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The American University in Cairo (AUC)
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

انا نفسى أتمشى

**“I ASPIRE TO WALK”: EGYPTIAN WORKING WOMEN DEFINING THREATS ON
CAIRO’S PUBLIC SPACE**

A thesis submitted by

CAROLINE KAMEL NASSIF

Submitted to the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies

May 2010

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender and
Women’s Studies in Middle East/ North Africa

Gender and Development specialization

Under the Supervision of

Dr. HANIA SHOLKAMY

MAY 2010

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أصدقائي من منشية ناصر، أود أن أشكركم لمشاركتكم في هذا البحث وردكم على أسئلتى التالية لحلقات النقاش على الهاتف. أشكركم أيضا على الصور التي اخذتمونها لاجل تميز هذا البحث. ان نجاح هذه الورقة لم يكن ممكن من دون ارائكم وافكاركم. شكرا

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The city is believed to have become less safe “not so much because instances of violence that have occurred, but that people feel more vulnerable and less safe because the city has become more exclusive and less welcoming (Phadke 2007:1514)

Since the 1970s economic activities have become characterized by a combination of spatial dispersion and global integration, which as Sassen (1991) emphasized has created a new strategic role for major cities. Due to these changes, the “Global City”, a term coined by Sassen, has emerged with certain political, economic and cultural characteristics that render it vital for the world economy.

Cairo, a city with a long reputable history and acclaimed regional and continental status has been striving to acquire the “global” status. While there is controversy on whether Cairo has acquired this title or not, El Khishin (2003) clearly identifies the contemporary changes that have taken place in the city, with clear impacts of globalization on its various economic, political and social structures. Hence, Cairo could be identified as a city in transition to “global”.

Global cities have become the grounds where culturally differentiated people meet, where the traditional links that have bound people to places have changed. Yet, despite the promises of globalization and neoliberalism, where inequality will be controlled and citizens will enjoy wealthier and more comfortable lives, we find that safety measures and the discourse about safety in these contemporary cities has become the norm of the daily lives of their inhabitants.

Several scholars (Sassen 1991 and Holston and Appadurai 1999) have agreed that it is the new structure of economic activity and the modern techniques of urban design and governance that have had negative impacts on the social order of these cities and led to a shift in job supply, visible economic polarization, and urban inequalities between neighborhoods. Bourdieu (1998) argues that “the ultimate foundation of this entire economic order placed under the sign of freedom is in effect the structural violence of unemployment, of the insecurity of job tenure and the menace of layoff that it implies.”

Moreover, it is globalization that has led to what Sassen (1999) called the “denationalizing” of urban space. Globalization has affected identity formation and is said to have created paradoxes; hybridization and indigenization, where it “globalized the local and localized the global” (Friedman 2003: 19).

Globalization and neoliberalism’s modes of governance have created divides among the city’s inhabitants, ranging from insiders and outsiders to the city to what Holston and Appadurai (1999) called “formal citizens” who simply carry a membership in the nation state and “substantive citizens” who possess a group of civil, political, socioeconomic and cultural rights. The authors made it clear that a citizen’s full access to rights has become independent of their simple membership in the nation state.

As a result, the “differentiated citizens” such as the urban poor (especially those who belonged to shanties and informal settlements), women and other groups are seen by groups like substantive citizens as “others”. These “others” are “denied respect and opportunity because they are different” (Holston and Appadurai 1999:8).

Following Phadke's (2007:1514) argument, the city is believed to have become less safe "not so much because instances of violence that have occurred, but that people feel more vulnerable and less safe because the city has become more exclusive and less welcoming". This represents the point of departure of my research which seeks to understand the meanings of violence, risk, crime and danger to Egyptian working women living in Cairo.

The research provides an indepth understanding of women's perceptions and experiences of danger and violence in urban spaces and also investigates their constructions of safety and access to these public spaces by examining how public spaces are socially and physically constituted and reconstituted by women who use them. Globalization and neoliberalism have governed these perceptions of vulnerability, risk, and rights to access public space. Furthermore, it will interpret rules of exclusion and inclusion that govern public space.

This research is part of the women's fund at the United Nations (UNIFEM's) newly launched project the *Safe Cities Greater Cairo Region: Safe cities free of violence against women and girls*. The overall goal of the project in Egypt is to improve the life quality of Egyptian women through the creation of safe cities and communities that are free of violence against women and girls (VAW & G).

The geographic location selected for the implementation of the program is the Greater Cairo Region (GCR); an agglomeration that comprises Cairo Governorate and the urban areas of Giza and Qalyobiya, October and Helwan Governorates.

Greater Cairo was chosen, as a starting point for the program in Egypt, for a variety of reasons. First of all Cairo, although viewed by some (Scott *et al.* 2001) as having attained the "global city" status, others confirmed that it still is "bidding" for this status (el-Khishin 2003).

