

**MAPPING WOMEN'S EXCLUSIONS
FROM MANY PUBLICS:
THE REPRODUCTION OF GENDERED
SPACES IN URBAN YEREVAN**

By

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ABSTRACT

In 2015 I was a participant of “Acting Together” Armenian-Turkish reconciliation project and had a chance to work on mapping post-traumatic memories of the Armenian genocide survivors. While survivors were asked to tell their memories within the scopes of oral history project, they were also given an option to draw a simple map of their villages or towns. Later on those imagined and memory-based maps were compared to the updated maps of those cities and this served as a basis of further analysis for the project participants. Upon seeing the city mapped according to the affective experiences of women, it was the first time that I realized how powerful this form of layered, spatialized geographical tool can be if it is made ‘readable’ for many kinds of audiences.

Following the completion of that project, I began to explore similar mapping projects worldwide in order to understand the methods and common tendencies within this developing area within the digital humanities. The idea of ‘mapping’ gendered exclusions in Yerevan came about as the result of a simple need to find a method of layering and pinning down the places where I have encountered aggressive or threatening gaze or verbal harassment. Based on the preliminary research in the field, I realized that map is the most efficient and accessible way for users to visualize and speak up about the issue.

For that reason, my project consists of two parts: the map with women’s visualized stories of harassment in Yerevan and the theoretical and methodological part of the work that intends to set a larger frame to understand the topography of violence in public spaces. The theoretical frame of the thesis sets to analyze the dynamics between the traditional education (promoted by mothers) and the spatial projections of that education on the city landscape. The affective interaction between the bodies and the spaces sets a theoretical frame in order to understand the spatial experiences of city-dweller women and the images of places for them shaped through those experiences.

Lastly, as initially designed, this project is intended to be an open-access platform and participatory mapping project. In addition to the academic contribution, the map sets up a possibility for women in Yerevan outside of the academic circles to have a safe virtual space and to share their silenced and tabooed spatial experiences.

Declaration of Authorship:

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted from any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 20802 words

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Signed _____ (Arpenik Atabekyan)

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Dedicated to all women ...

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Introduction

As an urban woman living in Yerevan, I have had a complicated relationship with the city where I have resided for the past twenty years. Throughout my time living in the city, I have encountered cases and personal experiences of verbal and sexual harassment, in addition to the gaze present in public spaces that creates gendered exclusionary spaces. As I began to speak to other women about their experiences, I realized how their stories – and mine - have been muted and silenced so that it becomes a taboo that is not shared with other women. The silence had intensified my fears connected with certain places; fears that were previously formed through my mother's warnings about certain public spaces coupled with other women's experiences of fear and harassment in these places.

Yerevan is considered one of the safest capitals in the world, even though many women face the daily experience of operating under the intimidating gaze of men in public spaces, as well as their harassment in the forms of verbal and physically threatening and abusive patterns of behavior. I am not an exception to this case, since I can attest to experiencing both fear and harassment after dark in the city. As I listened to other women speaking of their fears of darkness in these spaces, it led me to consider how the dark builds upon the vulnerability of women walking alone. My own experiences led me to believe that my fear shaped my interactions with certain publics, and it also reshaped the boundaries of what I mapped internally as 'safe' and what was 'not safe' thus restricting my mobility in the city. Over time, like many other women in Yerevan, I became increasingly resentful of the inequality in how I navigated the city, and in resisting the

masculinization and phallocentrism of spaces where only my male friends felt comfortable alone after dark.

Once found myself isolated with my stories in a victim-blaming society, I began to search for answers in other women's life stories. My story unfolded in the story of dozens of people around me and brought up the common (silenced) issues in the city. By connecting the issue of harassment to broader issues of traditionalism and traditional education in the families, I put my story in the midst of interviewed women's stories and use maternal knowledge (as a main source of traditional education) as a perspective of observation. My aim is to demonstrate reflections of bodily and citizenry affective relationships on the cityscapes. Thereby in the methodology section I will portray through which research methods this argument will be addressed in the interviews and how to layer (to map) embodied experiences of women.

While in the main body of my analysis I focus on the traditional education and the roles of mothers in preserving gender roles, I argue that the latter affect the socially constructed boundaries in the city and contributes to the creation of gendered spaces. Chronologically organized interview questions are intended to reveal the connection between the upbringing politics (predominantly designed by mothers) and women's experiences in the city spaces during puberty years. Interviewed women's first encounters with spaces are shaped by their embodied experiences, and set the first individual relationship between them and the space, without any mediators.

It is important to understand the transformation of the space throughout the last decades, therefore in the beginning of the research my aim is to give a brief historical background of the development of the city Yerevan since 1920s until our days in order to outline the transformations of the space. With a particular focus on the city in 1990s my aim

is to alienate the city development story with the identity development of interviewed women, as well as to observe the changes in the way they experience the city alongside with its socio-political changes.

My focus group is Yerevan city-dweller women, between 20-40 years, who actively navigate in the city due to their work, studies or entertainment. As I will take the component of the darkness as an important factor for women's vulnerability, I aimed to interview women, who are in the street at different times of the day and who have accessibility to public places.

For the story-interviews I intended to use the inherited knowledge of my mother's encounters as a channel of knowledge, as lenses to look at the issues women have to encounter on a daily basis and to understand how much the inherited knowledge from their mothers have affected their experiences in urban spaces. Research questions begin with the years of education and upbringing at home; at this point of the interview I intend to see how children learnt about the dynamics of public urban spaces through their mother's life stories. Secondly, I am determined to find out in which places of the city women have had experiences of gaze, verbal and sexual harassment or stalking, followed by questions: how much is the place shaped through the experience of the person. To which extent does the experience shape the image of the place for them? As a conclusion, again based on the conducted material I intend to understand how much of those fears have been imagined (based on mother's narratives) and how many of them experienced (based on the encounters they have had in the city), how traumatic it has been for them and how did they overcome (or not overcome), what are the ways and methods of overcoming. While my main argument is that there is a relationship between the traditional education and socially constructed boundaries, in the second part, based on the identity development

phases of women I intend to explore the ways they negotiate public places and challenge the boundaries of the gendered spaces.

I have separated the sections of the chosen literature according to the memory and motherhood, experiences and space-making politics (including embodiment, fear and overcoming of the fear) in cities with particular focus on Yerevan. Following the introduction, the breakdown of the chapters follows the trajectory of the mentioned literature:

Chapter I begins with the mapping of the literature that has served as the foundation of this research, including theoretical, methodological and region specific literature. Chapter II is a historical review on Yerevan as a city, with brief historical overview from early Republican times, throughout Perestroika and after USSR collapse times. With the analytical overview of the regional literature I will draw on the importance of transformation of public spaces parallel to economic and political changes, as well as their effects on the formation of gendered spaces. Chapter III is dedicated to developing the theoretical frame with the key authors' works that helped to frame this research. Chapter IV is an extensive methodological framework with detailed applications to the fields of oral history and with connections to previous spatio-social academic and activist initiatives. It includes reflection on the practical experience, the obstacles, the difficulties and ethical considerations during the interviews. In regard of mapping as a method I will draw on importance and usefulness of digital humanity approaches and visualization of textual data. Chapter V is the analysis of the conducted research, where I will be (re)conceiving or (re)conceptualizing the public spaces through the narratives (interviews). In this part some of the initial personal stories of motherhood will be brought up again and developed as a thread throughout the narratives of the interviewed women. The conducted interviews will carry thematic separation and by that will provide a better understanding of the common

fears and experienced encounters of women. Through figures of the designed map I am going to demonstrate the digital stories (interviews and narratives) illustrated as spatial experiences and projected on different parts of Yerevan map.

Chapter 1

Research Objective

1.1 Literature Review

In reflecting upon Irigaray's "change that begins in individual relationships between women,"¹ my research seeks to explore the impact of mothers' spatial knowledge on daughters' perceptions of safety in public spaces. One of the key questions that I pose in the research is at what point of the upbringing process does daughters' spatial knowledge detach itself from mothers' knowledge and builds a new one, based on embodied experiences. In order to explore this area of research, I situate my study of space within the frameworks employed by both Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's theories of spatiality. Lefebvre's theory of the production of space helps us to understand space as a whole entity, as well as the fragmentation of one into pieces by certain causes and the body-space interaction. Thus spaces are fragmented, and fragmentations are caused because of professions, which have turned some spaces into their own. The fragmentation of spaces itself creates "mental barriers and practo-social frontiers."¹

The notion advanced by Lefebvre of an organic and fluid conceptualizing of space forms the foundations of this research. Bodies are central in making of space, and interaction between bodies and space is central in reproduction of the dynamics. One of

¹ Henri Lefebvre, Eleonore Kofman, and Elizabeth Lebas, *Writings on cities* (Cambridge, Mass : Blackwell, 1996), 90.

the questions that I ask to my informants is how they experience the spaces they embody, and what is men's role in controlling space dynamics according to their daily experiences. I also draw upon Michel de Certeau's "The practice of Everyday Life," in which he develops an urban sociological method to engage the performative aspects of 'being' in a city. I emphasize his concept of experiencing the city from a gendered perspective in terms of being a woman in the city and experiencing the spaces through bodily interaction. Accordingly the bodies and space mutually write each other and places gain meaning to people through stories and memories.

In order to understand the space and bodily interactions situated within a region specific context, as well as broader understanding of divisions between the private and the public in the regional societies I draw upon Ayten Alkan's edited compilation on the cultivation and construction of private and public spaces in Turkey.² While her arguments expands upon early thoughts on space segregation according to gender, it is Hülya Arik who takes up these ideas and expands upon these in her focus on the closed public spaces and especially male coffee shops as gender segregated spaces even within the most progressive areas of Turkey.³ These two works contribute greatly to the region specific usage of public and private spaces in traditional societies from a perspective of a woman researcher. Similarly, in Yerevan there are small taverns in almost every yard, where it is only men playing backgammon, chess or domino. However, it is solely a male space, where children (girls) would be told not to participate or would be shamed for intervening into the "men's place."

2 Ayten Alkan, *Cins Cins Mekan* [Queer Places] (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 2009), 63-75.

3 Hülya Arik, "Kahvehanede Erkek Olmak: Kamusal Alanda Erkek Egemenliğin Antropolojisi" ["Being a man in a coffee shop: The anthropology of men's hegemony in public spaces"] in *Queer Spaces* ed. Ayten Alkan (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 2009), 169.

Continuing the patterns of tradition within public spaces and especially in education, I draw the specifics of the women's roles in the education process from the work by Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989) "Woman-Nation State" with their categorizations on the main roles of women in the traditional societies of nation states. Based on Yuval-Davis and Anthias's concept of mothers-gatekeepers, I pay attention to Armenian mothers' role in daughters' upbringing politics, in order to underline their role as "signifiers and reinforcers of socially constructed norms"⁴. I will draw on the development of the city spaces throughout the establishment of the first Republic until the era of post-90s, with a focus on the shift of women's role in families and in society.⁵

By developing the concept of mother as a gatekeeper of traditions and national ideology, I refer to Chodorow (and authors influenced by her *Psychoanalysis of Mothering*) as an angle to examine the circulation of inherited knowledge from mothers. The three main aspects of Chodorow's work will stand out in the following chapters of the thesis in order to be able to indicate the "dynamics of early mothering and the bond creation"⁶. In particular, the work on the preoedipal phase of the mother-daughter relationships and the alienation from mothers/parents at the puberty phase of the identity formation is especially important in how I have chosen to frame the analysis of these bonds and of the exchange of information that takes place privately between mothers and daughters. Chodorow's approach helps to channel and follow the identity formation of the interviewee alongside with the relationships with the mother, that are embedded in family dynamics. My own conceptual frame is based on Chodorow's theories of motherhood, in addition to Kathy

⁴ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Introduction" in *Woman-Nation-State*, ed. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 7-8.

⁵ See also: Anne McClintock, "Family feuds: Gender, nationalism and the family", *Feminist Review* no. 44 (Summer93 1993): 61.

⁶ Nancy Chodorow, *The reproduction of Mothering : psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 83.

Davis's defined embodiment theory; it is based on the experiences of women through the "aesthetics of performance and display," specifically in public spaces.⁷ Drawing upon Chodorow's example, I ask how the fusion of bodies within the lived everyday experience reveals peculiarities of embodied experiences in urban spaces.

In order to look at the image of places through women's experiences, I will follow J.W. Scott's work "The Evidence of Experience" (1991) and through her work look at the embodied experiences from a historical and humanities perspective.

Within the theoretical framing of experience by Scott, I make comparative parallels between mother's and daughter's experiences, which based on the generation differences and place changes might vary drastically, and reveal the traumatic side of the story-sharing. Based on Marianne Hirsch's notion of construction of femininity discourses or gendered attitudes within the motherhood and daughterhood discourse, I will look at the dynamics of post-memories in the familial settings. In this frame I am interested in the traumatic side of the story-sharing as one of possible ways to overcome it. The notion of "social reality and fantasy construction" accommodates the further cultivation of imagined and experienced fears of daughters.⁸ Those stories are usually conducted within private households, in an intimate atmosphere of trust.

In that regard Kevin Lynch's "The image of the city" (1960) summarizes the internationality of case studies in different cities of various countries, by giving insight to the methods of urban space explorations. In relation to de Certeau's theory of writing the city Lynch discusses the knowledge of legibility of the city: how do we read places? How do we engage in a relationship with the city? How that engagement creates experiences and

⁷ Kathy Davis, *Embodied practices : feminist perspectives on the body* (London : Sage Publications, 1997), 13.

⁸ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of postmemory : writing and visual culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 10.

memories? Lynch has practical suggestions of research in overcrowded, multi-layered big cities, which he calls “way finding” or “getting lost in the city.”⁹ In addition to conceptualizing and conducting the research, the analysis is largely shaped by ideas, borrowed from de Certeau and Lynch on how to ‘read’ the text of the interview. Throughout the chapters, I come back to their individual works in order to juxtapose how we integrate and analyze different studies, in addition to what it means to bring intimacy into a methodology for a more open and emotive interview space. I set the task to understand the individual memory of mothers behind the interviewee’s narratives in favor of revealing the story-telling intimacy in their relationship¹⁰. For the frame of my research it is very important to understand the urban changes Yerevan has undergone since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both the political changes of the time and the demographic changes, as well as post-war migration and economic crisis caused shifts of places in the city. Because of shift of classes and emergence of post 1990s *nouveau riche* class, the city underwent and is still going through an urban transformation according to the needs, tastes and demands of the upper class residents.

Feminist standpoint theory is concerned with the power relations between the center and the periphery, and how these shape the politics of marginalization. In particular Sandra Harding’s¹¹ theory of objectivity of the feminist epistemologists from within helps me to position myself as a researcher from within the community that I research and bell hook’s¹² contribution on margins as sites of knowledge production. While making more emphasis on

⁹ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1960), 6.

¹⁰ Anna Green, “Individual remembering and Collective memory: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates,” *Oral History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Memory and Society (Autumn, 2004):35-44.

¹¹ Sandra Harding, *The feminist standpoint theory reader : intellectual and political controversies* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹² bell hooks, “Choosing the margin as a space of Radical Openness” in *The feminist standpoint theory reader : intellectual and political controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004), 154.

the maternal thinking from the perspective of gender studies, I look at the knowledge making by mothers as a standpoint of knowledge production, while drawing on Ruddick's insightful contribution in relation to nation states and conflict zones.¹³

Rouben Arevshatyan (2010) begins his "Blank Zones in Collective Memory or the Transformation of Yerevan's Urban Space in the 60s", when there was an urban architecture movement and refers to those "extraterritories" which back then were shaping new space perceptions, new urban culture and politics¹⁴. In this article he focuses on specifics of mainstream Soviet architecture and on Soviet modern, experimental architecture pieces. I take this and similar sources on Soviet architecture particularly because besides space-human interaction relation, "architecture flaws", architectural mistakes, miscalculations, gentrification and newly built buildings highly affect the formation of gendered spaces that women vastly avoid. Arevshatyan's article further corroborates Kevin Lynch's article in regards to the way we read the city. It gives a very important knowledge of situatedness of the urban space, develops a look at it from nowadays standpoint. Most importantly, this piece gives a sense of how to 'translate' Lynch into different landscapes in order to keep the text relevant, and this is how Arevshatyan's work is so important because it is embedded in the Soviet architecture tradition.

