



Class, Gender & Sexuality on the move

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Gender matters

PS: this is not just about women but the *relationship* between various genders

- **Feminist geography: how does gender shape the right to move around space?**
- **How is urban design and planning complicit in the reproduction of gendered norms around mobility?**
- Who is the imagined user of city spaces?
- Who lays claims to the city? Who dares to lay claim to the city?
- For instance, who has the privilege to walk without fear of sexual assault? 😊

Today:

- Why does “lived experience” matter in cities?
- Fear and how it hinders mobility
- The right to be alone

- All fun and no play?
- Why should boys have all the fun?
- Loitering as a radical act

ANTI-STREET HARASSMENT
19TH TO 25TH APRIL

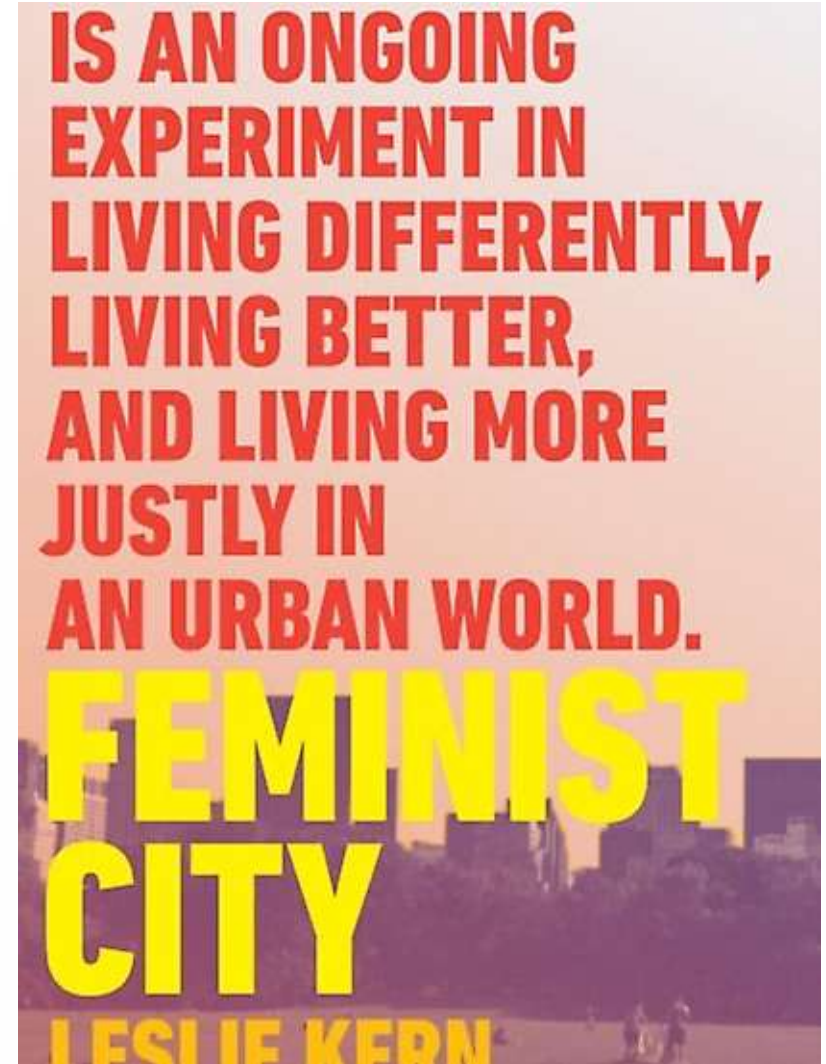


City of men: why lived experience matters

Drawing on Leslie Kern's "City of Men"

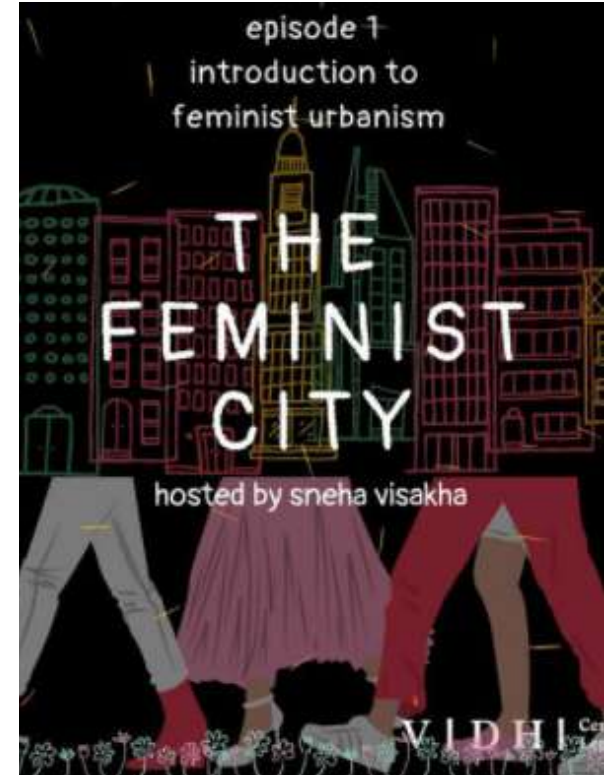
“...women still experience the city through a set of barriers—physical, social, economic, and **symbolic**—that shape their daily lives in ways that are deeply gendered. Many of these barriers are invisible to men, because their own set of experiences means they rarely encounter them. This means that the primary decision-makers in cities, who are still mostly men, are making choices about everything from urban economic policy to housing design, school placement to bus seating, policing to snow removal with no knowledge, let alone concern for, how these decisions affect women.”

