit speciale at bygge en bro mellem den feministiske geografis centrale argumenter, feministisk urban aktivisme i Indien og metodiske tilgange til byrumsstudier, med henblik på at kunne fremskrive hvordan feministisk kritik og byrumsmålinger kan møde hinanden.

# THESIS AND THE CITY

## *Acknowledgements*

I am immensely grateful to everyone who with their consent generously gave me their insights, stories and perspectives on urban gendered spatialities. Without them and their worldly presence my work would neither be fruitful or relevant. I dedicate this thesis to all of those who have walked home with a heartbeat faster than their foot pace, and who struggle to find their footing in the urban script. I hope the insights and provisions I have attempted to provide will make cities become yours too.

I thank *Safecity / Red Dot Foundation* for their eagerness in collaborating with me and for providing the support and sources that enabled me to conduct the last and most crucial part of testing the toolkit. I am especially grateful for the help carrying out the testing out the toolkit by a group of driven young women at Safecity; Vanshika, Mahua, Sanya, Anjali, Jyoti and Kajal. Finally, I want to thank my supervisor, Rasmus Christian Elling, who challenged my view of the urban with equal amounts of patience and support and taught me to look at the urban with my own eyes.

## *Introduction*

Throughout history, cities have been places for vibrant contestation and the claiming of rightful ownership for different groups of inhabitants. Great art and epic tales of the city have told the wide array of stories that the city has to offer. The megacities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century hold promises of being sites for societal equalizers as well as the site for opulent wealth and devastating poverty side by side. In the city, a plethora of urban realities coexist, and it is around these different experiences in and of the same urban setting I am setting the stage for my thesis.

If we want to understand what makes urban public spaces meaningful and fulfilling, we need to begin by understanding that spaces are experienced differently by everyone. Cities that do not take the human scale into account risk failing in areas of inclusivity and in providing its citizens with democratic opportunities. Here, a variety of identity-based factors are co-constitutive in shaping urban lives and everyday experiences. Gender is one of them. So why do aspects of gender politics matter for a city?

Gender inequality continues to shape and inform everyday lives of many women, queer people and other marginalized bodies in the city. This can be a consequence of ill-informed urban planning, but most often it arises from social structure issues informed by patriarchal power dynamics. Regardless of how or why gendered spatialities restrict lives, it remains the democratic right for everyone in a city to be able to partake in all it has to offer equally.

For different groups in a society, the process of gendering urban spaces takes on different forms according to the intersections of gender, sexuality, religion and in the case of India, caste. In order to combat this, marginalized groups must be enabled with the agency to advocate for themselves.

The question remains: how do we build a feminist city? It is by way of public design and urban facilities only, or does the project necessitate answers to questions of safety, mobility inclusivity which are only given value through subjective inputs? Can there be a bridge of sorts between urban planning and public life studies in the quest to make cities feminist?

In this thesis, I present the result of field work conducted in New Delhi, India in 2018 and 2019. The narratives from young women I interviewed in different contexts presented in this thesis are not purely anecdotal. They represent the perspectives, statistics and consequences of strong patriarchal societal power structures in India, which has resulted in skewed sex ratios, incomprehensive judicial

systems and legal structures as well as an almost crippling lack of city planning in modern urban India.

## **Research question**

In this thesis I explore what makes a city safe for women and what constitutes fulfilling cityscapes for women and marginalized bodies. My thesis takes on a multidimensional and cross-disciplinary approach in understanding what complicates urban life for women in India, and I explore the potential for user-generated urban space surveys with the aim of improving urban life quality. I inquire about the sentiments and emotional attachment related to human use of the city, as well as investigate the purpose and active use of technological tools and public space design solutions for urban improvement in a gendered optic. Furthermore, I highlight the key role and contributions made by grassroots activism in strengthening our understanding of the importance of why spatial politics matters in a gendered context.

This thesis employs data collected in 2018 and 2019 through multiple rounds of fieldwork conducted in New Delhi, India. The subsequent work of testing and editing an audit toolkit was made in collaboration with the organization *Safecity*, as well as with the help and input from a group of young women volunteers.

The outcome of this thesis is two-fold: to provide, through ethnographic data collection, insights into the everyday politics of gendered urban life in Delhi. Secondly, to prototype, test, and finalize a survey toolkit, which allows users interested in gendered spatial politics to investigate their surroundings. By testing and developing the toolkit on site along with analytical reflections on the methodological (dis)advantages of ways to conduct studies on gendered urban life and politics, this opens up to ways of improving existing methodological approaches to surveys of gendered/gendering spatialities.

In short, I seek to answer the questions of *how are gendered spatialities in urban India problematic from a perspective of feminist geography, and by way of this, what should public space surveys focusing on gender inequality look like?*

This thesis sits at the intersection between urban studies and feminist geography. I present a combination of descriptive and prescriptive potentials in order to bridge an understanding between

the general challenges of urban (im)mobility faced by young Delhiite women, the work specific practical and analytical considerations related to designing an audit toolkit with gendered politics. Furthermore, I critically approach urban space surveys and their potential for universal applicability through practical testing.

### **Rhetorical reflexivity and knowing one's own point of view**

In a critique of 'outsider ethnography' accounts being at fault for producing one-dimensional depictions of urban poor, Mario L. Small (1996-) raises some interesting and critical questions about the ethics of representation in urban ethnography (Small 2015). He argues that urban ethnographers provide two representations through their work: that of the observed and that of the observer. He posits that "though the ethnographer controls the writing both have an interest in the product." (Small 2015:352). The observed has a rightful stake in claiming fair and reflexive depiction, and the observer an interest in representing themselves as a particular kind of researcher be it reflexive, critical or insightful. By way of using the notion of exploitation – the gain of one at the premise of loss for another – Small argues that lack of representational reflexivity in urban ethnography runs the risk of inflicting rhetorical violence on the observed. Furthermore, Small present two ways ethnographers have chosen to represent themselves: as either the sympathetic/empathetic observer, or the courageous immersive (Small 2015:353). The sympathetic observer will "focus the gaze on those aspects of the people, institutions, or places likely to evoke pity, sorrow, or anger", highlighting those elements to a greater extent than others, allowing otherwise complex storytellings to "miss heterogeneity, and ignore people and institutions inconsistent with the view." (Small 2015:354). Sympathetic ethnographic depictions tend to foster stereotypes, placing the observed as a representation of a societal issue at the forefront, rather than multidimensional beings able to contradict and diversify ethnographic accounts. On the other hand, empathetic approaches to ethnographic representations seek to invoke notions of plausibility and familiarity with the reader in what would otherwise be portrayed as 'exotic'.

The 'courageous immersive' as a figure vocationally embodies the idea that "ethnographies are merely "reporting the facts" requires one (a) to believe that a single trait, violence, can capture either the essence of a neighborhood or the character of a population and (b) to presume that writing does not involve choice." (Small 2015:355). To Small, 'merely reporting the facts' is impossible

because she will inevitably have to create the very thing – the ethnographic account – intended to engage readers. In the words of Small: “For violence to sell, the ethnographer must create the product.” (Small 2015:356). This affects the way urban ethnographers narrate their accounts, often overemphasizing statistics of violence, and in turn downplay heterogeneity and scopes for agency and contestation.

In the optic of Small, it is up to the urban ethnographers herself to decide the mode of representation. The notion of “everydayness”, uncovering what lies within the plain sight of everyday life (Goffman 1959). Here, Small point to a tendency within urban ethnography to focus on urban middle-class whites, “as though ethnographers have seen in poor minorities little more than their poverty and their race.” (Small 2015:356), invoking a critique of their missing representation as more than the sum of their problems.

I position myself and this thesis within Small’s critique of ethnographic representation. However, I do not fully disregard the potential for employing various statistical accounts of a society in ethnographic accounts. In this thesis I employ statistics on national levels of violence against women in combination with case-based descriptions of violent instances in order to contextualize and embed my research question within India. Echoing the rhetorical representation critique of Small, I deliberately engage grassroot and activist work, voices and perspectives to the work of the thesis, due to two primary reasons. First of all, they possess crucial knowledge of everyday gendered interactions with various spaces. They are the “eyes on the street”, whereas crime statistics are canvasses for context. Secondly, we need to emphasize the narrative of agency of marginalized minorities in society otherwise deemed lacking it. There are certain similarities between the poor urban communities Small refers to, and the representation of women in India within the discourse of broad, public representation. Statistically, New Delhi might account for the highest rate of reported rape cases throughout India. That being said, however, it is crucial to understand how various socio-economic, religious, regional, gendered and cultural aspects shape, complicate and enrich lives of hundreds of millions of women in India in countless myriad of ways and intersections. In line with this, I intend to forward nuanced, people-based and critically reflexive accounts of gendered spatialities in India. I do this with the knowledge of my own position as a South Asianist researcher from a privileged, academic background, entering India from another subcontinent – both in terms of geography, as well as my background and the perspectives deriving from there.

For this thesis to matter, it is imperative to note that much empirical data on urban ethnography would not exist without the on-the-ground work and everyday struggles of activists and regular citizens alike. Academic research is fundamentally flawed without this acknowledgment.

## DESCRIPTION AND THE CITY

### **Feminist geography and urban studies**

Feminist geography offers insights into gender and body politics that are crucial as resources for improving urban spaces and lives. Through considerations and perspectives - particularly non-male – feminist geography can provide insights to better public design and urban planning outcomes. Planning and building better cities with this in mind would further address the need to engage a broad spectrum of urban populations. Furthermore, this accounts for urban ethnographers and urban planners alike. Within urban planning and urbanism, a vast majority of their contributors are from men. When American-Canadian urbanist Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) in 1961 published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she broke gendered ground in an otherwise overwhelmingly male-dominated world of urban planning. In her book, she introduces some of the key elements in contemporary urban theory, including the concept of “eyes on the street”, the human aspect of urban design and planning, and the joys of urban complexity (Jacobs 1992). A useful example of the overrepresentation of male contributions to urban studies would be this table of content from the 2016 edition of the Routledge City Reader<sup>1</sup>, where only four women contributors feature out of a total 66. Only 17 women made it to the crowdsourced list of *The 100 Most Influential Urbanists* in 2017<sup>2</sup>. In naming influential women contributors to urban studies and urban planning, we must not forget women contributors in their positions as mayors, urban studies teachers, urban lives NGO workers and activists, who already contribute to urban improvement, yet receive a dismal amount of due acknowledgment. So why does a broad representation in urban studies and planning matter? If we secure diversity in our conversations about city-making, we ensure a basis for intersectional, heterogenous and diverse urban lives to be thought after and potentially lived. And if we acknowledge that women’s rights are human rights, by this measure the feminist city is a city made with equality in mind – albeit not every female body will be a feminist mind, women’s urban experiences project valuable insights which reach far beyond their male peers. The further we delve into intersectional urban interactions, the richer our understanding of what makes cities inclusive, meaningful and democratic becomes and the more comprehensive our urban planning approaches

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[https://books.google.co.in/books?id=0AMtCgAAQBAJ&dq=urban+planning+reader&q=table+of+contents&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=table%20of%20contents&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=0AMtCgAAQBAJ&dq=urban+planning+reader&q=table+of+contents&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=table%20of%20contents&f=false)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.planetizen.com/features/95189-100-most-influential-urbanists>

can be thought of. In order to get there, we must take into account some key contributions of central women figures of feminist geography.

Spatial theory pioneer Doreen Massey (1944-2016) introduced her conceptualization of space in terms of social relations, with three distinct aspects in mind. According to Massey, space is never a static backdrop onto which social life happens. Rather, it is continuously under dynamic construction and a product of socially interrelated global as well as distinctly local features (Massey 2007). In Massey's understanding, the spatial is social relations "stretched out" (Massey 2007:2). Space and gender, then, is continuously dialectically constructed. Through this understanding, we are able to uncover the connection between spatial and social power, and thereby deconstruct their connection to gendered spatialities and power relations. Power relations and positionality becomes visible through the social relations of space, because they are experienced and interpreted differently according to who is experiencing it (Massey 2007:3). The spatial, then, is a site for the shifting geometries of social power and meaning.

Massey is highly relevant in this context because she invokes the discussions of cultural specificities of gender definition through the scope of real-world geographies. This poses the question of whether public space surveys and toolkits can be universally designed and applied, or if they should be designed with local specifics in mind. To Massey, geography crucially matters in the construction of gender, and geographical variation plays a significant role in in the (re)production of uneven development, as well as imaginative geographies (Massey 2007:2). Social relations everywhere are made from power, symbolism and meaning, and since the spatial is a site for constant shifts in power and significance, social relations of space will inevitably be experienced and interpreted differently by those in different positions of power within it (Massey 2007:178). In this sense, gender deeply informs the production of the geographical. The ways in which space and gender intersect are multifaceted, and each are involved in the construction of the other.

Spaces in and of themselves are not gendered. Rather, they affect and reflect how gender is constructed and interpreted. In the pursuit for gender equality, spatial interrogations of gendered power relations reveal exclusion, silencing, subjugation and violence. Interrogating the variable construction of gender relations according to different localities, cultural contexts and spaces, is important not only to uncover geographical variations, but to underline the necessity for an anti-essentialist approach to urban theory. This enables the potential for undoing the arguments which depend on attributions of specific 'natural' characteristic of men and women. Mapping geographical

variation underscores the socially constructedness of gender and space. It critically alerts us, that what it means to be a woman in India does not translate equally to what it means to be a woman in Denmark. Furthermore, and highly important, what it means to be an upper-caste Hindu woman in India is nowhere near the same as being a Dalit, Muslim woman in India.

The experiences of and in urban space are additionally related to perception. Anthropologist Setha Low (1948-) argues that perception as a psychosomatic act can only be experienced through the body (Low 2017). In this understanding, the act of walking offers an embodied experience founded in the social relationship between self and the environment. The saying “to walk a mile in another man’s shoes” recalls this notion. Walking, however, is more than placemaking. Reminded of Massey’s co-constitutive relationship between space and social relations, Low argues that movements in space generate knowledge from the interaction between bodies and the act of moving (Low 2017). Bodies, here, become a sort of reader of an urban script. This process of embodying space, intentionally or unintentionally, can open up spaces for political potentialities and social movements. Low argues that embodied space provides a strategy for “integrating the social production and social construction conceptual frames by locating space in bodies, individual, collective, human and nonhuman, in such a way that the materiality of the body and the body knowledge and cognition are recognized as equally important to understanding space and place from an ethnographic point of view” (Low 2017:118).

Departing from the critique posited by Jacobs, feminist geographers began offering critiques of the apparent lack of women perspectives in the field, and how this subsequently contributed to a production of inaccurate stereotypes. Linda McDowell (1949-), a key figure in feminist geography, describes the urban as a spatial scale from where gender could be experienced and analyzed, apart from being a framework in which social and economic aspects of human life could be studied (McDowell 1983). The urban becomes a focal context from where to study the everyday lives of women, now as visible actors in urban life.