After illuminating on the literature of the past and the present history of urban development in Yerevan, I will elaborate on the issue of women's political participation with their bodily presence. In that regard contributions to the gendered spaces of Yerevan was put forward by Arevik Martirosyan (2006) in her article "Connecting literature on the past and the present history of the urban development brings me to the issue of women's political

13 Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking as a Feminist Standpoint", in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory: Intellectual and political controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding, (New York: Routledge, 2004) 165.

14 Rouben Arevshatyan, "Blank Zones in Collective Memory or the Transformation of Yerevan's Urban Space in the 60s", *Readthread*, Issue no.2 (2010): <http://www.red-thread.org/en/article.asp?a=33>.

participation with their bodily presence. In that regard contributions to the gendered spaces of Yerevan was put forward by Arevik Martirosyan (2006) in her article “Gendered space and political statement in Armenia,”¹⁵ which was published as part of the project “*Spaces: Sustainable Public Areas for Culture in Eastern Countries*”. Martirosyan looks at the space women occupy in social and political movements in the city, beginning from organizations, rallies and physical participations. This article is especially important because the author is a political activist herself and focuses on very specific issues of women spaces that might be invisible for an outsider. While Martirosyan’s article contributes to my work through a local perspective of (political) space making, hereby I intend to connect the local and domestic region specific content to larger scholarship on space making, The boundaries, visibilities and invisibilities, marginalization of different groups, and the inclusion of women of different classes are all processes embedded in everyday urban space making. Following Lefebvre’s legacy on perceived and conceptualized places, Pierce and Martin’s (2015) work “Placing Lefebvre” helps to conceptualize Yerevan as a symbolic space, as an urban landscape full of spatial semiotics that talk to each other in a symbolic language.

Placing in proximity the three key themes (bodies, memories and space) illustrated in this research, I will draw on Elizabeth Grosz’s (1995) work “Cities and bodies” that examines the city as a space, where everyone comes together and women’s lives are, as she described them, citified, adjusted and adopted by city rules. Continuing the thought of Grosz, who examines the city as a space for projection of the body, it is important to address the issue of the dynamics in the city. The space dynamics are complicated with fluidity of boundaries that will be addressed through Miranne and Young’s work (2000) in terms of

15 Arevik Martirosyan, “Gendered space and political statement in Armenia”, http://www.spacesproject.net/images/doku/gendered_spaces_and_political_statement_in_armenia_a_martirosyan_english.pdf.

gendered boundaries in the city spaces and the affect of those boundaries on formations of margins that are pushed out of the centered, visible sites of regions.

The latter reminds us of the fluidity of spaces; the boundaries that are under direct influence by socially constructed gender norms and are mutually affecting one another, while being visible on cityscapes.

Chapter 2

Yerevan as an urban landscape for gendered inequalities

2.1. “Who has the right to the city?”

This chapter of the research begins with exploring the dynamics of gendered spaces in Yerevan, alongside the historical and spatial developments within the city. Giving emphasis to the city as a space, where the embodied experiences of women happen, it is important to see the bigger picture of the development of city spaces in order to rightly draw on the mothers’ inherited stories.

The latter are embedded in the very cityscapes and have been under the direct influence of urban developments. Developments have exceedingly been projection of political rhetoric that appeared to dictate their own understandings of the spatial organizations.

The notion of the right to the city depends largely upon intersecting inequalities that are negotiated at the site of public places. The right to the city, initially suggested by Henri Lefebvre, has been used to interpret new practices of urban citizenship that breaks away from considering the nation to be the natural site of memory and ideology.¹⁶ Rather, he argued that urban citizenship as a form of equal practice for different group rights had the potential to reconfigure and appropriate the spaces of the city.¹⁷ Drawing upon the important work of Lefebvre, this chapter will focus on conceived or conceptualized space as suggested by Tamanyan the city planner of the first Soviet Republican period architect of Yerevan, followed by perceived or practiced space in forms of day to day action from the standpoint of women and their use of space.¹⁸ Following the combination of the conceptualized space

16 Engin F Isin, “City, Democracy and Citizenship: Historical Images, Contemporary Practices” in *Handbook of citizenship studies*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Bryan S. Turner (London: SAGE, 2002), 313.

17 Isin, “City, Democracy and Citizenship: Historical Images, Contemporary Practices”, 314.

18 Susanne Fehlings, “The ignoble savage in urban Yerevan.” *Central Asian Survey* 35:2 (2016): 20.

during the evolving years of early Soviet Republican times, I will elaborate on the produced space throughout the early Soviet years and conclude with the newly emerged spaces after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I will draw on the representational space as “directly lived” one¹⁹, which will be performed and illustrated through some common patterns and tendencies of women visibilities on urban landscapes.

In this chapter I argue that the experience of woman is understood as the way women know and recognize the space, as well as in the way it is imagined and memorized. Drawing upon the interviews that I conducted with women in the city (and some via Skype), I will explore how women create their own approaches to deconstructing conceptualized, perceived and representational spaces. As an opposition to Lefebvre’s ontological approach, I will suggest an epistemological approach that draws upon the lived experience of woman as a way of knowing the place, but not necessarily as a mechanism to produce space.²⁰ Furthermore, I intend to address the idea of Lefebvre’s approach in terms of citizenship participation in the city, put forward by Joseph Pierce and Deborah G. Martin, on how women find individual ways to mark certain places in their spatial memory.

2.2. Yerevan in the midst of socio-historical shifts: historical reflection

In 1920s, shortly after the establishment of the Soviet States there was a state agenda to express the national identities of the people of Soviet republics through semiotics of the larger cities. In that regard, the Soviet Republic of Armenia and its representation through the capital Yerevan was not an exclusion but rather part of a trend between those states under Soviet control. Following the genocide against Armenians in 1915, it was deemed important to develop a stable economy as quickly as possible, and so the reestablishment of

19 Joseph Pierce and Deborah G. Martin, "Placing Lefebvre," *Antipode* 47, no. 5 (May 21, 2015): 1282.

20 Pierce and Martin, "Placing Lefebvre," 1279.

national values and loyalty became a priority in the agenda of local government. Yerevan was supposed to become a space that would speak through its semiotics, through national and identity symbols. Both the location - a landscape facing Ararat, and the erecting complex infrastructures and buildings in different spots of the city - became a language or a text, a bridge that would reconnect the lost values, the Armenian national identity and the bright Soviet future for the city-dwellers, as well as the country.

The construction of the city developed under the careful gaze of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. However, the architecture of the city in the 1920s and 1930s is dramatically different from the buildings built throughout *Khrushchev Thaw* and *Perestroika* years. While the concrete buildings of the latter years had a mission to provide the city inhabitants with living spaces and they were growing like mushrooms especially in the suburbs of the city, the 1920s Yerevan buildings had multiple roles – to speak of the identity and national revival of the Armenian nation. The project was a success, and it was brought to life by the talented architect Aleksandr Tamanyan and his team. He was a neo-classical architect, who had designed the initial city maquette based on the English concept of the garden-city²¹ and inspired by Campanella's 'Sun-City'²² that was primarily supposed to be inhabited by 1 million people and be limited with the borders of the Small and Big Centers. As of an aesthetic context of the garden city idea, Tamanyan intended to create a place of "earthly and heavenly paradises" that would face Ararat.²³

Following the Tamanyan's era and the brief Khrushchevian 'thaw' in-between the end of 1950s and beginning of 1960s, there have been attempts to convert the social semiotics of

²¹ Fehlings, "The ignoble savage in urban Yerevan," 197.

²² Narek Mkrtchyan, "Nation-building projects through new capitals: from St. Petersburg to Yerevan and Astana," *Nationalities Papers*, 45:3,2 (January 9, 2017): 487.

²³ Nazareth Karoyan, "Public Sphere as a place for gifts: Socio-symbolic characteristics of the City-building of Post-Soviet Yerevan" in *Public Spheres After Socialism*, ed. Angela Harutyunyan, Kathrin Hörschelmann and Malcolm Miles (Intellect Bristol, UK 2009), 30.

the city. As mentioned previously, there were expansive housing projects delivered and successfully finished mainly in suburbs.²⁴ These were houses that were named as “Kruschchovka” that were known for lower ceilings and smaller square meters unlike Stalinist apartment projects that were more spacious and belonged to the earlier Tamanyan era of architecture. The mass constructions during the Thaw, and more largely during Perestroika years demarcated the residential areas and the downtown, known more as a “centre” (“kentron”), together with its socio-economic connotations. In the 1960s and 1970s the cityscapes became spaces that bore time and memory.²⁵ With the construction of new symbolic monuments, like the Genocide Memorial, it seemed the legacy of Tamanyan found its continuation through the semiotics and poetics of space.

The period from the 1960s to the 1970s appeared to be a passage to the formation of democratized and gender-friendly spaces. This resulted in the emergence of “extraterritories” - new surplus urban spaces that shaped perceptions of new urban cultures and politics.²⁶ The modern and experimental era in the city architecture was demarcated by several masterpieces of the new Soviet architecture. However, that passage did not occur smoothly as expected, as in the mid 1990s already some of those so-called special or extravagant architectural masterpieces started to vanish from the urban terrain “either by being destroyed or corrupted beyond recognition.”²⁷ The 1990s were dramatically crucial for the region both geopolitically and for the city as a space. It is very important to understand the urban changes Yerevan has undergone since the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to understand how it has affected the (under)representations of different groups.

²⁴ Karoyan, “Public Sphere as a place for gifts”, 30.

²⁵ Mkrtchyan, “Nation-building projects through new capitals”, 488.

²⁶ Arevshatyan, “Blank Zones”.

²⁷ See note 24.

Both the political and the demographic changes of the time, as well as post-war migration and economic crisis, caused transformation of public spaces in the city. After the official declaration of independence in 1991, the centralized economy shifted towards the free-market relations that redrew and reorganized the boundaries between “the private, the public and the official”²⁸. The privatization of land and industry as well as changes in constitution and in administrative apparatus caused uneven economic developments and inequalities in different spheres. As a result, the city center underwent a huge transformation of public spaces that would speak of the groups that established them, and would promote their claims. This representation through public spaces, especially cafes and art houses, became a popular way of spaces speaking of themselves and gave a “refuge” for certain circles that would think the same way, belong to the same circles and come together in the evenings to share the common space. These places as well became the spots, where students would socialize in mixed groups and women would always be visible and active actors of those places. Yet, those places were identified and associated with certain classes and were standing as places of the local bohemia²⁹.

Class inequalities and uneven relationships between the center and the suburbs of the city developed to an extent especially after the 1990 economic and political crisis that redesigned the public places due to the needs and elites of the time.³⁰ Due to the lack of proper and fair accessibility from the suburbs the class gap between the people from the suburbs and the center became more visible. At the same time, given the frequent power

²⁸ Karoyan, “Public Sphere as a place for gifts”, 35.

²⁹ Vardan Jaloyan, “Public Space: The City in Armenian Literature,” in *Public Spheres After Socialism*, ed. Angela Harutyunyan, Kathrin Hörschelmann and Malcolm Miles (Intellect Bristol, UK 2009), 69.

³⁰ Diana Ter-Ghazaryan, “Civilizing the City Center:” Symbolic Spaces and Narratives of the Nation in Yerevan’s Post-Soviet Landscape” *From Socialist to Post-Socialist Cities: Cultural Politics of Architecture, Urban Planning and Identity in Eurasia* (Routledge, 2015): 583.

outages, due to the safety reasons and vulnerability women representation in public spaces began to fade.³¹

Women enter a space that has been designed and transformed throughout almost a century, and every phase of those transformations were focused on one or another issue, yet by neglecting the citizenry demands of different marginalized groups. It is a “text written by an architect” at the time of socio-politically dictated projects and the urge of reestablishment of new national identity³². This text was not written for a woman; however a woman was called to write her existence in the city that has been silenced, made invisible.

By giving the outline of the city as a physical entity I intend to illustrate a physical platform of women’s geographies, including gendered-bounded spaces and spatial practices, negotiations of gendered boundaries and socio-economic practices in physical urban space.

2.3. *Gendering the City*

The binary of public and private spaces is portrayed and designed in our imagination through the boundaries. Between the outside and the house there is a threshold that one crosses in order to step outside this space. In similar manner, there is a border between the private and the public in our spatial understanding. The segregation between the public and private spaces is based on the notions of access, accessibility, possibility of mobility, as well as safety. In the public spaces the state, the surveillance and the notion of security plays an important role in contradiction to private spaces, where people tend to create their comfort spaces. However, public spaces are open to some kind of public participation³³, thereby they become the places of affective intrapersonal relationships and spaces of “human

³¹ Hrach Bayadyan, “New Social order and Change in Media Landscape” in *Public Spheres After Socialism*, ed. Angela Harutyunyan, Kathrin Hörschelmann and Malcolm Miles (Intellect Bristol, UK 2009), 116.

³² Mkrtchyan, “ Nation-building projects through new capitals”, 489.

³³ Setha M. Low, and Neil Smith, *The politics of public space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

geographies of daily movements”³⁴. Yet, the issues of safety and immersion are very often negotiated exactly at the thresholds of the private spaces, houses in many of the child-centered societies.³⁵ Under the light of political and spatial changes the gendered exclusions had become more invisible and silenced, and have not come up in the agenda of social problems until recently, when during the country-wide anti-regime protests the ideas of citizenship and inclusion of diverse groups, women, (who were a main ruling force of the movement,) ³⁶ finally reclaimed their space of representation. The space was negotiated, reconfigured and democratized (also) on behalf of women and other marginalized groups.³⁷

2.4 Abstraction of the gendered spaces in Yerevan

Bodies and cities, regardless of the external changes of the given context, always mutually affect and shape each other. The city is shaped and reshaped over and over, and the body is transformed, “citified,” urbanized and translated into a city-body, metropolitan or urban body.³⁸ Following this logic, cities become frames for emergence of the complicated and complex relationships between the bodies, as well as between the city and the body itself. Grosz sees the city as a space, where everything and everyone comes together,³⁹ however, these gatherings are directly and more strongly influenced by external geopolitical events.

34 Ter-Ghazaryan, “Civilizing the City Center”, 586.

35 Zoltán Glück and Setha Low, “A sociospatial framework for the anthropology of security,” *Anthropological Theory* Vol 17, Issue 3, (2017): 282.

36 Pashinyan, Nikol, “Այս շարժման ամենակարևոր շարժիչ ուժերը՝ մեր կանայք ու մեր քույրերը” (“Our women and sisters are the driving force of this movement”), Facebook, April 21, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1801227783507000&id=100008593864189.

37 Jasbir Puar, “Introduction: The Cost of Getting Better,” in *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 15.

38 Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 242.

39 Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion*, 244.

The design of public spaces is very often customized according to the tastes and preferences of the ruling elite with its cultural and economic class. As a result of such urban design politics and capitalist projects, the poorest and strongly marginalized, but de facto city-dwellers do not fulfill their expectations in the public spaces and are pushed away more towards the shadow.⁴⁰

Besides total subversion from the initial planning and after the collapse of the Soviet Union and throughout the political and economic chaos of the 1990s, Yerevan expanded beyond the outskirts of the city. This process was accompanied by a jarring centralization project for all institutions of education, administration and culture. The latter actions not only evoked migration towards the capital from the regions outside Yerevan, but also caused an uneven development between the larger and smaller cities of the state. These political and economic shifts lucidly found its reflection on the city landscape. City-dwellers witnessed an exposed exclusion not only towards certain social classes, but also a big shift in gender representations in the city, expressed in forms of gendered spaces.

In the conditions of drastic shifts the boundaries of gendered spaces have been rearranged and redesigned and negotiated⁴¹. In the last decades the shift of those boundaries and reassertion of women's roles (aside from the maternal role in traditional society) brought up new discourses of women-city dweller's lives. Miranne&Young (2000) argue that for city-dweller women the boundaries are not a fix category that they move across the boundaries with their lifestyles.⁴² Theoretically that would be possible, as cities give a larger

40 Michael Rios, "Multiple publics, urban design, and the right to the city: Assessing participation in the Plaza del Colibri," *Open Space: People Space, An International Conference on Inclusive Environments* (2004): 122.