Cairo surely is a city that has undergone major changes. Reviewing Abou-Lughod's *1001 Years of the City Victorious* which describes Egypt in the 1970s and juxtaposing these anatomies to today's Cairo as described by Ghannam (2002) and the progress that has been taking place as iterated by El Khishin (2003), one could surely state that globalization and neoliberalism have had an impact on this city. It is these changes that make Cairo attractive for a program tackling safety and violence in urban spaces. Additionally, Cairo fits the list of criteria adopted by UNIFEM for the implementation of this project (UNIFEM 2009-2).

Research Questions

Neoliberalism, Globalization and Violence

My research question evolves around how Egyptian working women construct notions of risk and danger in the urban public space of Cairo. I started by first examining the impact of globalization and neoliberalism on cities and the relation of this to emerging incidents of urban violence and the diminishing of sentiments of safety.

Implications for Cairo

Although literature on the effects of globalization on Cairo is wanting, using a historical analysis of the city and comparing it to Cairo today, will help me examine the changes that the city has undergone in its striving attempts to become modern and gain a global status. Hence, I inquired about the manner Cairo is structured today and how is this affecting its social order? And given the relation, that has been established in the literature, between globalization, neoliberalism and violence, how does Cairo fit within this discourse? What does the urban public

space of Cairo look like in line with this? What are the urban inequities between neighborhoods? Do we see outsiders and insiders?

Egyptian working women and their feedback

The literature on the gendered nature of risk perceptions shows that women, aside from their fear of sexual assault, also fear other forms of structural and physical violence such as threats in the physical environment surrounding their families. Hence, I ask: what do Egyptian working women primarily fear and what are the other sources of threat aside from their fear of sexual assault.

Here I hypothesized that women would highlight some flaws and defects in the urban design of their neighborhoods that contribute to the heightened feeling of fear and danger. Additionally, I hypothesized that fear of losing their reputation and respectability is one important source for feeling lack of safety.

Furthermore, following Phadke (2007:1512), I sought to investigate the presence of chosen and imposed risks in the Egyptian context. I hypothesized that Egyptian women, especially the group from Manshiet Nasser¹ would choose to take certain risks (for example by being outside their neighborhood despite the fact that the neighborhood is physically safer) to avoid the imposed risks to their reputation and respectability in their own neighborhood.

Given that the groups of women studied in this research come from two distinct neighborhoods; Manshiet Nasser, a known informal settlement in Cairo and Heliopolis, a “wealthy” neighborhood (as perceived by most Egyptians) I explored their definitions of the

¹ A slum area in the heart of Cairo, near Islamic Cairo

urban public space. I hypothesized that not only will different definitions emerge between the two groups, but also within the groups.

Women and Technologies of the Self

While developing my questionnaire and themes to be covered in the focus groups and interviews, I sought to investigate Foucault's "technologies of the self". I wanted to inquire about the different techniques women developed to safely maneuver the public space and whether some of those techniques are risks (Phadke 2007) in their own right or not.

Here I found Foucault's "Governmentality" and "Technologies of the self" very useful:

I became more and more aware that there is in all societies, whatever they are, another type of techniques: techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on. Let's call this kind of techniques a techniques or technology of the self (Foucault 1993:203)

Urban cities have been shaped by neoliberal forms of governance. This governmentality in turn has been passed on to the citizens by governments to control and manipulate people's behavior, especially that of access to public space. "Risk" has been used as a mechanism of controlling people's spatial behavior.

On the other hand, the literature showed that women in general "have not been taught to be comfortable in outdoor/public space but instead have learned the private, domestic realm is their domain" (Wesely and Gaarder 2004:647). Consequently, because "safety, is linked directly to the level of claim that one feels to a space"(Phadke 2007: 1511), I sought to understand whether there are spaces women feel they have a claim to or not and how their sense of safety is

constructed accordingly. I also inquired about what affected women's construction of the public space as dangerous.

Finally, being an intern at UNIFEM, I sought to critically look at the Safe City Model being designed for implementation in Egypt. Based on the findings of my research, I should be able to initially identify whether certain components are missing within the model for purposes of intervention or not.

Methodology

I have designed my research following a comparative approach, whereby I will compare findings from two field sites; Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser. This design was driven by my understanding that women are diverse, and the perception of danger or threat is intensely affected by a range of factors “including income, class, area of residence, housing status, disability, experiences of victimization and many other life experiences” (Pain 2001).

The decision has also been motivated by Phadke (2007:1516) who emphasized that “women's differential location does give them differential capacity to engage risks through differential access to the material means of producing safety for themselves like access to transport”. I expected that in using this approach I will be able to get a comprehensive understanding of sources of threat and conceptualizations of safety that will feed into the planning process of the Safe City Model.