Part of this visibility-making of spatial processes points to a helpful use of the verb “gendering” of spaces, to accompany than the adjective form. Supporting the position of Massey, feminist researcher Shilpa Ranade (1966-) emphasizes this position by situating her argument within the constant becoming of gender and space as part of a particular discursive construction (Ranade 2017:1519). Similarly, Fran Tonkiss (1958-) conceptualizes the correlative relationship between social dynamics and space. Tonkiss points to how a multiplicity of embodied factors will inform

how spatial and social dynamics mutually constitute each other. To her, gender and sexuality become visible in the urban through the “symbolic coding of spaces, through modes of spatial practice and interaction, in terms of material divisions and exclusions in space, and in the ‘micro-geographies’ of the body” (Tonkiss 2014:111). These ‘micro-geographies’ of the body reference the personal and become spatially political. To engage with gender in the city is to turn attention towards the material ways cities and urban experiences shape bodies. Tonkiss and Massey are aligned in their approach to urban gendered/gendering spatialities as the interaction between spatial practice, social difference and symbolic associations.

In the context of my thesis, these positions make me ask how bodies become located within these social structures and relations, and in extension of this – how can we *see* gender as a social factor, rather than a subjective detail?

As social and material relations, gender leaves imprints on urban space and urban processes. These reflections are not merely questions of what kind of body walks down the street, but in addition they are intimately tied to the social and physical environments they inhabit and simultaneously produce. According to Tonkiss, examining the spatial impacts of urban subjective identities and relations necessitates inquiry into the meaning, the use and the shape of urban space. How is the meaning of urban space composed around gendered bodies and the representation of women in the modern city? How are women’s spatial practices and their gendered use of the city constrained by geographies of violence and fear? By turning towards these questions, we can attempt to unsettle normalized conceptions of social space.

By engaging these questions, we begin to understand how the city can be a potential site for freedom. Because the figure of the woman in public has been historically associated with meanings of desire or danger, the very presence of women in public signaled women out of place, women in the process of potentially unsettling a prevailing sense of social order. Women have progressively paved the way for spaces of urban resistance and alterity. But as cities became places for women to obtain social and spatial liberties, they additionally gave way for political visibility – and even to some extent spaces which offered the pleasures of anonymity (Tonkiss 2014). The dichotomy of being able to see and go unseen is not only important to women’s freedom, but to their safety as well. Gender inequalities in cities are often most visible through violence against women. In societal and cultural contexts where women are not denied access to public spaces, logics of sexual domination and patriarchal power structures will inevitably prevail, informing and shaping many

women's perceptions of urban freedom of movement and mobility. As Tonkiss argues, "the gendering of space becomes especially evident in this geography of danger, as women's fear of male violence is manifested as a fear of space" (Tonkiss 2014:95). As I demonstrate later, this was the case with many of the young Delhiite women I interviewed during my fieldwork.

McDowell and Massey concur that spaces imbue particular meanings for particular bodies. In addition, they argue that different times of day affect how we appropriate space (McDowell 1999, Massey 2007). Spatial dynamics change with the movement of the sun, and busy *bazaars* or *chowks* change meaning after sunset. New Delhi goes to sleep early. Not much takes place after midnight. Since this is a shared understanding between the inhabitants of the city, roaming the streets after midnight means being out of place, either in experiencing or in providing a sense of 'danger' or discomfort, according to where your body is placed in the socio-spatial script.

Liz Bondi & Damaris Rose, as part of their research on the geographies of women's fears in urban spaces have been particularly prone to represent women as overly constrained by their use of space. Thus, movements within urban spaces result mainly from fear and concern about personal safety (Bondi & Rose 2010). They describe two mismatches in the depiction of gender and risk in urban spaces: Typically, elderly women belong to the demographic group showing the highest levels of fear will statistically be at the lowest risk of experiencing it. Secondly, while many women will associate fear of violence to strangers in public spaces, they are far more at risk of experiencing violence in domestic spaces by men familiar to them. Bondi and Rose suggest that these two factors have been constitutive in denigrating women by implying that the exclusionary and constraining effects of fear are the product of women's inherent 'irrationality' (Bondi & Rose 2010). Falling in line with this thinking, women are doubly victimized in being constrained by these fears, as well as the apparent irrationality of them. Research taking this as a point of departure question the definitions of violence, and argue that patterns of fear are gendered in that they reflect and encompass women's exposure to verbal and gestural assaults as distributive effects of fear (Bondi & Rose 2010). The capacity to use, claim and occupy urban space cannot be understood properly without this problematic conjunction of (mis)recognition. I argue that there is a certain type of fear to be critiqued, which relates to heteronormativity and safety – a binary, which translates into either "safe" or "unsafe". In order to understand what makes a space 'feel' safe or unsafe, we need to

absolve these binary definitions of fear itself, to go beyond the 'loss of safety' and include aspects such as micro-planning of outings, concerns in cars with unknown drivers etc.

Bondi & Rose highlight the importance of a commitment to work across analytical divides, which show the relationship between affective experiences of urban space and the simultaneous makings of them. Within this, it is important to understand how cities can disadvantage and constrain women, as well as offer spaces for liberation, contestation and the enabling of normative expectations (Bondi & Rose 2010). Recent feminist geography studies indicates a shift beyond dualistic research approaches towards the employment of both qualitative as well as quantitative research methods in feminist public life studies. These methodological re-envisionings suggest a move towards a tactic of involving spatial users, coupled with advocating the provision of such data to urban policy makers and stakeholders. Engaging in a partnership with *Safecity / Red Dot Foundation* is an expression of the same. I argue that the value of ethnographic data and research is not only crucial for local stakeholders, but the politics of feminist geography drives the argument for data sharing.

# TOOLKITS AND THE CITY

## Why make a toolkit?

Applying a toolkit to measure the quality of public life such as featured in this thesis is important in that it highlights context-based data and user reflections. I argue that in order to manage or improve something, you must be able to measure it. Surveys on gendered spatialities are inherently political, and with them they carry the potential to engage their users in a sense of agency and ownership of the space in which the toolkit is employed. Making public life surveys on gendered spatialities becomes feminism in practice.

Spaces are always in a state of becoming, and similarly, human spatial organizations are an ongoing production (Lefebvre 1991). In her studies of mapping techniques applied in Mumbai, Ranade points to the conceptual limitations of mapping strategies due to their inability to reflect the discursive constructedness of gendered space and the social fabric. By focusing on how different bodies locate themselves in and move through spaces in everyday negotiations of space, she was able to demonstrate how women's bodies code the social space as particularly gendered, and the capacity to negotiate these gendered codes varied according to socio-economic status, caste and class (Ranade 2007).

Making public space surveys to improve public spaces is an ongoing process of city-making. According to David Harvey (1935-), there is a powerful potential in the dialectic between cityscapes and citizen participation. He notes that "As we collectively produce our cities, so we collectively produce ourselves ... [if] we accept that 'society is made and imagined', then we can also believe that it can be 'remade and reimagined' (Harvey 2000). Harvey's words also evoke Massey's notion of the mutually constitutive relationship between space and social life. Using user-generated and crowd-sourced public space surveys such as the Gehl *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* as a proxy to determine what constitutes safer and more inclusive urban spaces, allows us to think of radically improved cities. Employing these surveys in democratic city-making processes suggests spatial ownership to its users.

Reaching comprehensive and meaningful answers to the question of what makes a city safe for women necessitates direct involvement and proactive participation of the users of a space. In the context of my thesis, I involve young middle-class women students in New Delhi. The scope of my

thesis is to demonstrate the useful links between theoretical approaches to gender and space, and field work-based ethnography on gendered spatialities.

Invoking the argument of Bondi and Rose in their attention towards the potential for the city in being both the site for restriction as well as liberation for women, I argue that women are not silent spectators to their exclusions or discomfort in public urban spaces. In their everyday lives, they make calculated and informed decisions about choices and mobility. Urban planning solutions are too often dislocated from the knowledge provided directly by user experiences and will therefore will not sufficiently improve the lives of citizens. Public life studies and tools for measuring urban problematics are crucial in providing local stakeholders with this data.

### **Gehl Institute Public Life Survey toolkits and recommendations**

My previous work on practical uses of feminist geography led me to investigate the public life surveys of famed Danish architecture and urban planning company, Gehl Architects. Since the 1970's and onwards, they have held a key position in practices of urban space studies with a social focus, particularly by way of their *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* – a universally applicable toolkit for measuring the qualities of urban spaces. The key characteristic of their work is an approach to urban planning from a “human scale” through incorporating the value of both social life and social mixing in their public life studies. Hence, their work employs both qualitative as well as quantitative data collection methods, though the strongest emphasis remains on the latter.

Quantitative data methodologies tend to favor predictability. Here, urban life ethnography poses certain difficulties. “Like with weather, life is difficult to predict” (Gehl & Svarre 2013:2) company partners and urban planners Gehl and Svarre reflect in the introduction to their seminal book *How To Study Public Life* (2013). They point towards the value of qualitative ethnographic methods such as long-term and in-depth methods of ethnographic research methodologies in providing findings with important and reflexive nuances on the link between social relations and space. Measuring and qualifying social dynamics in urban spaces requires participant involvement such as interviews or participant ethnography (walking or go-along ethnography, questionnaires, workshops etc.). In the *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* by Gehl Institute however, qualitative data is seen as difficult or overly time consuming in terms of quantifying and data processing. Furthermore, in their optic the person conducting the public life survey will run a risk of disturbing or ‘polluting’ the space which (s)he is

observing by remaining too long in or interacting too much with it (Gehl Institute 2016:47). However, interfering with your field is an undeniable consequence of engaging with it. However, in doing so I argue for the enriching, rather than restraining potentials through critical reflections of one's own positionality within the survey.

The discussion around how to engage in a field ignites the conversation about relationship between design and applicability of a toolkit. Is it possible to design public life surveys and toolkits that are globally applicable? Are there methodological needs for localized designs, and if so, how to incorporate them? As a universally applicable survey method, a sort of "one-size-fits-all", will potentially produce ethnographic accounts lacking depth in understanding the socio-cultural specificities of a spatial context. As argued earlier, access to and experiences of a space greatly vary according to embodiment and local context, and it is therefore vital to incorporate such reflexivity designing a survey structure.

These considerations lead us to consider the advantages and shortcomings of quantitative versus qualitative research methodologies, as well as locally-specific and universally applicable surveys. What can they speak of individually, and what are the potentials for the combination of both? In my thesis, I approach these questions through the development and subsequent testing of a toolkit designed to specifically engage with questions of gendered/gendering spaces and their impact on social relations and individual mobility.

As she describes the advancement of feminist geography methodologies, McDowell reflects on potential for a specifically feminist way of 'administering' a questionnaire. In her optic, the idea of remaining distant to a research 'subject' for the fear of bias and contamination, goes against the grain of the feminist movement she was part of in shaping feminist geography (McDowell 2004). As a strategy, collaboration became a central part of the feminist research strategy.

### **Multilateral commitment to safe and inclusive cities**

In recent years, global awareness on the connections between urban spaces and gender (in)equality has been increasing, along with a component of multilateral initiatives and policy making. In 2017, the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) was adopted by the UN as a policy vision and point of entry to achieve and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in cities and municipalities

around the world. By including gender equality on the urban agenda – essentially combining SDG number 5 and 11 - , the NUA advocates for the fostering of feelings of belonging and ownership in their living spaces regardless of gender, and to promote and provide gender-responsive planning and investments in safe and accessible urban spaces for all. Their vision was to commit to urban development from a human-centered perspective with gender-responsive and rights-based approaches (United Nations 2017). Recently a UN-published guide to architecturally implementing the SDG's featured gender equality and the urban as a central focus point. In it, they argue that in order to support the movement towards gender equality “the design of buildings, settlements and urban areas must be inclusive to all citizens regardless of gender” (United Nations 2018:45). On Women's International Day in March 2019, a joint declaration by the mayors of Mexico City, Montreal and Barcelona announced their pledge as city administrators to work for improving their cities in terms of inclusion, access and safety<sup>3</sup>. This is an example of government approaches to inclusive city-making, which will often allow grassroots organizations and civil rights movements to contribute with input and alliance-building as the need for implementing gender equality in urban public policies is becoming universally acknowledged.

## India and New Delhi

Gender inequality in India is woven into much of the social fabric and ingrained in strong patriarchal structures which transcend the intersections of religion, caste and socio-economic factors. In 2018, India was named the most dangerous country in the world for women. Seven years before that, it ranked number four (Thomson Reuters 2018<sup>4</sup>). The survey methodology included 548 expert voices on women's issues, placing India at the highest ranking according to three topic questions: risk of sexual violence and harassment for women, the danger women face from cultural, tribal and traditional practices, and through living in a country where women are most in danger of human trafficking, including forced labor, sex slavery and domestic servitude. In the survey, the category of ‘culture and religion’ included acid attacks, female genital mutilation, forced marriage,

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/right-city-women-joint-declaration-mayors-mexico-city-montreal-and-barcelona-women-s-day?fbclid=IwAR1l6qi8c3NOONRszZTZyy3gGoF\\_-qECBYsj03pnvogJu9cgNSZCD9Br-io](https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/right-city-women-joint-declaration-mayors-mexico-city-montreal-and-barcelona-women-s-day?fbclid=IwAR1l6qi8c3NOONRszZTZyy3gGoF_-qECBYsj03pnvogJu9cgNSZCD9Br-io) (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>4</sup> <http://poll2018.trust.org/country/?id=india> (accessed 31/05/2019)

punishment/retribution through stoning and/or physical abuse or mutilation, and female infanticide/feticide. The ‘sexual violence’ category includes rape as a weapon of war, domestic rape, rape by a stranger, lack of access to justice in rape cases, sexual harassment and coercion into sex as a form of corruption<sup>5</sup>.

In the span of these two surveys, a particularly gruesome case of sexual violence shook the nation. In 2012, a young woman in New Delhi boarded a private bus outside a mall after having gone to the cinema with a male friend. On board, she was gang raped and mutilated, and weeks later she succumbed to her injuries. The perpetrators were migrant workers living in the outskirts of the city. This became a watershed moment in the history of violence of women in urban settings in India, and the victim, Jyoti Singh Pandey, henceforth became known as *Nirbhaya*, meaning ‘fearless’ in Hindi. When the news of the crime broke, a substantial part of the population subsequently demanded legal reforms to ensure tough punishments for cases of violence against women. Many activists saw in the moment an opportunity to encourage conversations about dire needs for societal change to ensure fundamental rights for women and girls throughout the country. Following this, a group of legal experts, known as the Verma Committee was put in place by the government to assess possible amendments to the legal and judicial system of India (Verma, Seth & Subramaniam 2013). As result the Verma Committee made a series of recommendations, to name a few, on longer prison sentences for sexual offences, on police reforms to ensure properly trained staff, a Bill of Rights for women, and the proper registration of rape complaints to the police. Since these recommendations came of being, stricter sexual assault laws have emerged, and recently four federal states introduced capital punishment for the rape of minors below 12 years of age.