⁴¹ Gyanendra, Pandey, "The Subaltern as Subaltern Citizen," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 46 (2006): 4737.

⁴² Miranne, Kristine B., and Alma H. Young, "Introduction" in *Gendering the city: women, boundaries, and visions of urban life* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 7.

capacity and ability to the city-dwellers to transgress those boundaries or to use the option of anonymity in bigger cities in order to live out or to create their own spaces. However, in the nation state formation and the following years in the case of Yerevan, alike other big cities in the regional countries the women's roles and narratives were tailored into bigger national agendas. In addition to geopolitical shifts in the region, the traditional and social specifics of the country harked on the already existing restrictions of mobility, self-expression and full citizenry participation. The trajectory of this development of women equal participation in the city spaces will be displayed through the analytical chapter, where through embodied experiences interviewee women I will discuss and will demonstrate the negotiation of the socially constructed boundaries.

The reconfiguration of social boundaries under the strong gaze and immersion of the state, society and national agenda was put once again on the shoulders of women; they were once again portrayed as responsible for preserving the national borders, honor and family. It is important to understand that the notions of borders demarcated with women bodies easily found their reflections on urban landscapes as well, and since they are inseparable from social boundaries, the image of women in the city after the collapse of USSR has usually been perceived in the frames of larger acute nationalist ideology rather than a citizenry or city-dweller approach.⁴³

Yet, the immersion in a more localized manner has been and still is largely controlled by neighborhoods. Members of these groups usually are people who were born and grew up in the same neighborhood, and however much these circles are designed for a mere communication, still they compose certain male-dominated spaces.⁴⁴ An elderly and middle aged generation of the neighborhoods comes together in “*besedka*” (from Russian

⁴³ Ter-Ghazaryan, “Civilizing the city center,” 587.

⁴⁴ Jaloyan, “Public Space: The City in Armenian Literature,” 63.

word *besedovat* – talking, chatting) places, which are basically taverns in the middle of the yard, in front of the building blocks, where men play chess, backgammon, cards. These are very central places, where children and women usually do not participate and do not intervene. These places carry boundaries, where men are allowed to curse and speak louder than usually. It is a comfort zone for neighborhood men to socialize in the first place, but they become those spaces of reproductions of masculinity with impenetrable boundaries. Although these taverns occupy a very central place in the neighborhood and are open from all sides, they are still considered as a “place not for a woman/girl” like many other male-dominated spaces. The neighborhood gaze and control is one of the central topics I address when interviewing women to understand if the neighborhood is a comfort zone for them and how do they define their belonging to it?

Creation of boundaries is one of the first characteristics that demarcate the places of belonging for women within the urban spaces; thereby they also regulate the politics of visibility and invisibility of female bodies in the urban landscape. As we consider that the social boundaries, as well as the gender roles are socially constructed in order to understand those socially constructed boundaries on the example of the city Yerevan, I will pay attention to the relationship between the private and the public spheres. By the close examination of this relationship I intend to answer the questions of boundaries and the actors, the designers of the boundaries in order to understand what boundaries are physically and imaginarily? Who are the actors who put women within those boundaries or do they put themselves in those categories?⁴⁵

These questions will be addressed through the interviews with women, from drawing light on their mothers stories embedded in the Soviet time Yerevan urban spaces until their own embodied experiences in the democratizing spaces of the capital. Women narratives (or

⁴⁵ Marianne and Young, “Introduction,” 2.

interviews) in this research are designed to demonstrate the gender identity formation through motherhood stories and their own embodied experiences (together with inherited knowledge) projected on the city Yerevan. Through the stories of those experiences I am determined to portray the dynamics of gendered spaces and women's usage of those spaces as a post-memory generation, who has obtained citizenship (equality) status and the right to a fair use of spaces.

Chapter 3

Developing theoretical and methodological framework to women's exclusions from public spaces

3.1. Motherhood as a lens, experience as a way to know the spaces

This chapter develops the theoretical framing of the thesis where I explore how to read women's experiences in the urban spaces of Yerevan. In this part of the thesis I will introduce the theoretical lineages of my arguments through the relevant authors and texts, and also address how I developed a methodology for conducting interviews with women and then mapping their answers into the spatial analysis. For this research I position myself as both an insider and an outsider, since I am still a representative of the community that I research. In my methodology I as well want to address the following issue - how can we use the ways of informing and understanding urban spaces in order to address the challenges that women face worldwide and locally.

As research informed by a situated feminist methodology, I discuss here how I adapt key feminist standpoint theories to meet the specific harassment and inequalities faced by these Armenian women. In the field I will identify myself as a feminist from within with a personal spatial practice and will research Yerevan women's "lives and experiences as a "ground for that knowledge" as an attempt to contribute to a disciplines that bear "the fingerprints of their communities".⁴⁶

46 Sandra Harding, *The feminist standpoint theory reader : intellectual and political controversies*, 128.

In order to understand the dynamics and channels of maternal knowledge, I draw my deployment from the theoretical framework of Nancy Chodorow's "Reproduction of Mothering" (1978). I base motherhood knowledge on Chodorow's analysis and circular development in three phases of (1) early mothering and its affects, (2) pre-oedipal phase and the "discovery" of mother-daughter relationships and (3) children's gender personality and the reproduction of mothering. After discussing the alienation phases between mothers and daughters, I look at the politics of experience and embodiment, through Scott's (1991) theory as "one of the foundations of history"⁴⁷. Through Chodorow's mothering practices I will look at young women's individual experiences in the city as embodied practices of inherited knowledge as emotional investments throughout identity formation.⁴⁸ Embodied practices here are seen as a link between the development of the urban spaces in the previous chapter and the physical encounters in the social world⁴⁹, where the multiplicity of the city indicating once again that bodies and spaces co-exist in a mutually affective manner within the given time⁵⁰.

I set the concept of inherited knowledge to be analyzed in the larger picture of mothering and maternal bond between the child (daughter) and the mother at the early development period. This is an indicator of affective relationships between the two, where there is an archive of emotions, cultivation of negative and positive affects. Hence, the rearing of the child becomes the process of that archiving and throughout the phases of development the child/daughter "filters out" that archival knowledge. The filtering is indicated through attachments that are broken, through multiple detachments of the major preodepal phases.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Joan W Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer, 1991): 780.

⁴⁸ Anna Mehta and Liz Bondi, "Embodied Discourse: on gender and fear of violence," *Gender, Place and Culture* 6.1 (1999): 70.

⁴⁹ Davis, *Embodied practices*, 15.

⁵⁰ Gill Valentine. "Images of danger: women's sources of information about the spatial distribution of male violence," *Area* 21.4 (1989): 389.

⁵¹ Chodorow, *Reproduction of mothering*, 95-96.

Attachment that has been caused through parenting and especially through relationality between the infant and the parent is recomposed through the detachment from the mothers in the puberty years. The detachments are followed by establishment of the self or the personality – the breaking of the Freudian concept of the ego-ideal which is supposedly dependent on love and particularly the identification with the parent ⁵². As an emergency point to knowing the place of one's own.

Conveying of inherited knowledge as a part of mothering in the Armenian context has its specifics in the atmosphere of constant feticization of motherhood and the motherly care. Under the gaze of the traditional society, guarded and preserved mainly by women and situated in the midst of nation state formation, where women demarcate “boundaries and borders with their bodies”⁵³, mothers tend to pass their bodily experiences to their daughters both acquired by the personal and motherly care and under the fear of being labeled as a bad mother. In the case of the Armenian context, the “Family is the foundation of the state”⁵⁴ according to the constitution, and mothering is a fundamental key “mission” that has to keep the familial institution intact.

I argue that women inherit the spatial stories of mothers as a “glossary” to navigate in the cities and as a knowledge to safer mobility. Mothers’ legacy in terms of conveyed knowledge is big, yet, I try to understand where and in which possible ways have those spatial knowledge stories been passed to the daughters. The intimacy and the politics of that story sharing precede their way through the reproduction of women’s post-memory and post-traumatic narratives. They mostly contain traumatic memories; some of them are buried under many layers of traumas and taboos, some of them silenced by traditionalism, some of them faded.

⁵² Sara Ahmed, “The Skin of the Community: Affect and Boundary Formation,” *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis* (2005): 98.

⁵³ McClintock, “Family Feuds”, 62.

⁵⁴ “National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia”, accessed May 1, 2018, <http://www.parliament.am/parliament.php?id=constitution>.

Mother's shared stories and outspoken experiences "located at the margins" become visible and spoken through daughters⁵⁵. At the same time, the memories contain a testimonial, confessional nature⁵⁶, where the mother trusts her most sacred woman stories, confessions to the closest female family member.

As a "successor" of such an inherited spatial urban knowledge, born and grown up in Yerevan, I as well inherited knowledge from two generation of women from rural and urban spaces, in a highly complicated relationship with the inhabited space for years due to extremely masculinized spaces, in/visibility issues, boundaries, etc. As mentioned in the beginning, through the inherited knowledge women in my family and I are a starting point for this research with our bodies, yet, we are not alone in our limitations and we are all actors in a space called city, where we all affect each other every day.

In a way, we all had an elder companion, a friend, a mother, grandmother or a sister, who has developed their strategies of "the survival of an urban woman", has designed their safer routes throughout the darkest places of the city, and from whom we have inherited that spatial knowledge and experience in women's ways of knowing⁵⁷. My inherited knowledge dates back to my grandmother, who has not lived in the city by herself, instead she has passed that knowledge with all necessary and imagined precautions to my mother, from whom I have heard during those female talks at kitchen tables, and have reinterpreted and reconfigured those stories through my own embodied experiences.

Drawing on Gloria Wekker (2009) and Alice Walker's (1983) works as a tribute to their mothers, in the end of this thesis I want to argue that marginalized groups do speak, yet the methods of their speaking are not heard to our ears: the issue here is to make the unseen

55 Adrienne Cecile Rich, *On lies, secrets, and silence : selected prose, 1966-1978* (New York: Norton 1979), 432.

56 Henry, Greenspan. *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (Saint Paul:Paragon House, 2010).

57 Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking as a Feminist Standpoint", 167.

and the unheard margins available and visible to the society and academia, to come up with more inclusive research alternative. At this point language becomes a site for a struggle. The effort to bring the experience and the story into one picture is challenging, which is the reason why we keep stumbling upon our silences. “It is not an easy task to include our multiple voices within the various texts we create”⁵⁸, yet my attempt is to engage with the silences of the maternal inherited stories and with the stories shared with me throughout this project.

58 bell hooks, “Choosing the margin as a space of Radical Openness,” 154.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1. Ethnographic concepts and interview questions

The aim of my research is to explore gendered spaces in the urban landscape of Yerevan (Armenia) and to find out the reasons and consequences of women's exclusions from certain public spaces. The final stage of the research project will include an interactive map developed through a digital mapping device in order to visualize the conducted research. By visualizing the ethnographic research, my aim is to make the topic reach larger audience so that it can inform other developing research on how we can make visible – in a different way – the affective lives of women. I intend to design a map of imagined and experienced fears based on the scholarship affective cartography of anxiety, fears and violence.

My methodological inquiry began with a desire to explore in greater depth the making of gendered spaces in order to understand how and why women's exclusion from public spaces occurs so that we might eventually reach a point where we can address these issues to shape more woman-friendly cities.

In order to illuminate the social, urban and demographical change of the city, I will rely foremost on my own field work interviews to be complemented with the resources provided by Armenian NGOs and activists in the field of women rights. I conducted 27 in-depth interviews with current city-dweller women in Yerevan city, aged between 20-40, who are actively involved in the social life of the city, i.e. working and/or studying. Due to circumstances related to work and/or study or entertainment my participants spend time in

different parts of the city (including suburbs) during different times of the day. Interviews have been conducted absolutely anonymously, giving the privacy of the content.

4.2. Layering the visual ethnography

The lack of the language and visibility coupled with the constant silencing of issues and experiences makes our feminism an important part of supporting a visible and audible resistance in the Academy. Drawing upon authors who have informed areas of Oral History research as well as Social Anthropology, I use their ideas to consider how an engagement with the informant's emotions can bring us to a place of "listening vulnerably" and reproducing that intimacy in our analysis. Once the sense of a place is grasped through verbal expression, it has the potential to gain secure and permanent meanings.⁵⁹ In this particular case the task of the researcher should be not only finding the right language of expression, but also to make the language express the issue efficiently.

I am juggling in-between the academic language and a widely accessible language, between visualizing the language and verbalizing the embodied experiences. Through "Mapping Gendered Spaces in Yerevan", I try to fill in the gap that exists between us, the people in academia and people in the field, i.e. the subjects. Here I struggle to bring in embodied experiences and very heavy, difficult stories told in a very simple, "human" language, wrapped in an academic frame.

In order to vocalize silences, to engage with them and make the embodied experiences visible, the oral history in-depth interview method and the mapping came to be the most relevant means of exploration and projection of this research. As of a feminist approach to the research, I fully acknowledge my position while entering the field full of women

⁵⁹ Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston Beacon Press, 1996), 29.

vulnerabilities that is why I would describe my position as a researcher, yet at the same as each and every woman from that field, with every interviewee I am “enmeshed among” the stories of the embodied experiences.⁶⁰

Drawing on Chodorow’s notions of mother-daughter relationship and bond and Hirsch’s conveying of the motherly knowledge I will continue with Davis’s embodiment theories in order to fully demonstrate the spatial and embodied practices of the interviewed women. With the help of the embodiment theory I look at the female body as a central impicator and actor of spatial dynamics, as well Davis helps to address the ways women negotiate in and through their bodies.⁶¹ Finally, with the embodiment theory Davis brings into discussion the discourse of power;⁶² here drawing from Foucauldian ramifications helps me to thread it throughout the development and knowledge cultivation phases of the interviewed women.

At this part I heavily lean on the oral history methods and particularly refer to Valerie Yow’ “Recording Oral History” (1994) as a handbook of oral history method. Her straightforward explanations and discussions helped to structure the questions to women, to investigate the ways of how to draw out intimacy and make them feel comfortable.⁶³ The issues of trust are problematic both because of the sensitive content of the research and due to my position in the field. As a so-called expat researcher I drive between the home and the field,⁶⁴ and due to the enrolment in a Western academic institution, stand out as a “halfie”⁶⁵,

60 Clifford Geertz, *After the fact*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, 44
Geertz, Clifford. *After the fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 44.

⁶¹ Davis, *Embodied practices*, 15.

⁶² Davis, *ibid.*, 14.

⁶³ Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2005), 97.

⁶⁴ Susan Stanford Friedman, “Academic Feminism and Interdisciplinarity”, *Feminist Studies* 27, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 507.

⁶⁵ Binaya Subeidi, “Theorizing a ‘halfie’ researcher’s identity in transnational fieldwork,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* Vol. 19, No. 5, (September–October 2006): 573–593.

failing to fully gain the trust of the community back home and remaining “foreign” to the Western academic circle. While academically framing and setting the methodology of this research, I reconstructed myself anew as a researcher through every single conducted interview.

Based on Hirsch’s articulation of the post-memory and the bond between the mothers and daughters I find it crucial to address the traumatic content of the interviews and the testimonial nature of the interviews. Most of the interviewees have been retelling stories of their mothers and recreating the post-memory patterns of the familial stories; in that regard it has been both an intimate story-(re)sharing and a testimony of the silenced stories for some of them ⁶⁶. But methodologically a rather difficult task is how to engage with those silences after having them conducted, how to make them heard and visible. Saluja suggests multiple ways to make that process work through creation of spaces for “recognition and acceptance” of trauma and violence and integration of “such events and experiences within a broader collective memory.”⁶⁷

4.3. Interviews as narratives

During the process of the in-depth interviews I have come across many interesting narratives, incidents, reactions and stories of women. However, one of the main topics, as well as the most striking part for me was in relation to women’s imagined and experienced fears in public spaces. Many times the interviewees would not understand what has caused

66 Stephen High, *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2012), 25-26.

67 Anshu Saluja, “Engaging with Women’s Words and their Silences: Mapping 1984 and its aftermath,” *Sikh Formations* 11:3 (2015): 359.

their fear in relation to that particular space, why, when, under which circumstances they came to believe that the place is to be avoided. The next phase would be that they would question their fears and would show a wish to visit those places again in order to test their feelings. Although the age in this case is a very important component, and as observed, fears are cultivated throughout the years of their early childhood and puberty, the age, the experience and their role in socialization makes women reconsider their fears and attempt to “take over” public spaces with their presence.