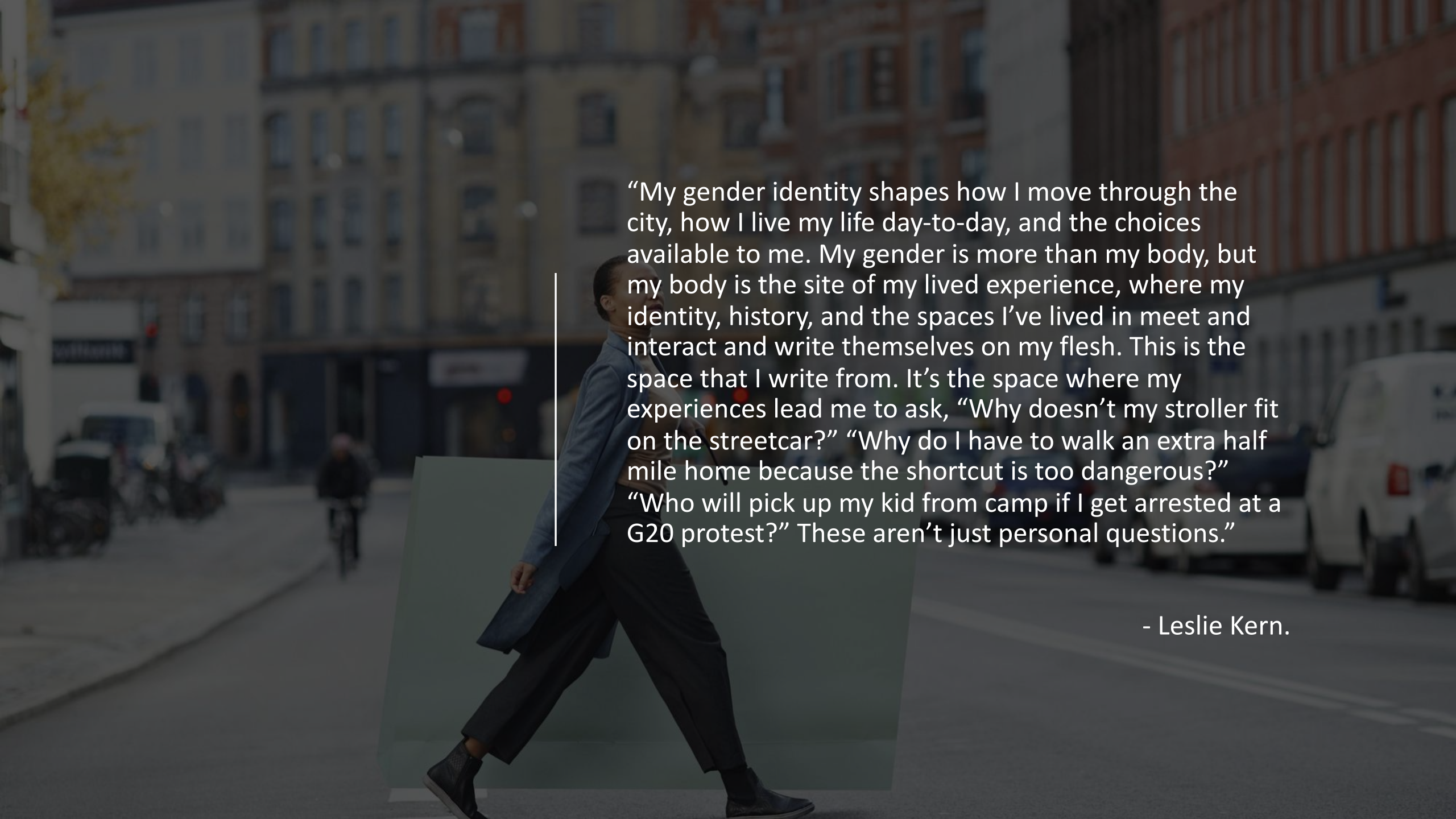
- Leslie Kern



“The city has been set up to support and facilitate the traditional gender roles of men and with men’s experiences as the “norm,” with little regard for how the city throws up roadblocks for women and ignores their day-to-day experience of city life. This is what I mean by the ‘city of men.’”