The Nirbhaya rape pointed towards a lack of sufficient public transportation, after which the public Transportation Department of Delhi NCR subsequently committed to increasing the fleet of public buses, as well as to improve the service response of these. However, the prevalence of harassment on board public buses remained an issue. According to a survey conducted in 2018 by Ola Mobility Institute and Centre for Social Research, only 9% of women in Indian cities overall feel completely safe in public transport<sup>6</sup>. In the same survey, 77% noted that last mile connectivity was lacking, and 80% replied they felt unsafe using public transportation at night. In New Delhi, while the metro system is high frequency in capacity, it does not operate post-midnight adding to nighttime mobility

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<sup>5</sup> <http://poll2018.trust.org/methodology/> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>6</sup> [https://olawebcdn.com/ola-institute/ola\\_women\\_and\\_mobility.pdf](https://olawebcdn.com/ola-institute/ola_women_and_mobility.pdf) (accesses 31/05/2019)

issues. And though the metro network has a far reach, the lack of last-mile connectivity is further complicated with a severely lacking, and most often completely absent, provision of sidewalks rendering reaching one's destination dangerous due to traffic and uncomfortable at night on poorly lit streets.

Resulting from the recommendations by the Verma Committee, the New Delhi police introduced women's help desks with women officers staffed along with a dedicated women's service helpline<sup>7</sup>. While these provisions are necessary, they mostly target instances of assault or violence after they occur. As I will demonstrate through interview accounts later, while the knowledge of police presence in an urban setting can provide a sense of security to some, the opposite would be the case to others with an attitude of disregard towards police authorities. Pragmatic solutions such as increased provision of police presence as an amendment to the improvement of public spaces in a gender optic is neither a sustainable nor comprehensive approach.

Crimes against women in India tend to go vastly underreported. This is related to a complicated matrix of issues such as, but not limited to, police insensitivity, a prevalent culture of shame and victim-blaming, as well as an inefficient and pressed-for-resources judicial system. Recent analysis point to rape cases as accounting for around 12% of all crimes against women in India. The average rate of reported rape cases was in 2018 6,3:100,000, with New Delhi showing an increased ratio of 22,5: 100,000. The same analysis with data from National Family Survey and the National Crime Records Bureau showed that a startling 99,1% of sexual violence cases go unreported. This is most strongly reflected in cases where the victim will know the perpetrator. Comparatively, in cases of violence from strangers the level of unreported crime is reported to be 15%<sup>8</sup>.

The low levels of crime reporting might be connected to a low level of conviction rates. In 2016, the national conviction rate for all crimes against women was 19%. The same year, 1/3 of all reported rape cases were still pending investigation by the police authorities. Similarly, out of all pending investigations, crimes against women accounted for 1/3, with New Delhi accounting for a

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2013/01/urban-plannings-role-making-india-safer-women/4456/> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/AV3sIKoEBAGZozALMX8THK/99-cases-of-sexual-assaults-go-unreported-govt-data-shows.html> (accessed 31/05/2019)

discerningly 62% percentage of all these cases<sup>9</sup>. Stricter legislation with harsher punishments to follow may have led to an increase in reporting but failed to transpire to a higher conviction rate.

Since Nirbhaya, New Delhi received the dubious title as the “rape capital” of India<sup>10</sup>. As the brutal circumstances of the rape case became high-profile media content in India as well as internationally additionally, the conversations about gender violence in urban spaces were revived, and subsequently became the site for new and critical research on gendered spatialities in South Asia. But to many young women in urban India, it became eerily easy to identify with Jyoti Singh; student, going to the cinema, taking a bus, being a woman.

### **Skewed sex-ratio**

One of the factors in the Thomson Reuters survey which indicated dire living conditions for women in India was female infanticide and feticide. Female feticide – sex-selective abortion practice due to male child preferences – has subsequently caused a declining rate of female population and a skewed sex ratio in the country<sup>11</sup>. The birth of a girl child advances the need for dowry upon marriage and is therefore viewed as a financial burden for the family she is born into. Sex-selective based abortion is practiced even with gender-determining ultrasound scans are banned nationwide, and there is an existing cottage industry despite the ban to accommodate an apparent demand for such a service.

Up to 700,000 female fetuses aborted in India each year. In 2017, there were about 30 million more men than women. The reason being sex-selective abortions, but other factors such as medical and nutritional neglect as well as female infanticide. In 1994, it became illegal for medical professionals to inform the sex of the fetus upon conducting ultrasound examinations (Hudson & den Boer 2004). The preference for a male child stems from the perception of him as the breadwinner in the family as well as a retirement insurance for parents at their old age. The ongoing, although increasingly diminishing and now banned, practice of dowry as a socio-economic phenomenon also plays a role in preferring the male child. Furthermore, sex-selection based abortions are also a socio-economic issue, mostly prevalent in middle-class urban communities with a financial access to illegal abortion services.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://thewire.in/society/a-closer-look-at-statistics-on-sexual-violence-in-india> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/ncrb-data-reinforces-delhi-s-rape-capital-tag-city-tops-in-crimes-against-women/story-APb3zjxQWw3nRkeJITE8oN.html> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Femalefoeticideworldwide.pdf> (accessed 31/05/2019)

## *Why Loiter?*

In academia as well as public and political discourse, the last two decades have increasingly seen an emphasis on raising critical questions on the relationship between urban spaces and sexual violence against women and girls in urban South Asia. In the Indian context, these discussions focus on various notions of gendered (un)safety/protection, civil rights and the right to unlimited mobility, and they investigate different intersections of gender, age, body, sexuality, religion, class/caste (Krishnaraj 2009, Chakravarty & Negi 2016, Ranade 2007, Vishwanath & Mehrotra 2007, Eagle 2015, Phadke 2007, 2013 (a), 2013 (b)). In 2011, Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade published their seminal work *Why Loiter? Women & Risk on Mumbai Streets*. The book is the culmination of years of urban ethnography projects in Mumbai, and it addresses issues of gendered spatial life, politics and violence on a national level with impressive ease. The authors argue that heteropatriarchal social structures inform urban planning, public design, livelihoods and urban social dynamics, which can be read through particular modes of gendered urban behavior and spatial practices. An example hereof is how temporal changes can gender a space: it might feel comfortable or safe at day, but is complicated after sunset. Embedding these critical themes into a wider context of urban life politics, Phadke, Khan and Ranade raise the radical potentials for the act of *loitering*, or claiming the right to loiter, as an inherent political act of resistance towards gendered spatial politics and heteronormative perceptions who gets to lay claim of the streets and cityscapes (Phadke, Ranade & Khan 2011). In their optic, loitering holds the promise for a radically different way of inhabiting public spaces “where one might stretch one’s body rather than contain it, where one’s body language might express pleasure in public space rather than an awareness of its boundaries.” (Phadke, Khan & Ranade 2011:279-280). Loitering as a feminist act or tactic playfully, but willful, disturbs the idea of what “good women” are like in the heteropatriarchy. Furthermore, access to public space, for most women, and particularly in their function as workers, professionals or consumers, is often based on conditional access rather than a democratic rights to the city. Loitering as an anti-neoliberal activity disrupts the idea of citizens as valuable only in their capacities as contributors to capitalist production.

## *Why is the urban important in India?*

### *India and the Smart Cities Mission*

In 2050, 53% of India's population will live in urban areas<sup>12</sup>. An economically as well as ecologically challenged and battered agricultural industry in the countryside leave many with the dream to pursue financially improved lives in the cities. According to the 2011 Census, there were approximately 139 million internal migrants in the country<sup>13</sup>. In order to accommodate this urban population influx and growth, the Government of India in 2015 launched the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) as an urban renewal and retrofitting programme for 100 cities across the country. The Union Ministry of Urban Development together with state governments holds the responsibility for implementing the directives of the programme, which – not particularly elaborated. – advocate for citizen participation as a way of building networks to ensure interaction between different users of the city. As part of this, the SCM includes the aim to ensure “safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elders<sup>14</sup>. The SCM is a technocratic mode of governance, sometimes referred to as new urban colonialism, which highlights technology-based solutions in smart city urban development. This is complicated in an urban democracy context as access to technology-based urban provisions are dependent on class and socio-economic aspects. Furthermore, there is a risk of too great a distance between issue and proposed solution, failing to implement local knowledges and contexts. This can produce two complications: by generalizing products across cityscapes, not taking into account local realities and knowledges. When there is a big distance between planning and execution then the tendency is often to see a dissonance in implementation as well as a weak point of departure for the projected efficiency of the ‘solution’ at hand. Top-down solutions tend to disregard grassroots activism and activist-led innovations, and it becomes an urban activist task to ensure that large capital interests are not allowed to determine the human scale of urban life through this suggested technocratic mode of governance. I offer a way of thinking about bridging the gap between urban activism and local government urban improvement approaches. By using a toolkit as a way of producing information from the ground itself, is perhaps a way to make urban renewal projects better equipped to reflect the actual social content of a space.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA%20Profile\\_combined.pdf](https://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA%20Profile_combined.pdf) (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census\\_2011.html](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census_2011.html) (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/smart-cities-mission-step-towards-smart-india> (accessed 31/05/2019)

## *From flâneur to flâneuse*

Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the figure of the *flâneur* found its place in popular culture and writings about the city. In her book *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (Elkin 2016), Lauren Elkin argue that the word, *flânerie*, the act of aimless walking in the city, and the person doing it, the *flâneur*, have since its literary inception largely been a male figure. Her feminist critique of the *flâneur* revolves around the inherent male privilege of being able to walk and inhabit the city with equal amounts of ability to uncompromised see and be seen (Elkin 2015). Returning to the idea of walking as a way of inscribing meaning to the city, Elkin posits about the *flâneur* as a “figure of masculine privilege and leisure, with time and money and no immediate responsibilities to claim his attention, the *flâneur* understands the city as few of its inhabitants do, for he has memorized it with his feet.” (Elkin 2016: 3). Subverting this, Elkin suggests the *flâneuserie* is a move from women being looked at to becoming the active one looking, thereby asserting a sense of subjectivity. The feminist subversion potential lies in that “rather than wandering aimlessly, like the *flâneur*, the most salient characteristic of the *flâneuse* is that she goes where she’s not supposed to.” (Elkin 2016:10).

As long as there have been cities, women have been in them. In and about the city, they have reflected on their presence in and entanglements with it. Elkin alerts us, that if we assume there could be no *flâneuse* because she has not been a female *flâneur*, limits the ways in which women have interacted with cities to the ways in which men have (Elkin 2015). The pleasures of the city do not belong to men, but to all its inhabitants, human and non-human, alike – and interrogating the restrictions and inhibitions women have experienced in urban life necessitates a reconfiguration of gendered relationships with cities. As I will demonstrate, cities in South Asia are slowly, but surely, seeing the emergence of figures like the *flâneuse*, urban loiterers and girls drinking political *chay*.

Cities matter because they have been and will continue to be places for political dynamism, opportunities and contestation. Cities matter because they are made from streets, parks, bazaars and crosswalks where women walk and spend time, where they are not supposed to. Cities become backdrops for new urban scripts to be walkingly written, and where new routes offer alternative and potentially liberating subjectivities. Elkin argues that “it’s the center of cities where women have been empowered, by plunging into the heart of them, and walking where they’re not meant to. Walking where other people (men) walk without eliciting comment. That is the transgressive act.”

(Elkin 2016:20). After all, “You don’t need to crunch around in Gore-Tex to be subversive, if you’re a woman. Just walk out your front door.” (Elkin 2016:20)

## Activism and the city

I have previously argued that cities are places for feminist contestation and sites for liberation struggles. In the following, I highlight feminist activist contributions in India to the ongoing project of making cities inclusive and safe. As a backdrop, I introduce discussions linking the local particularities of feminist urbanism to global conversations of feminist tactics.

To Massey, localities are produced by the intersection of local and global processes. In this understanding, social relations operate at a range of spatial scales. She refers to this notion as ‘a global sense of place’ (Massey 2007). The way socio-spatial relations intersect are constitutive in shaping them, making it increasingly more difficult to term places ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’. Spaces as relational places made by social relations, are able to connect the local to the global in various ways for different inhabitants. However, localized factors such as institutional structures, customs and cultural codes still impact the way places are “set” in time and space (McDowell 2004). To better understand this, she points toward the ‘cultural turn’ in feminist geography. Here, the focus changes from an emphasis on material gender inequalities to a converging interest in representations and meanings of gender, of symbolism and language, of identity and the sexed body (McDowell 2004).

In this understanding, gender appears as a set of material relations and as symbolic meanings, which cannot be separated. I argue that the scope for feminist geography is to illustrate how gender differences are a central organizing principle in the construction of social power, in the production of subjectivity, and self-identities. Feminist geography is a way to make gender and spatial divisions visible and, perhaps most importantly, to challenge their naturalness and how they continuously construct each other. In employing feminist geography methodologies to urban analysis, there is a cross-cultural element since clear geographies of gender relations become visible in the multiple expressions of gender relations between nations, continents and cultures. The aim is to examine the ways in which men and women experience spaces differently, which includes

making geographical comparisons of the various differences in gender divisions, women's autonomy and subordination. Constructing these gender geographies according to McDowell "calls attention to the significance of place, location and cultural diversity" (McDowell 2004:12). Mapping how gender inequalities and patriarchy shape social and spatial relations in India is necessary not only to envision improvements, but coupled with comparative accounts is a vital part of destabilizing ideas of anything "natural" or essential about localized gender violence, when it is, in fact, a global epidemic, only outlined in different shapes and forms.

Urban feminist activism, in India as well as internationally, calls for the undoing of legislation and discourses of moral worth, which divide citizens into worthy and non-worthy respectively. Public spaces are important feminist battlegrounds in that they host the place where idealized versions of "right" can be challenged. The activist's projects I present in the following chapters represent the undoing of heteronormative, socially constructed representations of women in India. Through subverting the meaning given to everyday gendered spatial practices, they take their fight for equality and rights to the city out in the streets.

### *What has tea got to do with it?*

In 2015 a group of young Pakistani women and non-binary people from Karachi started a social media campaign by posting images and selfies on platforms such as Tumblr and Instagram. The pictures showed a figure, Sadia Khatri, amongst others, casually drinking tea at roadside *dhabas* (small, usually tin-roofed eatery). In a matter of weeks, they had gained an online momentum and began posting their pictures from a platform, which they named *Girls At Dhabas*. What made this seemingly mundane event stand out and grab the attention of many, was the fact that it uncovered the taken-for-granted maleness of drinking tea at *dhabas* and other public places. In fact, their online campaign highlighted the juxtaposition of something so ingrained in everyday life, and the many ways it was out of the ordinary for the women now conducting online feminist activism over tea.

That same year I would get to know Sadia (identifying with the pronouns 'them/they) virtually as I conducted a Skype-interview with them. They were in Karachi, I was in New Delhi. They told me how their project hoped to see more women and non-binary people partaking in public life, on the streets and at various places where they otherwise - in a patriarchal spatial understanding - would

not be thought to take up place. What became interesting for Sadia was how *Girls At Dhabas* made them introspect about the ways and manners of how they themselves would occupy certain spaces. It made them be acutely aware of their spatial limitations and of how they would carry their body physically in certain spaces, either with relief or with restraint which would depend on their company or sense of self-strength that day. These moments of self-unravelling were liberating as Sadia realized how and why they would feel certain ways at certain moments in certain spaces, and simultaneously inescapably confining: “knowing how and why one feels oppressed or limited does not necessarily forever unlock the sense of (self)restraint” they explained to me.