I was interested to learn whether greater access to economic capital will grant women from Heliopolis greater access to public space in comparison to their peers from Manshiet Nasser or, on the contrary, would they be welcome in certain “public” spaces such as malls and coffee

shops. Yet these spaces are spatially governed- that is, “these are not public “public” spaces, but privatised spaces that masquerade as public spaces and they are carefully protected through glass barriers from where the risks and uncertainties of everyday life are carefully edited out” (Phadke 2007:1514).

Manshiet Nasser was picked for two main reasons. The first was that it is an intervention area for the Safe City program. The second reason is that I have worked in this area before and have personal links with the *Association for the Protection* (APE) and the *Spirit of Youth Association* and these have helped me in establishing close relations with different women in the area.

On the other hand, being a Heliopolis resident myself has influenced my choice of Heliopolis as the second research area, since I am also able to have access to a variety of women. However, choosing Heliopolis was not out of ease of access, rather it is the hypothesis that women from these two distinct areas will have different narratives about meanings of risk, danger and violence. It is this distinctiveness that I feel gives a certain depth and comprehensiveness to women’s narratives.

My research does not aim at generalizing its findings to Egyptian women at large, because an urban structure, such as Greater Cairo, makes it as Merry (1981) indicates “a mosaic of little worlds”. I am very aware, as Phadke (2007) stated, that the category, “women in Cairo”, covers a diversity of identities that intersect with gender – class, religion, age, educational status, employment situation, and physical ability that would surely create different experiences. I also acknowledge that women from Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser also encompass inner groups of

diverse women and the groups which have participated in my research represent some of this diversity.

My secondary research relied heavily on UN documents and violence against women literature. Being an intern at UNIFEM Egypt has granted me access to many internal reports produced by UN Habitat, UNIFEM Egypt and other institutions affiliated to the Safe City program, all of which have helped me in conceptualizing violence and safety in public spaces.

Chapter two will focus substantially on what the UN literature says about safety and violence against women in public space. However, the corner stone of the UN ideology in this regards is that “Safety for Women is Safety for Everyone”. This statement has been subject to critiques and currently UNIFEM’s global program is sending missions to cities aiming at implementing the safe city approach, to evaluate the feasibility of realizing the aforementioned declaration.

As for literature on Cairo; Ghannam (2002), Ismail (2006), Singerman (2009) and Abou-Lughod (1971) were among the secondary sources of literature I consulted. These sources have tackled the various changes that the city has undergone over the past four decades. These were juxtaposed with narratives of women collected from the field, to provide an indepth analysis of these accounts.

Considering literature on the field work sites, I have found relatively enough scholarly work on Manshiet Nasser, such as Sims (2003), Fahmi and Sutton (2006) and Tekce, Oldham and Shorter (1994). However, literature on Heliopolis is inadequate; I have found one study, Al

Shieby (2006), while other scholarly work tackled the architectural aspect of Heliopolis. Hence, I also relied on my own “ethnographic” experience of the area.

In terms of conceptualizing urban public space, Yücesoy (2006) elaborately discussed the important characteristics of urban public space. “Public space as the physical space with the variety of ways it is configured”, “public space as a political space” and finally “public space as interactional and experiential space”. The definition of urban public space provided in Yücesoy (2006) includes “those areas of the city that are legally open to everybody: streets, parks and places of public accommodation”. The author added public buildings and public buildings of semi-private and semi-public buildings (such as shops, cafes, cinemas, malls). Phadke (2007) added modes of public transport (such as buses, metros, taxis) as well as sites like bus-stops and metro stations. These were in line with UNIFEM’s operationalization of urban public space:

Streets and other public neighborhood spaces; public spaces of work, both in terms of women’s productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities (e.g. markets, water distribution sites, river beds); public transportation (e.g. buses, taxis, trains); routes to and from schools and educational institutions; public parks and other recreational and sports facilities (Youth Centers); and other public recreational spaces, such as coffee shops (UNIFEM Egypt, Morsy 2009:6).

Yucesoy (2006) also informed my definition of the term “public”, the design of my questionnaire, the selection of themes for the interviews and focus groups, and finally in analyzing the findings. “Public” could give the impression of a fixed dichotomous relation between public and private. However, “publicness” according to Yucesoy (2006) is about “co-presence and sociability”, which is in turn continuously changing from one place to another. Yucesoy (2006:5) said “we experience the urban public space with varying degrees of publicness and privateness based on our perceptions, conceptions and the relational context”. This has also

guided the way I posed my questions with regards to what my participants considered public or private.