For that reason it is first and foremost important to understand what is the city for the interviewee, how does she feel there, why does she associate any negative or positive affect with public spaces, what is for her being a woman in the city and how do they usually experience/walk (in) the city, as a group or individually? Through the questions that address these issues I try to look at the city as a social experience, where the attempt (method) would be walk as “countless tiny deportations” interwoven with relationships, with walks or departures.⁶⁸ The bodies shape the places and vice versa, they are the actors of the given space, thereby they affect its dynamics and intensities. Socio-sexually affective bodies in urban realities become a source for gendered readings of the body and gaze.⁶⁹ Yet, we deal with affected bodies that reproduce the socially constructed gender roles in the public places and project the taught performances on the city landscape. For that reason interviews are designed to find out the genealogies of the family dynamics, the so-called making of gendered identities. In order to find that out the interviewees have been asked to elucidate on the type of their education (traditional, religious, etc.) and on the role of their mothers in the education process.

68 Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press 1984), 103.

69 Davis, *Embodied practices*, 37.

The boundaries are set at the threshold of the houses and set in-between the borders of the private, the house and the public beyond the borders of the house. Setting boundaries and controlling them through cultivation of fear are controlled both by male and the female members of the family and the society, the myths that support and feed the constructed gendered roles and their expressions in urban spaces.⁷⁰ Therefore in the beginning of the interview I ask interviewee women to mind-map their emotional attachment both to private and public spaces, and to describe their emotions, feelings and comfort within both of them. While these mind-mapping signifies a start for individual perceptions of the spaces, for the next portion of questions I move to the larger issue of exploring women as marginalized groups.

4.4. In/visibilities and marginality

In the research I situate myself as a middle class, educated, urban woman, ideally with access to public transport at different times of the day and a possible accessibility to different parts of the city. However, I position myself also as a woman who possesses a female body; the body becomes the point where the urban and bodily boundaries intersect. This female body, as well as the bodies of many females draw a different geography of interactions, whether this geography is imagined or experienced, whether it is cognitive or bodily.

On the other hand, as a women researcher it is as well possible to look from that position and to interpret the field in an opposition to the “determined set of values”⁷¹. As we will see later in the analytical chapter, the socially constructed boundaries, the discourse of

70 Liz Bondi, "Gender and the Reality of Cities: embodied identities, social relations and performativities," *Online papers archived by the Institute of Geography, School of Geosciences* (University of Edinburgh, 2005): 5

⁷¹ Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 13, no. 3 (1988), 434.

shame, neighborhood gaze and victim-blaming push the victims of violence in public spaces more towards the invisible edges. However, the aim of the overall project is to engage the vulnerabilities and the differences in order to critically approach the issues. It is a way of getting over the boundaries that have been carved for us, and instead of fitting in, alter our differences, maintain the difference elsewhere, rework and relocate it in a way that it is more inclusive and engaging⁷². The failure to belong to places, where female bodies have been “written in”, turns into an epistemological discrepancy between the bodies, spaces and the structure of power relations that regulates all the process of “fitting in” through its agents (i.e. society, boundaries, societal norms).

Within the frame of uneven power relations in traditional societies women are unable to speak of their embodied experience, do not have the possibility to interpret, to claim and make their experiences heard⁷³.

As Lewis and Mills draw on Spivak’s arguments, given their position, subordinated subaltern women often fail to produce anything new, but what the dominant discourses have already produced⁷⁴, as in the case of Yerevan women, they are forced to enter a space designed for them without developing their own “rules of the game”. It is a vicious circle, yet I believe there is a way of breaking out of it. Margins are invisible in the society, however there existence hangs in the air and is theoretically known; In order to become visible, a reconstitution of a bodily space should be considered⁷⁵. Feeling the surface, like Ahmed describes the interaction of the invisible margins and the reconfiguration of power relations, is the initial step to transgress the set, carved out boundaries. Her notion of “maintenance

⁷² Trinh T Minh-ha, "Difference: 'A Special Third World Woman Issue,'" *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989): 80.

⁷³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 20.

⁷⁴ Reina Lewis and Sara Mills. *Feminist postcolonial theory: a reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 10.

⁷⁵ Ahmed, “The skin of the community,” 101.

through transgression” considers an active crossing of borders as a possible way to challenge them⁷⁶. In a Lefebvrian and de Certeau discourse the transgression of those borders carries out a bodily intervention to spaces and demarcation of the spaces with the embodied presence, embodied experience and with the bodily proximity. Stories in these cases mark the spaces, create invisible landscapes of places, through physical existence in the places (walking, listening thinking, etc.) bodies give imaginative or physical meanings to those spaces; they become “bumps on the invisible landscapes of places in our lives”⁷⁷.

4.5. Mapping as a method: to visualize the narratives

The second and final part of my research constitutes a visual mapping of gendered spaces based on insights gathered in the interviews. In terms of technical support I use the mapping tool <https://www.zeemaps.com/>. This device gives opportunity to scholars, independent researchers and all other users to create their own maps, insert information and develop it into projects, databases or simply as an alternative way of keeping notes regarding certain places.

Here I would like to emphasize that I have chosen mapping as a method firstly because my aim is to find all possible channels of taking academic work outside of the academia circles and make it visible, useful for larger masses of society. Given the important topic of harassment and fear in public spaces, I think it is even more important to raise our voices against inequalities and violence once again in cooperation of the academic work and activism. Places stand for “fusions of experience, landscape and location” that are connected

⁷⁶ Ahmed, *ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁷ Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the invisible landscape: folklore, writing, and the sense of place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 291.

to memories and recalls the past events and experiences very quickly⁷⁸. Those events and experiences are memorized and kept alive through the stories told about them. Mapping and digital story-telling is another way of archiving the oral history both as a text and as a picture, i.e. as a narration and visualization.

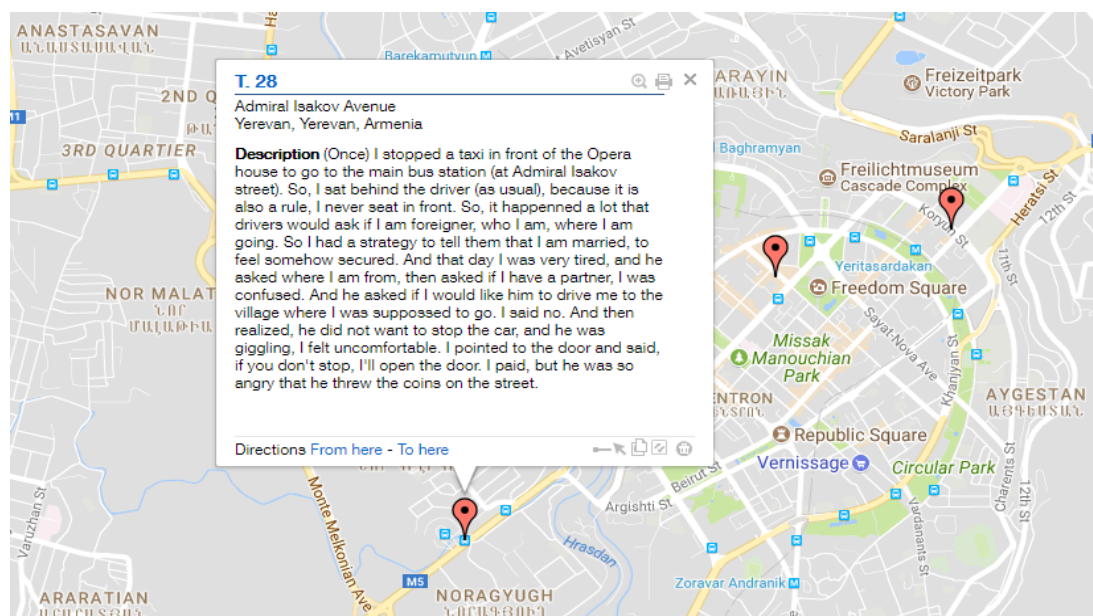


Figure 1: Account of an interviewee on sexual harassment with indicated spots in the city center

(excerpted from

<https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=2801895&x=44.494291&y=40.175048&z=2>)

Mapping of affects, emotions, imaginary and non-imaginary fears is another way of telling human narratives. Nevertheless, except from the importance of spatial analysis and contribution against silencing women stories, mapping method is a very effective visual tool which helps to access random users, academicians and researchers across many countries and different disciplines. I find it a tremendous opportunity to have mapping as a method in order to transfer human stories into visualization. It is an opportunity to “freeze the place” in the

⁷⁸ Ryden, *ibid.*, 39.

time and the manner that has been told during the interview, by that recreating the moment of the embodied experience and archiving it.⁷⁹

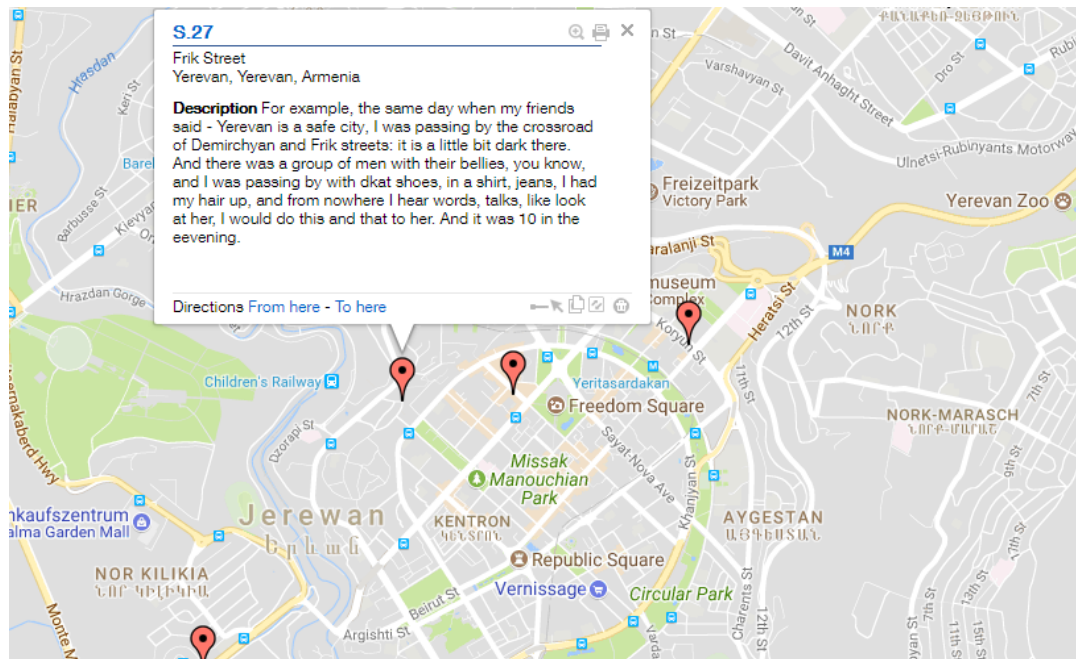


Figure 2: *Encounters of an interviewee with specific location in the city center.*

(excerpted from:

<https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=2801895&x=44.504433&y=40.185970&z=0>)⁸⁰

Inspired by such contributions in social sciences as Lawrence Cassidy’s “Salford 7/District Six. The Use of Participatory Mapping and Material Artefacts in Cultural Memory Projects” I follow an alternative memory of space approach as a valuable way to reclaim the

⁷⁹ Ryden, *Mapping the invisible landscape*, 246-247.

⁸⁰ See additional examples in the appendices.

sense of space⁸¹. It helps to make the conducted academic material legible for the reader or the user and make it more accessible open source for larger communities.

81 Lawrence Cassidy, "Salford 7/District Six. The Use of Participatory Mapping and Material Artefacts in Cultural Memory Projects" in *Mapping Cultures: Place, Practice, Performance* ed. Les Roberts (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 187.

Chapter 5

Reconceptualization and reproduction of the public space memories through women's narratives

*"My stepmother took me to the woods to get me lost there.
I scattered my beads in my path and then, once the moon came out,
I gathered the shining little balls and found my way home".*

Violette Grigoryan

"The City" (1998)

5.1. Imagined and Experienced Fears in socially bounded cities

Like every human being born into a given environment and given circumstances, women born in Yerevan are exposed to the historical past and the present of the city with its symbols and semiotics. Bodies navigate within a space that has been developing as a city for almost a century, has lost, gained, added a layer over layer, gentrified, undergone through economic crisis and capitalism. The city stands in front of a human body with all its burden and traces of the historical effects and impacts, yet it is the part of the city-dweller's everydayness to navigate it, given the safety, time and comfort factors.

Being in the city means a constant negotiation with the space, and everyone has her/his own strategies of navigating as an actor in that space. Yet, depending on the age, class and gender of the person, navigation strategies change drastically and very interestingly based on individual's narratives. Consequently, women have different strategies of navigation and negotiation with places that reframes the reconfiguration and reconceptualization of the spaces anew.

Under the prism of this research, I will have a focus on mothers and the crucial role they play in the establishment and reproduction of socially constructed gender roles and “normalized” behaviors. Drawing on the conducted material, I argue that the first way women get to know the city spaces and to perform there is through the inherited knowledge of their mothers. In a way it is a “glossary” to read the spaces and be legible within those spaces as a woman. While maternal knowledge among the semiotics of spaces is sometimes illegible, invisible or “outdated”, the personal embodied experiences of women become sites of knowledge and a prism to know the city.

In the following analysis of the interviews in the scope of post-memory and trauma studies, I will draw on women’s spatial memories from early childhood and puberty years, inherited from mothers. The second part of the analysis will be based on the embodied experiences of women in contrary to the inherited memories. Here I tend to contradict to the argument of Lefebvre that Pierce and Martin elaborate in terms of space making⁸² and instead draw on Scott’s “Evidence of Experience”; as through the analysis of the conducted material I will argue that embodied experiences shape the places for women. Through Chodorow’s mother-daughter relations drawing on Hirsch’s post memory and “Mother-daughter” plot I tend to challenge the generational and citizenship twists that happen during the identity development of the interviewee and are indicated by alienation between the two. Through the gendered perspective I tend to take under the focus the traumatic side of the embodied experiences and project them on the cityscapes as a starting point of story-sharing.⁸³

Through the final visualization of the conducted material I will focus on the performative and interpretative side of body-space interaction, where personal interpretations,

⁸² Pierce and Martin, “Placing Lefebvre “, 1282.

⁸³ See: “City Scapes Dataset: Semantic Understandings of Urban Street Scenes”, Accessed March 25, 2018, <https://www.cityscapes-dataset.com/>.

connotations and comments the embodied subjectivities of the interviewee-narrators will portray the picture of gendered spaces in the city.

Based on the conducted data I will argue that the place for the particular woman is memorized through the embodied memories of her experience. Throughout the research I will use the interviews as narratives (also given the oral history research method), rather than questions and answers, oral history stories about the spaces that help women to reconstruct and recontest their memories and perceptions. As a conclusion, I will elaborate on the notion of woman-citizen and the marginalization of woman as a citizen, who tends to deconstruct those perceptions through their daily usage/experience of the city. Drawing on the interviews based on the women's experiences and practices throughout their years of residence I will also demonstrate the changes of the urban landscape in Yerevan in terms of comfortability to female inhabitants⁸⁴ and the attempts of women to adjust the common gendered spaces to their bodily presence. At this point I will argue the citizenship notion and the right to the city by challenging it with women's marginalization.

Lastly, in terms of production of knowledge, I situate myself as a researcher from the within and as a representative of the same community⁸⁵. In order to portray the usage of public spaces and embodied experiences (also) in a self-reflexive way, I myself lean on the inherited knowledge from my mother and use it as a channel through which I analyze my and city women's experiences.

