

Tuesday, January 5

6.30 pm • GETZ PHARMA

Bombay Velvet Film Screening with screenwriter Gyan Prakash.



PROFESSOR GYAN PRAKASH ON THE WRITING OF THE FILM:

“Even though I grew up in Bihar, Bombay was always on my mind. There were stories of Bombay all around us. We would hear so and so ran away to Bombay. At my house we used to get Bombay publications such as Blitz, Illustrated Weekly of India and others. I had a special interest in the city since my childhood. I did not really do anything about it until 2000 when I came to Mumbai and spent about three and a half months. Usually, before you come to a city you have an image of what it will be like. The image does not always match with the reality. In my case, the image became richer. I began collecting stories of people’s perceptions of Bombay and how the city forms an integral part of their lives. I collected a number of stories with different images attached to each one. For some, Bombay was a place of opportunities, for others it was a city of hard knocks. I wanted to understand what lies behind these images. What produces these images? What is the politics of these images? I decided to do research on the city for my book Mumbai Fables. A large part of this research went into the film’s script.” TIMES OF INDIA



January 3-6, 2016 Karachi, Pakistan

This workshop seeks to address questions regarding how the poor and marginalized survive in their private and work life in South Asia’s expanding cities. We hope the workshop will encourage a broader discussion on the life worlds of the poor in urban South Asia, specifically on how working class men and women experience the economically uncertain urban milieu. Rather than concentrating on perceived failures of the South Asian mega-city—whether in terms of infrastructure, governance, or economic development—we seek to emphasize seeing the emerging fabric of urban South Asia as the result of ordinary peoples’ sustained productive deployment of sensibilities, practices, efforts, and collective formations. The workshop presentations will sensitize us to the travails of workers who as immigrants to larger cities like Karachi, Dhaka, Colombo, Mumbai, Chennai, Lahore etc., join the lower rung of the urban poor. The workshop will address how issues of gender, caste, religious and ethnic difference, and structural inequalities help shape the constraints and possibilities for a decent lived life.

Sponsored by AIPS, AIIS, AIBS, AISLS, OUP, Pakistan, ARCOP, NED University, Lyceum School, Multinet, T2F, UT South Asia Institute, Getz Pharma, GEO TV

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 3

7:00PM • T2F

Film Screening: Q2P by filmmaker Paromita Vohra followed by Q + A
Moderated by Naila Mahmood

Q2P is a film about toilets and the city. It sifts through the dream of Mumbai as a future Shanghai and searches for public toilets, watching to see who has to queue to pee. As the film observes who has access to toilets and who doesn't, we begin to also see the imagination of gender that underlies the city's shape, the constantly shifting boundaries between public and private space; we learn of small acts of survival that people in the city's bottom half cobble together and quixotic ideas of social change that thrive with mixed results; we hear the silence that surrounds toilets and sense how similar it is to the silence that surrounds inequality. The toilet becomes a riddle with many answers and some of those answers are questions—about gender, about class, about caste and most of all about space, urban development and the twisted myth of the global metropolis. Q2P is the winner of the Best Documentary IFFLA and

Bollywood and Beyond, Stuttgart.

Monday, January 4

12:00 PM – 5:15 PM • T2F

SESSION ONE

1-3.30pm

Chair: Will Glover

*“The Story of Contestation of Space in Karachi in the
Backdrop of Safety and Security Issues”*

Noman Ahmed
NED University, Karachi

ABSTRACT: Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan, has passed through many transformations during the recent past. Swift and frequent break down of public safety and security situation is a core issue that has contributed to this ongoing metamorphosis in the city. Multiple acts of terrorism, that have took place during the past fifteen years, targeted military installations, places of worship, market places, government buildings, residential quarters, buses and public transport vehicles, major streets and intersections and a wide variety of commercial locations. Thousands of people have lost their lives while many more have been severely or partially wounded. Extraordinary damage to the assets and property of people and government has been caused during the course of these events. With rapid rise in militancy through terrorist groups, sectarian and targeted assassinations continue unabated. Many elements possessing links and support of some political groups resort to street crimes, robberies, kidnappings for ransom and other heinous deeds. Not receiving adequate support from state institutions, people have developed several mechanisms to enhance their personal safety and security. They have also resorted to initiatives to safeguard their residences, places of worship, public spaces, work places and other category of spaces. Installation of physical barriers on streets, thorough fares, alleys, public assembly grounds and similar spaces are a major visible outcome. This paper presents the findings and analysis of the transformation of urban public spaces in Karachi with a focus on safety and security issues as observed during the recent history of the city. The work is based on field research completed between 2013 and 2014 by the author and his team.

