The Way She Moves: Mapping the Everyday Production of Gender-Space

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The Way She Moves

Mapping the Everyday Production of Gender-Space

This paper examines the everyday practice of gendered public space through an analysis of three "mapping" studies conducted in Mumbai. The first study attempted to document and represent public spaces onto drawings through observation. The second study was based on a participatory research methodology and came about through two simple exercises developed for pedagogic activities. These studies, conducted under the Gender and Space project at Pukar, focused on how male and female bodies locate themselves in and move through public space in their everyday negotiation of space, in the process participating in the production and reproduction of a hegemonic gender-space.

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In the last two decades, simultaneous with the move towards problematising "gender" as a stable category of analysis in social theory, has been a movement towards re-conceptualising space. The focus has shifted from seeing space as a neutral setting – an objective and inevitable backdrop against which social change happens, to articulating a mutually constitutive, dialectical relationship between social structure and space. The focus is on understanding how socio-spatial constructs play constitutive roles in the production and reproduction of social relations. The interpretation of human spatial organisation as an ongoing social production as articulated by Henri Lefebvre (1991) is one of the key arguments in this direction. Taking as its basis the theoretical premises of (a) the discursive "constructedness" of both gender and space and (b) the idea of gender-space as being in the constant state of becoming, this paper aims at further interrogating the "How?" of this proposition hoping thus to nuance/complicate our understanding of gender-space. I do so through a discussion of three studies of the everyday production of gender-space, carried out by the Gender and Space project at Pukar. My argument is based on the premise that we need to dwell upon the "gender" in "gendered spaces" not as an adjective of space, but as a verb- to en-gender space.

The first, and largest, was an exercise of "mapping" the gendered use of public space. Drawing from architecture and planning practices, mapping here refers literally to the making of a physical drawing of a designated public space (a street, park, public toilet) with an aim to examine how spaces are engendered. The process of evolving a methodology for mapping gender will also be discussed briefly here. The other two studies came about through two simple exercises that were developed for the pedagogic activities of the project. Based on some of the initial insights of the mapping study, these exercises are constructed around a drawing each of a hypothetical (but "generic" and probable) space in the city wherein the participants are asked to imagine (and graphically mark on the drawing) themselves, and other people in specified situations and activities (Figures 1 and 2). First these studies and their findings will be described in detail, followed by a discussion of the insights they offer.

Mapping the Practice of Gender-Space

As mentioned above, the exercise of mapping is aimed at understanding the everyday production of gendered public space by men and women through their occupation of and movement through space. The project has undertaken an extensive mapping of four public spaces in Mumbai: Central Avenue, Chembur: a suburban middle class residential neighbourhood, Zaveri Bazaar and Mumbadevi: commercial areas in the dense fabric of old southern Mumbai, Nariman Point: the commercial district of south Mumbai and Kalachowki: a working class residential neighbourhood in the former mill district of central Mumbai.

While observations from this exercise have been insightful, the process of evolving a methodology for mapping gender itself provoked a critique of gendered spaces by bringing into focus the conceptual limitations of prevalent modes of mapping. The initial maps followed a methodology that was informed by standard architecture, urban design and planning strategies of mapping which were extremely useful in gathering information about the built environment. However, when it came to recording the social inhabitation of this material space, this methodology was found wanting.

To understand the crux of these limitations, Lefebvre's definitions of "spatial illusions" prove extremely useful (1991). The traditional problematic of the spatial disciplines is limited to the material environment, and their concept of space can be said to operate under two "illusions" [Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989]. First, is the "illusion of transparency" where space is viewed as being innocent and completely transparent to human comprehension. The mental space of contemplation and social space are seen as having a rough coincidence. The second, more prevalent amongst the spatial technicians, is what Edward Soja terms the "illusion of opaqueness" (1989) or in Lefebvre's words "the realistic illusion" (1991), wherein space is accorded a reality that is purely defined by its materiality – what is seen is what it is. This "essentially physical view of space", notes Soja, has "tended to imbue all things spatial with a lingering sense of primordiality and physical composition, an aura of objectivity, inevitability and reification" (1989).

Through the operation of these two "illusions" space is stripped of both its historicity and politics and the material environment is either seen as a neutral passive backdrop against which social life is played out, or, in more socially oriented spatial practices, space is seen as a reflection of society – a product of a particular social order/organisation. In the former case, space (material

