

Sexing the City

HERA SINGLE Final Conference

Final programme

Workshop Dates	September 15-17, 2016
Workshop Venue	Museum Volkenkunde / Research Center for Material Culture
Exhibition Dates	September 15-December 31, 2016
Exhibition Venue	Museum Volkenkunde / Research Center for Material Culture

Museum Volkenkunde / Research Center for Material Culture (Leiden)

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In 2015, five feminists were detained in China for more than a month; their public activism for more female toilets, against domestic violence and for safer subways, appeared to challenge the authorities too much. Meanwhile, in India, calls for a safe city for women continue to dominate public debate. Asian cities are changing at an unprecedented speed, along with their gendered social fabrics. Simultaneously, forces against changing gender roles also multiply, summoning a return to traditional (often regarded as ‘Asian’) values that invokes banishing women back to the private sphere.

Such dynamics can be seen in the rapidly transforming cities of Delhi and Shanghai that have become a site for changing family patterns and the undoing of ‘traditional’ social contracts as a result of migration, new work opportunities, delayed marriage, divorce, open homosexuality, and a growing leisure and consumer society. Reflecting moral panics centered on discourses of ‘westernisation’ and alleged disruption of public spaces, the resulting subjectivities are precarious, marked by asymmetrical power relations. Gendered imaginaries of emancipation are therefore contested in the light of a variety of cultural practices that impact women’s multiple lifeworlds.

In *Sexing the City* we wish to unpack the gendered dimensions of rapid urban changes taking place today through the themes of autonomy, respectability and precarity. With our focus on Delhi and Shanghai we seek to examine how different groups face different and/or similar struggles. For example, in Delhi a female motor bike club explores new and shared forms of navigating urban space; in Shanghai, creative female workers jump from job to job braving stigmatization by the outside world as overtly ambitious and ‘left-over’ women (*shengnü*); in both Shanghai and Delhi, migrant women face precarity in terms of labour and in terms of romance. Moreover, queer women date gay men in China to pacify their parents’ wish for a heterosexual marriage, while the GLTBQ community in Delhi is facing legal measures against same sex practices. *Sexing the City* aims to unravel this proliferation of new gendered and sexed dynamics and subjectivities within recurring and persistent heteronormative discourses. It also brings a gendered focus to key debates in urban studies such as urban comparativism.

We use the transitive form “Sexing” to underline the continuity of this process, while highlighting its instability. We address questions such as: How to live, love and make love in times of precarity? How to feel safe while navigating the city autonomously? How to remain ‘respectable,’ and according to whose criteria? How to resist heteronormative and patriarchal forces that continue to haunt the cityscape? How and when and who can claim the right to the city? What impact creative forms of protest can have? And is it possible to compare cities through a gendered lens? Indeed, though our focus is on Asia, these are questions that are as relevant for Europe today.

Sexing the City comprises discussion and debate including keynote presentations from prof. Raminder Kaur (University of Sussex, UK) and prof. Jennifer Robinson (University College London, UK), film screenings of “Women” by Walker Lee (Shanghai), depicting the lives and loves of young urbanites in China and an art exhibition featuring the artists Li Xiaofei (Shanghai), Guo Qingling (Shanghai), and Sheba Chhachhi (Delhi).

This workshop is the closing event of SINGLE (www.hera-single.de), a three-year research project funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA). Project partners are Heidelberg University, the University of Amsterdam, and Birkbeck College (University of London), as well as Fei Contemporary Art Foundation (Shanghai), Goethe Institut (New Delhi) and The National Museum of World Cultures / The Research Center for Material Culture (Amsterdam and Leiden).