- Leslie Kern.



A man in a blue suit is walking across a city street, carrying a large, dark, rectangular object. The background shows a blurred city street with buildings, a white van, and a person on a bicycle. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“My gender identity shapes how I move through the city, how I live my life day-to-day, and the choices available to me. My gender is more than my body, but my body is the site of my lived experience, where my identity, history, and the spaces I’ve lived in meet and interact and write themselves on my flesh. This is the space that I write from. It’s the space where my experiences lead me to ask, “Why doesn’t my stroller fit on the streetcar?” “Why do I have to walk an extra half mile home because the shortcut is too dangerous?” “Who will pick up my kid from camp if I get arrested at a G20 protest?” These aren’t just personal questions.”

- Leslie Kern.

“Begin with the material. Begin with the female body. ... Not to transcend this body, but to reclaim it.” What are we reclaiming here? We’re reclaiming personal, lived experience, gut knowledges, and hard-earned truths. ”

What counts as “expert data”?

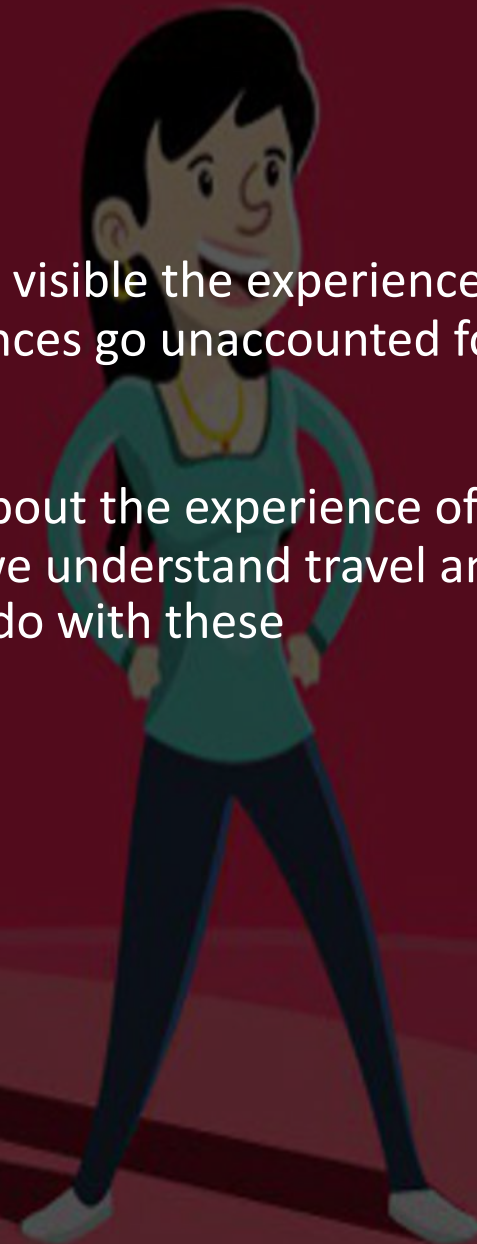
Who makes decisions about the city?

Go back to the “right to the city” argument. Missing women planners!

“Women” as a layered category.

Feminist mobility agenda

- Empirical: to just make visible the experiences of people whose experiences go unaccounted for.
- Conceptual: to think about the experience of women shaping how we understand travel and mobility and what we do with these understandings.



Thinking through the body

- Write down one experience you have had in any public place in the city when you felt acutely aware of your body
 - Could be an encounter with a stranger
 - Could be difficulty in accessing urban infrastructure
 - Could be feeling “different” in some way





The flaneur

- Keen stroller of the city
 - Quiet observer
- Able to watch the city
 - The power to gaze
- The pleasure of walking
- Discovery, exploration, the urban adventure awaits!
- Male





How does Kern describe
the experience of women
attempting to flaneur?

A black and white photograph of a person walking up a dark, narrow staircase. The person is silhouetted against a bright light source at the top of the stairs, creating a strong lens flare effect. The walls of the staircase are dark and textured, with metal railings on both sides. In the background, a tall building with many windows is visible, also silhouetted against the bright light. The overall mood is contemplative and solitary.

The pleasures of being alone in the
city: is it a privilege?

“My brain is in fight or flight, checking for escape routes, it’s trying to figure out just how aggressively you’re going to react to any further action I take to extract myself from a situation entirely not of my own making”.