Figure 1

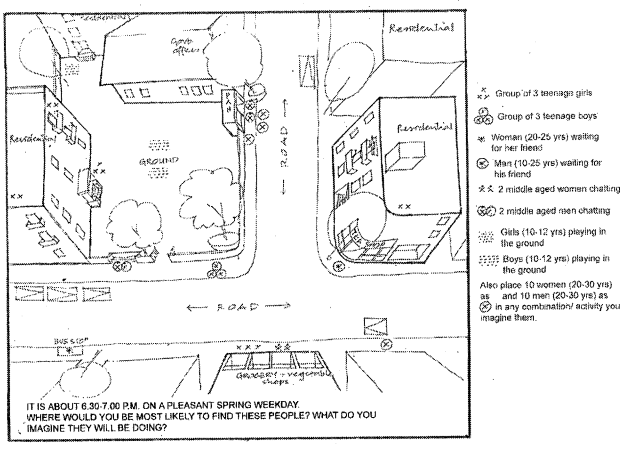
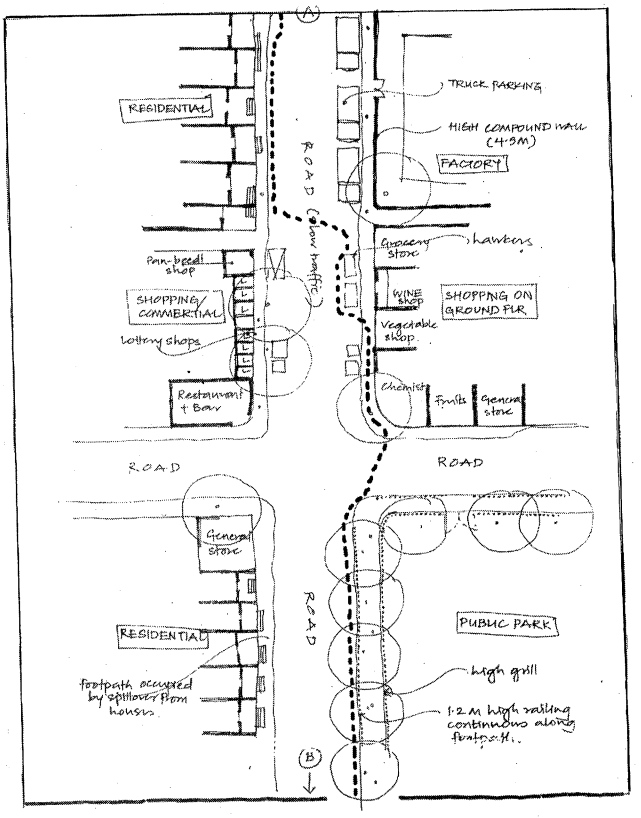


Figure 2



Imagine that you are an outsider to this area and need to traverse from point A to point B on foot alone. You have passed this street before. Mark the path you will take along your walk (.....) and note the reasons for your decisions.

space in particular) is static and undifferentiated, getting its inflections only through the activities it contains. In the latter, although space is stratified, a one-way causal relationship is imagined between space and society – a relationship that is "visible" to the enquiring human mind. Society in this case is a relatively stable totality.

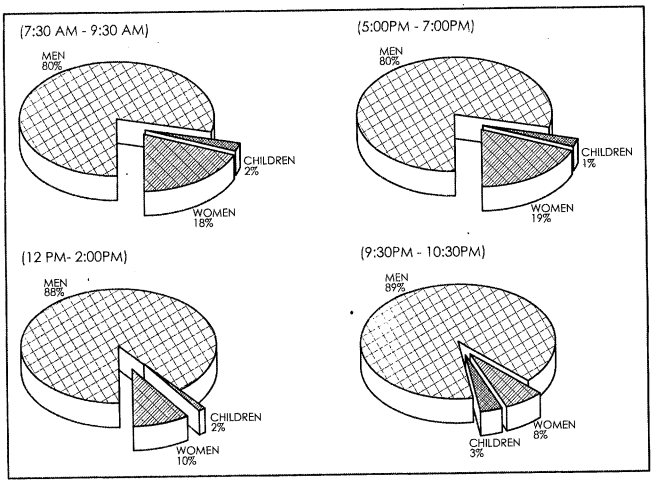
However, as social theorists [Harvey 1990; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989] have argued, not only are material and social constructions of space in a dialectic relationship with each other but space itself is an inherently embodied experience. Different bodies experience space differently depending on, amongst other things, their gender, class, age, sexuality and physical ability, because access to space is socio-culturally determined by these differences. Under the effect of these "illusions" then, the representational practices of architecture and planning assume that the user of space is a neutral entity, i e, all human inhabitants identically experience similar spatial configurations and unsurprisingly this neutral user is usually an upper-class, able-bodied, hetero-sexual male. The single-most challenging aspect of the mapping has been to identify a methodology of documentation that can record "soft" data- an impression of the dynamic social production of space by different people or its "patterns of inhabitation" – in addition to "hard" data consisting of the material build environment.

While part of the problem arises from these disciplinary limitations, the other part is contributed by the limitations of human perception and thus the possibilities available to us to imagine and represent a time-space continuum.[1] Patterns of inhabitation are focused on entities in flux which are averse to mapping in principle. Instead of accepting the limitations and inevitable gaps in knowledge, traditional models of representation usually solve the problem of accurate representation of change by taking multiple "counts" of bodies and averaging these out to produce seemingly comprehensive data. While counts are useful to a certain extent to map the distributional aspects of entities they often end up flattening the unevenness of lived experience into a bunch of numbers. The counts in our early studies revealed the important fact that even in areas considered to be safe, non-threatening and generally gender-balanced in public perception (as known through Focus Group Discussions and ethnographies), the ratio of men to women is glaringly lopsided (Figure 3). But these numbers could not tell us much about where these 30 per cent women are relationally located in the space. Thus while the counts "transparently" tell us that space was gendered the obviousness of this transparency hides the actual practice of gendering space.

