

Abstract

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Bodies In and Out of Place: Local Readings of Displaced Bodies within a Low-Income Residential Area of Cairo.

While bodies are increasingly fixed with places, readings of the body get employed to distinguish which bodies are considered "in" "out of place." Social science literature on readings of the body and its markers and scholarship on readings of place (particularly within urban studies, geography, and architecture), address these concerns in examinations of in- and ex-clusiveness amongst social groups within urban settings (Blakely and Snyder, 1997 Day 1999 and 2000 Imrie and Hall 2001 Lewis, 1990 Lozano, 1990 Mohanram 1999 Nabih 1999 and 2001 Relph 1976 and 1997 Tuan 1980 Williams 1996). Viewing place not as a "passive, abstract arena where events occur" but as a site saturated with social relations and identity constructions, we rely on the premise that subjects have close relationships with the landscape that surrounds them, one that "shapes their bodies and perceptions... and participates in identity formation of the individual" (Mohanram 1999, xii). Accordingly, this paper employs in-depth interviews and observations to examine local readings of Sudanese and Somali displaced persons and their bodies within a densely populated low-income area of Cairo where many of them reside. We simultaneously explore the local Egyptians perception of their neighborhoods being an inhabited space shaped through social interaction. As a result of the daily interactions with the foreign migrant groups we aim to uncover how inscribed spaces, identity constructions and meanings are shaped and ascribed to different territories within Ard El-Lewa. We base our research within a specific settlement where asylum seekers commune in order to locate the place of interaction between local residents and these transient immigrant groups. In so doing, we demonstrate that the process of "othering" results from these readings of displaced persons, the places they are perceived within, and the activities in which they are engaged.