“Improving Women’s Mobility: Results from a Public Transport Pilot ”

Fizzah Sajjad

Center for Economic Research (CERP), Lahore

ABSTRACT: Women’s mobility outside the home in Pakistan is restricted by social norms and safety concerns. In particular, social norms against women coming into close contact with unrelated men, and the discomfort, social stigma, and fear of harassment when they do so, limits women’s movement and their use of public transport. This constrains women’s choices to participate in the labor force, continue their education, or engage in other independent activities. In recent years, various public transport interventions have attempted to address this issue by introducing ‘women’s-only’ or ‘women-friendly’ transport services. This paper looks at the key features and limitations of such interventions, and presents findings from a women’s-only public transport pilot conducted in Lahore, Pakistan between October and December 2015. In light of the pilot, it makes recommendations on how transport services geared towards women can be designed, adapted and expanded to improve women’s mobility and meet their needs for safe and reliable public transport services.

SESSION FOUR

4.45-5 pm

Chair: Kamran Asdar Ali

Closing Remarks by Arif Hasan

“Emerging Urbanization Trends: The Case of Karachi”

ABSTRACT: Because of the increasing dependence of the rural areas on urban manufactured goods and their unaffordability to the local population an unprecedented migration to Karachi is taking place. The city is expanding and living in ones own house on the extreme periphery is becoming more expensive for low income groups than renting in settlements near places of work in the city centre. As a result, old katchi abadis and even formal low income settlements, are densifying creating conditions of extreme overcrowding. These developments and the power of the formal sector developers is determining the form of the city with serious environmental and social repercussions. An Urban Land Reform is required to create a more “inclusive” city.

DISCUSSION

Wednesday, January 6

9:00 am – 12:00 noon NED UNIVERSITY

The NED Department of Architecture and Urban Planning hosts a
Round Table Discussion

Presenters: Will Glover, Rupali Gupte, Arif Hassan and Udan Fernando

Moderators: Noman Ahmad and Yawar Jilani

“The Crowd as Symptom: Violence, Visuality, and the Ambivalences of Democracy in Bangladesh”

Nusrat Chowdhury
Amherst College

ABSTRACT: This paper takes crowd politics as symptomatic rather than representative of some of the ambivalences of Bangladesh’s democracy. Its ethnographic site is the digital footage of the incidents of sexual and vigilante violence in Dhaka and Sylhet, respectively. The scenes of violence, at times as raw footage and at other times as digitally modified journalistic expose, went viral on social media in 2015. The medicalized metaphor of contagion in the expression is also emblematic of crowds, or at least, the way it has long been discussed in canonical social theory. The visual evidence I write about caused public uproar and invoked curious responses from the government. These examples help me explore the expansion and retreat of the spaces of critical dissent, what I call the double bind of digital activism in Bangladesh. The visual material brings to the fore the links between crowd behavior (public shaming of alleged molesters, calls for vigilante justice, etc.) and mechanisms of surveillance and sociality, like close-circuit television and cellular phone camera. I ultimately argue that social media activism, and technology more broadly, mimics the kind of crowd mentality it incriminates, and in so doing, reproduces certain immanence associated with crowds.

