

25 November 2012

Introducing Societal Violence and Alternative Security Practices Research Projects

Following a month of training on field research methods in the framework of urban violence and security, Nazra's Societal Violence and Alternative Security research team has been divided into three groups, each group examining local conceptions and forms of urban violence and alternative security practices in a distinct area in Greater Cairo.

Group I – Ma'adi:

The first research team will conduct ethnographic research on the area of Ma'adi, particularly the communities living in Sakanat al-Ma'adi, Hada'iq al-Ma'adi, Arab and Arayees. The particularity of the community living in these areas relates to its composition of a large community of refugees from the Sudan, Ethiopia and other neighboring African countries living alongside of Egyptian residents. It will focus on Sudanese youth gangs active in these areas, and which came into existence as a result of the violent crackdown on the Mohandessin sit-in of Sudanese refugees in 2005. It aims to examine forms of urban violence and alternative security practices at the intersection with issues of migration, race and masculinity.

Group II - Imbaba:

Choosing the area of Imbaba as the principal site of their research, the second group of researchers will examine emerging forms of violence and mechanisms of resistance adopted by Imbaba residents since January 2011. With its heterogeneous social fabric, Imbaba provides a rich area for analyzing class, gender and ethnicity struggles and their effects on the lived realities of people in this area. The principal questions that guides this research is: "How do people define crime? And where do they draw a line between violence and protection?"

The site of Imbaba was chosen by the late president, Gamal Abd el-Nasser, to be the neighborhood of the working-classes in Greater Cairo. It was the site for the fiercest confrontations between the state and Muslim fundamentalists in the 1980s and 90s. It continues to witness recurrent incidences of sectarian violence, the most recent being the burning of the Mar Mina church in 2011. Since 2005, Imbaba has also been a focal point for leftist and revolutionary activism.

Group III - Abdin:

The third group of researchers will examine alternative security practices adopted by the local community of the area of 'Abdin as a result of its exposure to violent political confrontations between state agents and revolutionary activists since January 2011. This research will explore local conceptions of violence and security at the intersection between issues of governance, class and space. It will explore ethnographically the different ways through which local merchants and traders negotiate the insecurity of their landscape in transitional Egypt.