PARTICIPANTS

HERA Team

Christiane Brosius, *University of Heidelberg* (Germany)
 Melissa Butcher, *University of London, Birkbeck* (UK)
 Jeroen de Kloet, *University of Amsterdam* (The Netherlands)
 Laila Abu-Er-Rub, *University of Heidelberg* (Germany)
 Yiu Fai Chow, *Hong Kong Baptist University* (Hong Kong)
 Maddalena Chiellini, *University of London, Birkbeck* (UK)
 Penn Ip Tsz Ting, *University of Amsterdam* (The Netherlands)
 Pi Chenying, *University of Heidelberg* (Germany)
 Lucie Bernroider, *University of Heidelberg* (Germany)

Invited Speakers

Raminder Kaur, *University of Sussex* (UK)
 Jennifer Robinson, *University College London* (UK)
 Kinneret Lahad, *Tel-Aviv University* (Israel)
 Lucetta Kam, *Hong Kong Baptist University* (Hong Kong)
 Barbara Mittler, *University of Heidelberg* (Germany)
 Sheba Chhachhi (India)
 Shilpa Phadke, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences* (India)
 Sruti Bala, *University of Amsterdam* (The Netherlands)
 Li Maizi, *Rainbow Lawyers China* (China)
 Flavia Dzodan (Netherlands)

Invited Artists

Li Xiaofei (China)
 Guo Qingling (China)
 Sheba Chhachhi (India)
 Oindrila Duttagupta (India)
 Walker Lee (China)
 Kareem Reid & Urban Wolf (United Kingdom)
 Zinzi Minott (United Kingdom)

Museum Volkenkunde / Research Center for Material Culture

Wayne Modest
 Amal Alhaag
 Ninja Rijnks-Kleikamp

PROGRAMME

Day 1 Thursday September 15, 201

Public event

Room: Gerbrandszaal, Research Center for Material Culture

16.00-17.00

Registration & Reception

Coffee and tea

17.00-18.30

Welcome

Stijn Schoonderwoerd, *director National Museum of World Cultures*

Public Keynote I

Raminder Kaur

Mediating Rape:

The 'Nirbhaya Effect' in the Creative and Digital Arts

Chair: Jeroen de Kloet

Discussant: Christiane Brosius

18.30-19.30

Opening of Exhibition

Day 2

Friday September 16, 2016

Public event

Public Workshop with project team and invited guests

Room: Gerbrandszaal, Research Center for Material Culture

09.30-10.00

Coffee and tea

10.00-11.30

Panel 1: *Autonomy*

Chair: Christiane Brosius

HERA Team, PIs

Creating the 'New' Asian Woman:

Entanglements of Urban Space, Cultural Encounters and Gendered Identities in Shanghai and Delhi

Kinneret Lahad

A Time-Bound Autonomy:

Single Women and the Heteronormative Market Place

Lucetta Kam

The (Good) Life Out There:

Stories of *Chuguo* (Leaving Country) of Queer Women in China

11.30-12.00

Coffee and tea

12.00-13.30

Panel 2: *Respectability*

Chair: Melissa Butcher

Barbara Mittler

Locating Re-Spectable Touch:

Visual Mindmaps from China's Print Media, 1900s-2000s

Sheba Chhachhi

Naked Poets, Barricade Breakers, #Pink Sluts:

Changing images of Transgressive Women in India

Laila Abu-Er-Rub

Shaking and Sexing the Indian Public Sphere – Prabuddha Dasgupta's

Portraits of Urban Indian Women

13.30-14.30

Lunch

14.30-16.00

Panel 3: *Precarity*

Chair: Jeroen de Kloet

Shilpa Phadke

Risking Politics, Rethinking Feminism

Sruti Bala

Four Female Theatre Artists in India and their Solitary Struggles On and Off-Stage

Li Maizi

Queer Feminism in China

16.00-17.00

Coffee and tea

17.00-18.30

Closing & Public Keynote II

Jennifer Robinson

Thinking Cities through Elsewhere:

Post-Democracy Meets Post-Colony

Chair: Melissa Butcher

Discussant: Wayne Modest

Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies

Disassembling sexual and gender identities in the city

**“We are often superficially perceived as “sub” culture. Sub for whom? Not for us”-
artist, activist Kareem Reid.**

Queer and feminist politics, thought and self-expression are continuously reconfiguring urban landscapes globally. Claiming the emancipatory promise of city life numerous queer and feminist pockets, whether in real space or on social media, show the power and potential of DIY cultural and digital spaces to question normative boundaries of the self, sidestepping restrictive notions of sexual, gendered and political identities.

But how do these radical notions of transgressive being affect or create contemporary urban socialities? Conversely, how does the city allow or restrict these transgressive bodies & politics. During the final HERA SINGLE Conference Sexing the City, The Research Center for Material Culture organizes Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies. With this event we experiment, disrupt and situate the idea of Sexing the City in a global context.

