

Network for Gender & Urban Research

State of the Art: Gender and Urban Research

Friday 30 August
08:30-16:00
Colloquium Programme

**Venue: Humanities Graduate Centre, South West Engineering,
University of the Witwatersrand**

Photo by Tracy Mutugi

- 8.30 Arrival and registration
8.50 Introduction and welcome
- 9.00 **A survey of questions of genders, sexualities and cities in South Africa** - Alan Mabin
Facilitated discussion
- 9:30 **The interplay between digital and physical geographies for improved safe public spaces for women in South Africa** - Khensani De Klerk
“Too many men”: perceptions of public open spaces, policies, place-making and planning in Cape Town - Rike Sitas and Alicia Fortuin
Facilitated discussion
- 10.30 Tea
- 11.00 **Public Transport, Women and Gender-based Violence** - Zanele Mabaso, Siphokazi Dyani, Fredalene Booysen and Nonhlanhla Skosana
Spatialising the moral: rape and urban settlement - Lisa Vetten
Facilitated discussion
- 12.00 **Gender and the city: Psycho-social experiences of foreign national single parents in Tembisa** - Zimi Fitshane
Inequalities within and with-out: How gender dynamics within families impact spatial footprints - Alexandra Parker, Margot Rubin and Lindsay Howe
Facilitated discussion
- 13.00 Lunch
- 13.45 **Women and the City: The urban experiences of women entrepreneurs, self-employed women and women-led business in Twist Street and surrounds, Hillbrow, Johannesburg** - Carla Soudien
Men, home and homelessness: experiences and identity in a time of hardship - Sarah Charlton
Facilitated discussion
- 14:45 Tea
- 15:00 **Applying a gender lens to Municipal Spatial Development Frameworks** - Raudhiyah Dien
The impact of public transport systems failure on male and female commuters in Gauteng - Lesedi Mokoma
Facilitated discussion
- 16:00 Closing discussion

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Abstracts

A survey of questions of genders, sexualities and cities in South Africa - Alan Mabin

Well developed bodies of literature – of course with major lacunae as well as strengths – exist in relation to two areas of research and thought relevant to cities in the tortured territory and society of South Africa. The more personal scale addresses genders and sexualities and is energetic, young, globally linked and relatively open. Extensive typically city scale literatures are voluminous and, it might be suggested, often sclerotic, tied to stale global urban conceptual traditions, although there are many more creative and original contributions too. By and large what is lacking, from the perspective of intersections between the person and the city, includes substantial work which brings questions common in genders and sexualities literatures to city scale enquiry.

The modest purpose of this intervention is to survey available work which consciously (sometimes otherwise) brings gender and sexuality studies to the city. The paper thus is primarily a review of literatures, based mostly on secondary sources, and generating new questions for conceptualization, research and writing in the coming decades of the present century. The paper draws cautiously on global literatures and newer conceptualization. Its focus is on how gender and sexualities research might intersect more deeply with cities, particularly for those left behind in the present power situations of cities in South Africa (and beyond).

The interplay between digital and physical geographies for improved safe public spaces for women in South Africa - Khensani De Klerk

With the rise of the 4th industrial revolution, designing cities with information modelling is becoming the development norm. Cities such as London, are exploring how information modelling can yield gender transformation through user inputs informing design. The inputs collected digitally from real life issues inform the physical space and vice versa; a constant interplay between tangible and intangible geographies. Equal access to the internet is crucial for these inputs, so as to prevent the exclusion of groups engaging in decision making (Watson, 2016). This will also reveal the universal assumptions made in design that in fact hamper the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1960) for many. In South Africa, women of colour have the least rights to the city, by virtue of racial historical oppression and the current patriarchal paradigm of the history (Collins, 2008). These rights describe a participation in decision making which, when withheld, becomes an act of violence. The internet is a useful tool for mobilising women and girls (Travers, Shaw, McCleery, 2016).

The physical landscape of South African cities is a result of intertwined social, racial, economic layers defining an infrastructural geography that perpetuates segregative violence. The digital geography gives women a place to identify physical public spaces of concern, giving reason to that concern and feeding into information modelling tools (eg built information modelling i.e. BIM) for new built development. With improved access to the internet of things, and the normalisation of data collection; urban planning will inevitably mould Intersectional Space: spaces in which multiple identity groups are considered (de Klerk, 2017). The interplay between digital and physical is not exclusive to women, but instead presents humans with choices to reconstruct themselves by way of technology (Seu, 2019).

“Too many men”: perceptions of public open spaces, policies, place-making and planning in Cape Town

- Rike Sitas and Alicia Fortuin

Cultural and urban policy are often premised on assumptions about the role of open public spaces in neighbourhoods. The romantic notion of the agora has fascinated thinkers, planners, and architects for centuries, and these ideas permeate global policy imperatives (African Union 2015; UNESCO 2005). Although spaces for social, political, cultural and economic inclusion are crucial, the imagination for the socio-material forms in which these manifests are somewhat limited.