In negotiating these limitations of existing methodologies, over four extensive mapping projects, we evolved a mapping strategy that allows us to better map gendering practices onto visual diagrams without losing the inherent complexities. Fundamental to this strategy has been the suspension of the desire for omni-science – the acceptance that the knowledge produced by the maps cannot be representational or comprehensive knowledge. It is, however, vital illustrative knowledge that helps construct a deep multi-layered understanding of the gendered practices of public spaces. In spite of its inherent limitations, the visual representation of the everyday practice of gendering in the simultaneous space of a drawing allows us to visualise the dynamics of gender-space in ways not possible through other mediums.

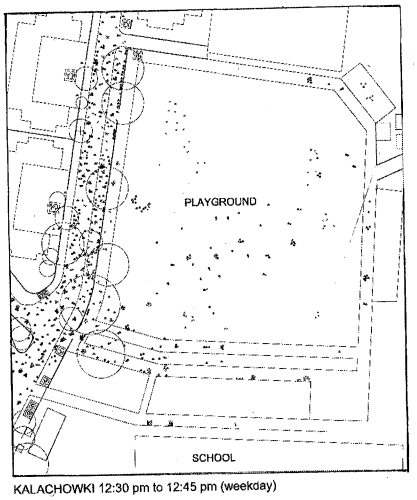
Essentially then the maps consist of two layers.[2] The first is an impression of the relatively stable features of the environment such as detailed landuse patterns, formal and informal structures, street furniture, amenities (public toilets, bus-stops, telephone booths, police stations), trees, light-posts, and transportation hubs (taxi, rickshaw stands). The second layer involves a mapping of the patterns of inhabitation where the focus is to map as accurately as possible the location of people, rather than their numbers. Two methods are used to for this purpose; one, titled "Putting People in Place", uses a freeze-frame metaphor to locate different entities in the space and the second, called "Tracing Peoples Paths"

Figure 3



WEEKDAY PEDESTRIAN COUNTS at JUNCTION OF BAJAJ MARG, NARIMAN POINT

Figure 4



KALACHOWKI 12:30 pm to 12:45 pm (weekday)

literally traces the path followed by some people in the space for a specified period – say, 5 minutes.

These observations are produced as separate maps for different times of the day over a typical weekday and weekend allowing us to record minute changes in the first layer that can impact the patterns in the second layer. For example, while a grocery shop may remain a grocery shop at all times of the day, whether this shop is open or closed at a particular time impacts the way the space outside it is experienced and used by men and women. While women might be found outside it at times when it is open, it might become a hang-out for men or a dark unsafe corner when closed. Documenting these dynamics has been a crucial aspect of the mapping.

Drawings generated through these exercises are different from the hard edged maps of the first layer and can seem extremely messy at the first glance, particularly to the trained eye of a spatial technician. As we further nuance the gender focused observations with age, the diagrams become even more complex. Yet, as multiple maps of a space are juxtaposed against each other and patterns are studied both exclusively and comparatively, the insights they offer are extremely significant (Figure 4).

A fundamental hypothesis that mapping corroborates is that the gendering of public space happens not just through sheer numbers but through ways in which women and men occupy public space. A case in point is the mapping of the neighbourhood of Kalachowki, a largely working class neighbourhood in the former mill area of Central Mumbai. The residential apartments here are basically chawls which were built for the mill-workers in the immediate vicinity of the textile mills. With the closure of the mills in the 1980s, most people here have moved to alternate vocations. In the last five years, the area is undergoing rapid transformation with a number of high rises and upmarket shopping centres coming up. The area of study – a large open playground flanked by residential buildings on one side and community institutions, including a coeducational primary school, on the others – is still physically untouched by the new developments. The drawings for Kalachowki reveal that indeed there is considerable difference in the way men and women use space. Although the area is a predominantly residential neighbourhood and the school is coed, the playground is used far more extensively by men of all ages than by women. The boys and men of the neighbourhood use it not just to play but for hanging out, meeting friends and even sleeping at nights. Girls and women, on the other hand, use it rarely and often just as a short-cut to get to the other side.

In coding the entities on the maps, one of the primary markers of difference we use is moving/stationary persons; these are colour coded differently in the original maps (see footnote 2). As most maps over different times of the day show, it is always men who are found occupying public space at rest – they are found sitting and hanging out on low wall adjoining the playground, standing near the paan shops, newspaper stands or just sitting around in the middle of the playground, alone and in groups. Women, on the other hand, are rarely found standing or waiting in public space – they move across space from one point to another in a purposeful movement. The coding of entities in the original maps – moving men: light blue, stationary men: blue, moving women: pink, stationary women: red – starkly reveals the paucity of red marks on the drawing. Women occupy public space essentially as a transit between one private space and another.