We focus on questions such as: How to live, love and make love in times of precarity? What happens to those who are (in)visibly (re) producing, (re)claiming and (re)defining city life on the peripheries of societies? For Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies, The Research Center for Material Culture invites artist Zinzi Minot, feminist writer Flavia Dzodan, art historian and filmmaker Walker Lee, writer and artist Kareem Reid and filmmaker Oindrila Duttagupta to destabilize normative urban narratives of urban socialities by presenting and working with moving images, films and performative gestures. Specifically, the programme attempts to identify precarious, unconventional or offbeat survival strategies within global patriarchal urban settings. In this day of discussions, workshops and screenings, Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies aims to become an alternative and temporal stage for a multitude of critical, queer and feminist perspectives and voices to refashion our understanding, language and doings.

Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies is part of the concluding program of “Creating the ‘New’ Asian Woman: Entanglements of Urban Space, Cultural Encounters and Gendered Identities in Shanghai and Delhi” (SINGLE, see also www.hera-single.de, a three-year research project funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA). ‘Queer Sidesteppers & Feminist Boss Ladies’ is part of the three-day conference ‘Sexing The City’.

See: <http://www.materialculture.nl/en/events/queer-sidesteppers-feminist-boss-ladies>

Day 3

Saturday September 17, 2016

Public program with film screenings, workshop and debate
Room: Gerbrandszaal, Research Center for Material Culture

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|-------------|--|
| 10.00-11.00 | Registration & Reception
Coffee and tea |
| 11.00-11.10 | Introduction: Queer Side-Steppers & Feminist Boss Ladies
Wayne Modest, Jeroen de Kloet and Amal Alhaag |
| 11.10-11:40 | Presentation by feminist writer Flavia Dzodan
Q&A with audience moderated by Wayne Modest |
| 11.40-12.10 | Film screening <i>Desire in the City</i> and <i>Shame was a Place inside</i>,
and interview with filmmaker Oindrila Duttagupta
moderated by Lucie Bernroider |
| 12.10-12.45 | Performance & presentation by artist Zinzi Minott
Q&A with audience moderated by Amal Alhaag |
| 12.45-13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30-15.30 | Film screening <i>Women</i> and interview with filmmaker Walker Lee
moderated by Yiu Fai Chow |
| 15.30-15:45 | Coffee and tea |
| 15.45-16.45 | Performative Workshop with artists Kareem Reid & Urban Wolf
<i>Body Party Museum</i> |
| 16.45-17.15 | Panel Conversation: The Objectified Bodies and Taboo Cultures
with Zinzi Minott, Kareem Reid, Li Maiza and Oindrila
Duttagupta moderated by Amal Alhaag |
| 17.15-17.30 | Conclusion by Wayne Modest and Jeroen de Kloet |

Art Exhibition

Curator: Wayne Modest

Artists

From China

Li Xiaofei

Guo Qingling

From India

Sheba Chhachhi

PAPER ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

KEYNOTES

Raminder Kaur, *University of Sussex* (UK)

Mediating Rape: The ‘Nirbhaya Effect’ in the Creative and Digital Arts

While reports of ‘Nirbhaya’ referring to the brutal gang rape of a young woman on a moving bus in Delhi 2012 have been prolific, less attention has been paid to other media and artistic representations on the subject. In this article, I consider how the atrocity has been mediated through multiple outlets in India as part of a reinvigorated aesthetics of grief, anger, critique and protest. Building on earlier feminist modes of artistic engagement and describing it as the ‘Nirbhaya effect’, I consider outlets such as online films, canvas art, posters, photography, murals, comic books, satirical skits, and ‘social experiments’ which continue unabated in India despite the state’s censorship of the BBC documentary on the issues raised, *India’s Daughter*. The creative outlets may be considered in terms of five overlapping registers: memorialisation, affirmative solidarity, ironic provocations, rescripting the master narrative, and sensationalisation. Altogether, they indicate the many potentials and limitations of a violent wound in the social fabric channeled through the creative arts and digital media.