TEA BREAK

2.30-2.45 pm

SESSION THREE

2.45-4.15 pm

Chair: Yawar Jilani

“The ‘Signal Free Corridor’ and the Pedestrian’s Right to Dignity”

Rabia Ezdi
National College of Arts, Lahore

ABSTRACT: In recent years, Pakistan’s larger cities such as Lahore and Karachi have seen the ‘signal free corridor’- an intra-city model of road transit which eliminates traffic crossings for kilometres at a stretch, and encourages fast-moving vehicles often at speeds of 80-100km/hour to whiz through the city. This not only saves driving time for the vehicle user, but is also a monument to ‘modernisation’ according to its visionaries. The promotion of the signal free corridor model in Pakistan can be traced back to various factors, the most dominant of which is the world-class city concept, which proposes the ‘image-building’ of the developing world city through ‘emblems’ of development and ‘modernisation’. From the point of view of the cross-section of stakeholders of the Pakistani road, the signal free corridor is a violation of the basic safe-commuting rights of the pedestrian and other ‘Vulnerable Road Users’. Secondly, the signal free corridor encroaches upon an intangible right of the citizen, that is, the right to ‘dignity’. This paper views the pedestrian’s right to a safe and ‘dignified’ commute as a basic right. It also views citizen satisfaction and well-being as the prime indicators of a successful city. In this vein, the signal free corridor and its continued establishment across the city of Lahore is critiqued as a case in point.

“Colombo’s Urban Poor: Projection and Reality”

Udan Fernando

Center for Poverty Analysis, Colombo

ABSTRACT: Colombo’s poor occupied the center stage of the discourse of the new wave of urban development in Sri Lanka coincided with the end of the end of the 30 year-year internal war. Urban Development, practically Colombo and outskirts, was premised as the hub of growth in the country’s march towards a Middle Income Country. An ambitious, intense and aggressive urban regeneration process was launched by under the powerful bureaucrat and the then President’s brother. The process and results attracted praise for the ultra-efficiency and determined-leadership as well a great deal of criticism for the way in which the new wave of urban development projects were implemented. A cornerstone of the criticism was the manner in which the urban poor who were compelled – sometimes forced -- to let go their dwellings to pave the way for new urban regeneration projects, often construction projects with high investments. The poor was subjected to different forms of eviction, displacement and relocation which attracted a great deal of media attention as well criticism by opposition political parties and organizations advocating for rights. The implementers, in their defense, made many attempts from public relations to image building campaigns. The projection and profiling of the poor by different actors took its own trajectory probably divorced from the reality. The current paper strives to capture how these different promoters and critiques projected the urban poor in Colombo and contrast it with the reality.

TEA BREAK

3.30-3.45 PM

SESSION TWO

3.45- 5.15pm

Chair: Marvi Mazhar

“Resistance and Its Limits: An Analysis of Protests to Urban Violence in Lyari, Karachi”

Nida Kirmani

Lahore University of Management Sciences

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the impacts of on-going conflict on the everyday lives of residents living in one of the oldest areas of Karachi, Lyari. In particular, it examines the various and shifting strategies adopted by residents of this area, which has been the site of on-going violence for the past decade at the hands of criminal gangs, political parties and state security forces. Residents have adopted a range of responses as a means of dealing with violence, covering a broad spectrum from seemingly passive coping mechanisms to various forms of active resistance. This paper looks specifically at the active forms of resistance that have manifested in Lyari in the form of street protests between 2012 and 2014. It will focus on those protests organized by the People’s Aman Committee against the state security forces, protests organized by members of the Kutchi community against the gangs and the People’s Aman Committee, and protests organized by various residents against the gangs, the political parties and the state in response to the Jhat Phat Market bomb blasts. The paper will also briefly discuss the possibilities of resistance through social media. The examples discussed will help to shed light on the possibilities and limitations of resistance in the context of urban violence. By focusing on resistance, this paper seeks to problematize the binary so often presented in literature on urban violence, which paints actors as either victims or perpetrators of violence.

“Virtuous Value: The Shape of Desire in Karachi”

Noman Baig
Habib University

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I seek to show the shape of the desire at the interstices of the city’s financial flows as well as the shifting religious virtues. Narrowing the ethnographic gaze on a seventy-year old veteran trader in Karachi’s Jodia Bazaar, the paper demonstrates how the trader slowly undergoes the process of effacing the existential attributes in order to lodge into the passionate pursuit of the alienated forms of value and virtue. I argue the form of desire that emerges is constitutive of the artificially supplemented affects of moral and financial fantasies. In Karachi, such induced affects not only submit the population into the clutches of social vulnerability but also leaves them existentially discontent.