This is further demonstrated clearly through the "Tracing Peoples Path" maps. For example, a map of a street in corporate zone of Nariman Point reveals that during lunchtime, most women who come down from their offices to get lunch (very few as compared to men) go straight to the vendor, pick up their food and head back inside. They do this usually in company. Men, on the other hand, will not only be often alone but also hang around on the street, hopping from vendor to vendor, before and after eating (Figure 5).

In effect then, women can access public space legitimately only when they can manufacture a sense of purpose for being there. Flânerie as an act of engaging with urban public space is not available to women. This is evident in Kalachowki by a particularly anomalous map. The low wall demarcating the playground from the road is generally occupied by men, often lounging around with friends or alone, at all times except one (Figure 6). This happens around the time the school ends for the day and mothers, coming to pick up their children, take over the edge. It would not be preposterous to suggest that many of the women sitting on the compound wall of the Kalachowki playground are mothers who have come far sooner than they need to in order

Figure 5

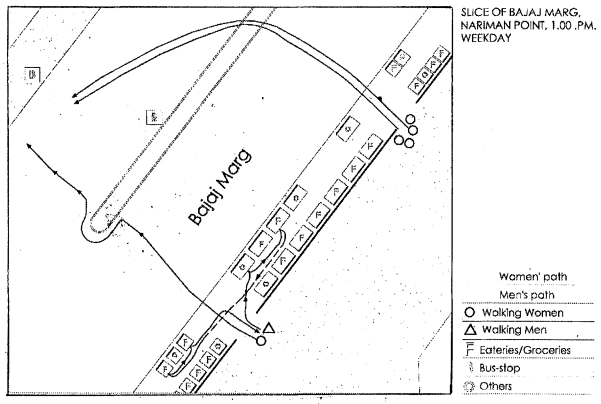
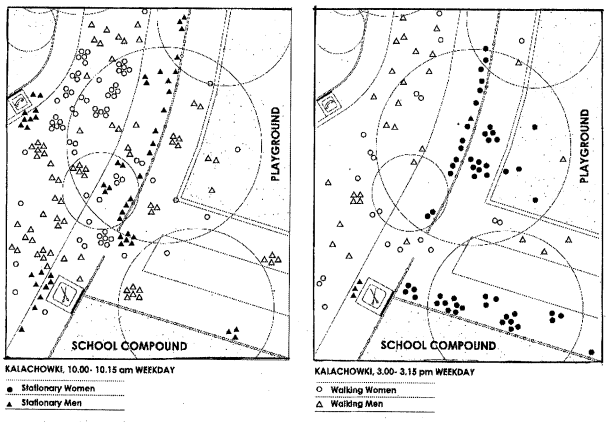


Figure 6



to spend some "official" time with their friends, other mothers. It is interesting also that this happens at a time which is considered to be relatively free from her occupation in other household chores which define her as a good woman. This aberration thus is circumscribed within the larger hegemonic gender regimes which outline the gendered division of labour. The production of a disciplined body through a ritualised performance of domesticity remains critical to legitimise this claim to space.

By visually locating various entities in relation to each other in the synchronic space of the drawing, the maps sometimes produce information on synchronic events which is difficult to get through our other research methods. In Chembur, the space under study, Central Avenue, was described as being comfortable and safe by most of the neighbourhood women in the focus group discussions. Yet there is one stretch along the road which, our maps showed, women tend to consistently avoid. This is a stretch strung with row of lottery shops. Lottery play is primarily a male activity, one reason for this being its association with high risk, something women are socialised with an aversion to. Lottery shops are hence hang-out places for men, which women (and even "good" men) avoid. A typical feeling women describe in these situations is that of "discomfort". While safety is too closely associated to actual, physical violence, discomfort falls in that in-between space of implied threat – a sense of being made to feel that you are in the wrong place/time. This is done through being looked at, verbally assaulted (cat-calls), and very often through self-policing by women themselves. In their daily negotiation of the street we realised, women were making implicit and often unconscious decisions about where to walk in a way that they could manufacture this comfort for themselves (Figure 7).

Contemporary feminist scholarship attempts to overcome a simplified understanding of gender as dichotomous and replaces it with a more nuanced construction formed through a complex "nexus of multiple stratifications" [di Leonardo 1991] wherein gender identity is seen as embedded in other social inequalities and identity markers such as race/ethnicity, class, religion, age, sexual preference and nationality. In our mapping of Kalachowki, one of the markers of gender we studied in detail was age. In general it was observed that men between the ages of 18 and 55 had the maximum access to public space. Young boys had greater claim to the playground than young girls although their presence on the road leading to and fro the school was equal. (It is possible to suggest that the girls did not hang out before and after school as the boys did.) Above the age of 55 both men and women seemed to be equally ill-represented in the space. Besides young school girls the other age group amongst women which most extensively uses the road adjacent to the playground is young unmarried women on their way to and from vocational courses. Although as the drawings show, most of these women are only passing through the space, education does become an important medium – a legitimate pretext – for women to access public space.