Raminder Kaur is Professor of Anthropology and Cultural Studies based in the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex. She is the author of *Atomic Mumbai: Living with the Radiance of a Thousand Suns* (2013) and *Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism* (2003/5). She is also co-author of *Diaspora and Hybridity* (with V. Kalra and J. Hutnyk, 2005), and co-editor of the following books: *Arts and Aesthetics in a Globalizing World* (with P. Dave-Mukherji, Association of Social Anthropologist series vol. 51, 2014); *Censorship in South Asia: Cultural Regulation from Sedition to Seduction* (with W. Mazzarella, 2009); *Bollyworld: Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens* (with A. Sinha, 2005); and *Travel Worlds: Journeys in Contemporary Cultural Politics* (with J. Hutnyk, 1999). She has written several articles for peer reviewed journals as well as other outlets, along with a number of scripts for theatre.

Jennifer Robinson, University College London (UK)

Thinking Cities through Elsewhere: Post-Democracy Meets Post-Colony

The analysis of urban politics in South Africa and in other African contexts offers a rich repertoire of theoretical insight, stretching from governance and policy formulation in the post-apartheid era, to revolutionary urban social movements as well as a fine infrastructure of mobilisation, engagement, contestation, collaboration, evasion and invention which marks out a prosaic but significant arena of ongoing urban transformation. This paper will operationalise generative comparative strategies (as outlined in Robinson, 2016, *Progress in Human Geography*) committed to thinking through elsewhere to confront the relative pessimism of post-democratic and post-political analyses of urban governance and contestation in London with views from post-colonies, where democratisation and hopes of transformation have figured so strongly in shaping dynamic forms of emergent political association, in the face of often spectral and preemptory forms of power. What can the concept and ideas launched by the experiences of the post-colony bring to the analysis of post-democracy? The paper will focus on some key elements of the architecture of urban governance and contestation in both contexts, including processes of renewal and displacement, engagements in planning large scale developments, and forms of popular mobilisation. The rich analysis of the experiences of the patient grassroots organising of the Shack and Slum Dwellers International, grounded initially in the case of Mumbai (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2015), as well as the detailed emerging analysis of “bargained authoritarianism” in some of China’s cities (Lee and Zhang, 2013; Hsing, 2012), will also inform the paper alongside detailed original community-based research in London. This kind of experiment in comparative thinking takes seriously the potential of a strong post-colonial commitment to decentring theorisation, provoking a more global urban theory, and making London, for example, a destination for theory.

Jennifer Robinson is Professor of Human Geography at University College London, and Visiting Professor at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town. She has also worked at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, the LSE (London) and the Open University. Her book, *Ordinary Cities* (Routledge, 2006) developed a post-colonial critique of urban studies, arguing for urban theorising which draws on the experiences of a wider range of cities around the globe. This project has been taken forward in her call to reinvent comparative urbanism for global urban studies in her recent, *Cities in a world of cities* article in *IJURR* and *Thinking Cities through Elsewhere*, in *Progress in Human Geography*. Current projects include exploring transnational aspects of Johannesburg and London’s policy making processes and collaborative and community-based research comparing governance of large scale urban developments in London, Johannesburg and Shanghai (with Phil Harrison and Fulong Wu). She has also published extensively on the history and contemporary politics of South African cities, including *The Power of Apartheid* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996).

PANELLISTS

Kinneret Lahad, *Tel-Aviv University (Israel)*

A Time-Bound Autonomy: Single Women and the Heteronormative Market Place

A few years ago, Princeton alumna Susan Patton (2013) sparked intense debate when, in an open letter to *The Daily Princetonian*, she suggested that female students make the best use of their time at the university by finding a future husband. Statements like Patton's are ubiquitous in global media; single women are warned to *manage their time wisely* and to *invest* in the right kind of men/commodity. Drawing on a close reading of media texts, I will demonstrate how the autonomy of single women is articulated and regulated by the juxtaposition of commodity imagery and socially constructed timetables. I argue that under these terms, the autonomy of single women is configured as a short-lived privilege, dependent on one's age and gender. Seen this way, ageist and sexist norms such as those promoted in Patton's public letter are presented as temporal facts, merely reflecting market dynamics and conveying post-feminist articulations of women's autonomy.