Dominating the discussion has been to look at how public space can foster particular kinds of human interaction. In an attempt to counter the increasing privatization of the commons and to foster an equitable right to the city, a ‘good’ public space is often claimed to be one that is inclusionary and ‘a visible emblem of order and harmony’ (Amin, 2006). By implication, public space should then be all things to all people, which is an ambitious expectation (Harvey 2012). This ideal does not take into account the myriad power relations that shape people’s everyday activity and freedom

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of move-ment in unequal cities.

Increasingly, the relational turn in urban studies has asserted the importance of seeing the human and material as entangled in inextricable ways (Lefebvre, 1991; Amin, 2008). Despite shifts in thinking, how this lands in the minds of architects and planners re-mains limited, particularly in African cities facing a polycrisis (Pieterse, 2008). The im-plementation of creating public spaces has largely resulted in parks and cultural / recre-ational facilities – many of which are under-used, derelict and unsafe for women, chil-dren and LGBTQI residents – parks being used for drug deals, while children play on the streets.

This paper draws on a series of interviews conducted with women in Cape Town’s Cape Flats around perceptions and uses of public space, and in particular open public spaces, in order to challenge local and global policy narratives (Grodach and Silver 2013). It starts by explores notions of publics, publicness and the public sphere from a southern perspective (Bayat 1997; Simone 2008, 2010). It continues by analysing the how global policy language around public cultural spaces travel to different local contexts. Drawing on the research conducted in Cape Town, the paper proposes reframing public cultural space imperatives in global cultural and urban policies, in the interest of more just and accessible cities (Fainstein 2010).

Public Transport, Women and Gender-based Violence - Zanele Mabaso, Siphokazi Dyani, Fredalene Booyesen and Nonhlanhla Skosana

Public transport is an essential part of everyday life for many South Africans, and recent data suggests that 3 out of 4 (76.7%) households in South Africa rely on public transport. Mini-bus taxis are the most commonly used mode of transport with 51% of households relying on them; with 18% using busses and 7.6% using trains. Nearly 40% of workers use public transport as their main mode of travel to work and 3.7 million pupils use public transport to commute to institutions of primary and secondary learning.

Public transportation has been described as “an institution through which hegemonic masculinity is maintained”, where women are at greater risk of violence, sexual harass-ment, and sexual assault. Thus, violence in public places, particularly on public transport systems, reduces the freedom of movement of women and girls.

Evidence has shown that all forms of violence and harassment (particularly verbal and sexual) affect women deeply and reduce their confidence - affecting their willingness to travel, ability to move freely in public spaces which increases their anxieties and feel-ings of safety, thus often affecting their social and economic decisions to opportunities and responsibilities.

Sonke Gender Justice is conducting a qualitative research study on public transport and gender-based violence in Western Cape and Gauteng. The research seeks to provide a gendered-perspective on the impact of safety and violence on public transport in cities by highlighting women’s and girl’s lived experiences of gender-based violence and har-assment when commuting via trains, busses and mini-bus taxis.

Spatialising the moral: rape and urban settlement - Lisa Vetten

Black urban settlement was a long-standing colonial preoccupation. Maynard Swanson has shown how infectious disease and concepts of public health, operating as societal metaphors since at least 1870, exercised a powerful influence on the origins and development of urban segregation in South Africa. This extended to at least the 1920s and the enactment of legislation aimed at the prevention and suppression of venereal disease. From the equation of black people with disease, it was a short step to the contagion of crime. These fears of criminal ‘contagion’ took on particular importance in the context of the country’s urban slums which were seen as providing opportunities for both black and white to influence each other for the worse. The solution to this threat to white morality was strict racial segregation, with criminological solutions to crime providing important underpinnings to apartheid. Notions of the urban and the rural have thus been made constitutive of the moral and its spatialisation. I illustrate this through the example of rape and show how this genealogy of the urban continues to register in present-day conceptualisations of rape as crime and as epidemic.

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Gender and the city: Psycho-social experiences of foreign national single parents in Tembisa - Zimi Fitshane

This paper is based on an empirical study which explored the psychosocial experiences of foreign national single mothers in Tembisa, Ekurhuleni, South Africa. Increasingly, more women are migrating from their countries of origin in order to search for better livelihoods in safe and secure countries. Both in their transition journeys and in their countries of destination, literature points out that women and children are more vulnerable to psychosocial risks, compared to men. In Africa, South Africa remains the most favourable destination. Both gender and anti-oppressive lenses are essential in analysing the challenges that foreign national single mothers face, especially in foreign city spaces. Social work as a profession suffers a dearth of literature that interrogates the intersection between migration and gender regarding women in the city spaces. This study applied a qualitative paradigm and an exploratory design in understanding the experiences faced by foreign single mothers in Tembisa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants and data was also obtained from a focus group discussion from the same population category. Findings show that, as single mothers, this population group faces interconnected, multiple levels of discrimination, which exclude them from social and economic opportunities and welfare services because of their foreignness. Secondly, being women, they are vulnerable to various psychosocial risks which worsens their responsibilities of providing for their children. As a recommendation, the paper advocates coordinated anti-oppressive and gender-aware initiatives to address the needs of foreign national single parents.