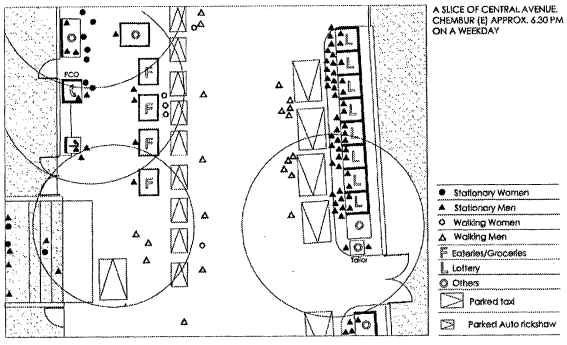
The maps of the four different areas that we studied do not show any significant differences in the general manner women in these areas negotiate public space that might indicate inflections of other identity markers, particularly class. This however, is possibly because the areas studied to date, while diverse in nature of activity, are not starkly contrasting in socio-cultural composition. The greater differences are found in the sheer numbers of women in these areas particularly within any given space at different times of the day. So for example, at Nariman Point which is a business district, the percentage of women drops drastically after office hours as against Kalachowki where the percentages remain relatively stable.

Drawing Perceptions of Gender-Space

Parallel to the study of mapping urban public space, the project undertook two studies which attempted to map perceptions of gender-space through exercises in our pedagogic initiatives.[3] In the first exercise (Exercise A see Note 3), which is provocatively titled "Putting People in Place", participants are given a drawing representing a typical residential neighbourhood street corner in Mumbai on a weekday evening. They are asked to imagine such a neighbourhood familiar to them and "put" women and men of different ages, in different groupings (specified), in places they are most likely to be found at that time (Figure 1). In the second exercise (Exercise B) titled 'Trace Your Path' participants are given a drawing showing a mixed use urban street (residences, shopping, restaurant, park, industry) and asked to imagine and mark the path they themselves would take in negotiating this street from one end to another (Figure 2). The exercises are done individually and the participants are given just enough time- about 5-7 minutes to complete their markings. This is then followed by a long session in which the responses to each section of the exercise are presented by the participants and a discussion is generated through these. We intervene to constantly ask "Why?" (Would you place her here not there? Would you cross the road here? ...).

Drawing on initial observations from the mapping study, these exercises were designed to engage with the participants'

Figure 7



taken-for-granted notions of their everyday world and make sentient the gendered stratifications that structure their experiences. While the purpose of these exercises was to initiate self-reflection, the drawings made by the participants created valuable data of embedded gender maps that structure the spatial subconscious.

The most prominent, and disquieting, insight that jumps from the data of Exercise A is the pervasiveness of a particular gender-space construct or code across a cross-section of respondants. These two exercises were initially designed by the author for use in a "gender-sensitisation" workshop for architecture students and teachers at an all-women technical institute in Thanjavur, a small-town in Tamil Nadu. The atmosphere at the residential college campus was beautiful but stifling. The girls, mostly from smaller towns around, were not allowed to go out of the walled campus at any time without advance written permission. While many of them expressed some degree of frustration at this, they also said they "understood" the need for such control. The context, in other words was begging for a gender and space discussion, and the exercises were exceptionally successful. The participant responses (21 women and four men) reflected what were, in our eyes, very conservative gender paradigms. Destabilising these allowed us to clearly articulate our key arguments – the assumption of a neutral user of space, the contested nature of public space, the centrality of gender in determining spatial access, along with concerns of respectability.

A few months after this, the Gender and Space project conducted a workshop at an architectural college and an extended honours course for sociology students at a Liberal Arts college, both in South Mumbai where the exercises were used tentatively. Our initial intention was to contrast the responses we got from the Mumbai students with those we got at Thanjavur and we had several backups planned in case our exercise failed to elicit previous responses or the discussion went another way. But the exercise did not fail. We have since conducted the "Putting People in Place" exercise at more than 10 locations with almost 400 participants which include in addition to college students, the legal clients of Majlis a women's legal cell (women ranging in age from early 20s to 60s from all possible social backgrounds) and participants in an international women's conference in Bangkok. And each time, apart from negligible differences of opinion, the response has been overwhelmingly similar. Nobody has spoken up to say that they will not do the exercise because it doesn't make sense – anybody could be anywhere!

In general, it is observed that in this exercise, while responses for the possible locations of women in the space are definite and almost always unanimous, locating men in specific positions is always a problem. Men, observe some participants, can actually be located anywhere (though they have never been placed inside their houses!). While women's access to public space is discrete, marked, and strongly delimited by what they can and cannot do, men have free access to be almost everywhere.

This differential access is evident from a very young age. In one section, participants are asked to locate in the drawing a group of young boys aged 8 to 10 and a group of young girls of the same age. There are two distinct responses to this. In the first case, the girls are marked as playing in the smaller, more defined and enclosed corner of the open compound while the boys occupy the larger central section of the ground. In the second case, participants say that at that age boys and girls will probably be playing together – either in the compound or on the terrace. The second group is asked if the case will be the same if the boys and girls are 12-15 years old. In most cases, the boys and girls not only play separately now, but the girls are closer to the homes and the boys farther away than before. As children grow older, boys begin to explore more and more of their territories while for girls, adolescence brings a diminishing of spatial boundaries [Weisman 1994]. It is precisely the age in which a woman is biologically reproductive and sexually active that her access to space is most restricted.