Kinneret Lahad is an assistant professor at the *NCJW Women and Gender Studies Program* at Tel Aviv University. Her areas of research include sociology of the family, singlehood, sociological and feminist studies of time, critical age studies, friendship studies and social emotions. She has written extensively on female singlehood, sociological and feminist theory and her forthcoming book *A Table for One: A Critical Reading of Singlehood, Gender and Time* will be published by Manchester University Press. Her current projects include independent and collaborative studies on Aunthood, blended families, feminism and emotions, middle ageism and solo dining and belonging. She has been a visiting professor and an honorary research fellow at the Venice International University and Manchester University and this upcoming winter she will be a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York and a visiting lecturer at Ca'Foscari University in Venice.

Lucetta Kam, *Hong Kong Baptist University (Hong Kong)*

The (Good) Life Out There: Stories of *Chuguo* (Leaving Country) of Queer Women in China

This paper looks at the question of autonomy through stories of mobility, in particular, those of *chuguo*. *Chuguo*, the outward mobility from China to other parts of the world, usually refers to travelling to the first world countries in North America, Europe or Australia. Mobility is conditioned by one's gender, class position, sexual orientation, age, physical ability and citizenship. In China, mobility is also defined and confined by one's *hukou* (household registration), ethnicity and other forms of social and cultural connection and resource one can access. The economic and social transformation in China has given rise to a new class of mobile urbanites. They are people who were born or growing up during the economic reform era. They are highly educated, fluent in English or other foreign languages, and have benefitted from the newly acquired freedom of geographical mobility within and

outside the country. *Chuguo* is always a shared destiny or life goal for this young urban class. This paper looks at the *chuguo* experiences of young urban queer women in Shanghai and Beijing. It studies the life aspirations of an emerging young urban class in China through the intersection of sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity and one's mobility.

Lucetta Y. L. Kam is a researcher, creative writer and queer activist. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing at Hong Kong Baptist University. She teaches gender, sexuality and media studies. Her research interests are queer ethnography, Chinese lesbian studies, and popular culture. She is the author of *Shanghai Lalas: Female Tongzhi Communities and Politics in Urban China* (2013; Chinese edition 2015). Her articles appeared in *Queer/Tongzhi China: New Perspectives on Research, Activism and Media Cultures*, *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*, *As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Gender and Sexuality in Mainland China and Hong Kong* and *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Gender and Sexuality in the Asia-Pacific*.

Barbara Mittler, University of Heidelberg (Germany)

Locating Re-Spectable Touch—Visual Mindmaps from China's Print Media, 1900s-2000s

Contemporary entertainment magazines in China are quite explicitly and openly sexed. Intimacy and touch play an important role in their visual make-up. This paper discusses the politics of touch (and its respectability) on the pages of these magazines, taking its starting point in the present and working its way back into the long 20th century: To what extent can different ideas of intimacy be played out visually and thus experienced and enjoyed by audiences reading China's vernacular media? How does the entertainment press, in advertising, caricature, photography, instigate new understandings of intimacy and touch? How do these factors contribute to shaping, the imag(in)ing of specific (acceptable) forms of intimate activity? How does this change over time?

By creating visual mindmaps, I argue, it is possible to spot the gradations in the normalization of such changes: both the coy and the openly intimate couple appear on the pages of China's magazine press—in urban as well as rural settings. Each of them fulfills particular functions at particular times (and in particular locales), thus answering to the particular psychological make-up and the expectations of the pleasures of leisure and the restraints of the respectable which is rooted both in time and in space. But when and where does it become “commonly accepted” to show (and make visible, “spectable”) a photograph of a woman (almost) in the nude or of a hugging and kissing couple? What does this mean for the general level of prudishness or openness (in the country or the city) and the respectability of visible and public displays of affection between the sexes? Surveying the visual mindmaps of 100 years of women's and other entertainment magazines, we realize that, images have, if not ruled, then certainly shaped the making of history in modern China—the fantasy of these images is not a false reality, but supports and creates the Real. Images are crucial to the

formation of cultural imaginaries and they are an important element in the making of cultural realities as well.