Inequalities within and with-out: How gender dynamics within families impact spatial footprints - Alexandra Parker, Margot Rubin and Lindsay Howe

The urban landscape of contemporary Johannesburg is fragmented, highly unequal and carries the scars of the spatial injustices enacted under the apartheid regime (Todes et al. 2014). Despite post-apartheid legislative change, full constitutional rights, better access to urban resources and social grants, and greater provision for women in the workplace, inequalities in the urban environment continue to exacerbate structural issues at the interstice of race and gender (Harrison, et al, 2014). Social changes, particularly regarding attitude, or what has been referred to as the 'stalled revolution', have been especially slow (Maqubela 2013). Previous research shows how spatial injustices of the past, as well as new inequalities in the city, impact the everyday movements and practices of women as well as their choice of home, work and school in the city (Parker and Rubin 2017). The spatial practices of mothers, influenced by a form of moral geography, also result in compromises and sacrifices for both mother and child. This research expands on our previous work and explores the roles of carers of children within households and questions what difference gender, gender performance and gendered expectations make and how these differences inform carers' spatial decision-making. Furthermore, this research investigates how ideas and decisions made within families shape the ways in which parents navigate childcare in the urban environment. The study uses a mixed methods approach with data from focus groups, in-depth interviews, mobility tracking through a mobile application, auto-photography and journaling of families in an inner-city neighbourhood of Johannesburg to engage with questions of mobility, identity and spatiality in the complex urban environment (cf. Howe 2017).

Women and the City: The urban experiences of women entrepreneurs, self-employed women and women-led business in Twist Street and surrounds, Hillbrow, Johannesburg - Carla Soudien

This dissertation aims to review the role of the urban environment in facilitating the economic empowerment of women, looking particularly at women entrepreneurs. The study is framed conceptually using a feminist, post-colonial lens and acknowledges complexity in relation to people's experiences based on their gender, locality, citizenry, race and class. The literature review portion of the study considers scholars' work in the fields of gender, urbanism and entrepreneurship. The study interrogates overlapping themes in relation to gendered social hierarchies in the realms of urbanism and entrepreneurship, reviewing both opportunities and constraints during all phases of the research. The empirical portion of the study comprises of twenty interviews with women business owners in and around Twist Street in Hillbrow. The interviews included a mapping exercise in which the respondents depicted their daily movements graphically. In addition to the interviews, I carried out a mapping audit of the streetscape of three blocks of Twist Street, between Pretoria and Kapteijn streets. This mapping audit has assisted with understanding what the range of businesses are being run in this street, how many are run or owned by women and how many are run or owned by men. The fieldwork study sought to explore the respondents' everyday experiences related to housing, transportation, support networks, domestic care work, agglomeration and clustering of business types and perceptions of women's work.

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Applying a gender lens to Municipal Spatial Development Frameworks - Raudhiyah Dien

For decades' post 1994, socio-economic redress through spatial and racial integration was the main focus of the planning profession within South Africa. A number of reasons can be attributed to why there has been little success in reversing the distinctive Apartheid spatial form across South Africa, but it can be agreed that the lack of success has a continued bearing on the lives of the most vulnerable members of society, namely the poor, the elderly, the disabled, children and women.

With attention within Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) firmly placed on racial integration and how best to make headway through burgeoning housing backlogs whilst navigating environmental stressors and aging engineering infrastructure, considering the vantage point of gender-inclusivity within SDFs has never really been considered. This is an important observation due to the fact that women and men use public space and public transport differently and women and men have different concerns about how the built environment meets their needs – needs which are contextually and culturally specific.

This paper looks at, assessing whether gender-inclusiveness can be found in two recent Municipal SDFs adopted in terms of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (Act 16 of 2013). The paper aims to understand whether, since the enactment of SPLUMA, gender-responsiveness strategies have emerged within SDFs, and starts considering how a successful gender-inclusive approach could potentially manifest itself within a Municipal SDF.

This is emerging work from the Spatial Planning Directorate at the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning.

The impact of public transport systems failure on male and female commuters in Gauteng - Lesedi Mokoma

The entrenched apartheid spatial planning is categorised by townships located far away from main urban centres where the majority of work, and education opportunities are located. At the advent of democracy many developments took place with the aim of addressing the resulting social exclusion. Transport is seen as a bridge between the periphery and the established urban centres and a substantial investment has been made to ensure that transport systems serve the needs of communities. The study aims to provide a snapshot of the social impacts of public transport systems, to determine how they affect the day to day lives of male and female commuters on the periphery. This is done by assessing the activity diaries of 10 public transport users from various parts of Gauteng who travel on a daily basis to urban centres for employment. The assessment will establish details such as how early users wake up and return home and the subsequent time spent away from the family as well as the personal safety risks that are taken to access late or non-operational services.