

Solo-Cities:

Representations of the 'Single' in Urban Spaces

Workshop date: 6–8 October, 2015

Workshop venue: Goethe-Institut New Delhi / Max Mueller Bhavan

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As cultural contact zones, cities throughout Asia are shaping and being shaped by global, regional and national flows that are implicated in the unravelling of 'traditional' social contracts. New forms of economic production, migration, and a growing leisure and consumer society, for example, are said to erode institutions such as 'the family'. Yet the emerging subjectivities from within this urban flux are precarious, marked by asymmetrical power relations reflecting moral panics centred on discourses of 'westernisation' and associated perceptions of transgressions of normative gendered comportment.

The 'single' woman is one such subjectivity that has come to signify cultural change, demanding recognition and access to the city, as well as re-versioning what concepts such as 'tradition' and 'modernity' mean. Singleness can stem from various acts of stepping outside the 'family', including delaying marriage, choosing never to marry, divorce, being widowed, being single in the city when moving across it at particular times of day or night, being unrecognised by the state because of sexual preference, or being alone in her aspirations and desires. This idea of singleness is increasingly visible within the media landscape that acts not only as a mirror but as a catalyst for its emergence.

This international workshop seeks to interrogate this contested notion of singleness in the city, focusing on Delhi and Shanghai. Through presentations, panel discussions, performance and film screenings, it will highlight that gendered imaginaries of emancipation are contested in the light of a variety of cultural practices that impact the multiple life-worlds of women and cities that invite, produce and restrict singleness. Speakers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (geography, architecture, anthropology, cultural studies and sociology) will explore ways in which women navigate and dwell in the city, finding and affirming a space of their own. Notions of class, autonomy, public/private, leisure, mobility, safety and protest will be explored, and how this agency is (re)presented in and through a range of media-scapes and audio-visual domains including film, poster art, television and literature.

The workshop is part of the HERA project 'SINGLE' (<http://www.hera-single.de/>), and organised in conjunction with the Goethe Institut/ Max Mueller Bhavan. Findings from the HERA project will be presented as well as ongoing collaboration with artists and academic colleagues from Shanghai/ Hong Kong.

PROGRAMME

Day 1: Tuesday October 6, 2015

6:30-8:00 pm **Welcome & Public Keynote I:**
Sanjay Srivastava (Delhi)
Technotopias, consumer cultures and the meaning of 'single'

Introduction by Christiane Brosius (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Yiu Fai CHOW (Hong Kong)

8:00 pm Reception

Day 2: Wednesday October 7, 2015

Panel 1: Entering Private Space

9:15-9:45 am Coffee, Tea & Registration

9:45-10:00 am Welcome by Christiane Brosius & Introduction Speakers

10:00-11:15 am

Penn IP (Amsterdam): *An Affective Home: Rural-Urban Migrant Women in Shanghai*
Shelly Pandey (Delhi):
Re/Shaping Private Spaces: *Single Women and Gendered Practices in Middle Class Homes*
Chair: Anindita Datta

11:15-11:45 am Coffee & Tea

Panel 2: Shaping Public Space

11:45-1:00 pm

Lucie Bernroider (Heidelberg): *Going it alone? Young women's spatial autonomy and the intricacies of neighbourhood place-making in Delhi*
Paromita Chakravarti (Kolkata): *Of Hostels, Shelters and Streets: Habitations and singleness in Kolkata*
Chair: Saraswati Raju (Delhi)

1:00-2:30 pm Lunch

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Panel 3: Contesting Public Space

2:30-3:45 pm

Sreejata Roy (Delhi): *Debating gaze via art in public sphere*
Sheba Chhachhi (Delhi): *Public Intimacies*
Chair: Rashmi Sawhney (Bangalore)

3:45-4:15 pm Coffee & Tea

4:15-5:45 pm

Public Keynote II:
Lucetta KAM Yip Lo (Hong Kong)
Queer Mobility of Chinese “Single” Women

Introduction: Jeroen de Kloet (Amsterdam)
Discussant: Shilpa Phadke (Mumbai)

5:45-6:15 pm Break with refreshments and snacks

6:15-20:15 pm Public Film Screening and Panel Discussion

Being Solo in the City: Representing Women in Film and Performance

Film Screening: “Where’s Sandra?” by Paromita Vohra (18 mins, 2005)

Input Statements & Discussion:

Paromita Vohra (Mumbai): *Sexy and the City or there’s a little bit of Sandra in all of us*
Ranjani Mazumdar (Delhi): *Walking the City in Cinema*
Aparajita De (Delhi): *Filmy Gupsup and the Singling out of Bollywood Heroines*
Chair: Melissa Butcher (London)

Day 3: Thursday October 8, 2015

Panel 4: Mobile Spaces

10:00-11:15 am

Maddalena Chiellini (London): *The Drive to Drive: mobility and aspiration amongst young women in Delhi*
Jenifa Zahan (Singapore): *Being Single: Experiences of young single women from North-East India living in Delhi*
Chair: Shilpa Phadke (Mumbai)

11:15-11:45 am Coffee & Tea

Panel 5: Urban Modernity and Gender



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11:45-1:00 pm

Brinda Bose (Delhi): *Singles and Doubles at Sixes and Sevens*

Chenyang PI (Heidelberg): *"It is not All about Getting Married:" Producing the Desiring Self in Love Club*

Chair: Jyothsna Latha Belliappa (Bangalore)

1:00-2:00 pm Lunch

Panel 6: The Urban Tool Box: Methods for Visualising & Mapping the City

2:00-3:15 pm

Gillian Rose (Milton Keynes): *Whether and how visual methods might be 'scaled up' to meet the challenges of a highly differentiated global visual economy*

Arunava Dasgupta (Delhi): *A typo-morphological approach towards tracking inner city transformations*

Patricia Uberoi (Delhi): *Against 'method': The lure and allure of serendipity*

Saraswati Raju (Delhi): *Mapping the contours of cityscape: Going beyond the conventions*

Chair: Christiane Brosius (Heidelberg)

3:15-4:00 pm Coffee & Tea

4:00-5:30 pm

Public Keynote III:

Gillian Rose (Milton Keynes):

Seeing the City in Digital Times: Photography, Network, Method

Introduction: Melissa Butcher

5:30-6:00 pm Refreshment and Snacks

6:00-7:30 pm **"Shorts in the City"**

Screenings of short films by Oindrila Duttagupta, Priyanka Chhabra, Shilpi Gulati and Shaheen Ahmed

The panel brings together four young filmmakers based in Delhi to showcase their work and engage in a discussion on the workshop's themes. Their short films touch upon a variety of topics ranging from mobility, singlehood and opportunity, as well as women's experiences of comfort and pleasure, sexuality and shame intimidation and independence. They present glimpses of both private and public spaces, visual fragments that conjure up affective geographies of the metropolis. The aim of the session is not only to explore representations of city-life, but also to look at Delhi through the camera's lens. How does the city inspire young female filmmakers? What subjects are dear to them? What aspects of city living do they feel the urge to linger on? How do they convey their experiences? The screenings will be followed by a discussion with the filmmakers and writer/ journalist Nisha Susan.

Chair/Discussant: Nisha Susan



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