Literature on neoliberalism and its impact on Egypt is rich, especially that which analyzes the impact of the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP). I examined more closely scholarly works that focused on the impact of these processes on Egyptian women. Assaad and Arntz (2005) has been one of the influential papers that directed my decision to choose working women as my target group and guided my questionnaire design. The paper aimed at understanding the reasons behind the drop in women's participation in the labor force especially in the private sector, by looking at the gendered differences in geographic mobility. They found that structural adjustment has resulted in an increased need to commute on the part of men, but that women were unable to accommodate such an increase, due to the code of modesty restrictions which prohibit women from returning late at night and working far away from their houses (World Bank 2004:114, 115). I also found out that safety concerns among women compounded this phenomenon.

Additionally, many women are involved in low income jobs due to what many economists call "occupational segregation" (Estevez –Abe 2006 and Said and El Hamidi 2009) with unusual working hours such as cleaners, nurses...etc. Such jobs force women to use different public spaces during unusual hours of the day, where fewer people are around, especially during the night. Presented in the context of women's safety in public spaces, the rhythms of women's work explain women's hindered access and participation in different activities. This is particularly relevant to women from Manshiet Nasser and explains their choice of work.

My primary research was qualitative, exploring how women construct their perceptions of risk and safety. Most of the scholarly work that has been developed over the past decade has been premised on the assumption that street harassment is THE danger facing Egyptian women in Cairo's public space, and very few scholars attempted to adopt a community based approach and engage women in identifying sources of risk, danger and violence. This research seeks to fill this gap in the Egyptian context.

Throughout my field engagement with UNIFEM Egypt, several meetings with potentially partnering Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were conducted. The main driving force encouraging these NGOs to take part of this UN led program was their belief of the project's perfect timing. Egypt, they argued, is ready now than before, to tackle women's safety. Before 2006², sexual harassment was not a word you would hear Egyptians use. Hence, sexual violence was what I might call a "silent disease" that was never discussed in public. Today, sexual harassment is hitting the frontlines of newspapers and reserving slots in major talk shows in the country. However, other sources of threats facing women in the public space have not been explored yet, which is the primary aim of my research.

Furthermore, Gustafson (1998) has motivated my qualitative approach for he found out that qualitative methods give space to respondents to define the risks and dangers, which help in identifying gender differences, something quantitative tools fails to distinguish. Gustafson (1998) demonstrates how quantitative studies showed that while men and women perceive the same risks, with various degrees of seriousness, when the gender dimension was introduced gender-

² A sexual harassment incident took place in downtown Cairo during Ramadan Feast. A group of young men attacked a small group of women exiting a cinema, surrounding them, groping and grabbing their clothes and veils.

specific risks emerged, whereby men and women not only perceived the same risks differently, but also identified different risks.

Accordingly, my research relied upon the use of interviews, focus groups, textual analysis and visual materials' analysis. The choice of focus group was driven by the appropriateness of this method for the study. The group interview assisted in orienting me to a new field of study in Egypt – that is – the general safety of women in public spaces and how women construct these notions. UNIFEM's project seeks to build on women's general safety concerns for policy initiatives.

Additionally, the group interviews assisted me in observing how women interact with one another around the issue of safety and space. It is these differences in positions and perspectives within one group and between the two target groups that encouraged me to adopt the comparative approach between Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser.

Given that the Egyptian safety audit tool is currently being designed by the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo, I had to opt for a simpler auditing technique which I developed. I asked some of my research participants to think carefully of their routes to work and home and take pictures of sources of threat they encounter.

I hope that the visual component of my research will guide other scholars and civil society organizations to adopt a similar approach, whether using still photos or video to present their findings through a comprehensive community involvement approach.

Chapter two will give an overview on UNIFEM's work and a brief on the Safe City Program with its tools and methodology. This is important in order to critically analyze the

feasibility of such an intervention in the context of Greater Cairo. Chapter three is the “journey” I took with my participants and the space I have dedicated for their voices and visions. These voices will be critically juxtaposed with UNIFEM’s approach to safety, in the concluding chapter, in order to highlight any possible recommendations that could be of value to UNIFEM and any agency working on violence against women and safety measures.

CHAPTER TWO CONSTRUCTIONS OF SAFETY IN UN BODIES

Cairo: A Glimpse on History

Founded in AD 969, Cairo was a military capital established during the Fatimid's era. The name Al-Qahirah (The Victorious) was given in celebration of the triumphal entry of the Fatimid Caliph, rendering Cairo today as one of the great cities of Islam. The city has witnessed wide oscillations and rulers throughout its history (Pharoas, Romans, Mamluks, Ottomans, British Colonial Rule), yet it has survived the downfalls and developed to become the megalopolis we experience today – a city seeking a “Global” status (El Khishin 2003).