This sense of uncomfortability partly stems from a lack of female presence, a social mixing issue common in most of urban South Asia. Without the ability to mirror one’s own presence in urban space through others, it becomes difficult to use or inhabit a space without a sense of being represented by the presence of others. Within South Asia, these great differences in the social composition of urban spaces transcends spaces of different socio-economic and culturally markings.

Access to public spaces in most of South Asia is closely linked to socio-economic status, religion and gender. Apart from demonstrating proper belonging in the private spaces, there is a tendency to demand women in South Asia producing a respectable purpose in public spaces (Phadke, Ranade & Khan 2011). Visibly indicating purpose can include holding an office briefcase whilst waiting at a bus stand late at night or conducting a phone call when spending time in a park. This strategic performance of gender is a way not only to demonstrate purpose of presence, but also a way of gaining access. These markings have the potential to create spheres of private or domesticated looking spaces around women, making this transgression possible, making sure their bodies are ‘read right’ according to the gendered dynamics of the space and context in question.

Sadia and the others at *Girls At Dhabas* were initially driven towards making *dhabas* and other public places safe for women, changing its gender composition from a male-dominated space into one where women could feel comfortable and safe being on their own. The repetitive and the mundane is part of the everyday embodiment of inscribing yourself in the cityscript. It matters to be able to partake in the normal times of the city – if you only feel you have been granted access by exception or conditionally, then you do not inhabit it democratically.

*Girls At Dhabas* seek to normalize the out-of-placeness of women in public spaces through the visual encoding of their presence in both public online as well as offline spaces. By trivializing their

presence, drinking tea and hanging out, their project is both a non-spectacular act of everyday life, and simultaneously extra-ordinarily out of place. In an almost self-contradictory manner, the *Girls At Dhabas*-project both trivializes and exaggerates the mundane in tea-drinking in public. To them, the mundane is crucial in feminist activism, and in advocating and taking steps (literally) from gaining and spreading awareness about feminist practice. It increases visibility and the feeling of safety, making it a more tangible idea for other women to occupy public spaces through the process of recognition.

*“Why don’t you just go home and watch a movie?”*

Upon reading *Why Loiter? Women & Risk on Mumbai Streets* (2011), a group of women subsequently took to the streets of Mumbai and began a weekly loitering group, traversing the city from sunset to sunrise. In December 2015, I interviewed a member of the group, Anita, and asked about her most memorable experiences in their loitering years. She recollected a few gendered urban encounters. I eagerly listened as she took me down this memory lane. She told me the story of the time she and two other fellow loiterers had taken refuge from the relentless monsoon rain at a covered bus stop. They sat there as the rain cooled off the hot streets and enjoyed the decline in temperature. Not long after a large SUV rolled by them, continued and reversed back only to stop right in front of them, never to roll down the windows. The two groups sat there in the night, gazing at each other. Anita recalled her group at first feeling uneasy about the situation, feeling how the people in the SUV had a certain advantage of being hidden in their looking.

She went on to tell me about the benevolent police officer who had intercepted her group loitering in some small by-lanes in a residential area of Mumbai. He asked what they were doing out so late at night and was puzzled when they responded they wished to take advantage of the pleasant evening temperatures and go for a walk. He politely suggested they went home and watched a movie instead, then escalated his argumentation: he had noticed a group of young men following them and was concerned for the safety of the women. “Why don’t you tell them to stop following us?” Anita responded. He chewed on her reply, and not long after they all continued their walk, sat down for *chay* and started talking about what the night holds of untapped potentials and social restrictions. “I hope one day my daughter will be able to go for a walk whenever and wherever she so wished” the policeman concluded about their loitering encounter in the Mumbai night.

The last story Anita told me took place during a “meet-to-sleep event” in a park in Mumbai. Similar events have been organized by various groups in India and Pakistan with increasing frequency in the last decade. Anita and her friends one afternoon arrived at the park and found a nice spot to settle down for a nap. Not long after they had laid down their quilts a park guard came and told them it was not allowed to sleep there. “Please point us to the sign where this is stated, *uncle*” they responded, not mentioning the fact that men sleeping in parks is the rule rather than the exception. The group ignored his prohibitive approach and went back to enjoying their outing. Not long after the sprinkler system around them went off and started dousing them in clouds of water. They quickly gathered their belongings and moved to – what they assumed would be sprinkle- and guard-less space – only to find that every time they settled down, the guard turned on the sprinkler where ever they would take up place, turning the afternoon into a veritable hide-and-seek between them, the guard and his water systems. This final story is a relatively harmless ending to an afternoon of playful manifestations in public space, but what all three stories highlight in their own way is the difficulty with which people who are not male, able-bodied and affluent will navigate city spaces. In this understanding, the city is built for allowing a very particular segment encode it with their everyday embodiment.

In her book about the figure of the *flâneuse*, Lauren Elkin describes walking as “(...) mapping with your feet. It helps you piece a city together, connecting up neighborhoods that might otherwise have remained discrete entities, different planets bound to each other, sustained yet remote. (...) Walking helps me feel at home.” (Elkin 2016:153). Walking as a form of place-making extends from a process of familiarization with a space, to a way of inscribing – or writing – one’s place and, perhaps more importantly, one’s sense of belonging in a city. It is critical in this context to understand what makes the politics of walking a gendered body politics, where bodies become the site of the potentials for urban exploring. To Setha Low (1948-), the body is the vehicle through which the psychosomatic act of perception happens (Low 2017:104). This embodiment is not only an experience for the individual, it is also part of social engagements with the surroundings. Much like Massey’s conceptualization of the dynamic between space and social life, walking links a social component between the individual and the environment. So why does that matter when we talk about gendered spatial politics? Walking as a mundane activity can bear the potentials as a resistance mechanism in its relation to body politics. Everyday use of a space creates knowledge about it just as much as it is a process of place-making (Low 2017:105). To embody space, then, is to make space available to social and political imaginations. In embodying space, social production

and social construction combined becomes a strategy if we view spaces as located in bodies. Assuming we understand bodies as both the individual, as a collective, human and as non-humans, bodies and body knowledge can be recognized with equal amounts of importance in understanding spaces and places.

To illustrate in other terms Elkins walking sentiments, the classic urban ethnography term rhythm analysis is interesting. Coined by Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), rhythm analysis is the combination of cyclical and linear aspects of everyday life. The cyclical represents intervals of repetition, biological and/or environmental rhythms, and the latter constituting point-to-point movements (Low 2017). Rhythm arises when there is an interaction between a place, a time and of energy. Walking, then, can be a method which allows us to understand how rhythms make space, and how they integrate the body into spatiotemporal rhythms of space. Because spaces are social, rhythm analysis is a way of looking at how they make up “polyrhythmic ensembles” (Low 2017:103).

### *Gender sensitization and the city*

After Nirbhaya, fast-track courts were established to ensure a more efficient processing of sexual assault cases. By the end of 2016, 133,000 rape cases were pending nationwide. Comparatively, this number was 95,000 in 2012<sup>15</sup>. The 2016-numbers for the conviction rate for all crimes committed against women was in 19%<sup>16</sup>. Within the judicial system, prolonged legal cases related to sexual assault can be a serious argument for why women are be hesitant about reporting sexual violence.

Recently, critical voices have raised concern about the ways in which sexual assault cases are handled by relevant authorities in India. Initial investigation by police is flawed, and hesitation to act upon crime reporting from authorities is commonplace. Victims of sexual crimes will face long judicial processes due to backlogged court systems. These factors coupled with low conviction rates for sexual assault cases are not an encouraging environment in which to report a crime of sensitive character. According to a story with the Indian news medium *Tehelka*, police attitudes towards women victims of sexual violence proved highly problematic in suggesting fault on the side of the victim. Police testimonies gathered in the reportage displayed terrifying attitudes which rationalized

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/speedy-justice-for-rape-victims-more-than-133-000-cases-pending/story-ZkQEq5SBbjVqm0aFIR6aII.html> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>16</sup> <https://thewire.in/society/a-closer-look-at-statistics-on-sexual-violence-in-india> (accessed 31/05/2019)

sexual violence from a patriarchal point of view, i.e. suggesting what clothes a woman would wear, or which behavior she would exhibit as the culprit of the crime<sup>17</sup>. According to the police officers, rape would only be rape if the woman was quiet about it; if she reported assault it would be “for business-making”.

In an effort to counter this discourse of victim-blaming, the activist group *Blank Noise* have since 2005 throughout India initiated several feminist projects aimed at raising awareness of gendered violence in public space. The project *I Never Asked For It* is a long term project gathering garments which sexual assault victims wore during their assault, and doing street interventions with garments ranging from school uniforms with conservative hemlines, to cocktail dresses, to *sarees*. The group advocate that the garments bear “witness, memory and voice” to end victim blaming and sexual assault stigma, and the project is set to culminate with 10,000 pieces in 2023<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, they have continuously arranged sleep-ins in public parks across India to counter the narrative of male-dominated spaces. In December 2018, marking six years since Nirbhaya, they arranged together with other feminist activist allied groups the event *Meet To Sleep*, where women across India commemorated Nirbhaya through sleeping in parks, calling to replace fear and violence in urban spaces with a right to belong<sup>19</sup>.

These feminist activist projects as civil society initiatives are important because they mobilize public sentiment to decision makers and to members of the community who politically are against the messages these projects carry with them. In light of this, political projects like *Girls At Dhabas*, *Blank Noise* and many more alike have the potential to impact public attitudes and destabilize the limits of community and solidarity.

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/07/indias-rape-problem-is-also-a-police-problem/?utm\\_term=.e283fb44d9b4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/07/indias-rape-problem-is-also-a-police-problem/?utm_term=.e283fb44d9b4) (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.blanknoise.org/ineveraskforit/vision> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.blanknoise.org/home> (accessed 31/05/2019)

### *The argument for mixed uses of urban spaces*

If our aim is to create equal and democratic societies, then we have to begin by understanding how spaces can enable inclusive and fulfilling public lives for all. By only keeping one demographic in mind when designing public spaces, we run the risk of excluding others. Cities with safe and inclusive public spaces can provide urban opportunities to all its inhabitants, and it is therefore crucial to interrogate how ideal public spaces would look like for migrant workers, parents with strollers, non-abled bodied people and in this context, women.

In their *Public Life Diversity Toolkit*, Gehl review their approach to urban life studies in terms of qualitative measurement of social engagement between different groups, referring to this as *social mixing*. Social mixing can act as a societal equalizer because “under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is an effective way to reduce prejudice between groups.” (Gehl Institute 2016:8). According to Gehl, social mixing is key to creating “tolerant and inclusive communities where the opportunity for human flourishing is shared by everyone.” (Gehl Institute 2016:10), referencing earlier studies showing that social interaction with people different from one’s self overall increases tolerance and empathy towards others. The Gehl approach to public life studies is founded on the idea that social mixing benefits the social fabric of the urban, and this notion is then used as an approach throughout their *Public Life Studies Toolkit*.

This notion of interpersonal contact can similarly be recalled in the work of Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) who in her pathbreaking seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) coined the concept of ‘eyes on the street’. She posits that in order to understand cities, “we have to deal outright with combinations or mixtures of uses, not separate uses, as the essential phenomena” (Jacobs 1992:144). According to her, cities as societal equalizers hold some sort of opportunity for everybody, but only because and only when they are created by everybody (Jacobs 1991:238). Similarly, to Phadke, Ranade and Khan, as a distinct democratic project, public spaces will only be truly accessible and inclusive when they are exclusionary to none (Phadke, Ranade & Khan 2011).

Jacobs describe the tendency to simplify and mainstream urban planning and design a tendency as “useful as the picture assembled by the blind men who felt the elephant and pooled their findings” (Jacobs 1992:144). An approach to urban life studies that omits heterogeneity and a multiplicity of insights will only produce a reflection of one’s own point of departure. To Jacobs, diversity is the

strongest asset of a city, and in order to create safe cityspaces, cities must be equipped in such a way that fosters mixed primary uses.

## Fieldwork

2018

The following section is an account of fieldwork conducted in 2018. It relays insights on how young women in Delhi perceive their own sense of mobility, and where their concerns as well as aspirations for urban life lie.



*Inner courtyard, SDA Market, New Delhi*

## *April*

In 2018 I conducted fieldwork in April in a small square named SDA Market, located in a lively upper-middle class neighborhood in South Delhi. Previous visits to SDA had made me curious about the lively social dynamic it eluded. SDA Market is situated in very close proximity to two central schools, making it a popular place for particularly students to come and enjoy an after-class catch-up with friends. Whenever I went back there, I noticed gradual changes in the maintenance as well as in the further development of SDA, suggesting the continuous popularity for the place. Since I began coming there, it has gradually evolved from somewhat lacking in public facilities – but still particularly popular – to its contemporary condition as tile-floored, valet parking facilitated, and hosting a plethora of restaurants, cafés and shops.