In this part of the chapter I will dive into the data analysis, which will be based on 5 subdivisions; those subdivisions are related to the common fears interviewed women have had in public spaces and in the final mapping will be looking as "spots of fear" on particular parts of the urban landscape. Based on the conducted interviews I have come up with the

⁸⁴ Ter-Ghazaryan, *Civilizing the city center*, 577.

⁸⁵ Harding, *Feminist Standpoint theory*, 138.

following spots of fear: (1).fear (imagined and experienced), that in this analysis are looked upon through the notions of social boundaries; (2).darkness and gaze challenged by the notions of anonymity and personal safety, (3).verbal harassment, (4).stalking, (5).sexual violence. It is important to note here that the above mentioned sections are spots of fear that will be layered on the map in order to portray a possible categorization.⁸⁶

Yet, I intended to keep the structure of the analytical part more flexible in terms of intersections of the categories. By keeping them, I chose the way to negotiate and navigate in-between these categories, as some of the stories intersect and interconnect with each other.

5.2. *Comfort zones*

Gendered behaviors decide upon the socially constructed boundaries in the cities. The roles women take over every time they travel back and forth between the private and public spheres, and describe their connections to the spaces through the notion of comfortability. The private space is usually perceived as a comfort space that gives privacy, while the public is complicated with the notions of belonging and non-belonging to many publics, from where women are or do feel excluded. In this part I have paid attention to the comfort zones in regard of private spaces, i.e. houses, and have dedicated a section to gendered exclusions in neighborhoods, given the largely spread region-specific neighborhood culture.

The boundaries between the public and private as well show us the dynamics of gendered performance in the city and the reproduction of the socially constructed gender roles. When asked about how they feel in private spaces in opposition to the public ones,

⁸⁶ See Subheading 4.2, p. 36-37 and Appendix C; Appendix D.

women's' answers referred mostly the social pressure they have in public spaces, whereas in private they do not have to fit into any categories:

“For me house is a space, where I can be all by myself and feel safe, (to be able to) share the time with myself. But the public space is a place, where I always have to be in a certain form, to perform my behavior, my moves, my words, etc. My clothes and self-expression is very limited; sometimes I would really like to be free to choose how I would like to act in public spaces”. (K. 26)

However, when asked about the perception of the house as a private space throughout their whole life, some of the interviewees have mentioned the house as the space, where they have encountered inequalities and discrimination for the first time. Most of the inequalities show up in the frames of family dynamics distortion, unfairness or discrimination between the siblings based on their gender or age. In that regard mothers play the leading role in negotiation of spaces, familial and gender dynamics.

“I have two brothers. There was discrimination towards me as a girl; I could not be outside at late hours, moreover, if I wanted to go anywhere my parents had to know about it”. (A., 40).

As observed in the above-mentioned case, in some of the families discrimination varies according to the gender of the siblings. Even in the absence of explicit gendered discrimination in interviewee's family, having an older brother or a sister would have meant a misbalance in the family dynamics. In most of the cases interviewees were either been controlled by their brothers (especially given the surveillance in the neighborhood) or have been pointed out on the elder sister as an example of morality. Houses were the places of uncontested power relations of the family, where, however much it seemed that the head of

the family (male or female) were setting the rules for the children, they were doing it under the surveillance and the immersion of strong traditions, supported as well by the state politics:

“My sister did not have that problem (to be controlled by the family), that is why I can say that yes, generally, by default, it was accepted that you should be like hayetsi⁸⁷, like an Armenian girl – modest, restrained, educated, for us education was the most important, restrained, prudent, neat, limited in your self-expression, have girly hobbies, something like that, and of course, you were not supposed to have relationships until a certain age. It was not even discussed, because it was supposed to be like that, because it has always been like that. It should be like that”. (E., 26)

The argument here is that the notions of inequalities are formed within the private household, shaped and fed through misbalanced family dynamics and gendered discriminations and in addition to the gendered fear cultivation, these inequalities are projected, brought out onto the spatial dimension. Those gender relations alter also the gender dynamics in the city through the use of space and interaction with the urban environment.⁸⁸ The intersections of the mutually exclusive private and public spheres benefit to the understanding of women’s negotiations around socially constructed boundaries, where as a result of the socially admitted “failure” of it they choose a marginalized position to speak from. The records of the discomfort or non-belonging to places alarms of the necessity of new and inclusive spaces.

Inter-familial gendered misbalances find their reflections outside of the house borders, once the interviewees enter a phase of interaction and bodily intervention in the outer world. The everyday routes of the interviewees has been highly affected by the discrimination and

⁸⁷ “Like an Armenian”, as Armenians would behave usually. The phrase is usually used to underline women’s (expected) morality and modesty.

⁸⁸ Miranne and Young, “Introduction”, 1.

the traditional education they have received at home. While being discriminated at home by family members, in the public spaces as well some of the interviewees have been policed (especially in the neighborhood) and restricted in mobility.

5.3. Practices of the use of public spaces

“Autobiographic and gender-biased knowledge” is based on the practices of listening and talking.⁸⁹ Miranne and Young argue that this type of a socio-political praxis creates a feminist knowledge that can be implemented for women’s research. The practice of listening and talking is embedded in the everydayness of people’s life: in that regard, the private sphere becomes a place, where the knowledge of imagined fears and perceptions of public spaces are produced in opposition of experience-based fears. At the same time, the private space is the place, where women’s narratives are created and retold to the next generations in order to keep the socially constructed gendered roles and boundaries intact.

Interviewee women’s encounters have varied from a threat or fear of violence until attempts of sexual violence. Some women experience the city during different times of the day; for some women the cultivation of fear, the common perception of danger in the darkness while being alone never actually mattered. The idea of the potential threat is a common narrative that circulates among women and in the media⁹⁰, however, for some interviewees, until the fear is experienced itself, they do not feel a bodily threat:

⁸⁹ Miranne and Young, “Introduction”, 3.

⁹⁰ Miranne and Young, *ibid.*, 4.

*“I love walking during night on Yerevan streets. Sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, I love it. But from time to time my friends say, you know, be careful, sometimes someone might approach from behind, you never know. And I think to myself, why would anybody do that? Why would they approach from behind in the middle of the night? But now when you asked, I started to think too; maybe I should really be careful” “E.26 ”.*⁹¹

The threat of violence is widely used and reproduced through mothers’ narratives; however drawing on Chodorow’s suggestion identity formation phases, this type of knowledge inheritance could be caused by intention to protect daughters from potential threat.⁹² Experienced fear is a type of spatial knowledge that unlike the inherited motherly knowledge, is embodied, bodily and physical, like “the knowing from within experientially, empathetically, and intuitively⁹³.

“I remember, I was 17, two cases happened. One, I was walking on the sidewalk, going to the university, I was wearing shorts. There was a guy walking towards me, he saw that I am walking behind the shops (there was no other road), there was no one around us, he came and hugged my legs. I hit him and ran away, then I looked back, it was a really unpleasant situation.

Another time, it happened when I was again 17 years old, one guy started to talk to me, it was an empty street, he suggested to have sex with me at the entrance of the one of the building. I told him to leave me alone, but he continued, until I pretended that I am talking on the phone and asking for help. So, my neighborhood has never been a safe place (comfort zone) for me.” (A. N. 26)

Sexual harassment is expected to happen in the suburbs of the city because of a particular reputation of the neighborhood or the control of the local authorities, and so-called

⁹¹ Interview excerpts contain only the initials and the age of interviewees.

⁹² Chodorow, *Reproduction of mothering*, 83.

⁹³ See note 86.

“qyartu”⁹⁴ subculture representatives, threat of violence is prevailing also in the very heart of the city, including block buildings, restaurants, cafes, pubs, etc.

“Yes, I avoid some places that have left bad memories on me. Once in one of the buildings at Saryan street one man was following me and tried to push me into the elevator, but I managed to press the button on time. Another place is Lambada bridge, the underground passage, where in the middle of the day one guy was masturbating and when I was passing by he did not stop.

I have unpleasant feelings almost everywhere, where there are men, because in Armenia they don't know how to behave, they are rude and tactless, usually with their voice, with their body they take over places and nothing is left for me or I don't feel secure enough to claim my space“. (K.28)

Experiencing the city alone and in groups impacts the affective relationships between the city inhabitants; being out in a group consisting solely of women and going out in a mixed group causes different reasons for gaze or harassment. The cases indicated by interviewees alarm of gendered exclusions and feelings of non-belonging to the place:

“In one club, in one of the pubs I had an argument, they would not leave us alone. We were sitting with girls and somebody was staring at us, and when we asked, what you want from us, we had an argument until they called the security, until they told me that actually the situation was dangerous, if he was not in a good mood, it could have a bad ending for me“. (E.25)

Many of women's everyday route has been largely affected by the cases of stalking in central parts of the city and the suburbs. Based on the conducted narratives, these cases have

⁹⁴ Subculture of men in Armenia, representatives of which believe that there are certain norms of the “ultimate truth”. They have their understandings of gendered behaviors especially regarding women and their expected behaviors in public.

mainly happened during late and dark hours, while the interviewee woman has been alone in the street:

“Yes, once, there was an elderly man stalking me in the daylight at Abovyan Street (one of the central streets of the capital), so I was running ... so until I caught a cab he did not leave me alone. Although I did not plan that I’m going to take a taxi, but he did so much ... so, that I just ran away”. (N.28).

“Yes, I had cases of stalking, everywhere actually, in the public transport, in the street, followed by car, because usually I was outside late at night. It happened that I was stopped on the way, they had suggested to accompany me somewhere, these kind of things. I have had offers on the street, also again related to being outside at late hours” (E. 25).

Another spot of fear is verbal harassment, which is a common practice by men to mark their territories, and in comparison to the other fear spots, women are exposed to verbal harassment the most. It is largely (and mainly by elderly generations of women) admitted to think that a woman should not respond to the harasser in protection of themselves. While it also speaks of reproduction of traditional patterns, being discouraged from speaking up in front of the harasser entails affections of motherly overprotection.⁹⁵ Many interviewees have pointed out on certain cases in particular parts of the city, where it has bothered or scared them:

⁹⁵ Chodorow, *Reproduction of mothering*, 85.

“(Verbal harassment) every day, it doesn’t matter where you are ... For example if you walk in the evening after 9, around 11 on high heels, doesn’t matter, you are an object of verbal harassment. At least you become an object of a male gaze or listen something told after you”. (S. 27).

Power relations negotiation lies in the foundations of the production of gendered spaces. Urban women are expected to rework their identities within the spaces created by men and their masculinized regulations. Through the dynamics of those negotiations of identities it becomes possible to observe how women manage to “stretch and break the bounds”⁹⁶ that they are supposed to fit into.

5.4. Inherited knowledge within the scope of Armenian traditions

Since this section stands as a connecting passage between the use of public spaces and their negotiation by women, I will draw on the post-memory knowledge in the mother-daughter relationships, embedded in the picture of traditionalism and kinship in Armenia. Drawing on the previous contributions on the private and the public, I need to downsize these broad understandings on the local contexts through embodied experiences and inherited maternal knowledge. As a traditional society, both on communal and individual levels it is expected to maintain family ties with extended and nuclear family members⁹⁷. Thereby the interpersonal relations in Armenian families provide a firmer ground for the mother-daughter kin relations to develop.

⁹⁶ Miranne and Young, “Introduction”, 5.

⁹⁷ Armine Ishkhanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia* (Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series 2008), 9.

Almost all of the interviewees grew up in traditional or semi-traditional families; those who identified their families as non-traditional or neutral, indicated either their extended family members as traditional or their surroundings (school, neighborhood, university, etc.) All of them have experienced inherited maternal knowledge either directly through their mothers or channeled to them through elder sister(s). The image of the traditional woman has been reproduced through narratives that had passed the knowledge to their daughters. However much in most of the cases women have tried to reproduce the traditional norms in order to protect their daughters from the society gaze or blaming, they have reinforced the same social tools that have been used against them, and provided to the vicious circle of reproduction of traditions.

“My mother, in fact all mothers, also female teachers ... they used to say that a child is a mirror of the family. They (teachers) used to shame girls for not being tidy or attentive. They would always refer to motherhood, by saying that, one day you’ll become a mother, is that how you’ll behave at the house of your husband, etc. But my mother instead of that would police my outfit, so that nobody in the neighborhood would talk after me.(A.A. 27).

Very often these notions are manipulative also through the usage of the nuclear family members and the notion of shame, typical for restrictions in the Armenian traditional societies:

“When my brother got married I lived with them in the same house for some years, and then I began to rent a house, because I had rejected the marriage proposal, and decided that I don’t want to marry, because the society wants it and in general why to reproduce the marriage institute, if I don’t accept it. For my family my leave from the house was accepted literally tragically; I would never think that it would be so hard for them, but the attempts to control me were unbearable, for example, why I am I coming late, what would the neighbors say, now there is already a daughter-in-law at home, she will think she can have a say in the house, I don’t know, I have to act like a sister-

in-law, I shouldn't give her reasons to speak and so on. Long story short, my mother threatened to jump from the window if I leave the house, she did everything to convince me, but I left, my brother did not talk to me for three months, at every visit my father was convincing o go back, that if omething happens I will be responsible fort hat and so on, until they accepted it.” (A2, 27.)

Shame (“amot”) is a big concept in traditional Armenian society and particularly within family frames, reproduced through the post-memory maternal education and in “the construction of femininity”⁹⁸. Shame is a tool for protection of the daughter’s good name (as in the above-mentioned case) and a way to keep the socially constructed boundaries intact under the light of the nationalism and traditionalism⁹⁹.

In the process of conveying spatial memories, the darkness has been used as another tool of redrawing the boundaries between the private and public and by regulating the dynamics of gendering public spaces. As I have interviewed women, who have grown up through the 90s, the darkness has been an important component for fear and for precautions. Darkness was prevailing those times in the houses and on streets, putting the citizens into a very vulnerable position. It is not a surprise that the memories of those years are also associated with the darkness; as well they are called “the dark and cold years”¹⁰⁰.

In these conditions, however much as a child you spend outdoors, most of the understandings of the public spaces and urban landscapes are formatted within the private spaces. In my childhood and early puberty memories I have many urban legends that I have memorized until nowadays in all their (mainly dark) colors. Now looking back, I think many of the urban legends and spatial stories were formatted given the fact that families, neighbors and friends would come together more often than nowadays, in the absence of electricity and

⁹⁸ Hirsch, Marianne, *The mother/daughter plot: narrative, psychoanalysis, feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 7.

⁹⁹ McLintock, “Family Feuds”, 63.

¹⁰⁰ The energy crisis years in the 1990s in Armenia, locally known also as “dark and cold” years.

television, long and heart-warming talks around the wood-burning stove were the spaces of story-tellings of the time. Darkness has been a big anonymous, unexplainable spot, a dark circle that would swallow people once they are out there. Given the historical and economic conditions after the collapse of USSR, followed by the war, the region started to suffer from power outages. Darkness became a part of local people's everyday life, and while people tried to take over the darkness in houses and on streets, women were gradually excluded from public spaces due to safety reasons. The notion of uncertainty was more intensified with the physical darkness of the space and in my memories embedded in the times of the post-war empty streets, suffering from power outage on and off have been intensified through motherhood stories.

5.5. Gaze and anonymity in the dark

"Yes (smiling). Gaze ... not that much... if you try to avoid gaze in Yerevan, you will not walk anywhere" (P. 22).

Gaze as a controlling power is largely reinforced by men in public spaces in Yerevan. Although most of the time people would describe it as cultural specifics of the region, or the traditions, young women are more exposed to the open male gaze and have to find their own ways to navigate their routes in the territories drawn by that gaze¹⁰¹.

Beginning from their neighborhoods until active and crowded city centers of Yerevan women are exposed to the male gaze regardless of the time of the day. The traditionalism,

101 Ani Karibian, "Navigating Culture Shock in Armenia", Accessed April 9, 2018
[Http://www.selftravelguide.com/travel/experience/navigating-culture-shock-in-armenia](http://www.selftravelguide.com/travel/experience/navigating-culture-shock-in-armenia).

specifics of the society and especially surveillance in neighborhoods (which is usually considered as a safe space) intensifies the explicit and socially justified gaze.