Street harassment: a “minor” issue?



More on this



ver-O-lantern





@wxixp





saw a Tiktok that said, what would you do if there were no men on earth for 24 hours.. here was the comment section 🙄



View replies (77) ✓

 ellenmoore_
Run around at night blasting music into my headphones without feeling like I need to take one out 3d  86.0K

View replies (119) ✓

 amira_shiwraj
Walk alone in the city and just breath 2d  48.1K

View replies (140) ✓

 abby.jones1115
Ride bikes with my best friend at night without  51.5K

 georgiemallett4
Go on walks at night 3d  353.5K

Liked by creator

View replies (827) ✓

 l4ur3n11
dance around town at 3AM without fearing for my life 3d  241.8K

View replies (257) ✓

 mxo.cruz
Wear an actual bathing suit and go to the beach :) 2d  177.3K

 sweet.creatvre
i would blast music through BOTH of my airpods, wear a mini skirt and tube top, and take a walk late at night. 2d  161.3K

View replies (318) ✓

 krgxoxo
wear whatever i want n feel safe while doing so 2d  145.0K

View replies (83) ✓

 sarasmrdeii
this comment section is so painfully true 2d  72.2K

 goldfishwhore69
walk alone at night not carrying anything and feel confident 2d  42.5K

View replies (20) ✓

 sophiacora111
a massive picnic w my girls at late and sleep under the stars 3d  122.7K

View replies (328) ✓

 nenobim
Idk wear whatever I want outside without  55.5K

The responses

The difficulty of being a flaneuse

Fear of sexual violence (from physical violence to name-calling to being gazed upon)

- “It is too risky...I try not to go to unfamiliar parts of any city...anything might happen”
- “I am tired of constantly being afraid while walking at night”
- “I don’t want to be blamed for anything that may happen to me”
- “Stranger is danger”

Paternalistic narratives

- “My parents have a curfew. They are worried for me, they do it for my safety.”
- “My mother asks me to cover my shoulders with a scarf.”

Issues around respectability (moral narratives)

- “My brother says that only prostitutes roam the streets at night”
- “Decent people don’t feel the need to expose their bodies for attention”
- Don’t be a “public woman”

With increasing participation of women in the workforce, women *do* go out in public but...


- Walk purposefully
- Walk quickly
- Keep a pepper spray with you
- Have an emergency contact
- Share your ride so someone can track it
- Dress appropriately
- Don't laugh too loudly
- Don't be too visible
- Don't deviate from known route
- Don't walk alone at night
- **Don't be alone!**
- Don't, don't, don't...



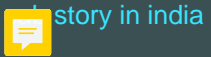
Let's discuss: being a “Public Woman”



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

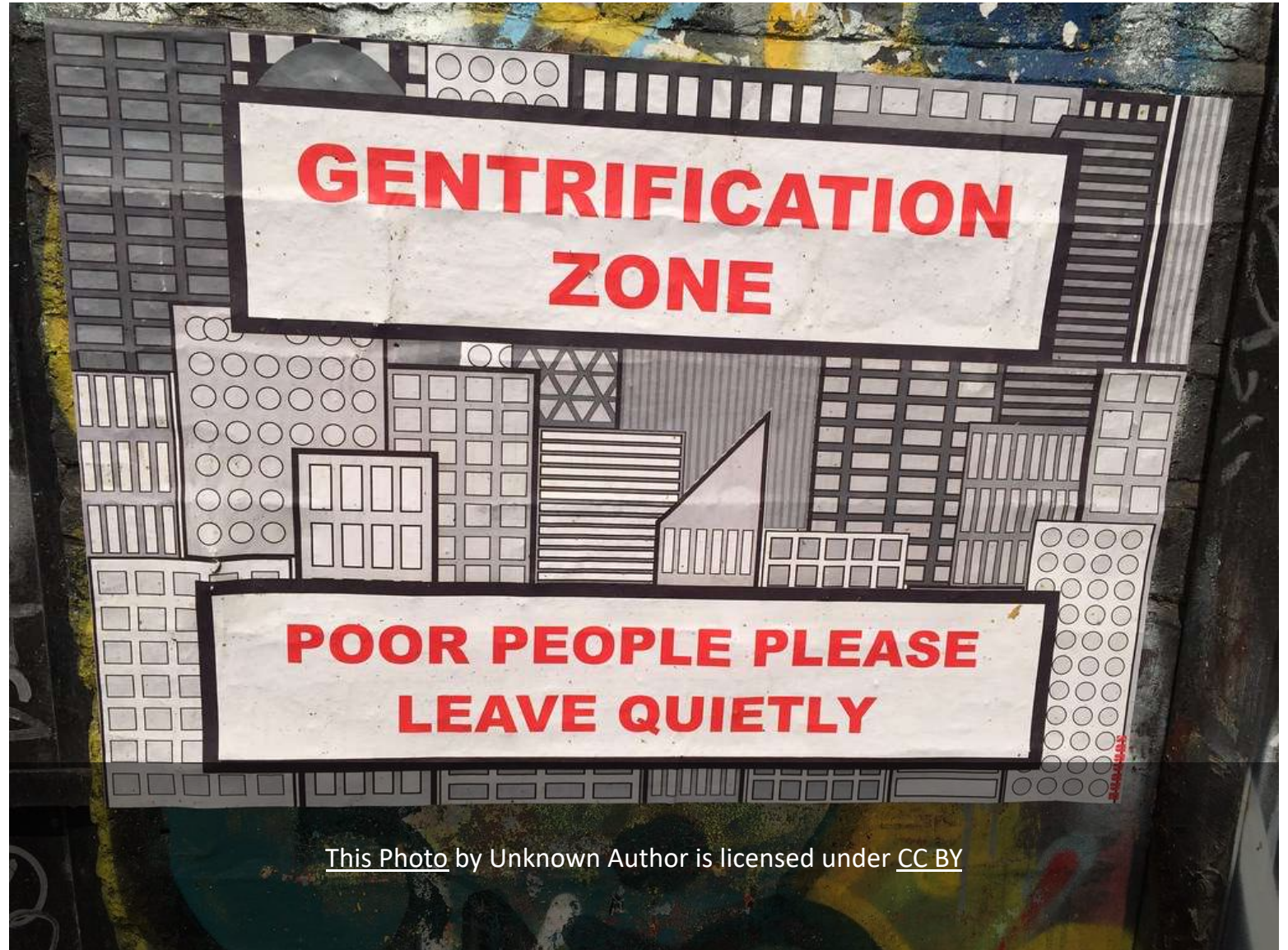
- What does it mean to be a “public woman” and what does  have to do with **women being in public?**
- What is Leslie Kern saying about the public/private binary?
- Why is she talking about consumption spaces?