During the reign of Ismail in late 1860s, Egypt began to experience financial distress, after the urban prosperity that prevailed, the financial difficulties leading to a decline in urban prosperity. In 1882 British Occupation followed and it is during the occupation period that a new division of the city took place. Cairo's old city witnessed many transformations in the way its public spaces were used, yet without much change in its physical structure. The significant presence of foreigners due to the occupation led the organization of a new city to the west (Al Sheiby 2006).

Consequently, since the end of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth century, Cairo has been described as a divided city, whereby there was a “European or western Cairo” in the west and the “Egyptian Cairo” to the east (Abu-Lughod 1971) with inequities clearly observed between the two. The eastern city was preindustrial in technology with unpaved “harat” (alleys), social structure and non modern way of life clearly visualized with the presence

of itinerant water peddlers. The western city, however, had its steam powered technologies, paved roads with traffic, water reaching its residents through water networks pumped by steam engines and a general faster pace of life with a western façade.

Al Sheiby (2006) confirmed that inequalities appeared between the old and new cities prior to the British occupation, but colonialism has accentuated these inequities which became a perpetual feature of Cairo. Abu-Lughod mentions that “the discontinuity between Egypt’s past and future, which appeared as a small crack in the early nineteenth century, had widened into a gaping fissure by the end of that century. Cairo’s physical duality was but a manifestation of the cultural cleavage” Abu-Lughod (1971:98).

Egypt: Neoliberal, Urbanized and Globalized

Over the past decades, cities have experienced rapid transformations as a result of the economic, social, cultural, technological and communicational shifts that urbanization processes bring with them, including changing patterns of social behavior and interaction (Falú 2000). This included rising insecurity. Over the past five years 60 per cent of all urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime (UN Habitat 2007-3). The issue of urban safety is especially critical today, since more than 50% of the world’s population lives in cities, equivalent to 3.4 billion people (UN Habitat 2007-3). Urban safety according to UN bodies is closely interrelated with poverty and inequality, both within cities and across countries.

This is important to contextualize here, especially with the rapid urbanization Egypt has and is undergoing. In 2000, the USAID³ published an urban profile on Egypt indicating that 45% of the Egyptian population lives in urban areas and it estimated that by 2015 this percentage will rise to 51%. Moreover, 44% of the country's poor live in urban areas.

Bayat and Denis (2000) provide a unique look at the demographic shift that took place in Egypt between the 1970s and 1990s. According to them, Egypt has experienced a deconcentration of population at both the metropolitan and national levels. The stabilization and diffusion of urbanization is justified by the “urbanization” of large villages and the rapid growth of small towns. Furthermore, rural migration to large Egyptian cities has stabilized, thanks to the prevailing urban conditions (such as the high price of land, population densities and the shortage of affordable accommodation). Hence, many newcomers decide to reside on the peripheries of these big cities.

While Egypt’s integration in the world economy has not been as extensive as other post-colonial countries, globalization processes are said to be “deeply entwined with a neoliberal agenda and that this limited integration has had profound impact on the city” (Singerman 2009:4). “The Egyptian state seeks to remake itself as the “tiger on the Nile” argues Singerman (Ibid), affirming El Khishin (2003) it seeks to become a truly global capital attracting resources and investment for its industries, through its franchises and services. The “*Cairo Contested*” scholars have used the term “neoliberal globalization” to describe the current forces affecting the city.

³ <http://www.makingcitieswork.org/files/pdf/neareast-n-africa/Egypt.pdf>

I agree with Singerman (2009) that globalization does not seem to have “A” clear agreed upon definition, however there are implicit assumptions that are evident. First, national sovereignty having diminished due several factors such as the judgment of local parameters against global norms, the exchange rates being judged against a paradigm established elsewhere, prices are measured against global values. Second, financial capital and information instantaneously cross national boundaries. Third, powerful regulatory mechanisms replaced national decision making.

Cairo: Housing Problems and the Birth of the “Ashwa’yat”

Cairo is one of the complex and unique cities of the world. Tekce, Oldham and Shorter (1994) confirm this through their analysis of Cairo’s inhabitants who “are drawn from ‘provincial’ cultures of Upper, Middle and Lower Egypt and amalgamated with generations of Cairenes to produce a mosaic of class and culture that is Cairo’s very own” Tekce, Oldham and Shorter (1994:1). This is similar to what Merry (1981) coined as “a mosaic of little worlds”.

Deboulet (2009), however, presents Cairo as “architecture from the sky” which conflicts with the concept of “mosaic of little worlds”. According to Deboulet, urban planners and architects view Cairo from a distance, which disrupts their ability to capture these little worlds and differences whether social, historical, or cultural of the city’s inhabitants. It is this denial of “social embeddedness of Cairenes that lies at the core of Cairo’s problems, hence lead to distorted policies and failed solutions to their problems” (Singerman 2009:6).