The paper thus traces visual evidence for dominant and prescribed as well as subdued and subversive modes of *seeing* touching and feeling and reflects on the importance of intervisual memory-making in this process. Surveying however “new” ways of visualizing touch have been introduced throughout the long 20th century, thus eliminating “old” types of touch (if not their memories) in readers’ minds, the paper traces the process of prescription and proscription—and thus by implication the question of how particular pleasures and visions of intimate touch become socially acceptable. It shows that touch and intimacy is always already policed and illustrates which rules decide about the (visual) enjoyment and the time and place of correct and “re-spectable touch.”

Barbara Mittler is Director of the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (formerly the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context.”), and of the Institute of Chinese Studies. She began her studies of Sinology at the University of Oxford (MA Oxon 1990), and has spent research periods in Taiwan (Academia Sinica), the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong, at Harvard and Stanford. Her research focuses on cultural production in (greater) China covering a wide range of topics from music to (visual) and (historical) print media in China’s long modernity.

Sheba Chhachhi (India)

Naked Poets, Barricade Breakers, #Pink Sluts: Changing images of Transgressive Women in India

The presentation will map the figure of the dissident women, across a wide historic range. From the pre-modern ascetic/saint and their refusal of the domestic, to the 80’s feminist refusal to allow violence, especially within the family, to most recent assertions of sexuality, mobility and lifestyle - in itself a refusal to conform to societal restrictions. These refusals overlap and are in tension with each other. The illustrated talk will share these diverse forms of representation of resistance.

Sheba Chhachhi is an artist/ photographer who investigates questions of gender, eco-philosophy, violence and visual cultures, with emphasis on the recuperation of cultural memory. An activist/photographer documenting the women’s movement in the 1980s, Chhachhi moved on to create intimate, sensorial encounters through large multimedia installations. Her work retrieves marginal worlds: of women, mendicants forgotten forms of labour and interweaves the mythic with the social, pre-modern thought with contemporary concerns, to bring the contemplative into the political. She has exhibited widely including the Gwangju, Taipei, Moscow, Singapore and Havana biennales and her works are held in significant public and private collections such as Tate Modern, UK, National Gallery of Modern Art, India, Singapore Art Museum, amongst others. She lives and works in New Delhi.

Laila Abu-Er-Rub, University of Heidelberg (Germany)

Shaking and Sexing the Indian Public Sphere – Prabuddha Dasgupta’s Portraits of Urban Indian Women

This paper is about the photographer Prabuddha Dasgupta (1956-2012) whose images partly created moral panics and stirred the Indian public sphere, particularly the pictures in which he portrayed strong, urban, independent women, nudes and/ or sexuality. Prabuddha openly criticized consumerism, capitalism, gender discrimination, unified notions of physical attractiveness and the contemporary Indian beauty imperative. Dasgupta’s last campaign for the jewellery campaign Ganjam before his sudden death in 2012 has so far been neglected in academia unlike his earlier works. According to Umesh Ganjam, the marketing director of the company, the brand stands for ‘multiplicity, multi-ethnicity, inclusiveness.’ The 2011 Ganjam campaign featured advertisements with different women who all challenged contemporary normative body and beauty ideals presented in Bollywood and other popular Indian media: the models were older than usual, had eye circles, birthmarks, tattoos or other ‘flaws’, some had a dark skin. Further, the images were deliberately not photoshopped in the post-production process. Through an overview of Prabuddha’s work with a focus on his last campaign for Ganjam, I will analyse contemporary Indian hegemonic visualities in relation to body, gender, sexuality, class, race, and Prabuddha’s strategy of turning these consciously upside down by disturbing the ideologically motivated “aesthetic dualism” (Mazzarella 2009) and Colourism in the Indian public sphere.

After a vocational training in advertising, Laila Abu-Er-Rub studied Cultural Anthropology, Media Studies and Religious Studies in Mannheim and Heidelberg. Her dissertation “Goldene Zeiten: Mode und Körper im neoliberalen Indien” (Golden Times: Fashion and Body in Neoliberal India) examined changing beauty ideals and sartorial practices in neoliberal urban India. Laila is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the interdisciplinary Cluster “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”. She further coordinates the Cluster’s Research Areas and the HERA SINGLE project.