The act of "marking" women in public space is repeated every time when the participants are asked to separately locate a woman and a man in their mid-20s (not from the same locality), waiting to meet a friend there. In most of the cases, the woman is located on the bus-stop; the man on the other hand "can be located anywhere" but most often he is either standing at the street corner or in the tea-shop. Discussion brings out that most respondents choose to place the woman on the bus-stop because then she appears to be doing something, i e, waiting for a bus. Further probing (So what will happen if she stands at the street corner?) brings out that a woman "out of place", who is hanging around without an apparent purpose, would be construed as being "available" and "loose" at best, and soliciting at worst.[4] Woman, through her location in public space sets into practice a whole set of connotative chains in the socio-spatial nexus of determination. (The purpose limited access of women is also seen in the section on middle-aged women who are often placed at the grocery store even when participants note that it is not necessary that the women are there to shop.)

The reason behind women's purposeful movement as evident in the mapping becomes clear here. To be seen as "good" women then is to legitimise their conditional claim to public space as also claim a degree of protection. For women, the production of respectability is closely connected to manufacturing safety for themselves.[5] In the context of material space, safety and risk can be related to the transgression of boundaries. In the socio-spatial schema of gender, boundaries of permissible behaviour are strictly delineated. Any transgression of boundaries spatially is deemed as a challenge to the status-quo and liable to be punished. The production of safety through respectability is thus practised by women in their everyday movement through public spaces. Sometimes in the production of safety, their actions are purposeful and conscious. At other times, they are the result of a subconscious self-policing arising from an internalisation of

hegemonic notions of femininity which determine what is proper and what not.

This production of respectability, and thereby comfort and safety through their everyday movements in public space, is also demonstrated in Exercise B where participants are asked to mark their path in a drawing showing a mixed use urban street (residences, shopping, restaurant, park, industry). Women cross the road between one to four times to avoid situations in which they might find themselves uncomfortable/unsafe. This is sometimes done indirectly by producing respectability such as when a woman crosses the road to avoid a wine shop. At other times, it is direct such as when she crosses to the other side to avoid groups of men hanging out at the paan-shop, or when she chooses not to walk between trucks and a dead wall. (The working class truck drivers in this case are regularly perceived as threatening.)

In one of the responses we received for this exercise from a mixed group of men and women, a man said that he would choose to walk a path which was most interesting, or in other words, where he could see the most – engage most with the street and the city. He was supported by the two other men in the group. Women on the other hand, were choosing to walk a route where they could either become invisible (by pretending to be purposeful) or a route where they could be seen by multiple "domestic" (and therefore female?) eyes on the street. As the Chembur lottery shops example of our mapping had shown, many of the time women are making these decisions subconsciously without being aware of the minute calculations and negotiations they involve.

As against the first exercise of Putting People in Place where responses are almost unanimously in agreement, this exercise revealed stark differences in the response from male and female participants. Although once more we had far less men respondents than women (11 out of 86), all the men demonstrated a similarity of response amongst themselves. If from Exercise A, there emerges the picture of a definite gender-space schema or code that is mutually agreed upon, the gendered differences in Exercise B go on to strengthen the case for such a code. When placed in the subject position of negotiating a public space themselves, the participants are actually performing differential gender in/through space as suggested by their own responses to Exercise A.

Reflections on the Studies

To locate the significance of these studies of everyday public space, I would like to dwell briefly on the broader issue of the significance of everyday actions in the production of a hegemonic social order and the role of individual human agents in this process. As has been the hypothesis of this study, post-modern theorists of space suggest that social structure and space are not mutually exclusive concepts and neither are they related to each other causally. Rather, they are continuously interacting with each other in a dialectical relationship. Space thus, is in a constant state of becoming, in a radical departure from earlier ideas of a static, primordial entity, or one which passively reflected social structures.

Looking at hegemonic gender-space as something that is constantly being brought into being through the everyday actions of men and women in space, rather than something women are subjected to by an external totalitarian ideology, allows us possibilities of interrupting and opening up gaps in the (dis)course of socio-spatial gender formation – gaps within which we can re-imagine women's place(s) in the city. Such emancipatory possibilities of everyday human actions to creatively re-imagine social spaces, are alluded to most evocatively by de Certeau. "The goal" he writes, "is not to make clear how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline"" (1984). de Certeau's proposition allows us to imagine social structures "from below" so to say, opening up a critical methodology for de-materialising socio-spatial structures and suggesting a subversive potential of human actions. However, he does not explain why, in spite of this primacy in the construction of experience, everyday actions remain subordinate to the larger totalisations of social structure.

How does one locate the actions of human agents in the context of discursive social structures? Why, the question remains, are social forms so immanent/powerful? It is here that Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977) help us translate between social structure and social action. Suggesting that, human agency and social structure are in a relationship with each other, Giddens claims: "Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible". It is via repetition of the acts of individual agents that social structure is reproduced.