Tuesday, January 5

9:30 AM – 5:30 PM • OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

SESSION ONE

9.45-12 noon

Chair: Asif Farrukhi

“Three concepts to understand cities: Mumbai a case Settling, Blur and Trips”.

Rupali Gupte,

School of Environment and Architecture, Mumbai

ABSTRACT: The presentation will discuss the urban form of Mumbai towards formulating the logic through which this form gets generated. The contention of the paper is that cities are formally complex, experientially intense and have logics that are incoherent. They fold spaces, practices and relationships together to create an enormous, perpetually morphing urban form. This morph is characterized by unclear geographies, absurd lives, unstable forms and coexistence of sharp contradictions within it. The formulations around grand-narratives of globalization, corporate capitalism, neo-liberalism, informalisation, poverty etc; or deficiency-stories of housing and infrastructure shortage, environmental decay and corrupt governance are inadequate to comprehend the morph. How does this morph work? What keeps it in a state of perpetual transformation? What are the sources of its energies? The stories from Mumbai offer an agile framework to discuss the complexities, intensities and incoherence of the morph.

The presentation would make three propositions to understand cities.

Proposition 1: On Settling

Proposition2: On Blur

Proposition 3: On Trips

“Surviving the Unhomely City”

Gyan Prakash
Princeton University

ABSTRACT: The city is not just an urban landscape, a geographical site, or a catalog of housing problems and unplanned growth disasters. It is also a space constituted existentially by those live in it and whose experiences it shapes. Taking this perspective on the relationship between the self and the city highlights questions of affect, affiliation, and imagination; it brings into view the question of belonging. It also raises the issue of not belonging, of feelings of alienation and estrangement. So, both experiences – homely and unhomeliness – are relevant as we consider the modern city. Focusing on Mumbai’s experience during the last few decades but also keeping its longer colonial history in mind, I want to ask how do the city’s subaltern citizens seek home in an unhomely city.

“Ishqiya Dharvi Style”

Paromita Vohra

Parodevi Films

ABSTRACT: I’d like to present some work I’ve been doing as part of my project Agents of Ishq. I collaborated with an organization in Dharavi called SNEHA, during a unique and beautiful event they did called the Dharavi Biennial. Dharavi is famously known as the largest slum in Asia. It is of course a very complex space with different artisanal and entrepreneurial forces that thrive here. During the biennale, different artists collaborated with local artisans and sometimes amateur residents to create different works of art. I wrote a play on adolescent sexuality which we workshopped with the children. Subsequently, I’ve continued my work with some of these children – we’ve made a sex education film on how bodies/babies are made which will be ready soon. We also did workshops with older kids where they spoke about sexual/sensual memory and personal romantic histories, finally recording audio narratives. These audio narratives are expressive of how relationships transpire in the dense and scrutinized, potentially risky environment they inhabit – but are also replete with language and emotional textures that are born from their, creating personal, local, resonant works. For me they throw up new, still forming, ways of thinking of how to engage with the urban as an artist which I would like to discuss as well.

LUNCH BREAK

12- 1 pm

SESSION TWO

1-2:30 pm

Chair: Hafeez Jamali

“Urban Wallpaper: Film posters and the Living walls of Dhaka city”

Lotte Hoek

University of Edinburgh

ABSTRACT: This paper is the story of a night of poster pasting. In it, I ride the night time streets of Dhaka with the young men who put up posters advertising the films of the popular Bangladeshi film industry. Carried on a cargo tricycle, we traverse the increasingly desolate streets, our eyes trained on the walls that provide counterintuitive sites of communication and fantasy. In conversation with the poster-wallahs, I explore their understanding of walls and theories of urban viewing that inform their nightly labour. Their work and words allow me to reflect on the braiding of the cinematic and the urban, experienced simultaneously. It also provides a means to think through the palimpsest that is the city wall. Written and over-written continually, the postered wall speaks powerfully to the force of the new that remains a key element in the everyday experience of the city.