“I was born and grew up in Errord Mas¹⁰² which is quite a patriarchic neighborhood, famous for its criminal inhabitants. We had older guys in our neighborhood, the “good guys” of the neighborhood, who were thinking that they should “take care of me”. For example, when my brother was doing his military service, if I had a boyfriend, that guy was supposed to come and “see them”, so that they would approve or disapprove (my decision). I was under a strict control – when did I go home, with whom was I out, where, but everyone knew my brother, and several times he had had fights with guys, including my classmates, so everybody knew they cannot disturb me or look at me differently, otherwise there would be different consequences. Although I have asked many times to my brother not to intervene in my life (A.2, 27).

Elaborating on the practices of public spaces and their changes throughout the time, it is interesting to see how women have “departed” from the spots of surveillance, let it be the home or the neighborhood. At the borders of that surveillance, neighborhood gaze or familial control spots women encounter the interactions of the public and private. For the sake of being outside of the surveillance network of the family members, and, after all, as a social being, women cross that threshold or the boundary of the household, yet to practice and negotiate the public spaces newly, with their bodies. ”To claim an individual private space in the public space” seems challenging within traditional societies¹⁰³, yet the insecurities and common concerns of women are based on the right “to be left alone and the tolerance” as an urgent need to have healthy inhabitation and co-existence in the city¹⁰⁴.

102 Known for its male-centered places and masculine neighborhood culture.

103 Fatima Mernissi, “The meaning of Spatial Boundaries” in *Feminist postcolonial theory: a reader* ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 494.

104 Judith A. Garber, “Not Named or Identified”: Politics and the Search for Anonymity in the City”, in *Gendering the city: women, boundaries, and visions of urban life* (Lanham, Md : Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 28.

“For me both the house and the street have to be safe. The house should be a space, where people understand you, accept the way you are, love and support. And the street should be a space, where you can express yourself, where you do not hide who your identity and identification, where you do not disturb anyone and expect the same to be done to you” (A2, 25).

„ (...) it depends on my daily condition at daytime. And if it will be night and i will be alone - for sure. I would do the same in germany. and yes, it (darkness)affects my mobility, for example i didn't like to walk on the street close to opera where the busstop is, on the side of this small vernissage, because always there were sitting or standing man who obviously tried to get in contact with me or were starring at me. it also affects my mobility in Germany. but it doesn't mean that there need to be always a group, sometimes it's enough that there is one men or the imagination/expectation that there could be (a man) men. (S., 30)

Under the pressure of policing and gaze women look for more comfortable places to be and more convenient times to go out. Although darkness is considered to be an intensifying effect for the possible sexual violence, for some women it becomes a possible way to be anonymous and invisible. In a small city like Yerevan anonymity is yet more difficult to maintain than in any other place. As Garber mentions in terms of anonymity in cities, it is a perfect place for people who seek for it to find there; they are considered to be “sites of anonymity and emblazoned in the minds of people who gravitate there”¹⁰⁵:

“Yes, I feel better at night, everywhere, also in Yerevan, because it is a rebellious act. There are only men on the street, there is the factor of the parents, that's why I like it. I feel safe in Yerevan, I am not afraid anywhere. I have not felt it anywhere, I feel safe in Yerevan especially because of this

105 Garber, “Not Named or Identified,” 20.

exaggerated publicity. There are too many people. But not outside of the center. There are also difference between being alone and being with a group". (S., 26).

"To be honest, I really like the darkness and the calmness, but safe ... it is not so safe here to say yes, I can go out easily. Yes, some places, where I have been so many times, I have passed by, I can be calm there, but sometimes there are places that are a bit disconnected. I want to go to those places, but exactly because of the darkness I am afraid, it is as if I want to protect myself (from those places). It becomes something like a dream, to go, to find, to be alone with yourself, but I have fear" (E., 26).

Yet, in a city, where the closer communities know each other by members and where at every corner you meet a friend or acquaintances, anonymity seems like an urge in order to be yourself without socially constructed gendered boundaries:

"After I was 17, after studying in US I was comparing myself all the time in public spaces. Always had a feeling that people are staring at me. I used to miss the evenings in US, we would feel good in the street, but in Yerevan it seemed impossible to me, it is impossible to drink outside, to sing, to have a good mood. I was missing the feeling of freedom. Here there is always the feeling that you are going to see some relative or a friend. Yerevan is like a stage. On the one hand everybody is looking, there is a gaze, as if they are the audience and they watch a play, so but everyone can also be someone who you know". (S. 25).

Gaze is one of the most suppressing components in restriction of the use of public spaces for women. It is one of the most powerful ways to fasten socially constructed boundaries¹⁰⁶, to mark the spaces of belonging or to exclude the given person from the circle

¹⁰⁶ Mernissi, "The meaning of Spatial Boundaries", 492.

of the locals. While some women might feel isolated or the outcast of the society due to the intensive male gaze, others take upon the challenges of “transcending the intersections of boundaries of social policies”¹⁰⁷.

5.6. Yerevan: “a stage” of bodily interactions

The politics of visibility and invisibility, women’s negotiation of spaces and debates on safety are largely dependent not only on the “actor”-inhabitants of the city, but on the nature of the cities itself. As elaborated on in the Chapter I, Yerevan has gone under different phases of political and urban developments and transformations. Those transformations have had their impact not only on the public spaces, but also on the way city inhabitants act in there. City as a space stands for a threshold that divides the life of the inhabitants into private and public spheres and by that defines the socially constructed gender roled and reestablishes socially constructed social boundaries¹⁰⁸. Traditionalism and the different notions of local specifics (for instance the usage of shame as a tool) predetermine the gendered attitudes in public spaces according to the socially constructed gender norms. Divisions, affectivities and boundaries recontest the notions of in/visibilities in the city, representation and in/equalities in the usage of spaces. As Grosz mentions, the circulation of information, structure, service and access are highly dependent on the structure and the layout of the city; those bodily and human interactions are much more complicated once they are put within the spatiality of the cities¹⁰⁹.

At this point of the research I identify women as the negotiators of not only public spaces for themselves, but also negotiators of the public and private, people who struggle both

¹⁰⁷ Miranne and Young, “Introduction,” 10.

¹⁰⁸ Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion*, 250.

¹⁰⁹ Grosz, *ibid.*, 243.

against the restricting social norms (including family in some cases) and for their equal citizenry right to places.

For some women public space has been something to be “conquered” with their bodies and moreover had to justify their presence there both to their extended family members and to the state.

“It has been around ten years that I participate in protests, although my relatives convince me that “a normal house girl” should not be in the street, are you whore, what would people say, if they see and so on; on one hand you resist the police that speaks to you from a perspective of a father, not as to a citizen and tells you to go home, tells that it is not your place, preaches you and refers to morality, by saying that you degrade the nation, the state, go home, home is your place, and you have to protect yourself also from your relatives, but actually they have t support you. But it changed by the time”. (A., 26)

Detachments often are marked with “deportation points” from the mother¹¹⁰ (de Certeau, 1988) and that phase is signified through the personal experience. The experience stands as as a way of knowing the space, the city in this case (Lefebvre, Scott, de Certeau, 1988). However, knowing the place through bodily encounters, as we will see, will refer to the second phase of the development of the interviewees, when they enter the spaces as grown-up individuals and reinforce the practices of the above-mentioned “detachments from the mothers”.¹¹¹

Here I discuss the detachments or alienation from mothers in terms of the inherited knowledge, the separation of knowledge, challenged with the citizenry or political but especially bodily participation, bodily existence in public spaces (which can also include

¹¹⁰ De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*.103.

¹¹¹ Chodorow, *Reproduction of Mothering*, 85.

political participation). Since narratives told by mothers are shaped through their autobiographic encounters, in the identity development women get to a point, where mother's autobiographic narratives do not shape their experience with the city, it does not make the space legible for them and they look for new ways of reading, practicing, negotiating the space.

Subjects get to know themselves through the narratives, as they are embedded in the “the language of everyday life and the knowledge produced at everyday sites”¹¹². Self-narratives stand for feminist oral history stories, where women tell their woman stories for women and recreate the scene of the told stories by their mothers¹¹³, i.e. sharing the experiences. The narratives women recreated during interviews ranged from elements of disclosure of personal life stories, partly resembling of emotional therapy talks¹¹⁴.

The departure of the individual way of reading lies upon the deportation or detachment and the individual embodied experience of the spaces. Joan Scott refers to the multiple layers of meanings and interpretation, as well as “unreliability of the memory” when it comes to affective relations¹¹⁵. The notion of experiences, indeed is complicated and in the case of this research is based on subject-space relationships within a particular given historical and daily time. The point here is not to contest the subjectivities and the power relations in the knowledge production process, but to understand the formation of social norms, the main actors who reproduce them. Finally I want to understand how and these dynamics find their projection on the cityscapes in forms of different (sometimes extreme) gendered exclusions.

112 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. “Autobiographical Subjects” and “Autobiographical Acts” in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 32.

113 Lenore Lyon and Janine Chipperfield, “(De)constructing the Interview: A Critique of the Participatory Model,” *Resources for Feminist Research* 28, 1:2: 37.

114 Lyon and Chipperfield, 38.

115 Victoria Hesford, and Lisa Diedrich, “On ‘The evidence of experience’ and its reverberations: An interview with Joan W. Scott,” *Feminist Theory* 15, no. 2: 202

I argue that those daily experiences shape the identity of women after the detachment from the mothers as an individual, yet they set the relationship between the body and the city as such. These experiences have defined and shaped women's identity; hence the spatial experiences of women establish their relationships with the places and define the image of the place in their spatial memory¹¹⁶. Although the sense of the self is established through the relationality and relationship with the mother (in this case), with the development of the identity the person encounters different experiences that shape her (self) and her perceptions of spaces. Embodied experiences are a type of an interaction that the person goes through, and the experience pass through the person in a way. It is an affective relationship of body and experience, as a result of which the experienced is embraced, and a certain image of the space is memorized for the woman.

Women are marginalized from cityscapes; they do speak and exist in the urban landscape, but they are either not heard or misrepresented. Based on the uneven spatial division, where based on the sex segregation there are those who hold authority, there are subordinated citizens who are expected to adjust to the rules that erase them from landscapes¹¹⁷. "Segregation of space and control over the visibility of women were forms of patriarchal control"¹¹⁸, that are intensified in the traditional and nation-state environments, and burdened over women.¹¹⁹

In the further parts of the analytical chapter through the conducted data I am going to look at the causes in/visibilities and exclusions of women as bodies and as marginalized groups. After the detachments from mothers in terms of inherited knowledge, a second phase

¹¹⁶ Chodorow, *Reproduction of Mothering*, 78.

¹¹⁷ Mernissi, "The meaning of Spatial Boundaries," 490.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Seen, the Unseen and the Imagined: Private and Public Lives" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A reader*, ed/ Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 502.

¹¹⁹ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Introduction", 8.

of “a generation turn” occurs among most of the interviewee women; under the light of the late third republican political developments this phase gets a citizenry resonance in terms of challenging invisibilities¹²⁰.

Beyond being heard and seen through their bodily presence, civil activity and performance, women deal with the issue of reading the bodies and representing embodied experiences¹²¹. In a city everything and everyone are experienced in relation to the surroundings, actors or events; the past experiences, serve as memories related to places shape the image of the place for the city-dweller women.

Everyday being in the city contains a performative aspect, walking there or experiencing it is an everyday embodied experience. In my research I specifically focus on being in the city as a woman, as a completely different “everyday life” experience from the one men have. As de Certeau argues, women are able to write their existence with their bodies, with their walks and other actions in the urban areas¹²². According to de Certeau’s notions of poetics of space, bodies and space mutually write each other. Everyday experience of a person in a certain space means to write that space, because through stories and memories places gain meaning for people. This approach helps to understand the perceptions of the interviewees regarding certain places before attending them and after.

Referring to an interview by Pierre Mayol, with a woman residing in Croix-Rousse quarter, Lyon, Michel de Certeau says that memories are the elements to tie us to places¹²³. Thereby I would argue that our stories, the stories of our being, walking, existing in that place are the components that shape the place. This is a type of a very personal, intimate way of

120Mari Nikuradze, “Heard but not seen: how women became the unrecognized architects of the Velvet Revolution, accessed June 1, 2018, ”<http://oc-media.org/analysis-heard-but-not-seen-how-women-became-the-unrecognised-architects-of-the-velvet-revolution/>.

¹²¹ Davis, *Embodied experiences*, 27.

¹²² De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, 97.

¹²³ De Certeau, *ibid.*, 108.

experiencing the place, memorizing, narrating and spreading that narrative. The stories of the interviewees are travel stories; each of them describes a personal spatial practice, which entail everyday routes, imaginary (or physical) maps, and certain tactics of navigation¹²⁴. The descriptions that women give through the interviews are reproduction of metaphors, sayings and stories. These utterings of physical, experienced spatial practices organize the places in the imagination of the interviewees and fixate the images of the places in their minds. Through the narratives and uttering women describe and perceive the places as physical entities, the actors who usually are there (or have been at the moment of the spatial practice) and the boundaries of the given place. Boundaries are very important to understand where the particular place (district, neighborhood, etc.) begin for the interviewee, what are its physical borders for them. This helps to understand the notions of belonging, the feelings of safety, or vulnerability in the given limited spatiality. So, stories carry out the role of transforming regular places into spaces of memory, struggle, negative affect, joy, etc.¹²⁵ Since we deal with the human memory here, we witness how the spaces become more fluid, more flexible to “play with”, to deconstruct or to remember. Ways of remembering can change according to different times of the talk, the way the questions are asked to the interviewee, thereby the ways of telling and reconstructing the image of the spaces can vary based on those occasions.

In the alienation period parallel with the practices in public spaces, inherited knowledge in relation to that particular place starts to vanish, and the interviewee stays together with her senses and memories of the space, setting her one-to-one relationship with the space (even if it is in her childhood memories). De Certeau calls it the “joyful manipulation” that makes the mother “go away”¹²⁶. This is an important point to set the very

¹²⁴ De Certeau, *ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁵ De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, 118.

¹²⁶ See note 115

individualistic relationship with the space back in the childhood and in the present. De Certeau's idea of "deportation" is marked with the first embodied experience in the period of gender development, when during puberty years the relations between the mother and the daughter are rearranged in the frames of the family dynamics.

What happens at this point of the mother-daughter relationships, complicated with the spatial encounters and identity development issues is what I am determined to call "generation turn". That is the point, where the inherited spatial knowledge through mothering is broken, deconstructed or reconfigured by the daughters. Very important to notice – puberty is both the time of the sexual identity development and the breaking of physical and psychological proximity from the mothers¹²⁷. As well this is the time when the mothering, that is based as well on protection, and many of the interviewees have had the conflict with the mothers at the threshold of the individuality formation, where during the puberty years the control and care are misunderstood by both parties. Here most of the interviewees had experienced the "fear of merging", and have replied to the acts of over-protection and care with the development that demarcated the beginning of "growing away from the mother"¹²⁸. Turning away from family values indicates the start of the individuality formation, which is proclaimed through a fully participation to the outer world, the city life. In most of the cases the generation turn is pointed out also by leaving the parental house (for various reasons), which, if we take into consideration the country and tradition specifics, has been a long time unrealistic and perhaps unacceptable for young and single women:

"But the house where I live now is in another similar neighborhood, where in the yard there are always men gathering, for whom it is strange that a woman can live alone. When I am about to

¹²⁷ Chodorow, *Reproduction of mothering*, 83.

¹²⁸ Chodorow, *Reproduction of mothering*, 82.

leave I check from the balcony if there is anyone in front of the entrance or not. I prefer to leave the house when there is no one there (at the entrance). (A., 40)

The development of the gender identity and acknowledgement of the gap between mothers' and daughters' generations indicates the beginning of the experiences for women city-dwellers in Yerevan. At this point of bodily urban experiences women juggle in-between the motherly inherited knowledge of the spaces, while experiencing the city on a daily basis. Through that experience women construct their own images and feelings related to the places that they visit every day. At the alienation point from the mothers' knowledge, bodies that have been through the experience become the starting point of the spatial knowledge for women¹²⁹.