The vast majority of urban areas in South Asia lack sufficient walking facilities such as sidewalks. In Delhi, the provision of sidewalks was largely only implemented in the northern part of the city, designed in 1912 when New Delhi succeeded Calcutta as the new capital of the British Raj. The lack of sidewalks makes public spaces precarious to use for those on two or more feet – cars and two-wheelers take precedence and consequently the act of “hanging out” in public mostly take place in parks or in privatized public spaces, such as the increasing presence of malls. Access to such places correlate with socioeconomic status and users thereof are expected to manifest the production of legitimate purpose in such spaces. This in turn promotes socioeconomic disparity, and risks further marginalizing those with limited financial resources and subsequently political stakes in the city

SDA consists of an inner fenced-off courtyard equipped with tables, chairs and benches, which offers a place for non-commercial social activities to take place. By contrast this is surrounded by four walls of tightly jammed shops and restaurants, a few of them street vendor hole-in-a-wall, whilst others are sparkly cafés and outdoor seating. Interestingly, all outdoor seating is placed at elevated store fronts. The market is simultaneously highly accessible and increasingly privatized. Here, I observed young women and men spending time amongst each other clicking selfies, practicing school plays and enjoying iced *masala chay* from Chayyos - the Indian domesticated version of Starbucks. Throughout many scorching April afternoons, I did my participant observation and conducted semi-structured interviews to explore how young women in Delhi negotiated their urban gendered life in the city. I was curious to understand their thoughts and

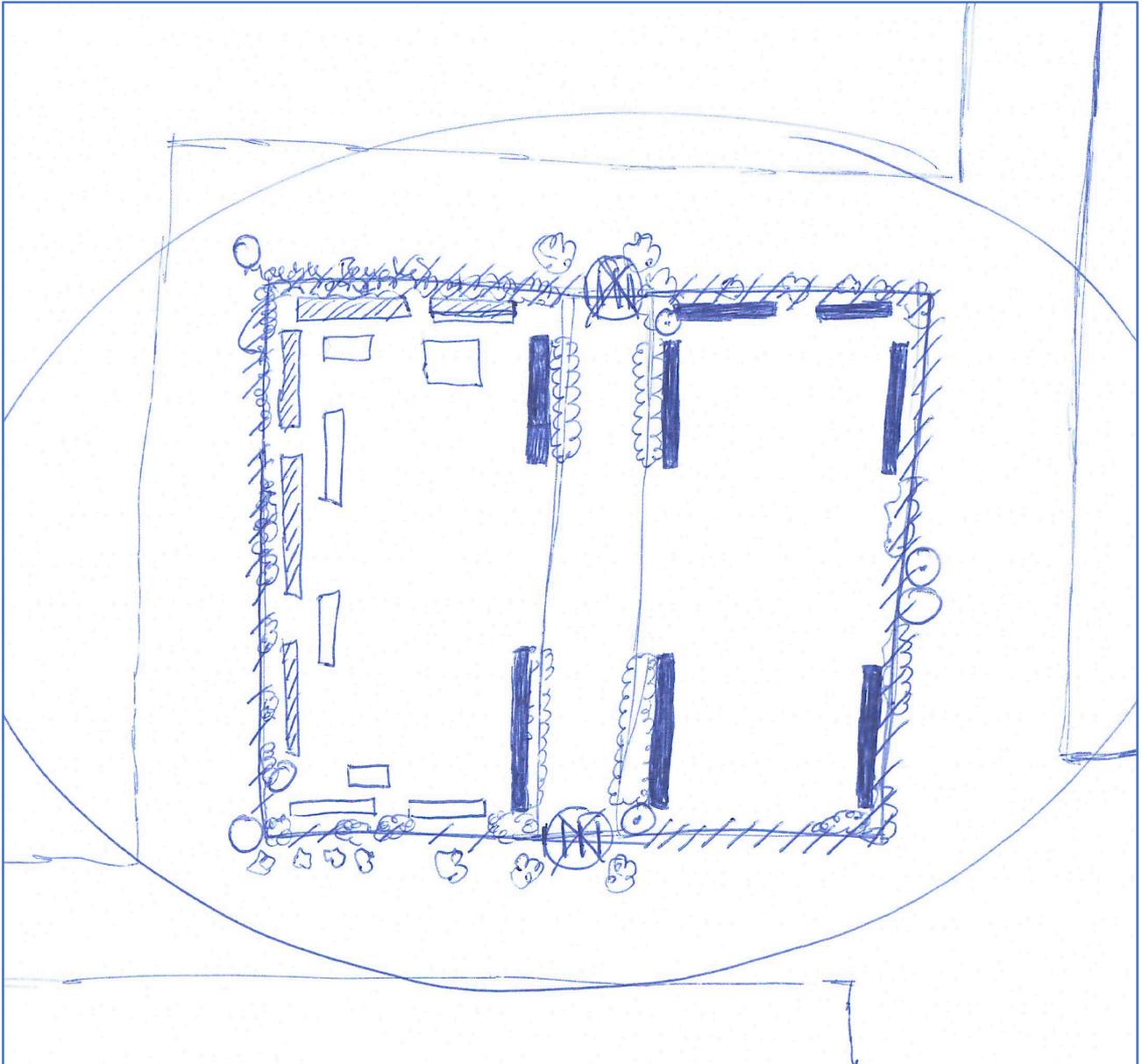
concerns on safety, mobility and access, and how this affected them as emotional labor. For the interviews, I approached young women spending time at SDA either in pairs or in small groups. Here, I interviewed eight women. The many encouraging and enlightening conversations I had were in part shaped by an interview guide I had prepared before departure. I scribbled notes in my field journal, and I recorded as much as possible on my phone, trying not to worry about the incessant background noise compromising my later treatment of the files. What I found pointed towards two significant aspects of the gendered dynamics of urban public space in New Delhi.

First, the majority of my informants relayed experiences of sexual harassment in public space in a broad variety of social settings (alone as well as with friends or family), and many had devastating stories of assaults that occurred at a pre-teen age of their lives. They argued that their experiences of being harassed (stared at, stalked, verbally and/or non-verbally assaulted) was not contingent upon the way they dressed, nor did a particular location or time during the day/night matter (though most informants conveyed an increased sense of unsafety after sunset). They all conveyed an overwhelming sense of awareness about their gendered bodies moving around in the city at all time regardless of location. By way of exposing how sexual harassment and violence are part of women's everyday lives, this directly challenges a very prevailing culture of victim-blaming strongly present in South Asia; a culture that delegates the responsibility of sexual violence onto the body of women. The women I met spoke with curiosity and an openness that would be difficult to ascribe to anything but their sheer commitment and intense thought on the subject I was interviewing them about. This led me to believe that to them, there was a pressing urge to share their experiences and it is underlined by an acute awareness of how the matter of going and hanging out in public spaces was embedded into a broader notion of feminist politics.

This supports my second preliminary finding. Regardless of whichever fear or anxiety my informants displayed with regards to their urban life, they all exhibited a strong sense of wanting to engage their experiences in this context of feminist politics, and simultaneously of wanting not to carry worries around their often-clenched sense of perception moving around and about. Most of the women, and some men, I interviewed, had carefully elaborated thought schemas constructed around what it would entail to go out, invoking the consideration that going out indeed was a continuous act of hard work. Regardless of the emotional labor my informants invested into their going out, it became my aim to underscore the sense of agency which they negotiated and produced

through their practical considerations and their spatial politics of being and insisting on a presence in the urban landscape.

*October*



*Overview map of the inner courtyard, SDA Market, New Delhi*

Later that year in October I returned to SDA to conduct a second round of fieldwork. Based on my findings from April that same year, I was interested in understanding some of the prevalent practical approaches to improvement-driven measuring of public life. Central to this task was my testing Gehl's *Public Life Diversity Toolkit*. During my fieldwork, I applied the toolkit in an analytical conversation with feminist geography in order to question its ability to illuminate the gendered spatial dynamics of SDA Market. I was curious to know what would happen when a one-size-fits-all methodology was applied on the ground in a context of critical feminist geography. At first, I wanted to substantiate my previous field work by using the *Public Life Study Toolkit*. For 10 October days, from lunchtime to late evening, I went to SDA Market and completed daily a vast amount of survey sheets.

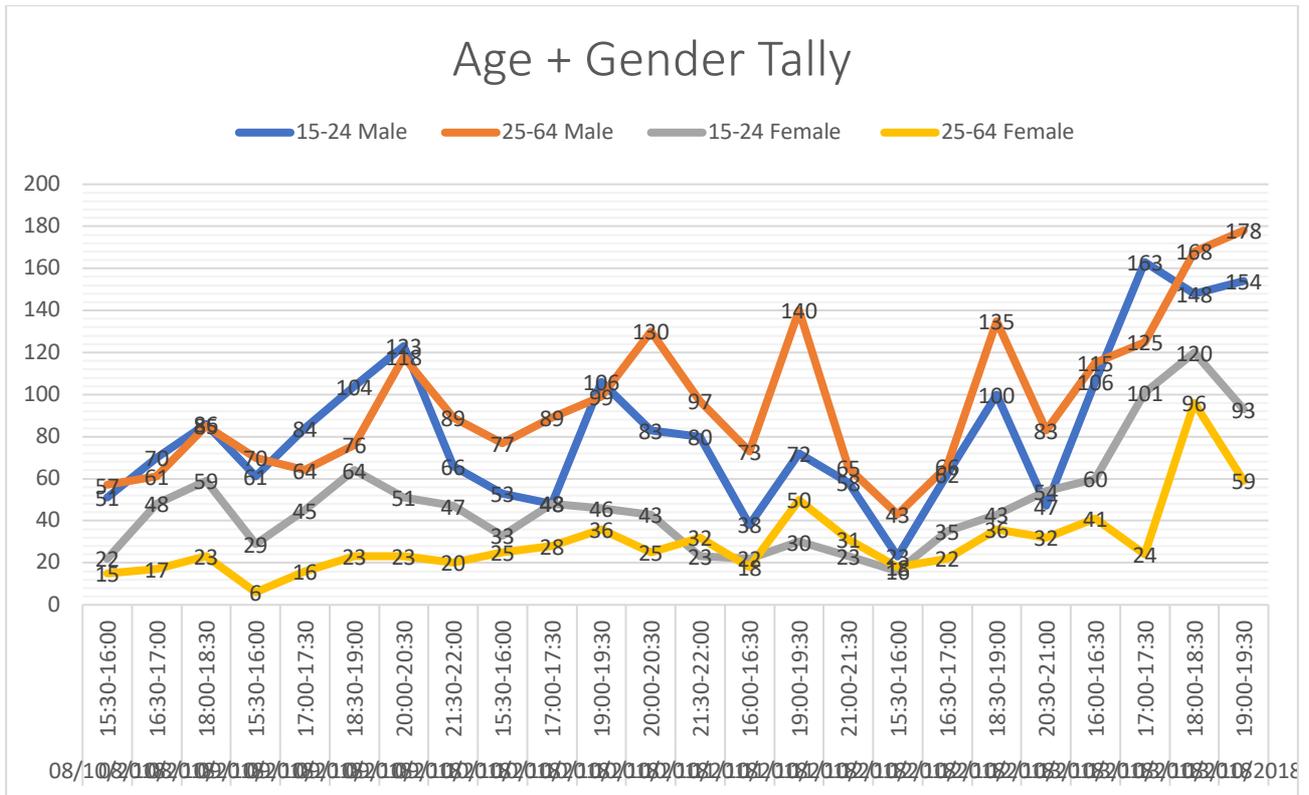
Usually, surveys conducted by Gehl will be carried out by large numbers of surveyors and participants, enabling the collection of large amounts of data. Seeing that the focal point of my field work in October 2018 was not to gather quantitative data, I set out to test the toolkit on the basis of a critique deriving from feminist geography. The *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* is readily available for download on the Gehl Institute webpage<sup>20</sup> and consists of many forms of surveys. I chose to test four: the *Age + Gender Tally*, the *Place Inventory*, the *Stationary Activity Mapping* and their *Participant Survey*. In the following section I elaborate on the intended use and function of each tool and discuss its applicability for feminist geography research.

The *Participant Survey* is, like the name suggests, an interview with users of a space that gathers their feedback on and sentiments about a space. In the survey, participants are given the questionnaire and are asked about demographic pointers such as income, gender, race. Since this survey is developed in the US a demographic indicator such as race figures. In the Indian context, race would not be a valuable indicator. In this context, caste would be its replacement. Later in the survey, questions are asked about the relationship between user and space, such time spent there, if the user was alone or not, and if the space provides the user with a variety of activity options. On the question of safety, the user is given a multiple-choice option.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://gehl.institute.org/tools/> (accessed 31/05/2019)





Upon concluding my field work in October 2018, I gathered the data from the *Age + Gender Tally* worksheets and compiled them into an Excel sheet. The horizontal line represents weekday and timing of the day, and vertical indicates number of counts. The chart confirmed the ideas I had about gender and activity at SDA Market; that there would be a relatively higher number of men using the space than women. However, this does not mean that women did not spend time there. Towards the end of the week, there was an clear increase in both male and female visitors.

The data I collected by using the *Age + Gender Tally* at SDA Market cannot be used as an argument to explain why there seems to be clear majority of men in urban spaces in India. However, gathering this specific data can be a good indicator of local tendencies, and a useful tool for urban planners in understanding why certain population groups are less present at certain times than others. As a point of departure to further investigate certain local urban tendencies of presence/absence, this tool can prove of good use. Although useful in gaining broad gender and age-related insights into who the users of SDA Market were at the time, it failed to provide answers to the reason for this gender imbalance. To understand this, I argue the need to apply survey

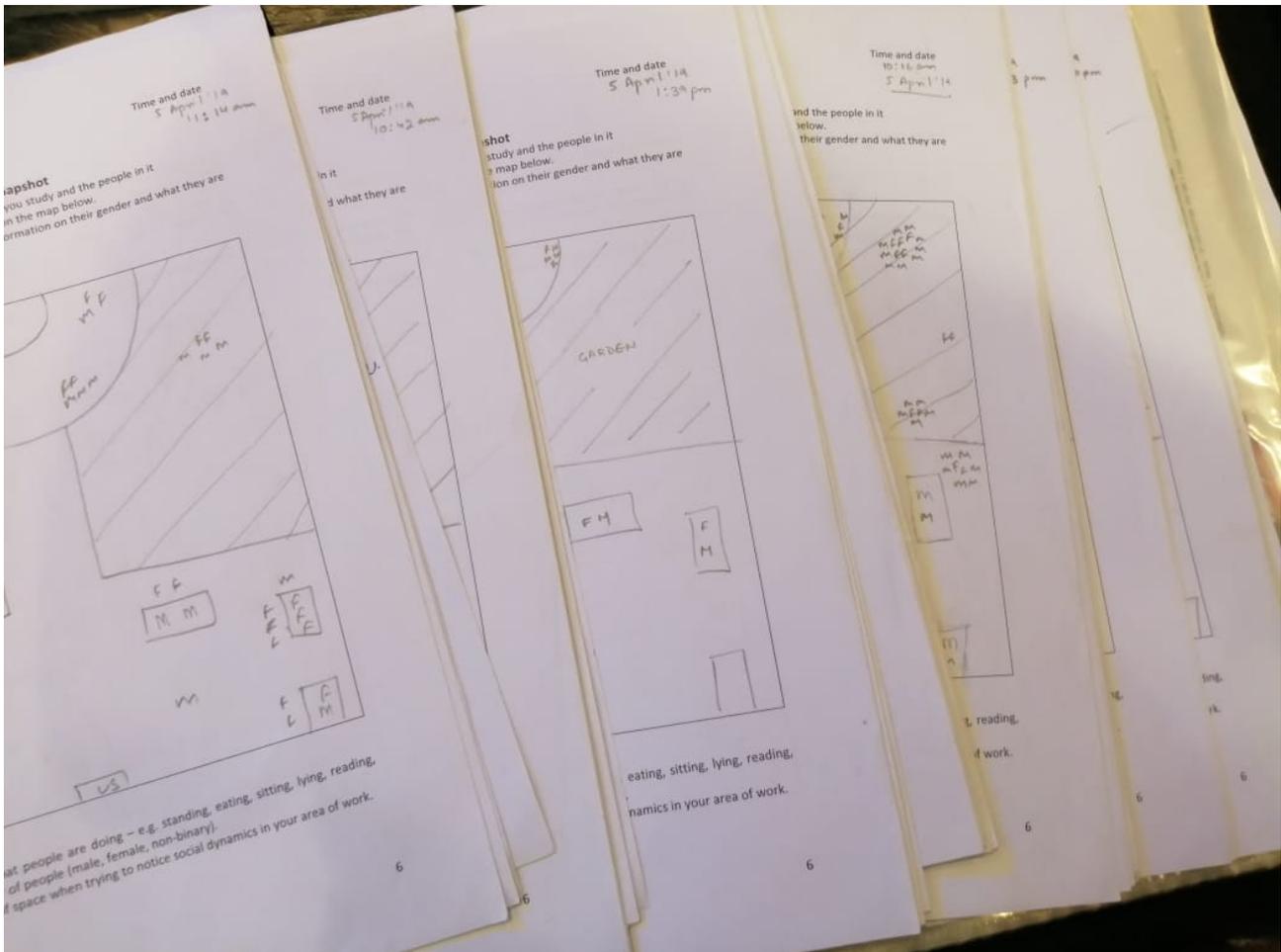
methods that include user inputs, such as individual or focus group interviews. Furthermore, because the tool was predesigned with gender binary constructs in assuming only the male/female options of urban space users, it lacked an understanding of gender as a social construct with particular insecurities attached to it – which in a context of prevalent transphobia in India would be difficult to observe.