Gentrification



What does women's mobility have to do with gentrification?!

The safety one is the policing of the other?



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Toilets: pretty key to being on the move!

- Availability – are there toilets?
- Access – who gets to access?
- How is this access shaped by social and infrastructural factors?
- Comfort?



Intersectionality matters

- No “one woman” experience
 - Some women’s safety and pain > other women’s experiences
 - Who is being made visible and whose concerns are sidelined?
 - Is the “home” even that safe?
-
- Critically explore the idea that **there is *one* experience of gender** in the city





City of Fear

The Female Fear

Paradox of
fear?

Is female fear
an innate
trait?



“The social function of women’s fear is the control of women. Fear restricts women’s lives. It limits our use of public spaces, shapes our choices about work and other economic opportunities, and keeps us, in what is perhaps an **actual paradox, dependent on men as protectors**. This all works to prop up a heteropatriarchal capitalist system in which women are tied to the private space of the home and responsible for domestic labour within the institution of the nuclear family.”

“Rape myths also have a geography. This gets embedded into the mental map of safety and danger that every woman carries in her mind. “What were you doing in that neighbourhood? At that bar? Waiting alone for a bus?” “Why were you walking alone at night?” “Why did you take a shortcut?” **We anticipate these questions and they shape our mental maps as much as any actual threat.** These sexist myths serve to remind us that we’re expected to limit our freedom to walk, work, have fun, and take up space in the city.