“Now that I’m grown up, it (the spaces of fear) seems less dangerous to me, but I think it is because of the age and self-confidence” (A2; 25).

“I don’t avoid any place, on the contrary, if I know there is a very “qyartu”¹³⁰ company somewhere (a subculture of men who accept the existence of one and the only truth, highly masculinized and sexist community), I might want to go and despite them seat there, try to break some stereotypes. But it does not always happen, because one usually wants to go to a calmer place, without tensions. In that sense, the cafes in the suburbs of Yerevan are tense, because elderly men are a majority there. Also some student cafes can be unpleasant because of guys. That is why I prefer only some places in the center” (A2, 26).

Yet, the idealistic perceptions and expectations of the public spaces are

¹²⁹ Scott, “The Evidence of Experience”, 782.

¹³⁰ See note 95.

deconstructed, reconfigured once the bodies begin to interact with the city spaces.

Mutually constitutive relationships between the inhabitant women and the city bring out different spatial experiences from one another. As we know, experiences are different (Scott) and their draw different consequences. The city becomes “product or projection of the body”, where the human subject stands as responsible for production of spaces, for production of the city. At the same time, the city shapes familial, sexual and social relations in spaces, where bodies become individuated and “subjectified”¹³¹. They become visible through the experience of women on a very individual level and mark spaces of fear, joy, affect and other emotions in their memory of the space¹³². Bodily intervention into places initially not designed for women becomes an everyday practice to deconstruct images of places, as well stands for a political citizenry act.

“Yes, of course I have noticed gaze. Even the waiters (of the restaurants), imagine, young people. Not just ... they look as if they don’t believe, oh wow, a girl just entered this place. I will (pretend) not to see her. But believe me, I’ve been there last week, almost 80 percent looks like it is fine, they don’t even turn around to see who entered. Maybe one in 10 people, very few. (And it does not matter) if it is in the center or in the suburbs, because, sorry, but our stupid stereotypes are like that, that here should be allowed only for men, sorry, but it is not men’s room, it is a bistro, people buy food. I think those kind of things do not have anything to do with the region-specifics, but with men’s that place. If women understand that the stereotypes are to be destroyed and if she wants she can have shawarma in the bistro and not care about men, that think will just collapse”. (A.3, 27)

“I would not feel the dynamics of the male-centered spaces, because I will force myself to stay there, to break that thing, that you cannot, it is impossible, you are not the one to decide anything

¹³¹ Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*, 250.

¹³² Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” 773.

here. I am already here. But for example there are male-centered places around Republican Square for very elitist groups, like cigar-bars for example” (S. 27)

These statements and actions by women indicate their claim to the city spaces and rejection of the commonly accepted social norms. Meanwhile, passive roles are imposed over women together with tactics of adaptation and acceptance, instead of active resistance and fight for the right and possibility of using public spaces on equal terms with men. Thus, instead of making streets more inclusive for everyone, violence is legitimized and women are excluded from full participation in urban life.¹³³

Taking up the right to the places and through alienation from the maternal spatial knowledge, women perform a political act. According to Miranne and Young it is “both a method and a result of identity formation”¹³⁴, as well as an attempt to transform the spaces of anonymity and invisibility into visibility. Mutually exclusive dynamics the public and private spaces intersect through the embodied experiences of women in Yerevan, where the inherited “theoretical” knowledge meets the constructed boundaries layered on the landscape of the city and are either broken, deconstructed or reworked into new generational and citizenship interventions.

The sections discussed above are analyzed as the components that restrict women’s mobility and free navigation in the city. Those restrictions are marked both through physical and psychological restrictions. The practices of marking the place through aggressive constant gaze and verbal harassment is the most common type of restrictions that women have encountered. On the other hand, men’s groups gathered at the entrances of the buildings¹³⁵ or on dark streets is as well as spatial obstacle women encounter. Taking into consideration the

¹³³ Martirosyan, “Gendered space and political statement in Armenia”, 2.

¹³⁴ Miranne and Young, “Introduction,” 25.

¹³⁵ See Appendices: Figure 3

peculiarities of the city Yerevan the darkness appeared to have double meaning in the spatial practices for women. While for some of them darkness was a reason to avoid public spaces due to safety reasons, for most of the interviewed women darkness is a possibility to be anonymous in a small city, where everyone knows one another.

Through attempts of overcoming the fear of physical (men's gatherings) and psychological (gaze, darkness) obstacles in the usage of public spaces, interviewees who represent one generation, challenge the commonly accepted social norms. The rejection of those common perceptions occurs through the alienation from families (and mothers in particular), sometimes physically, as leaving the house and by questioning the mother's knowledge, instead inserting their own; this alienation is marked with the generation peculiarities and a new model of citizenry participation through their bodies.

Hereby I have finalized the main arguments discussed in the beginning of the research. Having mother's spatial knowledge and memories related to spaces as lenses for primary knowledge in the city, women at a young age get to have challenging relationships with the city spaces. As they enter public spaces both with the memories borrowed by mothers and with the impacts of reinforced traditions and socially constructed gender roles, they are exposed to the dilemma of the generation differences and space developments. Spaces are fluid and the time is not constant, therefore the maternal knowledge stands as "outdated" once it is projected on constantly changing urban spaces. By a partial erasure of this knowledge women set up their own relationship with the city through their bodily interactions and citizenry interventions into spaces, from where they have been rubbed out.

Conclusion

“It takes years to develop yourself and overcome those fears, thinking that no one has the right to restrict your mobility in the city”. (Interviewed: H. 40)

Setting a research based on a personal experience, has been an ambiguous experience for me since the very beginning of the research. While using the motherhood narratives as a channel of knowledge to interpret my personal relations with the city, I have been concerned about how much of my own perceptions am I projecting on interviewees. For that reason while developing the methodology frame and setting interviews with women, I realized, the best way to get to understand our personal relationships on the realm of the city spaces is sharing our narratives. The story-sharing and speaking out lies in the foundations of the idea of this research, as I believe by the narrative telling women can successfully create an atmosphere of comfort and trust for more stories. Not once I have had the feeling that I used to call “the guilt of the anthropologist”; given the sensitive content of embodied experiences of the stories, I have always looked back in order to question my positioning towards the interviewees and subjectivity as a researcher from within.

In addition to that I have been determined to address the questions of global and local inequalities, discrimination and traditions and their projection on the city life. While layering the topography of my own experiences and connecting them to women’s stories, spreading them on the imaginary landscape of the city where we all we co-exist(ed) in different periods, I understood that the guilt of the researcher can be eliminated if I engage women’s voices into the bigger picture of the research, yet, on different terms.

My initial idea for to layer the ethnography has been designed and developed around a map. First and foremost, map was thought as one of the most powerful visualization tool for

this data. It was important to make the invisible visible and the unheard, silenced voices and experiences of women heard. At the same time, technically and ethically it was important not to include or insert audio materials in the map; as I have interviewed women of a small community, given the sensitive content of the topic, I would not want to risk their vulnerability as a subject. It is a challenge to make the silenced voices heard without actually, physically including audio materials in the project, but the writing came to turn the unheard voice into a legible text and turn the map into a visual digital story-telling project.

While drawing on the theoretical framework of mothering and narrative-sharing, it has been crucial for me to restage the performative part of narrative-sharing around the table, woman to woman, and recreate the conditions of 90s through the notion of darkness and story-telling.

For that reason conversation style interviews have been my preference as essential elements to “harbor the notions of female subjectivity”¹³⁶, it also sets a frame for story-sharing and keeping the power relations of the research/interview procedure balanced. This intimate story-telling in some cases helps the interviewee to reconstruct “a version of herself” and deconstruct the images of those spaces. The assisting and caring style of story-sharing will find its reflection in the mapping of the final project, where women’s digital stories will find their way to equally tell of their embodied spatial experiences in a secure, yet emotional/intimate way.

My methodological inquiry began with a desire to explore in greater depth the making of gendered spaces in order to understand how and why women’s exclusion from public spaces occurs so that we might eventually reach a point where we can address these issues to shape more woman-friendly cities. Alike the map that is designed to be a participatory project

¹³⁶ Lyon and Chipperfield, “(De)constructing the Interview: A Critique of the Participatory Model,” 35.

with open access,¹³⁷ the research and the overall idea of the project is an open end question to myself, to all mothers and sisters to trace back to their childhood memories and maternal practices in favor of understanding how much of the circulated knowledge between mothers and daughters impacts the socially constructed gender roles and the topographies of gendered spaces. Emphasis on the body with particular focus on equal rights to spaces as citizens gives a perspective to grasp the capacity of impact a female body can possess in a given cityscape. I believe that visually shedding light on women's embodied experiences in public spaces opens doors to discussions beyond academia and tackles the issue of women's fears in the most effective way possible.

My thesis will contribute to the field of gender studies in terms of embodiment and visualization. In terms of social intervention, the project will contribute to set a ground for breaking the consistent silence around different forms of harassment in public spaces. As of visualization, I particularly want to emphasize the importance of visualization of the data and by that shortening the existing gap between the academia and activism, the field and the research.

¹³⁷ See open access map example: Community-generated mapping project: "*Queering the Map*" <https://www.queeringthemap.com/>.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Interview example with a Yerevan woman:

(Original transcript in Armenian)

Երևանի գենդերացված տարածքների քարտեզագրում

Արփի Աթաբեկյան

(Հարցազրույցը կայացել է 05. 2017, Ստամբուլ)

1. Կարող ես ասել անուն ազգանունդ կամ կարող եմք ընտրել կեղծանուն: Կա նաև այլ տարբերակ՝ անվանդ առաջին տառերը:

Ս:Լավ, Ս.

2. Որտե՞ղ ես ծնվել (գյուղ կամ քաղաք): Գուցե հետո ես քաղաք տեղափոխվել:

Ս: Երևանում ապրել եմ քսան տարի:

3. Պատմի՛ր մի քիչ քո կրթությունից՝ տանն ու դպրոցում: Ինչպիսի՞ կրթություն ես ստացել՝ աշխարհի՞կ, կրոնական՞:

Ս: Կրոնական չեմ, մայրս հավատացյալ է, բայց կրոնի մասին ոչինչ չենք խոսել: Իմ ընտանիքը պահպանողական, տրադիցիոնալ է: Ծնողներս երիտասարդ են

ամուսնացել: Սովետական մտածողությամբ են մեծացել ու տրադիցիոնալ միջավայրում, չնայած օպոզիցիա են եղել, բայց ոչ կրոնական: Ծնողներս օպոզիցիոն հայացքներ են ունեցել:

Կրթություն ստացել եմ փողի դպրոցում, պրիստիժով դպրոց և եղել: Համեմատած մյուս դպրոցների հետ կրթությունը լավ և եղել: Բայց միշտ միլիտարիստական ու պատրիոտիկ պաթոս և եղել: Ինը տարի նույն դպրոցն եմ գնացել:

4. Քույր-եղբայր ունե՞ս:

5. Տանը քույր-եղբայրների, տղա-աղջկա, մեծի ու փոքրի միջև դիսկրիմինացիա եղե՞լ և:

Ս: Մի եղբայր ունեմ, ինձնից վեց տարով փոքր:

Դիսկրիմինացիա եղել և, ես տրավմատիկ հիշողություններ ունեմ, դաս էի անում, ինքը գալիս էր, ճղում էր տետրերս: Իմ համար շատ դժվար էր, լացում էի, գոռում էի, ծնողներս միշտ ասում էին, որ պետք և հասկանամ: Շատ դժվար էր ինձ համար: Եղբայրս վերջերս տասնութ տարեկան դարձավ՝ ես շատ :ավ էի սովորում, երբ որ ինքը տասներկու տարեկան էր, ես էլ տասնութ, ինձ ու իրան միշտ համեմատում էին իրար հետ: Բայց երբ որ ես էի տասնութ-քսան տարեկան, դե, եղ տարիքում ավելի շատ անհանգիստ էի տուն ժամը տասից հետո հասնելու համար: Իմ ընկերներն ինձնից մեծ էին, ու իմ համար նորմալ էր փաբեր գնալը: Բայց ծնողներիս համար խնդիր էր: Բայց երբ որ եղբայրս տասնհինգ-տասնութ տաչեկան էր, խնդրում էին, որ ժամը երկուսից շուտ գա տուն, որ իրանք կարողանան քնեն: Բարեկամների տուն գնալն էր միշտ խնդիր, որովհետև ինձ միշտ ստիպում էին

գնալ: Ինձ իրանց հետ էին տանում շատ վաղ տարիքից: Գիտես, ընտանիքս այցելելու օրերին ինձ թվում ա՝ կրկնակի կյանքով եմ ապրում:

Եղբորս ագրեսիայի, բռնի մասկուլին բնույթի հետ խնդիրներ ունեի: Փորձել եմ միջամտել, բայց ասել են՝ օկ ա, ինքը տղա ա: Եղբայրս ինքնապաշտպանության դասերի ա գնացել, բայց ինձ երբեք չեն սովորեցրել: Միշտ խնդիրներ ու վստահության պրոբլեմներ են եղել:

6. Երևանի ո՞ր թաղամասում ես ծնվել մեծացել:

Ս: Արաբկիրում եմ մեծացել: Ծնողներիս տներն իրար մոտ են եղել: Ընտանիքները իրար շատ մոտ են ապրել: Կենտրոնին բավական մոտ ենք ապրում: Դե, բայց ես Հայաստանում երբեք հարմարավետ չեմ զգացել:

7. Թաղամասն ի՞նչ է քեզ համար: Կոմֆորտ զոնա համարո՞ւմ ես:

Ս: Երբեք հարմարավետ չեմ զգացել, և՛ թաղամասում, և՛ քաղաքում. Գուցե մի թաղամասից մյուսը գնալիս տարբերություն եմ զգացել: Ճիշտը եթե ասեմ, մի քիչ էլիտիստ եմ: Կենտրոնն ավելի լավ գիտեմ, բայց մնացած թաղամասերը՝ ոչ:

8. Քեզ համար տունը որխես անձնական տարածք ու փողոցը որպես հասարակական տարածք ի՞նչ են:

Ս: Տանն իմ սենյակը չեմ ունեցել, եղբորս հետ էի կիսում: Հետո բողոքեցին ու ինձ մի տարի մի սենյակում թողեցին մնամ: Իմ համար սենյակ չունենալը խնդիր էր: Ընդհանուր առմամբ տանը հարմարավետ եմ զգացել, բայց անձնական տարածքի

ապահով խնդիր եմ ունեցել ծնողներիս հետ: Բայց կոմֆորտի առումով տանն ամեն ինչ ունեցել ենք: Ինչ վերաբերվում ա փողոցին որպես տարածք, ես դրսում, բակում շատ չեմ խաղացել, շատ ընկերներ չեմ ունեցել, ինչ-որ մեկին այցելության գնալուց բացի շատ տեղ չէի գնում: Տասնկոթ տարեկանից հետո, ԱՄՆ-ում սովորեցլուց հետո ինձ անընդհատ համեմատում էի հասարակական վայրերում: Ինձ միշտ թվում էր, որ մարդիկ նայում էին ինձ՝ Կարոտում էի ԱՄՆ-ի երեկոները, մենք փողոցում լավ էինք զգում, բայց Երևանում ինձ դա անհնար էր թվում, դուրսը խմելն անհնար էր, երգելը, լավ տրամադրություն ունենալը: Ես ազատության զգացողությունն էի կարոտում: Էստեղ միշտ նենց զգացողություն կա, որ միշտ ինչ-որ բարեկամի կամ ընկերոջ ես տեսնելու: Երևանը բեմի նման է: Մի կողմից բոլորը նայում են, «գեյզ» կա, ոնցոր իրանք հանդիսատես լինեն ու բեմադրություն նայեն, բայց նայողները կարող են նաև ծանոթ մարդիկ լինել:

10. Իսկ ավելի լավ ես զգում քաղաքում, երբ մո՞ւլթ է:

