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FEMINIST PRACTICES AS URBAN RESISTANCE

UNDERSTANDING GENDERED COMMUTE THROUGH
RICKSHAWS IN KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

Cities become gendered spaces when every day lived experiences of women are not taken into account in urban planning. By exploring the concept of a feminist city, I use an intersectional feminist lens to probe how women navigate the city differently through the use of rickshaws in my home town of Karachi, Pakistan. As the largest city of Pakistan, Karachi has expanded rapidly but it remains afflicted by lack of a mass transit system. Moreover, the clash of ethnic, class, gender and religion has obstructed the city's progress as a safe and inclusive environment for women and the marginalised communities.

Utilizing a triangulation of online survey and informal interviews with women and rickshaw drivers, this qualitative research maps the commuting patterns and behaviours of marginalized women focusing on the use of public transport, namely rickshaws.

The aim is to uncover the unspoken communal practices, the common threads and the anomalies that reveal how pockets of feminist cities are enacted in the here and now by marginalized groups. In that, I embrace an intersectional feminist lens, and feminist standpoint theory to broaden our understanding of gendered commute, I explore feminist practices and modes of resistance adopted by marginalised women when it comes to navigating the city on their terms.

This research analyses not only alternative ways of navigating urban spaces but also question the standard ways of communication and navigation design. How can perception of design be shifted away from planning and solutionism towards maintenance and care? Are design interventions even needed where people seem content living with contradictions? What is the fine line between romanticising the struggles and nurturing the acts of everyday resistance of women and the marginalised? Ultimately, this research highlights multiplicity of feminist practices to broaden our understanding of gendered commute, and acts of everyday urban resistance.