Bourdieu explains further why social structure needs to be reproduced in the first place through everyday actions of human agents. "The reason why submission to the collective rhythms is so rigorously demanded", he writes, "is that the temporal forms or the spatial structures structure not only the group's representation of the world but the group itself, which orders itself in accordance with this representation" (1977). Given that this "representation of the world" has no actual likelihood to any reality-in-itself or out there, it is the everyday social actions themselves that produce the object that they represent. It is only through the constant production, reproduction and representation of an image of the structure through spatio-temporal practices, that the structure is sustained. In this context then, although everyday actions may not have the absolute freedom of re-imagination suggested by de Certeau, they remain central to the sustenance of the sense of order and a critical site for contestation of meaning within the structure.

When the tenuous structures of power are reinscribed through space by everyday practices of moving through and occupying space, it is the body that becomes the locus of action for it is through the body that the everyday is lived, executed and experienced. The experience of space is mediated by the bodies we inhabit; male, female, old, young, white, black, blind, deaf and so on. Bodies are not just physical in the sense of flesh and blood beings, but as a constellation of culturally constructed ideas about what is appropriate mediated by discourse. It is through the body that the spatio-temporal regulations of social structure are produced, reproduced, represented and transformed. As Low notes, "Embodied space is the location where human experience and consciousness takes on material and spatial form" (2003).

Gendered bodies produce and are produced by particular spatio-temporal configurations. The normalisation of a particular gender-space is a key axis around which the society structures itself and the maintenance of this order is critical to its

self-preservation. The contested nature of this order however, means that the performance of gender has to be constantly replicated and strictly regulated. As Rose notes, public space's "masculinisation through a certain policing of bodies means that every new body requires disciplining in order to guarantee (public space's) reconstitution" (1999). Hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity have to be relentlessly performed by male and female bodies and any body that attempts to transgress the boundaries of appropriateness threatens the social order.

The control of women's movement has been central to the maintenance of a gender regime informed by patriarchy. So long as women reproduce the discourse of the hegemonic gender regime appropriately through their socio-spatial performance of femininity in pubic space, they can largely access it safely.[6] In many countries and communities this restriction on women's movement is written into the law or religious codes. In other places this may be indirectly put into place through dress codes for women, and socialisation into a hegemonic femininity.[7] Whether legally or socially coded, women perform the restrictions set upon them in their daily movements through space.

It is against this understanding that the studies discussed above should be read. Taking the notion of "constructedness" further, many feminists have conceptualised gender as a "discursive construction" and "performative fiction" [McDowell 1999]. Gender in other words is one of the "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" [Foucault 1972]. The mapping and pedagogic studies complement each other to help us make tangible some of the complicated processes of the production and reproduction of this discourse, particularly the spatial production of gender/gendered production of space. The exercises bring forth embedded gender-space codes informed by a dominant discourse of gender. They reflect ways of thinking about social relations. The mapping studies, on the other hand, document the performative aspects of these discourses. In showing how male and female bodies comport themselves in space, they mark the practice of a set of material social relations that both produce and are produced by the dominant code of gender-space.

In vividly illustrating the practice of gender-space in the city, some of the key points the studies re-iterated were: Public space is gendered. When comparing men and women of the same class and community, men have better access to public space at all times of the day. Women have to manufacture an appearance of purpose to legitimately access public space. Therefore, in their everyday occupation of public space, women are almost never found standing or "loitering" in a public place without a clear purpose. When moving through public space women, (a) walk purposefully from one point to another and (b) when walking, avoid such places as may be considered non-respectable such as lottery shops, and bars; or unsafe such as isolated lanes, dark footpaths. Women often choose the safest and most comfortable route even though it may be many times extended than the shortest route from one point to another. The purpose-defined movement of women is deeply connected to notions of respectability which define what good women should/should not do in public. In their movement through space women reproduce hegemonic discourses of femininity particularly that of respectable femininity. Age is an important characteristic in determining access to pubic space. At different ages women negotiate access to public space through various activities that are deemed socially appropriate for them at that age. So in their late teens and early 20s women often get access to public space via the medium of education and married young women get access due to their role as mothers. While men in general have greater access to pubic space, older men have lesser access than younger men.

Taken together, the similarity of responses to the mapping exercises across age and class, and the "evidence" of such practice through the mapping allows us to make a case for the presence of a dominant code – a shared way of thinking – of gender-space that is culturally prevalent. While the geographical and historical extent of this code cannot be determined here, given the scope of our research one can suggest that this code pervades the discourse of middle and lower-middle class neighbourhoods of Mumbai. This in itself is significant because, Mumbai city is widely regarded as the safest and friendliest city for women in the country.