Ս: Հա, գիշերներն ընդհանրապես լավ եմ զգում ամեն տեղ, նաև ԵՐԼանում, որովհետև ոնցոր rebellious act լինի: Մենակ տղամարդիկ են փողոցում, ծնողների ֆակտորը գա, դրա համար եմ սիրում: Երևանում ապահով եմ զգում, ոչ մի տեղ չեմ վախենում: Էդ զգացողությունը ոչ մի տեղ չեմ ունեցել, Երևանում ապահով եմ զգում հատկապես էդ չափազանցված հրապարակայնությունից: Շատ մարդիկ կան, բայց ոչ քաղաքի կենտրոնից դուրս: Նաև տարբերություն կա մենակ ու խմբով լինելու մեջ:

11. Ի՞նչ տրանսպորտի միջոցներ ես նախընտրում: Մարշրուտկա, ավտոբուս կամ տաքսի՞:

Եթե ընտրելու լինեմ՝ տաքսի, մարշրուտկա կամ ավտոբուս, կնախընտրեմ ավտոբուս, ավելի քան տաքսի: Չեմ սիրում տաքսիստների հետ խոսել: Հատկապես երեկոները ավտոբուս եմ նստում: Մարշրուտկաների մեջ կլաուստրոֆոբիկ եմ զգում: Հիմանականում ավտոբուս, հատկապես որ հեռու տեղեր չեմ գնում: Երթուղայիններում «գեյզը» շատ ա: Միշտ: Երբեմն հենց հատկապես դրա համար խուսափում եմ (երթուղայինից): Տրամադրությունից կախված՝ մեկ-մեկ քայլում եմ: Շատ դժվար ա ավտոբուսում կին լինել: Անըդնհատ փորձում ես ուշադրություն դարձնել, որ վրադ չընկնեն, չմոտենան, չքսվեն: Բայց տաքսիների հետ իմ խնդիրն էն ա, որ փորձում են շատ գումար վերցնել, որովհետև կարծում են, որ տարօրինակ ակցենտով եմ խոսում:

12. Երևանում կա՞նալիսի տեղ՝ սրճարան, ակումբ, փողոց և այլն, ուր խուսափում ես գնալ:

Ս: Խուսափում եմ Կոմայգուց: Ու նաև Անգլիական այգուց, ֆրանսիական դեսպանատան հետևը: Իմ «public imagination»-ի մեջ դրանք ահավոր տեղեր են: Մի անգամ գիշերը ուշ իմ տրանսգենդեր ընկերների հետ քայլում էի: Մի քանի անգամ էլ օրվա ընթացքում եմ եղել: Տարօրինակ բաներ էին կատարվում: Վատ տրամադրություն ունեի, գնացի այգի, տասնհինգ րոպե հետո, տղաներ կային, որ կողքս էին նստած, ուրեմն տասնհինգ րոպե հետո, մի հատ մարդ կար, իմ նստարանի մոտով հետ ու առաջ էր անում: Հետո կովող զույգ տեսա: Ուզում եմ

ասեմ, որ մարդիկ մտածում են՝ կարող են անեն ինչ ուզեն, դրա համար եմ
խուսափում այգիներից:

Կաֆեներում կամ փաբերում ոչ մի բան չի լինում, իմ սիրած կաֆեներն ունեն ու
հիմնականում հնտեղ եմ գնում: Խոցելի հիմնականում մեր տան մոտ եմ զգում: Մեկ
էլ եթե ասենք երեկոյան գնամ երրորդ մաս, խոցելի կզգամ:

Appendix B:
English translation from the original transcript

Mapping Gendered Spaces in Yerevan
Arpi Atabekyan
(Interview conducted 05. 2017, Istanbul)

The interview was conducted at the interviewees home. She was preparing for her final exams and found some time for me in the morning. Choice of the place was based on her preference. The atmosphere was cosy, in the beginning I had to give her more details and clarify the nature of the research. From the middle of the interview it turned into a smooth talk.

1. What is your name and surname? We can choose a nickname for you or we can use initials of your name?

S. (initials of the name- A.A.)

2. Where were you born? (village or a city). Did you move to Yerevan later? If yes, how old were you then?

S. - I lived in Yerevan for 20 years.

3. Tell me about your education at home and at school. Was it a secular or religious education?

S. - Not religious, my mom is a believer, but there was no discussion about religion. My family is traditional. My parents were young when they married. They grew up under a soviet mentality, I grew up in a traditional environment, but oppositional, not religious. My parents had opposition views.

My secondary education was in the School of Pos, it is a prestigious one. In comparison to other schools the education was good, but there was always the militarist and patriotic pathos has always been there. I attended the same school for nine years.

4. Do you have siblings? 6. Have you experienced discrimination between you and siblings, between the boy and girl, the eldest and the youngest child?

S. - I have a brother, he is 6 years younger than me.

Discrimination, yes, I have some traumatic memories, like, I was studying and he would come and rip my textbooks. It was very hard for me. I would cry, shout. My parents would always say that I have to understand. It was very hard form e. My brother recently turned 18. But I used to study better, so when he was 12 and I was 18 they would always compare him to me. But when I was 18-20 years old, well, those years I was worried more about getting home after 10 p.m. My friends are older than me and it was fine for me to go to pubs. But it was a problem for my parents. But when my brother was 15-18, he was asked to go home only before 2 a.m. so that they sleep. Going to relatives' houses was always a problem, because I was always forced to go. They would take me with them. Since my youngest age. You know, the days when I visit my family feel like, I have double life.

I had problems with the aggression and the violent masculine culture of my brother. I have tried to intervene, but they said it is ok, he is a guy, that's normal. Like, my brother attended self-defense classes, but I was never taught it. Also, there have always been problems and issues of trust.

5. In which neighborhood of Yerevan were you born/grew up?

S. - I grew up in Arabkir. (district in the Big Center of Yerevan). The houses of my parents are close to one another. The members of my extended family were close to each other. We live quite close to the center. Well, I have never felt comfortable in Armenia.

6. What is that neighborhood for you? Is it a comfort zone for you?

S. - I haven't felt uncomfortable, it was the same for me both in the neighborhood and in the whole city. I might have felt differences when I would go from one neighborhood to another one. Well, I have to say in that sense I am an elitist. I know the center better, but not other neighborhoods.

7. What is your home for you as a private space and the street as a public space?

S. - At home I did not have my private room, I was sharing one room with my brother. Then I complained and they left me in one room for a year. Not having a room was a problem for me. I felt comfortable at home in general, but I was having a problem with my parents in terms of space.

But in terms of comfort, we had everything in the house. About the street, as a space, outside, in the yard I haven't played much, I didn't have many friends, except from going somewhere to visit I wouldn't go anywhere much. After I was 17, after studying in US I was comparing myself all the time in public spaces. Always had a feeling that people are staring at me. I used to miss the evenings in US, we would feel good in the street, but in Yerevan it seemed impossible to me, it is impossible to drink outside, to sing, to have a good mood. I was missing the feeling of freedom. Here there is always the feeling that you are going to see some relative or a friend. Yerevan is like a stage. On the one hand everybody is looking, there is a gaze, as if they are the audience and they watch a play, so but everyone can also be someone who you know.

8. Do you feel better when it is dark?

S. - Yes, I feel better at night, everywhere, also in Yerevan, because it is a rebellious act. There are only men on the street, there is the factor of the parents, that's why I like it. I feel safe in Yerevan, I am not afraid anywhere. I have not felt it anywhere, I feel safe in Yerevan especially because of this exaggerated publicity. There are too many people. But not outside of the center. There are also difference between being alone or being with a group.

9. Which means of transport do you prefer? Marshutkas (minibus), buses or taxis?

Among taxi, marshrutka or buses I prefer buses rather than taxis. I don't like speaking to taxi drivers. Especially in the evenings I take a bus. In the marshrutka (minibuses, usually very small, overcrowded and very uncomfortable - A.A.) I feel claustrophobic. Mainly it is buses, as I also do not need to go to far places. There is too much gaze in public transport. All the time. Sometimes I avoid it especially for that. Depending on the mood I walk sometimes.

It is very hard to be a woman in the bus. The whole time you try to make it sure that people will not fall on you, will not approach or touch. But with taxis my problem is that they try to rip me off, because they think I speak with a strange accent.

10. Is there a place in Yerevan (café, club, street, etc.) that you avoid?

S. - I avoid Komaygi (a park in downtown Yerevan known as a gathering place for transgender sexworkers – A.A.). And also the English park, behind the French embassy. In my public imagination they are horrible places. Once I have been there late at night with my transgender friends. Several times have been during the day. Strange things happened. I was in a bad mood, so I went to that park, after 15 minutes, there were guys who were sitting next to me, so after 15 minutes there was a man who was walking round the bench, walking back and forth. Then I saw a couple fighting. I want to say that people think they can do there whatever they want. That's why I avoid parks.

In cafés or pubs nothing happens, I have my favorite cafes and usually I go there. I usually feel vulnerable around our house. Also if I go to 3rd mas in the evening I will feel vulnerable.

Appendix C:

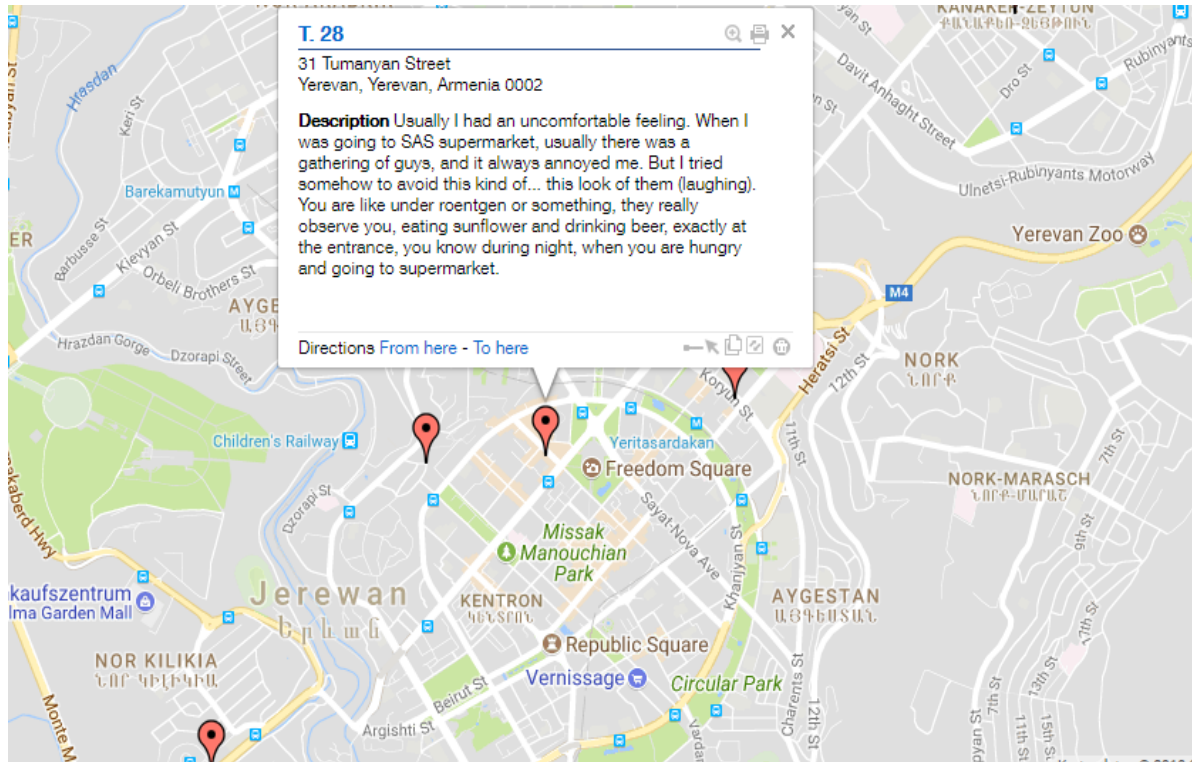


Figure 3: *An interviewee story on the gaze and space limitations in Yerevan city center.*

(excerpted from

[https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=2801895&x=44.512889&y=40.186749&z=1\)](https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=2801895&x=44.512889&y=40.186749&z=1))

Appendix D:

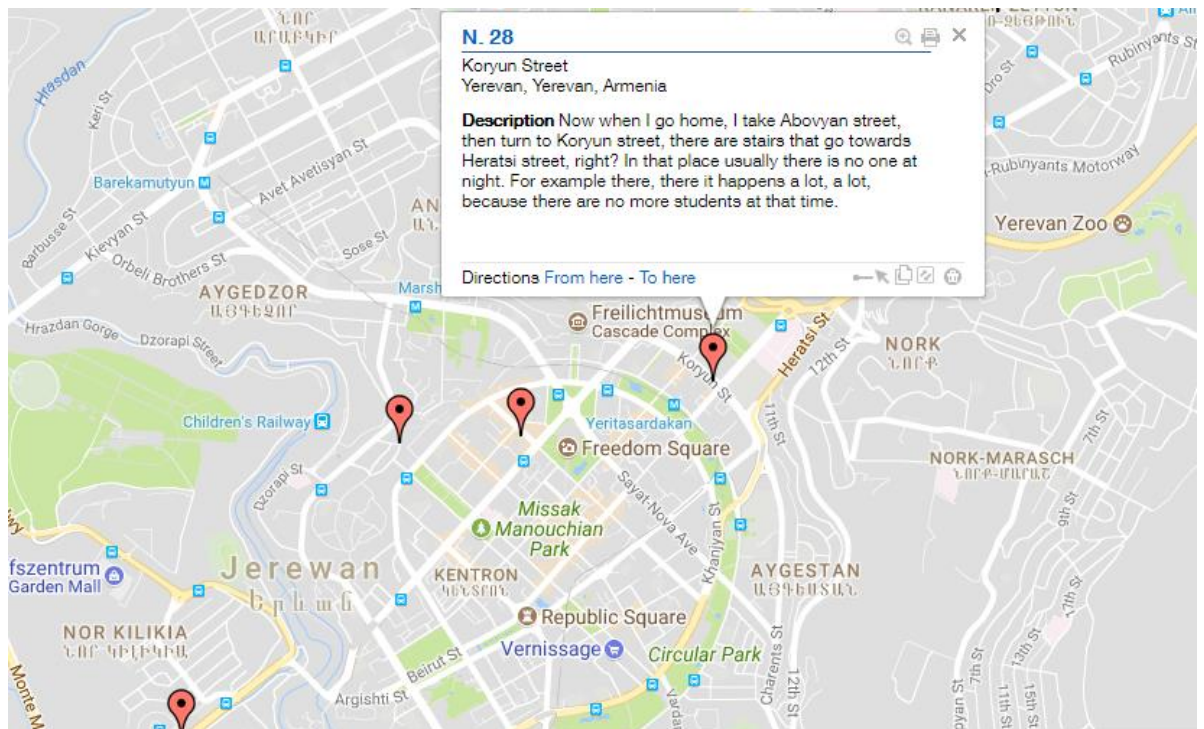


Figure 4. *The experience of the interviewee in the city center based on her everyday evening route.*

(excerpted from:

<https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=2801895&x=44.512889&y=40.186749&z=1>)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Mapping Womens' Multiple Exclusions: The Reproduction of Gendered Spaces in Urban Yerevan

Arpenik Atabekyan, MA student
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Department of Gender Studies, Central European University

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from September 2017 until June 2018.

This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

The name of the study:

Mapping Womens' Multiple Exclusions: The Reproduction of Gendered Spaces in Urban Yerevan

The purpose of this study:

- To understand the dynamics of private and public dynamics and how they affect the formations of women's fear in the urban spaces?

The outcomes of the research :

- To understand the reasons and causes of formations of gendered spaces
- To specify the relation of women bodies and their exclusions to the gendered spaces in the city

The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:

- One-on-one interviews.
- Digitalization of the conducted data in form of mapping.

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at anytime at the e-mail address listed above.

Our discussion will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide (including tapes) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

Insights gathered by you and other participants will be used in writing a qualitative research report, which will be read by my professor and submitted as a thesis topic at CEU Gender Studies Department. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.

By signing this consent form I certify that I _____ agree to
(Print full name here) the terms of this agreement.

(Signature) (Date)