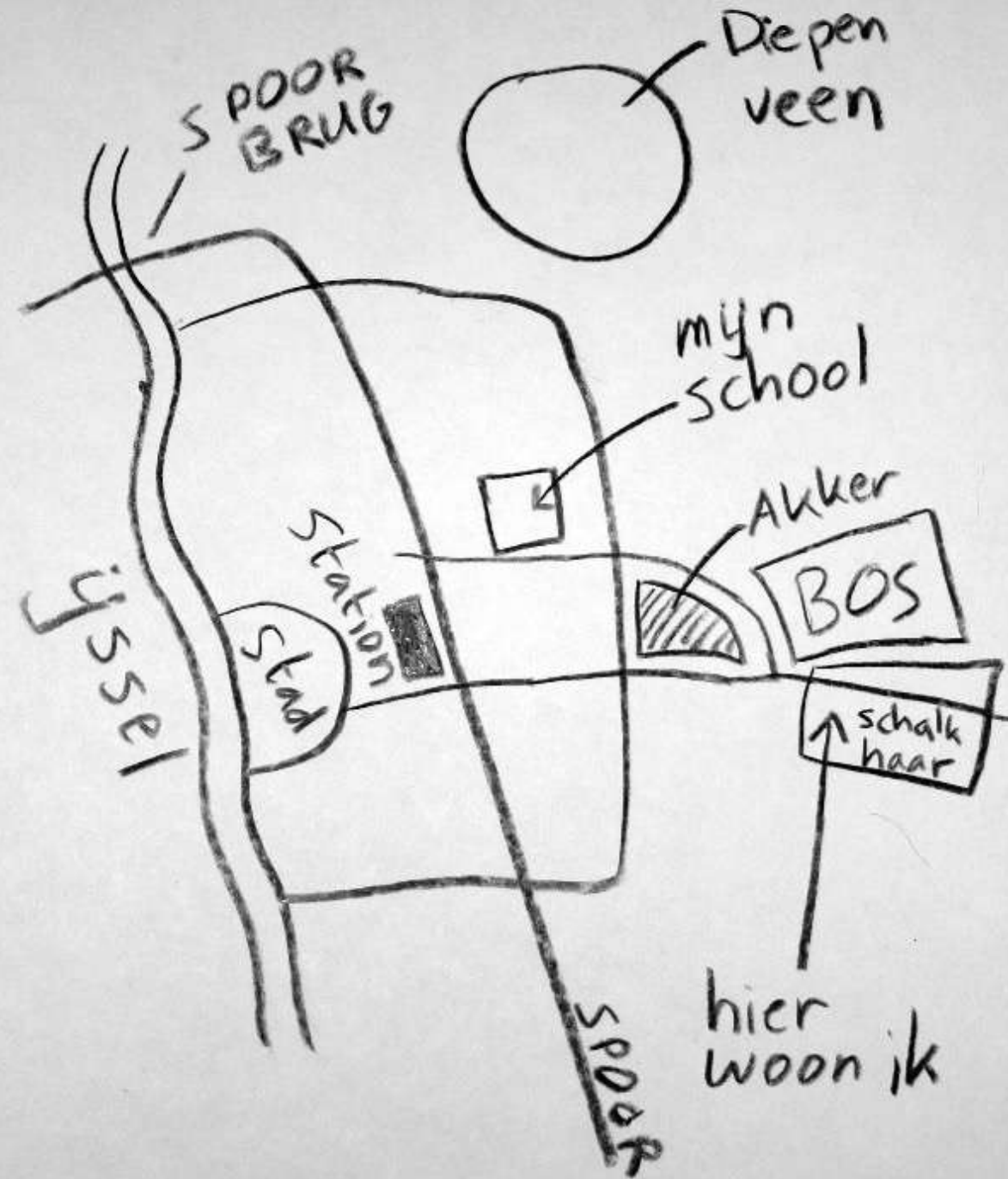
They say: The city isn’t really for you.”

Excerpt From: Leslie Kern. “Feminists City”.



The geography of fear

“...since we have very little control over the presence of men in our environments, and can't function in a state of constant fright, we displace some of our fear onto spaces: city streets, alleyways, subway platforms, darkened sidewalks. These spaces populate our personal mental maps of safety and fear. The map is a living collage, with images, words, and emotions layered over our neighbourhoods and travel routes.”



Consequences

- The cost of fear

- What can we do about it?

“Asking “women’s questions” about the city means asking about so much more than gender. **I have to ask how my desire for safety might lead to increased policing of communities of colour.** I have to ask how my need for stroller access can work in solidarity with the needs of disabled people and seniors. I have to ask how my desire to “claim” urban space for women could perpetuate colonial practices and discourses that harm the efforts of Indigenous people to reclaim lands taken and colonized.”

Excerpt From: Leslie Kern. “Feminists City”.

“While I can’t change most of the features that mark me in these ways, I can be aware of what my body signifies and check the impulse to assert that I can and should claim all urban spaces for my own. If my presence is going to lead to the further marginalization of already-struggling groups, then I need to strongly consider whether my presence there is necessary.”

Excerpt From: Leslie Kern. “Feminists City”.



Why should boys
have all the fun?

Why (NOT) loiter?

Why so serious?

- Are women *only* objects on rehabilitation and protection?
- What about women's pleasures in the city? How does gendered norms and structures shape the experience of fun?
- Can Fun Be Feminist?