As one traces the shifts in the regimes since Nasser’s era of socialism and post-colonial nationalism to Sadat’s “infatih” (open door policy), which was deepened during Mubarak’s era,

the impact of globalization and neoliberalism becomes more evident. I will investigate the impact of neoliberal globalization on Cairo by examining one analytical point – that is – housing.

Housing in Cairo has been a major problem for the “majority” of Egyptians. At one point the government blamed the rural-urban migration and uncontrolled population growth for its inability to match the demand for housing units. However, despite the stabilization of rural-urban migration, due to the “urbanization” of large villages and the rapid growth of small towns (Bayat and Denis 2000), improved medical services and family planning methods, housing is still a problem. The improved health conditions are now translated to new families being formed hence increased numbers of those seeking housing. Additionally, these families living in a globalized city have subconsciously raised their bars of desires.

Sims (2003) argues that after the 1952 revolution and the pursuit of a socialist regime, the phenomenon of informal urban development became a significant feature of Cairo’s development. This is due to fluctuating state policies in managing the housing industry. Initially the state was concerned about the housing industry then it withdrew the supply side of housing. Eventually the state became unable to finance the desired number of units especially, when priority was accorded to the military expenditure as a result of a quasi- permanent state of war and the rise in construction costs. Other factors such as lease regulations of housing units have come to play a role, all of which led to an increase in informal housing.

As a coping strategy and in order to absorb the increasing number of families seeking housing yet unable to purchase on the market, three (physical dimensions) alternatives were

invented by the people: expanding existing structures, spilling over into surrounding areas or shrinking the size of home accommodations (Tekce, Oldham and Shorter 1994:9).

In early 1990s, however, the government embarked on the stabilization program (ERSAP) promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The main objectives of this program were to transform the economy to a market based one and diminish the state's role. ERSAP has changed the way the Egyptian society has been managed. The government's role as the primary employer started shrinking, overtime and privatization started taking over, leading to a drop in job opportunities for fresh graduates. The dynamics of neoliberal globalization and its resistance, in turn, started becoming more evident (Singerman 2009).

Following a neoliberal agenda and a “partially free-market cost of housing” (Bayat and Denis 2000), increased housing and land prices. Hence, Cairo's increasing families, pursued the informal urban development that had started since the 1950s. After exhausting most of the coping strategies within the city, Cairenes began building affordable housing on the only available land surrounding Cairo, when it was technically illegal to build, because it was for mere agricultural activities. So as the Egyptian economy became internationalized, *ashwa'iyat*⁴ (slums) were being institutionalized.

Ismail (2006) clarifies how at first the Egyptian government was indifferent and pretended to be tolerant as more and more informal settlements were being created. In fact, it had

⁴ There are several operational definitions for slums, I would cover them in Chapter Three

ignored them, being busy branding and marketing the city to attain the global status⁵. However, as some of these settlements started hosting Islamic opposition members, hostility began around the 1980s.

As the state stepped back, the Islamic opposition started mobilizing and organizing followers by seizing opportunities such as the 1992 earthquake and quickly offering help to affected groups. Scholars, like Ismail (2006), have shown how these groups have acted as a kind of parallel government, offering people services and asking, in return, for greater reinforcement of policing through their members and leaders, morality, increased piety and religious observance.

Ben Nefissa (2009) and Dorman (2009) sought to understand whether the negligence of the government was intentional and the reasons behind overlooking the needs of millions of Cairenes. Dorman (2009) believed that the logic behind the “negligent governance” is not lack of resources, but “a mix of disengagement, clientelism, and fear that views land and housing itself as an important spoil to distribute to loyal followers”(Singerman 2009:10). On the issue of disengagement Harvey (2005) stated that:

The Neoliberal state is expected to take a back seat and set the stage for market functions, yet it is supposed to be active in creating a good business climate and to behave as a competitive entity in global politics and market ... this poses the problem of how to ensure citizen loyalty (Harvey 2005: 79)

⁵ Attempting to build a multi-million dollar National Museum, and having constructed a Stock Exchange Complex, a new French university, and a smart/hitech research park. An ambitious gentrification scheme for the Islamic city is in the pipeline. Over the past decade, moreover, Cairo’s transportation infrastructure was boosted by the inauguration of the second and third subway lines, and a ring road. Exclusive residential estates have sprung up around the city. Entertainment, leisure and international events have been served by the construction of an Opera House and more. (El Khishin 2003)

In short in many developing countries, like Egypt, in the wake of structural adjustment and neoliberalism, state power does not retire but “exercises power at reduced cost through various intermediaries and private actors” (Singerman 2009:9). Mitchell (1999: 455) critically analyzed the “logic of neoliberalism in Egypt”:

Neoliberalism is a success of the political imagination. It makes the window of political debate uncommonly narrow and at the same time promises from this window a prospect without limits. The condition of the nation and its collective well being are pictured only in terms of how it is adjusted to the discipline of monetary and fiscal balance sheets. On the other hand, the actual concerns of any concrete local or collective community are neglected and the most exuberant dreams of private accumulation and chaotic reallocation of collective resources are encouraged.

