

Exploring gender and regimes of morality in Indian cities through the lens of red-light districts and everyday mobilities

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On site at : Salle PRODIG (1er étage 1.061), Campus Condorcet – Bâtiment de recherche Sud.
5 cours des Humanités – 93300 Aubervilliers. Plan d'accès: <https://www.prodig.cnrs.fr/plan-sites/>

Online link: <https://meet.google.com/rjx-qwju-gsr>

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With

Dr. Ratoola Kundu,

Assistant Professor, Centre for Urban Policy and Governance, TISS, Mumbai

And

Dr. Romit Chowdhury,

Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Erasmus University College, Rotterdam

Discussed by

Dr. Virginie Dutoya, CNRS research fellow, CESAHS



(Photo Credit : Romit Chowdhury)

Abstracts

Dhanda (work) and daanda (stick): how the women of Kamathipura breach the moral and spatial boundaries in remaking the red light district

By Dr. Ratoola Kundu

Kamathipura is one of Asia's largest and oldest red light areas located in the heart of globalizing Mumbai and a diverse mixed neighbourhood of largely working class migrants and middle class residents. There are a series of proposals from the government as well as landlords, resident associations and private developers to redevelop the entire neighbourhood given the aging infrastructure and poor quality housing. Through a series of ethnographic vignettes captured during field work in Kamathipura (2016 to 2020), this paper seeks to unpack how different groups of women negotiate the current real-estate led transformations Kamathipura through their everyday social interactions, and in the ways they strategically place their bodies in relation to specific spaces in the neighbourhood to perform their gender and class roles. In doing so, they play an important role in boundary making, breaking and reinforcing functions that challenge the hegemonic moral regimes reproducing the gendered city and problematize the top down plans for large-scale redevelopment and sanitization drive for Kamathipura.

Mobile Masculinities between Street and Home

By Dr. Romit Chowdhury

In Indian cities, men are everywhere. And yet we do not seem to know very much about precisely what men do in the city as men. How do men experience gender in city spaces? What are the interactional dynamics between different groups of men on city streets? Based on my book, this presentation follows the labor geographies of autorickshaw and taxi operators in Kolkata to locate certain ideals of masculinity - related to fatherhood, marriage, filial ties, heterosexuality, and family honour - as compelling social forces that mediate everyday mobilities in the city. While social geographers have for a while now highlighted the value of thinking of masculinity and the home as co-constitutive, my book takes this symbiosis outside the threshold of the house to show how it conditions the urban outdoors. At the intersection of familial ideologies and masculine subjectivities, everyday morality and cooperation become motors for the gendered reproduction of the city.

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