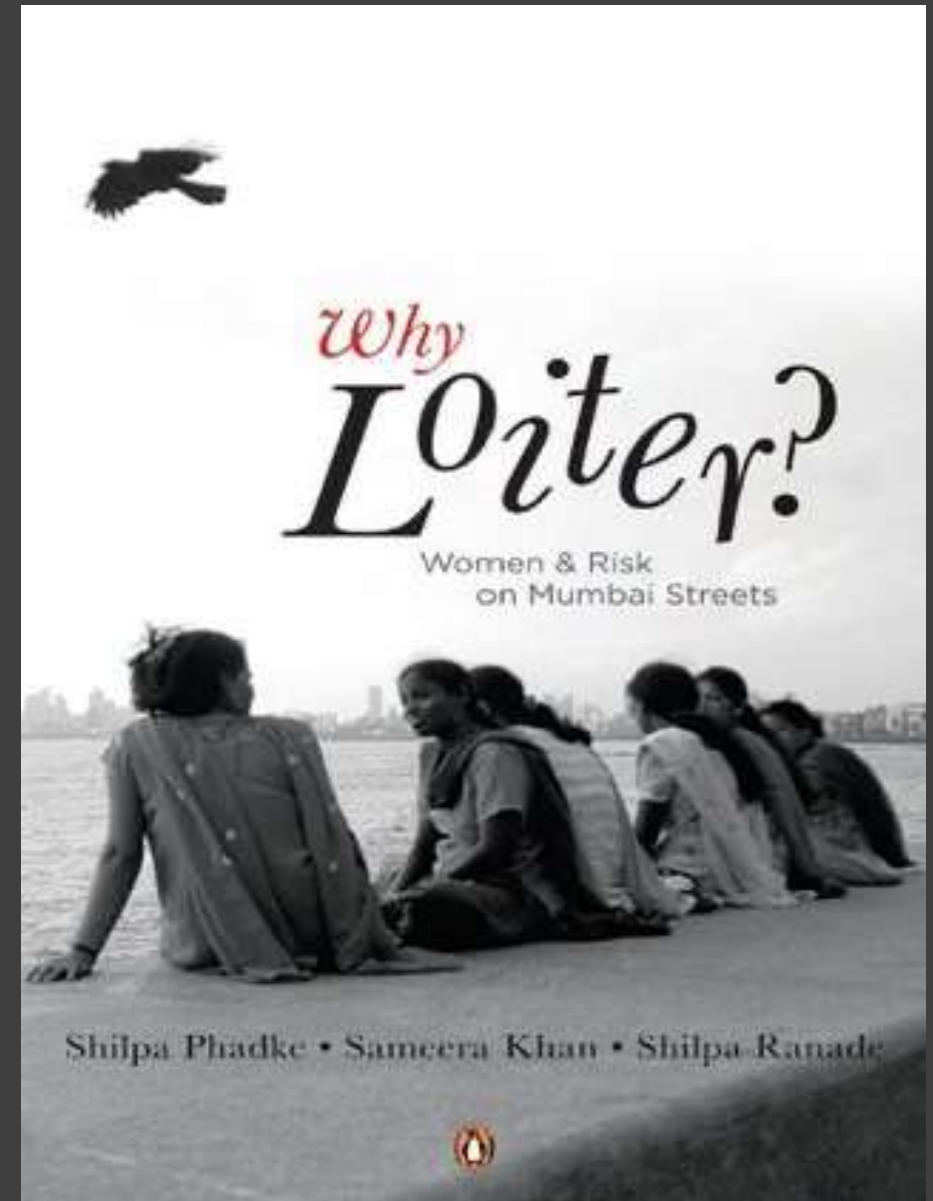
Why Loiter?

Sociologist Shilpa Phadke (and Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade):

Loitering is an act of resistance for women
[breaking gender norms and expectations around
conducting in public spaces]

AND

Due to commodification of time (time = money)
under capitalism, “loitering” indicates a wasteful
activity and so loitering is *radical* on multiple
registers.



Why Loiter?