Shilpa Phadke, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (India)

Risking Politics, Rethinking Feminism

This paper presents a work-in-progress that engages with contemporary feminist debates in relation to the claiming of feminism as a politics. “What”, varied women have queried, “is vested in the claiming of feminism as a label?” Continuing this line of argument, I will reflect briefly on ideas around fitting in and gatekeeping in relation to feminism, and the concomitant anxiety associated with espousing a politics. I will also engage with a recent exercise in a postgraduate classroom where students reflect on their personal-political

engagements with feminism. Here I will focus on what it means to write together as feminists. In the penultimate section, I will reflect on what it might mean to parent ‘feminist’ young women. In the final section I will look at the politicisation of young women in the post-December 2012 scenario and reflect on the possibilities for young women to ‘redo feminism’ in the 21st century. As with the ‘Risking Feminism’ paper, I will weave my own feminist biography alongside the narratives I engage.’

Shilpa Phadke is a researcher, writer and pedagogue. She teaches at the School of Media and Cultural Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She has been educated at St. Xavier’s College, SNDT University, TISS in Mumbai and the University of Cambridge, UK. She is co-author of *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (Penguin 2011). She has published both in academic journals and anthologies and in the popular media. She has previously taught under-graduate sociology at St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai. Her areas of concern include gender and the politics of space, the middle classes, sexuality and the body, feminist politics among young women, reproductive subjectivities, feminist parenting, and pedagogic practices.

Sruti Bala, University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Four Female Theatre Artists in India and their Solitary Struggles On and Off-Stage

Since the late 1990s, the Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW), based in Mumbai, India has produced a series of documentaries on four women in the theatre in India, each well known in their own regions and languages, namely: K.R. Ambika (Tamil Nadu), Vithabai (Maharashtra), Malathamma (Karnataka), and Maya Krishna Rao (Delhi). The presentation will address common themes and questions in these documentary films, which consist of extensive oral history interviews with each of them reflecting on their lives as artists in theatre. The oral history interviews reveal with care and sensitivity how being a woman in the theatre implies a lifetime of solitary struggles on and off stage.

Sruti Bala is Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests are in the areas of participatory art, feminism, artistic activism and translation. Recent publications include: *The Global Trajectories of Queerness: Rethinking Same-Sex Politics in the Global South* (co-edited with Ashley Tellis), Rodopi/Brill: Leiden, 2015; and ‘Humorous Approaches to Art and Activism’, special issue of *European Journal of Humour Research* (co-edited with Veronika Zangl), 2015, Vols.2&3.

Li Maizi, Rainbow Lawyers China (China)

Queer Feminism in China

On March 6, 2015, the police knocked on my door at night and took me to the police station, followed by a non-stop 24-hour questioning. Later, I was sent to a detention center, where I was detained for 37 days. Yet I was not alone. There were four other feminist activists

arrested by the police. Feminist activists in China quickly responded on the first day we were detained: they bravely walked on the street with our pictures in the hope to show the public that we were in danger. Thanks to their effort, “Free Five Sisters” became an international event. While the PRC government was trying to present the world a positive image of their support of gender equality, our incident reveals the other side of the story. Feminists and NGOs are under strict state surveillance. Significantly, our actions as well as other feminists who gathered together under the #freethefive event have shown to the world that feminists in China have the capacity to provoke change. They give a new turn to the feminist movement in China, and help to challenge patriarchy and misogyny in China. The government may be trying to crack down feminists, but this in turn ironically stimulates us to foster our solidarity. In this presentation, I will talk about the mission of this new Chinese feminist movement, our past events, and our future plans. First, Chinese single women cannot legally give birth. This is the current legal difficulty and reality. Then, I would like to introduce that we are now pushing to change the situation. Our short-term goal is to abolish the prohibition to implement single women statutory provisions artificial assisted reproductive technology. And our long-term goal is to promote long-term legalization of single women reproductive rights. The most influential new feminism media’s Feminist Voice is our partner on this project.

Li Maizi (Li Tingting) has been working with non-profit organizations and leading “performance art” campaigns in support of feminist and LGBT causes in China since 2011. She was one of the “Feminist Five” arrested in 2015 ahead of Women’s Day for planning to distribute anti-sexual harassment stickers on public transportation and charged with “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a charge that could have resulted in up to ten years in prison if not for her release following an uproar from supporters at home and abroad.