Neoliberalism has exacerbated individuality; one’s success or failure became attributed to personal factors such as investing in one’s own human capital through education. Ismail (2006) added that poverty management shifted from the macro level whereby policies deal with labor, investment and subsidies to the micro level where the individual is made responsible for his or her own poverty either through personal mistakes such as not investing in education, not working enough, or having too many children.

“Blaming the victim”, Singerman (2009) argued is an old strategy pursued by many politicians. In Egypt, this was manifested in the negative portrayals of lower class Egyptians, and those who inhabit *ashwa’iyat*. The government’s discourse constructed this large group of Egyptians as backward, inferior, dangerous, drug addicts, ultimately as the “internal other” (Singerman 2009, Ghannam 2002). In doing so, the government was throwing the blame on these people for being responsible for their poor conditions and hence their unworthiness.

In contrast, several urban planners and development practitioners whom I met through my internship at UNIFEM viewed the *ashwa'iyat* as organized, well governed areas. They believe that the simple fact that whole communities with an internal system of governance, infrastructure and services management were established is the mere evidence of planning and regularity.

Chaos is threatening to Cairo's image as a modern, global city. As a result, the state is exerting a complex kind of control over its public spaces to maintain the aesthetic criteria of a modern city. Thus most parks and open spaces have become fenced in and increasingly restricted and privatized. The ordinary Egyptians are excluded from local and public spaces, reserved primarily for tourism and agents of economic growth.

Neoliberalism has created stark spatial differences and inequalities in Cairo. *Ashwa'iyat* and gated communities are a clear evidence for this disparity. New towns and gated communities are seen by the Egyptian elites as modern and hence safer while the heart of Cairo (with its known diverse neighborhoods) is seen as chaotic and thus unsafe. Katameya, for example, was originally a very poor popular neighborhood east of Cairo. Today Katameya is a term connoting elegance and luxurious living. It is remarkable for one to revisit the advertisements of many of these gated communities and contemplate on how they are promoting themselves through a security risk discourse. I will quote one of those advertisements, referring to the Hyde Park New Cairo⁶

“ a world of exclusivity”, “with a pedestrian-friendly environment with over seven kilometers of walking and jogging trails”, “offer the ideal environment for

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9-SKWpNfKc&NR=1>

community interaction and children can play safely in close proximity to your home”, “fountains, trees and flowerbeds create the perfect backdrop for you to relax by the sidewalk cafes and restaurants”

Denis (2006) argues that the security risk discourse that underlies the promotion of these gated communities aims at depicting central Cairo as menacing, dirty, polluted, unsafe and unhealthy. He further emphasizes “urban ecology and the priorities of security are reversed to favor suburban desert colonies” Denis (2006:51). I find that it is the “commodification of everything” including safety that leads to social incoherence. With divided citizenship (formal and substantive) and inequality, violence emerges. This is the backbone of the UN global narrative on safety in cities.

Safety in Cities – a UN approach

Inequity, violence and stark economic gaps between inhabitants have become common traits of city life. UN Habitat estimated that by 2030, two-thirds of humanity will be living in towns and cities around the world. Moreover, UN surveys indicate that crime and the fear of crime highly manipulate the way we lead our lives, whether it be in our behavior, choices and decisions. In its 2008 publication “State of World Cities”, UN Habitat used the term “Harmonious Cities” to tackle the different ingredients needed to harmonize physical, social, environmental and cultural aspects of a city and the people who inhabit it. The three ingredients covered were the spatial, social and environmental harmony. To summarize, their definition of harmonious city reads:

A society cannot claim to be harmonious if large sections of its population are deprived of basic needs while other sections live in opulence. A city cannot be

harmonious if some groups concentrate resources and opportunities while others remain impoverished and marginalized. Harmony in cities cannot be achieved if the price of urban living is paid by the environment (UN Habitat 2008:x)

The three ingredients signify the importance of a comprehensive approach when tackling safety in cities. Friedman's analysis (2003) of violence makes a distinction between two types of violence that are also implicit in the three ingredients of harmonious cities: the violence of fragmentation and the violence produced by vertical polarization. Violence of fragmentation is defined as: "...a violence of differential identities in competition for economic resources and social spaces" (Friedman 2003:25),

While vertical polarization violence is: "...based on the very destruction of larger identities. It consists in the separation of the elites from the people, in the cosmopolitanization of the former and indigenization of the latter. (Ibid:27).