The last tool from the *Gehl Public Life Diversity Toolkit* was the *Place Inventory Worksheet*, which consists of two parts: the first regards the physical features, and the second allows the surveyor to note down her experiences and assessments of it. It maps how people are spending time in a space rather than to simply count them. The surveyor is free to set the time for conducting the survey and can move around in order to map the activities.

In testing the *Public Life Diversity Toolkit*, substantiated by my previous fieldwork, I realized that it fell short in being able to reflect adequate information and data on both gender-related spatialities, as well as give valuable insights into the specific context of New Delhi. Comparability in urban studies are vital for three reasons. As an inherently cross-cultural project, urban and public life studies can destabilize conceptions emanating from the Global North on the continuous backwardness of the Global South. Secondly, and in extension of this, employing comparative studies allows for introspection into our own local contexts. Thirdly, and most importantly for the feminist battle, public life studies with proper context reflection applied to comparative studies of other similar problematics, disturbs the essentialist idea of gender inequality as being part of a natural order of things.

According to Gehl, good social mixing provides inclusive and well-functioning urban spaces. Adequate methods to inquire how urban planning fails, and conversely how it could enable better public spaces, must necessarily account for considerations of how different bodies locate themselves in and embody public spaces. The everydayness of negotiating a space is a highly gendered practice, and public life studies must be able to reflect understandings of how social relations co-create and are embedded into the urban dynamics, and in the (re)production of socio-spatial constructs.

## FIELDWORK AND THE CITY



Testing toolkit samples

### *Safecity – SafetiPin*

In terms of technology-based and user-generated initiatives to investigate and prevent gender and sexual violence in public spaces in India, two phone-based apps, *Safecity* and *SafetiPin*, have made important impacts at a local scale through their work.

*SafetiPin* was co-founded by Kalpana Vishwanath in 2013. The free app allow users to suggest safest travel routes and areas in a city, as well as provide a platform to gather data on safety, primarily provided by users, in which public infrastructure facilities such as visibility levels,

lighting, gender diversity, security facilities and density of people can be registered. In turn, this can be passed on to local city administrators and urban planners as a knowledge-based point of departure for urban improvement. Furthermore, the app allows users to connect trusted contacts to track a journey, a feature which app-based taxi services implemented across India after massive public demand due to a sexual assault case in an Uber in New Delhi in 2014<sup>21</sup>. Through the data collection on *SafetiPin*, they have helped identify almost 8,000 ‘dark spots’ with a critically low lighting score, upon which local city administrators began implementing this kind of data-based advice from *SafetiPin* working towards providing reliable and affordable public transportation, increased amounts of public toilets and inclusive public spaces such as parks<sup>22</sup>.

Many more apps have emerged since the Nirbhaya rape in 2012. Most of them are designed to alert trusted contacts or police authorities, bringing up a valid critique of socio-economic position in order to access these services. Furthermore, the emergence of these apps correlate with various issues of surveillance and an increasing lack of privacy throughout South Asia. The rise of right-wing nationalist politics in the region has increased public surveillance, offline as well as online. In India, private and government surveillance is expanding in the name of safety and security, from the world’s largest biometric identity system *Aadhaar* to apps like *SafetiPin* or the Delhi Police women’s safety app, *Himmat* (translates into ‘courage’ or ‘strength’ from Hindi and Urdu) – not to mention the evermore common presence of CCTV cameras in cities. To many, this is not an issue either referencing a practical need for them or adhering to the saying “if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear”. This positioning reveals a certain comfort which is an extension of privilege. In terms of social stratification in India, being upper-middle class, upper Hindu caste, male and heterosexual are identity aspects which within surveillance discussions and dominant societal norms stand less to lose than being a Muslim, Dalit, queer or a woman. Gendering the conversation about surveillance and benevolent safekeeping of urban individuals opens the possibility to inquire about its disadvantages in societies, where big data is connected to the smallest aspects of everyday life. Furthermore, experiences of surveillance of women’s bodies have long served as indicators for the consequences of deviating from the social norm. As feminist writer Richa Kaul Padte has argued so fittingly: “The constant and rigorous emphasis placed on the female

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theverge.com/2015/2/11/8017829/uber-adds-sos-button-india-following-alleged-rape> (accessed 31/05/2019)

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/dec/13/what-would-a-city-that-is-safe-for-women-look-like?fbclid=IwAR15V5ziGpb9uf-Nv9e2L8C\\_qR1kondcEmuu7uMWZrCUIJ7cD6ev6mFlh8s](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/dec/13/what-would-a-city-that-is-safe-for-women-look-like?fbclid=IwAR15V5ziGpb9uf-Nv9e2L8C_qR1kondcEmuu7uMWZrCUIJ7cD6ev6mFlh8s) (accessed 31/05/2019)

body in societies across the world tells us two things: One, our bodies are something that we should hide, and paradoxically two, our bodies are something that are constantly on display. The presence of surveillance cameras in public or private spaces – hidden or otherwise – encapsulates this dichotomy perfectly (...) When it comes to spaces that tend to be male-dominated, your crime is the presence of your body, and the camera is, by extension, justified in capturing what you are supposed to hide.” (Padte 2014).

While these apps are helpful in providing data otherwise inaccessible to official records, due to lack of willingness to report gender related crimes, they run the risk of putting the onus of responsibility onto the user, further lamenting the idea that gender violence is a women’s issue rather than a societal one. Relying on emergency apps to undo the prevalence of violence against women in public spaces in India will not dismantle the systemic patriarchy that enables its very existence. It risks putting the onus of safety onto women themselves and their immediate social relations, absolving the real underlying issue of power imbalances and destructive social norms from responsibility. However, to some they do carry the potential of providing a sense of comfort or perhaps even courage – *himmat* – to go out. But relying on solutions like these without demanding a simultaneous social reform including comprehensive gender sensitization, will only continue the cycle of normalizing violence against women.

### *Safecity and collaboration project*

The following section is a description of *Safecity* as an organization and of their work on gender and public space issues. I proceed to present my fieldwork process, which took place partly with a group of volunteers from *Safecity*.

In working with developing a toolkit for surveying gendered urban spatialities, I sought to establish a partnership with a local NGO working with issues related to urban space and gender. The scope was to engage with a local collaborator in order to gain direct and context-reflexive insights into how to design a public life study toolkit with a gender focus. Critically acknowledging my personal position as a non-South Asian, privileged researcher from Denmark, I placed a strong emphasis and importance on my research being directly informed by inputs and reflections emanating from the actual peers of such a survey toolkit. From working with *Safecity* I was allowed to gain access to a

group of young women volunteers interning with them. In the course of three weeks in March and April 2019 they would engage in focus group interviews, as well as conduct on-the-ground testing of my toolkit, at this point in a non-finished beta version.

*Safecity* was established in December 2012 as an immediate response to the Nirbhaya rape. Co-founder, Elsa D'Silva, saw a need to improve the mobility and safety of women in public spaces in India. From this need, *Safecity* sought to provide women and girls with a digital platform to document their personal experiences of sexual violence, with public spaces as the immediate focal point, as well as seeking to bridge a data gap arising from underreporting of sexual violence and assault. As a platform, *Safecity* crowdsources and gathers information and personal accounts of sexual harassment and violence in public spaces. This data is then aggregated onto a map to indicate how public spaces are experienced as unsafe or problematic. Due to tendencies to underreport instances of violence or harassment, *Safecity* targets this lack by encouraging individuals to report cases through their platform without the otherwise occurrent fear of loss of integrity or retribution from authorities, the perpetrator and/or families. This has the added benefit of contributing to potentialize the refocus from victim to location, issues of urban infrastructure and lacking or problematic public facilities.

From a grassroots perspective, this carries potential for a strengthened local leadership in different communities. Furthermore, neighborhood participation encourages reflections of everyday experiences of urban spaces from lived and immediate perspective. Local residents will inevitably be closest to conveying this experience aspect. Urban space surveys conducted by project assigned consultants without local knowledge – be it from themselves or others – provide professional insights and, to a large extent, universally applicable vocational methodologies. But without the involvement of local knowledges, these surveys will reflect a lack of critically reflexive dimensions. Furthermore, engaging local knowledge is a way for local communities, women and other marginalized bodies in the broad, urban context, to take the lead in the drive for local as well as systemic change.

In an email-correspondence with Elsa, I asked her what contributions *Safecity* can provide urban planners and municipal governments with, which they might otherwise overlook. She explained that since most women and girls experience sexual violence in their daily lives, normalization of the issues take place and become part of a daily routine. In her experience, an egregious reluctance to

report harassment and/or crimes are correlated with shame and taboo, lengthy judicial processes and distrust towards police authorities.

In terms of practical results their work, *Safecity* has managed to change police patrol timings, increase local vigilance, convinced elected representatives to increase budgets for CCTV surveillance, and to fix street lightning and broken toilets in problematic areas. Furthermore, part of their work has also convinced transport officials to improve effective redressal mechanisms and religious leaders have influenced men and boys to change behavior. Educational authorities and corporations have worked on safe education spaces and workplaces, including policies and sensitization programmes.

To Elsa, the work of *Safecity* is about helping relevant institutions in strengthening their work with a gender lens in providing safe spaces. I asked her why activism is important for urban planning. She replied “When 50% of the population feels unsafe, it means there is no real "equality" to live and experience your constitutional granted human rights. It also holds women and girls back from accessing opportunities and exploring their potential.”. Resonating the reflections of Low, McDowell and Tonkiss, she concluded “It is clear that men and women experience a city differently, yet most cities are being designed by men for men. We need that to change.”.

I asked her what, in her opinion, is at stake for women and other marginalized bodies in their advocating for safe and carefree public spaces. Returning to the argument of city access being part of a broader human rights aspect, she told me that for women and girls alike, “It is their right, constitutionally given. If we want true gender equality, public spaces should be safe and inclusive. Today how many can travel freely at any time of day or night by herself? Does she truly have the same level of access as a man? If not, then it is not a level playing field.”. As a consequence, many women experience limitation on their bodies and their mobilities, on their mobility and of their opportunities. I argue that employing user-generated or crowdsourced survey methods, these concerns about and demands for urban rights can be made visible as well as constructive in urban planning processes and public education programs alike.

## *Fieldwork 2019*

### *From Public Life Diversity Toolkit to Gender and The City – The Toolkit*

Inspired by testing the *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* in October 2018 and realizing its inability to speak about gendered spatialities, I decided to focus on developing a toolkit which could be used specifically to engage in issues related to gender and urban space.

In order to construct the toolkit with inputs from its intended users, I gained access to a group of volunteers with the help from a young woman from *Safecity* – Vanshika. Back in April 2018, she had participated in an interview about her work as a campus outreach ambassador for *Safecity*, and in this capacity she became helpful in sourcing the volunteers who would test the toolkit and provide insights and feedback on it. The group of volunteers consisted of five young women, all undergraduate university students from different campus areas around and in New Delhi.

In March and April 2019, the five volunteers participated in focus group interviews with me, after which they themselves carried out on the ground-testing of the toolkit in various development stages. Prior to introducing the volunteers to the toolkit, I had produced a beta-version consisting of five individual tools. These departed from the aforementioned previous fieldwork-based analysis of the Gehl *Public Life Study Toolkit*, and included a self-survey, a “space snapshot”, a mapping of public infrastructure, a people count, safety survey, a participant survey, and finally a page for survey reflections.

At the first focus group, all five volunteers participated. We met at my apartment in South Delhi and drank mango juice to cool down on a hot afternoon. The discussion departed from questions I had made for the purpose. Through these, I inquired about their thoughts on and experiences of gendered spaces, and feeling unsafe in New Delhi. Throughout the session, I recorded our conversation for later use. They told me that feeling unsafe was being pushed by a larger narrative of statistics of sexual violence in India, which made them remain in a constant state of low-key fear. By living in New Delhi, in my own experience, gendered violence and the fear thereof is a common topic of conversation with yourself and with others. Managing this fear means making decisions about appropriate attire and transportation, being alone or accompanied, and calculating timings for departure and arrival is quite commonplace amongst Delhiite women. I am yet to experience these gendered social relations ‘stretched out’ coming from male friends.

I asked the volunteers about what kind of potential solutions they saw or imagined for the issues, they faced. For the purpose of adjusting the toolkit according to the experienced needs, I hoped to make them aware what potentials were at stake for user-generated data and community-based solutions in the toolkit-testing project. During the discussion I presented a non-final beta-version of the toolkit, and they gave according inputs. Most significantly, by way of asking them what they would like to learn and know about the gendered notions of a space, I gained access being able to construct the questions for the questionnaire-part of the toolkit close to the insights posited by the volunteers. Therefore, the questions in the questionnaire survey are a reflection of the curiosity as well as gendered experiences of the them.

During the focus groups conducted with the volunteers, several issues kept reoccurring. Often, they all spoke of how they, as women, felt outnumbered on the streets by men. “You only see men, it makes you feel out of place and uncomfortable. Especially with the constant feeling of being looked at and the occasional remark coming your way” one of them told me. The “feeling” of safety was a popular subject as well. Kajal at one point brought up the issue of self-restriction as a result of internalized fear. The Nirbhaya rape gave them an early and scary introduction to sexual violence as most of them at the time did not have double digits to their age. As they grew older and began using the city on their own, Nirbhaya became a benchmark way for their families and friends to include the notion of fear of sexual violence into the girls going out.

I asked them what they wished they could do in the city but were otherwise restricted or self-refrained from doing. Mahua, living in a women’s hostel in Delhi University North Campus, complained about having strict restrictions and curfews there, forcing her to return to the hostel before 8 PM at night. Having friends over was near an impossibility, she told me. The student hostels at Delhi University are gender segregated, and no restrictions are imposed on the men’s ward. As a result, in the last years, a women’s collective movement – *Pinjra Tod* (break the cage) – has been fiercely advocating against the imposition of curfew timings at the women’s student housing. Mahua was both annoyed at this restriction on her mobility, though living far from her family made her understand the sense of comfort, which her residing in a highly controlled environment would give her parents. “I don’t like living in a hostel, but it is the safer choice” she said during the focus group.

One of the strongest indicators for the need to have public life surveys and questionnaires reflect localized contexts, was illustrated by Kajal. When I asked her to define her own thoughts on public spaces, she told me she would ‘read’ spaces according to who was there, and that people defined a place. Her experience of public spaces is aligned with the argument I forwarded earlier: that spaces are shaped by the social life taking place through a process of embodiment.