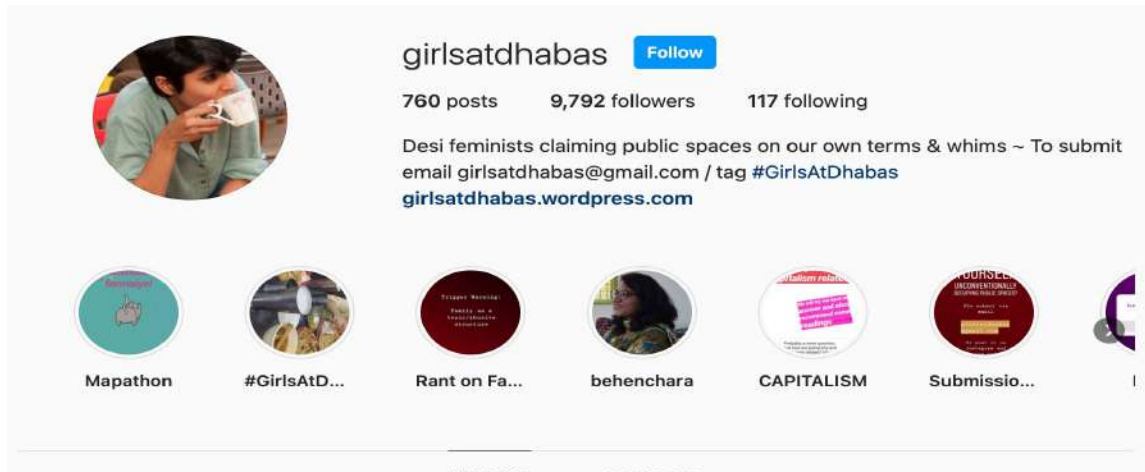


“The presence of the loiterer acts to rupture the controlled socio-cultural order of the global city by refusing to conform to desired forms of movement and location and instead creating alternate maps of movement, and thus new kinds of everyday interaction The liminality of loitering is seen as an act of contamination, defiling space. Loitering is a reminder of what is perceived as the lowest common denominator of the local and thus is a threat to the desired image of a global city: sanitized, glamorous and homogenous. Loitering then as a subversive activity has the potential to raise questions not just of ‘desirable image’ but of citizenship: Who owns the city? Who can access city public spaces as a right?”

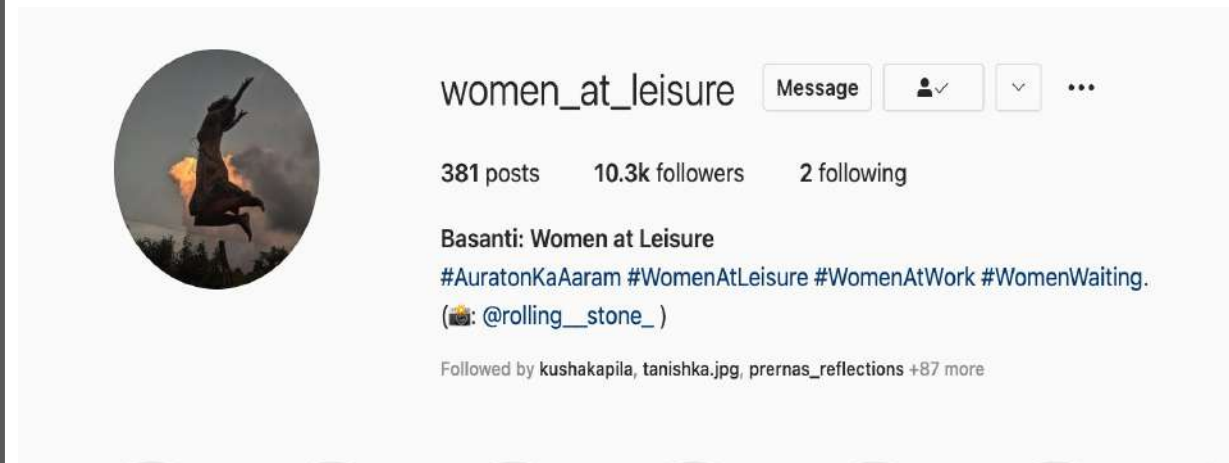
Risky Risks

- But isn't **loitering risky** for women? Who is accountable?
- Is the very freedom to take risks gendered?
- Making public spaces as *public* as possible – eyes on the sidewalk idea?
- Would it even work? “Patriarchal” eyes on the streets won't help, no?
- **Collective matters!**

The right to *enjoying* the city



@girlsatdhabas



@women_at_leisure

When Taking a Nap Is a Political Act

As part of the annual "Meet to Sleep" event, this weekend women across India will embark on a nerve-racking endeavor in the fight against sexual harassment: taking a nap in a public park.



By Chryselle D'Silva Dias

16 January 2016, 3:00am [Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Snap](#)



PHOTOS OF PREVIOUS MEET TO SLEEP EVENTS, COURTESY OF BLANK NOISE AND WHY LOITER



From “Blank Noise”



From “Girls at *Dhabas*”



Longing for the urban adventure!

In an interview, Sadia Khatri articulates the pleasure of the public: 'I think there is something amazing about just being outside without any set purpose in mind. When you're alone even more so: you could end up striking a conversation with a stranger; you end up discovering a new place, writing a new poem; sometimes you spend hours sitting in one place watching strangers and processing your own thoughts'.



From “Women_at_Leisure”

Let's discuss: Feminism and fun



- What are feminist scholars' critiques of the above-mentioned initiatives?
- How does Phadke disagree?

Are we willing to see feminism as a fluid, pluralistic, inclusive politics and movement that can hold space for different forms of organising and articulation within the larger framework of social justice? Are we willing to trouble our own ideas of what a progressive and effective feminist politics might look like in the twenty-first century? If we can see fun as political, we might be able to trouble our ideas of what feminist activism and organising should look like.



An example of looking “beyond the statistics”
and recognizing pleasure



Thank you!

Building a “city for women”