The prevalence of such a code however, has to be complicated by two critical observations. Firstly, in actual practice, as was seen in the focus group discussions/ interviews carried out through the project and our pedagogic discussions, many women subvert this code to be able to conduct themselves differently. Smoking in public, going out to night-clubs, travelling alone late at night, and so on are various degrees of contradiction of the dominant map of gender-space. This capacity to negotiate the code is variously available to different women, one of the primary markers of access being their class. This was brought home ironically to us through one section of Exercise A. In one corner of the street in the drawing, is a shop ambiguously titled "Tea-stall". Most often men and teenage boys are shown hanging out here. But often enough participants place middle-aged women and teenage girls there too. In the discussion that follows, it is revealed that all those who placed women in the store have assumed it to be an upmarket coffee-shop like Barista or Café Coffee Day, while those who did not imagined the place to be a "cutting chai" or Irani café. In most cases the former group admits that they would have not have placed women there had it been a "chaiwallah". Particularly, with the economic changes of the last decade, the capacity to consume has given many women unprecedented access to public spaces. Yet, these acts are always framed against the backdrop of a prevalent code, i e, they are read as acts in defiance of the normative, and women have to constantly strategise to gain this access [Phadke et al 2006].

Secondly, it is essential to place the responses to the pedagogic exercises in contrast to the overt rhetoric of "gender-neutrality" – often articulated in the context of dismissing the relevance of feminism – that we came across particularly in the middle-class undergraduate students we work with. Their articulation of what they see themselves as – modern, independent, equal subjects – is at a variance with not just their perceptual maps of gender-space brought out in the exercises, but also their actual behaviour. This disjunction in the explicit and implicit discourse/code/ imagination of gender-space can be read variously. It can be dismissed as a kind of false consciousness where conditional access, particularly that circumscribed once again by consumption, is read as a sign of equality of access;[8] it can also be seen as the sign of an emergent shift in the dominant gender-space coda, an example of actual change brought about by an "artificial" construction of self-image through the media, liberal education, and an official discourse of gender equality.

The space of the city is engendered day in and day out through the ordinary movement of gendered bodies. In a social order delimited by a largely patriarchal gender regime, it is the male

body that is normative; the female body becomes a marker of difference with the result that the woman's location in space/time becomes a critical site of signification for the social order. Within such a male-dominated socio-spatial order, public spaces in particular, are even further coded as male. The very presence of women in public space is transgressive and thus fraught with anxiety. In accessing public space, women's bodies are doubly marked. In their everyday movement through and occupation of public space women perform their femininity and simultaneously legitimise their being "out of place". EPW

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Notes

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1 Refer Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty – It is impossible to know (or measure) precisely and simultaneously both the position and the momentum of a particle. Our knowledge of the universe is therefore always partial. The Theory of Uncertainty is often seen as the fundamental distinguisher between classical and modern physics.

2 The onsite mapping study was conducted between September 2003 and March 2005. The maps used for illustration here are simplified versions of the original maps which are in colour. Colour coding allows us to carry more information in every map. The process evolved from area to area as we fine-tuned our methodology. In all the project has produced 45 maps of the four areas studied of which 25 are of our final and most successful study in Kalachowki.

3 These Exercises were conducted in the following workshops (the numbers of participants are mentioned in brackets in the right-hand column):

Exercise A: 'Putting People in Place'	
Workshop, Periyar College of Technology for Women, Tanjavur, March 2004.	(25)
Workshop, Sir J J College of Architecture, Mumbai, July 2004.	(30)
Honours course, Department of Sociology, St Xavier's College, Mumbai, August 2004.	(20)
Elective course, Sir J J College of Architecture, Mumbai, December 2004.	(16)
Summer School, Department of History, St Xavier's College, Mumbai, March 2005.	(25)
Workshop, Majlis Legal Centre, Mumbai, June 2005.	(100)
Workshop, J J School of Applied Arts, Mumbai, August 2005.	(40)
Workshop, SIES Bachelor of Mass Media, Mumbai, August 2005.	(15)
Workshop, L S Raheja Applied Arts, Mumbai, September 2005.	(60)
Panel session, AWID 2005, Bangkok, November 2005.	(40)
Workshop, Russel Square International College, Mumbai, March 2006.	(15)
Exercise B: 'Trace Your Path'	
Workshop, Periyar College of Technology for Women, Tanjavur, March 2004.	(25)
Honours course, Department of Sociology, St Xavier's College, Mumbai, August 2004.	(20)
Elective course, Sir J J College of Architecture, Mumbai, December 2004.	(16)
Summer School, Department of History, St Xavier's College, Mumbai, March 2005.	(25)

4 In one session, the participants went on to discuss how the man would stand at the street corner because then he could "look around and pass time", the woman wouldn't because then she would be "looked at".

5 Also refer Shilpa Phadke, this issue, for a more in-depth discussion on respectability.

6 Janaki Nair notes in her discussion of the gendered body politic in Bangalore that, "A complex matrix of gestures, markings, bodily controls, and language enables the safe passage of the woman through the urban space. Sometimes when her movement is purposive... she becomes safe as well as invisible. At other times, or in other spaces... her visibility as a sexual being is heightened" (2005).

7 Domosh and Seager enumerate the ways in which women's mobility is controlled: "rape as terrorism; 'purdah'; foot binding; atrophying women's athletic abilities; high heels and 'feminine' dress codes in fashion; sexual harassment on the streets; prescriptions for full-time mothering at home; enforced economic dependence of wives, ideologies that encourage women to be physically frail, and the lack of public support for child care and for elder care, responsibilities that typically fall on women" (2001).

8 Also refer Shilpa Phadke, in this issue.

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