The volunteers agreed that temporal factors mattered significantly in the way they would feel in a space, as well as determine whether or not they would go out at all. I asked them what they wanted to do in the city, but did feel like they were able to. They agreed that timings were an issue. The lack of public transportation after late evening severely impacted their ability to go out. Repeatedly, they told me that New Delhi bolstered a vibrant nightlife. I did not tell them that I knew that from experience, and soon the conversation turned from the exciting potentials of the nightlife to a discouraged agreement that none of the volunteers did actually partake in it. From lack of streetlights making roads seem unsafe, from not being allowed, to internalized fear for loss of safety and discomfort, they often neglected to go out as they pleased.

Perhaps most haunting, when asked about whether they had been subject or witness to transboundary or uncomfortable experiences in urban life, in unison they replied “nothing out of the ordinary” or “just the usual stuff”. They were referring to sexual harassment in the shape of stalking, groping and the infamous ‘eve-teasing’ – the common Indian euphemism for the passing of lewd comments in a sexual regard. As innocent as it might sound, it is widely adopted in South Asia to describe a criminal offence. By diluting its meaning, it perpetuates a culturally sanctioned practice which normalizes harassment and violence against women in public spaces. It underlines the fact that women, by sheer presence in the public, are provocative. The way these experiences had been internalized with the girls took me back, but later I became relieved to see they changed their view on it.

### *Testing the toolkit*

Part of building a bridge between feminist research and activism is the exercise of choosing the location for a survey. There are many different academic approaches, such as the arbitrary location (Candea 2007) or the multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995). Because the project of developing the toolkit involves elements of awareness-raising, I asked the volunteers to choose themselves. After all, the end goal of the toolkit is to be applied in contexts where users determine the relevance. As a broad indicator, I asked them to choose a space relatively manageable in that they should be able to map it in the toolkit, and choose a place from where to count people moving in it.

The group divided themselves in two. I supplied them with ample amounts of toolkits in the beta version. The first group to take to the streets had initially chosen to work in the Delhi Metro. Granted, throughout my fieldwork I heard stories of how travelling on the metro offered increased mobility, but at the same time was a place of discomfort on the account of frequent groping and stares. Doing ethnographic studies in a moving space requires trained abilities of attention and observer skills, and the limited time we had to test the toolkit did not permit such a training of the volunteers. Instead, I advised them to choose a space with easy access and plenty of social mixing. They chose the area surrounding India Gate, a triumphal arc in Central Delhi with many different visitors. For two days, they tested the toolkit and later returned them to me.

The second group chose to conduct their toolkit testing in the streets nearby their campus grounds in North Delhi. Upon visiting the place with them, we decided it was not demarcated enough. This would pose an issue when they conducted the counting tool. Instead, they chose to survey on the campus ground itself, given their interest in gender dynamics in student spaces. Unfortunately, I was not permitted access to the campus grounds, but the group kept me informed about their work via text messaging.

After the two groups had tested the toolkit, we all met at a café in North Delhi, close to the campus ground and held our second and last focus group. When asked about the experience, their overall impressions were positive. They told me they had begun thinking about issues of gendered and sexual violence in urban spaces in other ways than they were used to. Through their involvement in the project, they had come to understand that the gendered violence of normal times – the

internalized experiences of ‘eve-teasing’ – was part of broader structural violence patterns in public spaces, and not a natural given. Furthermore, from reading the completed questionnaires

The final concessions we made to the toolkit came from three recommendations the volunteers provided as a result of their testing of the toolkit. First, they had all observed issues with the length of the questionnaire part of the toolkit. They found it particularly difficult to convince users in their space to complete it. Furthermore, the questions seemed to be repetitive. As a result, we agreed on which questions would remain, thereby shortening it to what we together deemed to be an appropriate length. Secondly, several participants in the questionnaire part commented on the subjective nature of the questions, in that none would offer multiple-choice answers to the questionnaire. It was a conscious decision of mine to not employ these, as the questionnaire aims at insights into the subjective experiences of gendered public spaces, rather than generic measurement of its use. Thirdly, as a final addition to the toolkit, we added a tool which allows the surveyor to draw her ideal space.

### *The final outcome*

The final toolkit consists of five different tools. The idea is to engage users of the toolkit in the understanding of it as a toolbox, containing five different tools which used in interaction with each other will be a strength for the reflexive outcome of the survey, however they can be separated from the toolkit entirely and applied individually. In late March and the beginning of April, the *Safecity* volunteers took to the streets of New Delhi and tested the toolkits themselves. In total, I received 33 finished toolkits from five days of toolkit testing.

The toolkit begins with a background study (page 56), which the surveyor begins working on before applying the rest of the tools. This is due to two reasons. First, as I have argued earlier, culturally geographies matters to how social relations take place in public spaces. In terms of the comparability of gender relations across borders, cultures and socio-economic lines, knowing what is shared and what it dissimilar is part of being able to unravel the essentialist or naturalist arguments of gender politics status quo. Spaces are inherently distinct from each other, and it is therefore vital to understand the localized compounds of the space you study. In extension of this, being knowledgeable of your spatial research context is a way to empower your own position

within it. Not only does this enable the surveyor to be conscious about many different spatial layers in the field, it holds the potential for the surveyor to take control and enact her agency in the urban context. There is only need to complete one per spatial survey.

The first tool (page 58) asks about the physical conditions of the space. It begins with a set of questions to kickstart the spatial imagination of the surveyor. On the next page (page 62), the surveyor maps the space in order to record the spatial composition.

The second tool (page 61) is an overview of the in a space – human as well as non-human, urban space facilities and other factors, such as environmental adaptability etc. The surveyor is asked to imagine the tool as taking a picture – a snapshot – of the space and its contents. Part of what enables a well-functioning urban life in a space will be the physical environment and public design provisions. Most of the girls in the focus groups mentioned that public facilities such as washrooms, ample street lighting, surveillance or patrolling, sufficient public transportations etc. Supplying public spaces with design solutions to a societal issue such as gender inequality and violence will not suffice on their own, but they are part of building more inclusive and safer spaces. Ideally, this tool should be applied as often as possible, and preferably with similarly occurring timings. For example, the tool could be applied every hour for eight hours a day for a week, but to gain consistency, all tool uses should be regularized.

Tool number three (page 62) is a tool for counting people moving through a space. In its form in my toolkit, it resembles the *Age + Gender Tally* from *Gehl Institute*. In the context of an everyday, obvious majority of men as opposed to women on the streets in New Delhi, counting users of a space matters because it is important to understand the gendered composition of urban spaces. As I have argued earlier, employing tool number three alone will not supply answers to support the understanding of why a gendered imbalance would exist, as well as how this is felt by users of urban spaces. Like tool number two, this tool should be applied regularly and with recurrent timings.

The fourth tool (page 64) is a questionnaire which surveyors distribute to participants, who complete it themselves. The questionnaire focuses on questions related to spatial impressions, feelings of safety, limitations, possibilities and urban imaginings. This tool would be able to reply to the question of gendered imbalance in the urban composition. As noted in many of the completed questionnaires from the fieldwork, nearly every woman gave answers which indicated their feeling of unsafety and insecurities when moving around in New Delhi. Many quoted the surplus of male

presence in public spaces. The questionnaire can be distributed to as many participants as the surveyor prefers.

Finally, tool number five (page 68) is a mapping exercise, where the surveyor is asked to imagine her ideal space. What would it look like in terms of public design and facilities? Who would be there? What would be some of the keywords, she could attach to it? Tool number five allows for a context-specific visualization of desired urban spaces directly provided by its user. This provision hopes to spark the imagination of the surveyor, and to put her in a position of creative as well as constructive thinking about her ability to provide data inputs for public design and urban planning. As such, tool number five is thought to be a tool of empowerment and simultaneous embodiment.



*Sanya testing the toolkit at India Gate*

## CONCLUSION

In developing the toolkit, I realized there is immense opportunity and a critical necessity in thinking about ways to involve boys and men in the conversation around gendered aspects of urban (lack of) safety. In fact, ironically enough, placing the exercises, the brain work, the activism and the emotional labor onto women and marginalized bodies in this context, is unfair and unproductive. Furthermore, it places the onus of gender inequality onto the oppressed groups in societies. By way of this, we can ask why must the oppressed do all the work for their oppressors, in order to convince them to untangle and untie this relationship with power and dominance? Why not make a toolkit for men, which meant facilitating the gathering of data, whilst creating the platform for gender sensitization processes and education? Education and gender sensitization is crucial if we want to understand how to change mindsets and social dynamics, and patriarchal power structures informing social life all the way down to how we walk the streets, to the pervasive tendency to blame victims of sexual assault and violence.

In my thesis I have presented key contributions of feminist geography and urban studies. I emphasized the importance in feminist urban activism in their display of creative ways of subverting the heteropatriarchy in public spaces. In addition to this, I have shown how gendered spatialities in India are problematic in a context of widespread sexual violence and misogyny. I provided accounts of fieldwork conducted throughout one year in New Delhi, including the testing of the Gehl *Public Life Diversity Toolkit* and, based on a critique thereof, my own toolkit for measuring gender relations in public spaces, *Gender And The City – The Toolkit*. As a whole, I have sought to build a bridge between the descriptions of feminist geography, urban feminist activism in India and organizational approaches to public life studies towards prescribing how a feminist critique and reworking of public life studies could look like.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that local-specific studies of gendered urban spaces are necessary because the geographies of gender vary according to social, cultural and political contexts. It is necessary to employ surveyors, that have thorough knowledge about the specific conditions she works in and on. Without this, we risk falling into generalizing categories which will fail to provide adequate accounts of the site-specific conditions for gendered spatial violence or exclusion.

During my fieldwork, I asked nearly everyone I interviewed what would make New Delhi a safe and inclusive city. Posing this question sits at the forefront of my thesis. Answering it requires a broad spectrum of considerations and approaches, including the process of introspection. As a South Asianist scholar, I have studied the region, learned a local language and lived in New Delhi in many different capacities. I am often asked if there is any applicability for the knowledge on specific area studies in one's own context. I argue that knowing about others allow for a more nuanced and critically reflexive introspection into one's own positionality, which can enrich the images and perceptions we have of the world around us.

Feminist geography, and comparative feminist geographies in particular, demonstrates context-specific variations as counterarguments to the social construction of gender and space. To do this, we need to ask the people who actually inhabit those streets and embody the spaces, we engage with.

They are indeed the eyes on the street.



*The girls and I in North Delhi wrapping up our collaboration*

# Gender and The City

## THE TOOLKIT

In collaboration with Safecity / Red Dot Foundation

This toolkit is made for exploring the ways in which gender plays out in public spaces. The idea behind stems from the notion that in order to change something, we must to be able to measure and understand it to begin with. Use this toolkit to gather information and data about the

On the first page you will find a background survey on the space you examine. This is important because spaces are located within different geographical, social and cultural contexts.

In tool number ONE, you map the public facilities in your space. If you do your survey always in the same place, you do not need to complete this tool more than once.

Tool number TWO is a snapshot of the people in your space. Imagine taking a picture of your space. Note down as many details about your snapshot as possible. Tool number THREE is where you count everyone coming and going in your space. You do this to get a better understanding of who will be there at different times of day. Tool number FOUR is a participant interview. Print out as many of this tool as possible, and hand it out for people to complete themselves. It is designed to receive subjective replies. Gendered experiences of spaces are embodied experiences, and those are highly subjective. There is nothing wrong with that. In fact, that is a vital part of using the toolkit.

Tool number FIVE is a do-it-yourself ideal space. Draw, write, imagine the perfect space according to you. Remember to note down why your space matters!

## Directions

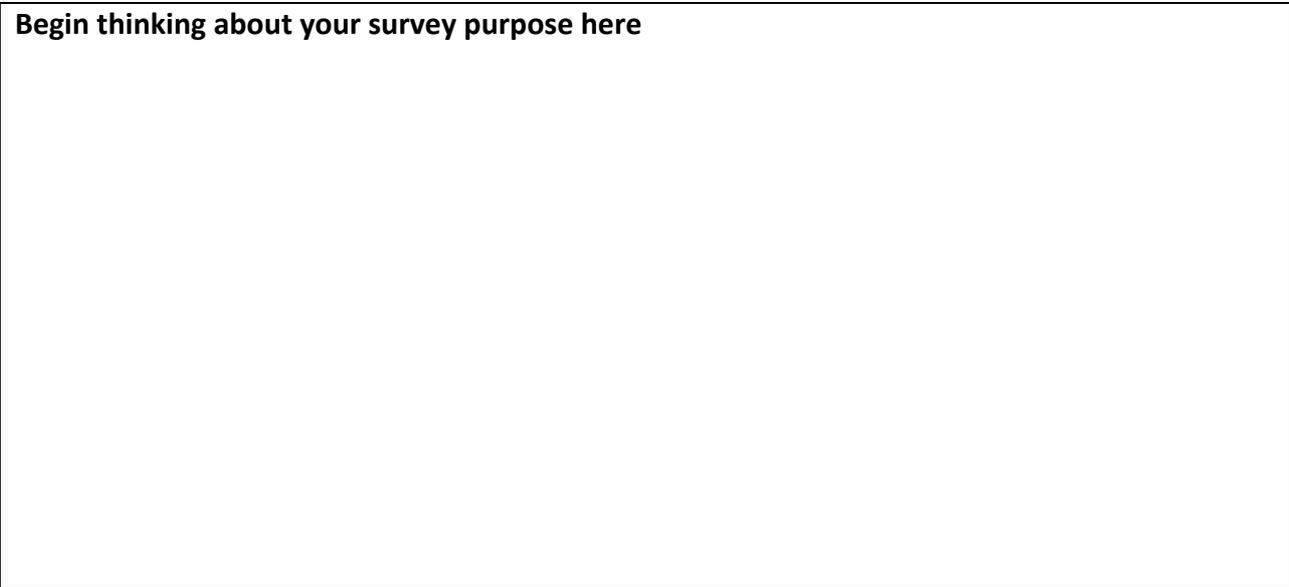
- Note down the date, time and your name on the sheets.
- **Tools number TWO, THREE and FOUR should be conducted several times. Print them out separately from the entire toolkit according to how often you plan to conduct them.**
- Conduct tool number THREE with consistent regularity. For example, if you choose to count people for 20 minutes at a time one day, follow this time limit for the remaining counts.
- **Remember to take notes and write down any of your thoughts or reflections along the way. It might be very useful later!**
- And remember to have fun whilst you work! Keep your eyes and ears open, remember to bring water and snacks, and to take breaks for reflection every once in a while.

## BACKGROUND SURVEY

### Background research part on the context of your survey

- What do you know? Substantiate this with adequate sources.
- What do you want to know more about?
- Why have you chosen this space? Why is it important/special/necessary?
- **Write down all these things in a separate document which you attach to this toolkit later.** Below here, initiate the process by freestyle writing your budding thoughts.

**Begin thinking about your survey purpose here**



### Your background

- What is your age? What is your profession? Where do you come from?
- Why are you using this toolkit today?
- Why does it matter to you?
- What do you hope to get out of it?

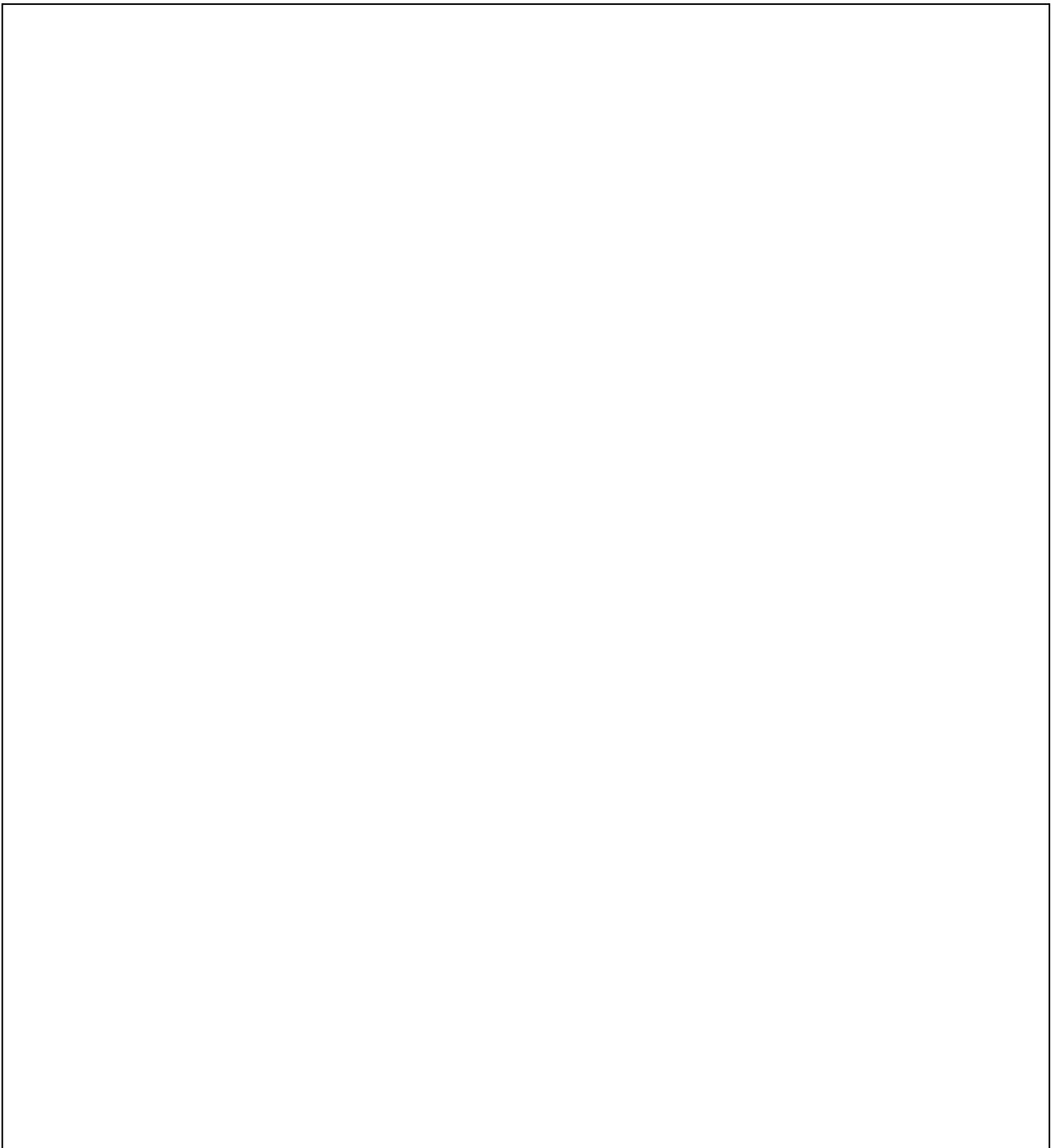
## **Tool number ONE – What Is In Your Space?**

Map the physical design of the space you survey. Try and answer these questions:

- Describe how the space makes you feel. (Un)safe, (un)comfortable, happy, inspired?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Would you be able to be there at night? Yes/no, why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Is the space open and can you see all around it? Yes/no, why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Where is the nearest toilet? Is it accessible for all bodies, is it clean, is it safe, is it free?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Where would you go to seek help in case of emergency?

**Describe your other thoughts and feelings about the space here:**

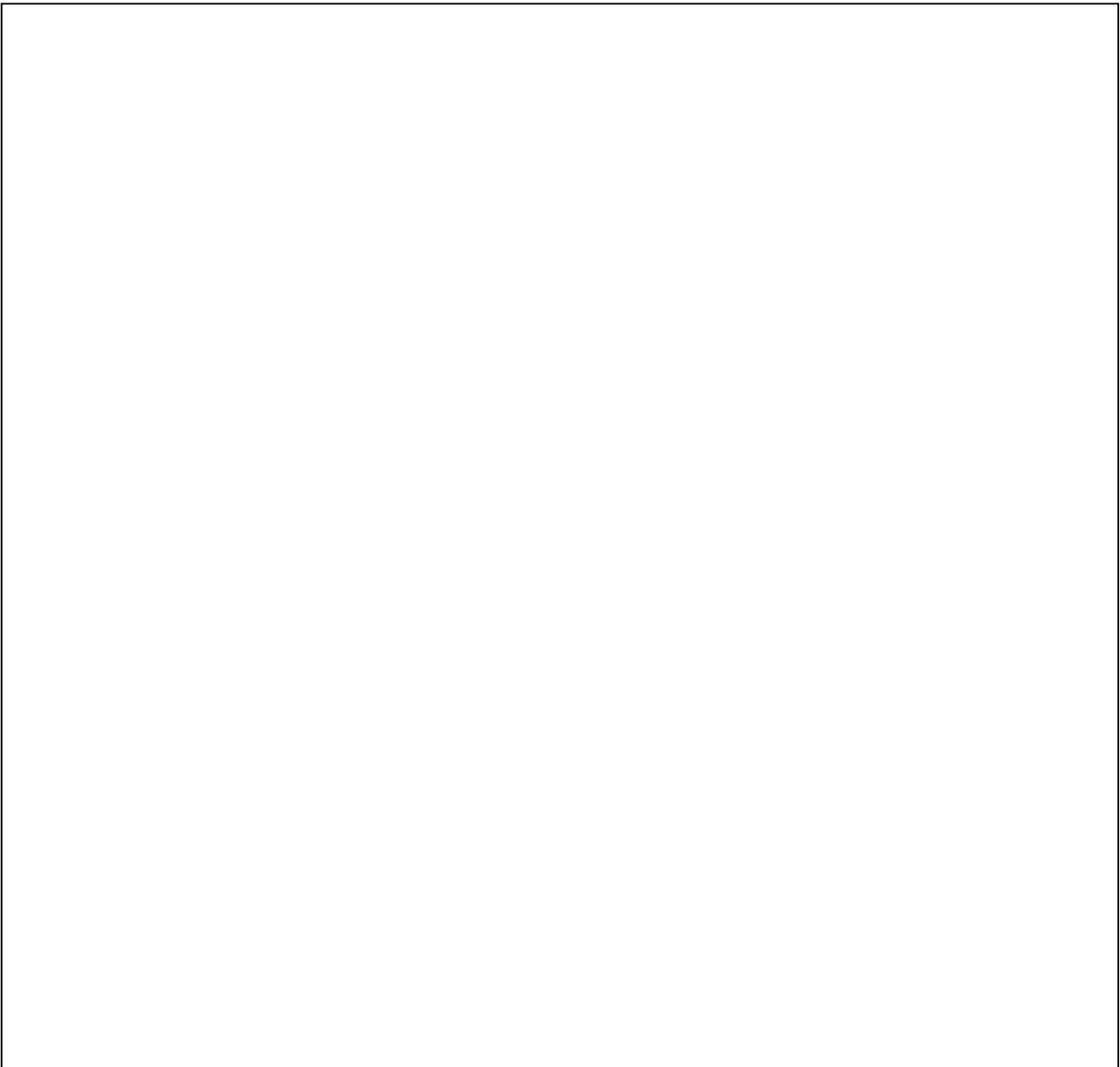
Draw your map below here for **TOOL NUMBER ONE** mapping exercise. Remember to add as much as possible! Feel free to draw, doodle and write notes.



## Tool number TWO – The Snapshot

- In this exercise you take a snapshot of the space you study and the people in it
- Pick a relatively well-defined space and draw it on the map below.
- Note down everyone who is there, including information on their gender and what they are doing.

Draw a map below here for **TOOL NUMBER TWO**:



Note down with key words what people are doing – e.g. standing, eating, sitting, lying, reading, playing.  
Note down the gender of people (male, female, non-binary).

Use your intuition and sense of space when trying to notice social dynamics in your area of work.

### **Tool number THREE – How many and who?**

- In this tool, you count people in the space you study. Choose a location that is of interest to your study. Do these with regular intervals to look for fluctuations in number of people and time of the day.
- For 10-30 minutes count everyone who crosses into an imaginary line in front of you. Be consistent with the amount of time you count; if the first count was 10 minutes, the subsequent must also be.
- Note down every by passer in the chart on the next page
- Repeat this systematically and consequentially according to the amount of time you have

Below draw a map of the space you are studying



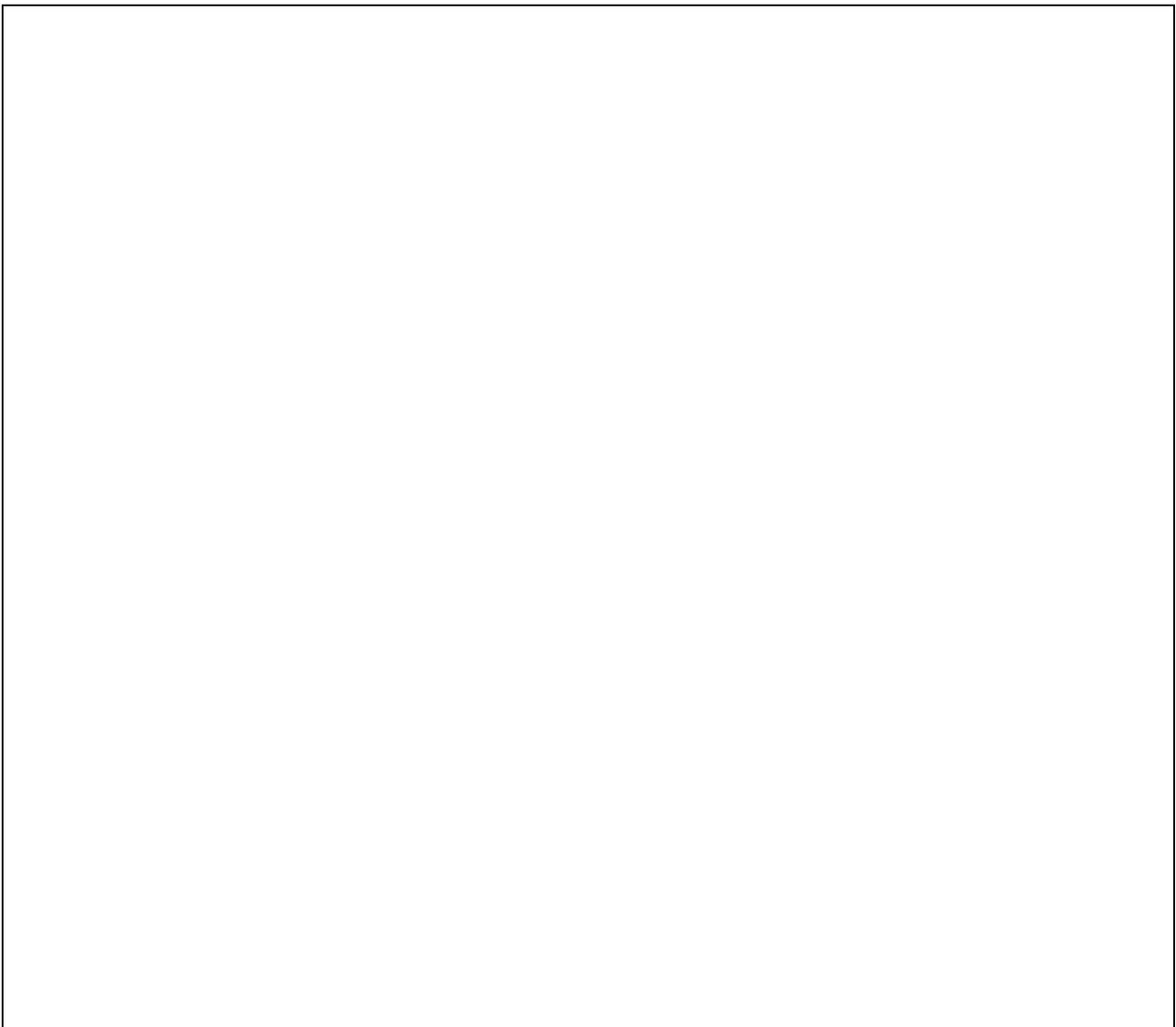
Use this sheet to count people. In the beginning it will be confusing to complete but keep at it!

AGE			
0-4			
	Female	Male	Not sure/non-binary
5-12			
13-24			
25-60			
60+			

## Tool number FOUR – The Survey

- This survey allows you to ask other people in your space how they feel about it.
- **Print out the following pages of the questionnaire and hand it to people along with pens. Keep this first page to yourself.**
- Approach as many people as possible, introduce yourself and your project and ask if they have time to answer some questions for your survey. Remember to tell them they are participating anonymously. Only take their names according to their initiative and consent.
- **Distribute questionnaire and pens and wait for them to finish. If possible, let them finish on their own without your interference.**
- Upon completion make sure to thank them for their contribution. Don't hesitate to ask what they think their thoughts on the questionnaire, it might be valuable to your work!
- 

Draw a map below of the space you are studying.



## Gender and the City – The Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey! In order to make public spaces safer and better for all users, we need to understand how people interact with it and their feelings towards it. Please answer the following questions, and don't hesitate to contact the interviewer if you have any questions! **Please complete the full questionnaire and return the sheets when you are done.**

Thank you in advance!

What is your age? ■

Which gender do you identify with?

What is your profession?

Where do you come from?

Where do you live?

Why are you here right now today? Are you alone?

How often do you come here?

How long time are you planning to spend here today?

■  
What are the key words you would use to describe this space?

Is there anything in this space you feel you cannot do, **but want to**?

Why do you think that is?

What makes a space feel safe? Why?

What makes a space feel unsafe? Why?

Do you ever avoid this space because you feel unsafe or uncomfortable? If so, why?

What would make you feel safer in this particular space?

In your opinion, what are the basic necessities to make a public space great?

**In your opinion, what makes a city great?**

Who do you think needs to hear the results from a survey like this?

Other comments?

**Thank you!**

## Tool number FIVE

### DO-IT-YOURSELF PERFECT SPACE

- Draw your dreamspace below
- No limits, no boundaries

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing a dreamspace. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the page.

If you need to verbalize your spatial imaginings, write them here below:

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