In UN Habitat's publications on safer cities, crime and violence are explained as a product of urbanization, the exclusion of members of society, and their deprivation from the benefits of urbanization and the right to participate in decision making. Crime grows out of an unequal and exclusive society and out of a lack of institutional and social control. Additionally, the absence of "inclusive" policies and long term solutions to social, economic and governance issues are contributors to the rise in violence and crime (UN Habitat 2007-1). In this sense, Cairo is no exception.

The Safer Cities Program

For most people, crime is no longer an aberration or an unexpected abnormal event. Instead, the threat of crime has become a routine part of modern consciousness, an everyday risk to be assessed and managed in much the same way that we deal with road traffic (Stanko 1997: 479)

In 1996, the UN-Habitat launched the Safer Cities Program at the behest of African mayors in order to tackle urban violence. UN-Habitat's role was outlined to include building capacities at the city level to better deal with urban insecurity which will then contribute to the establishment of a culture of prevention⁷. The three main areas of prevention of UN Habitat's program are: environmental design, advocating for new and alternative forms of justice and policing, and finally a focus on groups at risk⁸.

In June 2009, UNIFEM signed an agreement with UN- Habitat to tackle violence against women and girls in world's cities. This partnership reinforces UN-Habitat's special attention to women's safety (as a group at risk). Furthermore, it also falls under UNIFEM's mission, since 1976, which aims to promote and respect women's rights. The latter materialized in global campaigns on violence against women⁹ pursued in collaboration with diverse partners.

The notion of *Safe Cities for women* is a relatively new and innovative approach that has been put into practice in various sites in different parts of the world by local authorities, women's and grassroots groups. As such, this UNIFEM-supported Safe Cities global program promises to be the first-ever global comparative effort to develop a model that will be rigorously

⁷ <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=1433&catid=375&typeid=24&subMenuId=0>

⁸ <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/safercities/approach.asp>

⁹ <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>

externally evaluated for its processes and impact across different settings. The aim is to produce a global model, tested and proven through an impact evaluation, which can be widely disseminated to policy-makers, donors, and civil society for adaptation and upscaling, tailored to the specificities of local contexts (UNIFEM 2009-1).

Furthermore, the joint program strives to “promote a balanced approach to addressing violence against women both in public and private spheres” (Morsy 2009). Moreover, UNIFEM, represented by Mrs. Ines Alberdi, the Executive Director, believes that most programs working on ending violence against women have been limited to “reaction”, namely merely responding to the needs of victims, whether they are justice, care or support. Nevertheless, the Safe Cities approach is focusing on prevention which is a neglected area in programs targeting violence against women. The latter can be achieved by integrating policies related to “good governance, urban planning, women’s empowerment, political participation, gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting and access to basic services”¹⁰

For UNIFEM, there are certain benchmarks which determine its evaluation of safety, particularly safe cities for women. In order to join the global program, cities need to fulfill twenty three criteria (UNIFEM 2009 - 1). Some of these criteria include: a city in which public safety and security is a priority issue on the policy agenda of the local government and civil society; a city area in which forms of violence against women in public spaces are high (i.e. sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape); and the area of intervention is a city neighborhood characterized by insecurity, inequality, poverty and/or exclusion and where especially neglected

¹⁰ http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=882

groups reside. It is important to note that cities are not chosen on the basis of mere presence of violence and the choice by no means intends to label or stigmatize the city.

It is this latter criterion that has triggered my choice of a comparative approach. The assumption that an intervention area should be characterized by inequality, insecurity and poverty carried a stigmatizing connotation that poor areas and slums are insecure. I wanted to challenge this assumption by adding Heliopolis as a field site and juxtapose the narratives of women from a slum and a “wealthy” area with regards to the places they feel most unsafe. As will be shown in chapter three, women from Manshiet Nasser feel SAFEST in their area and it is not as the UN assumes an insecure place for women. It was women from Heliopolis who felt unsafe almost anywhere and reiterated experiences of violence that happened to them in Heliopolis.

The Safer Cities Greater Cairo Region

In 2009, UNIFEM Egypt applied to join the global program. The country coordinator believes that Cairo qualifies for the program. Having read the project document for the safe city Greater Cairo, the situational analysis in Egypt was highlighted to confirm the country’s fulfillment of most of the criteria needed to join the global program. The presence of a national women’s machinery such as the National Council for Women (NCW) is one highlighted aspect. “Evidence of political commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment is evident in the National Development Plan, which makes specific references to MDG3 which is linked to human development, and a specific national development goal related to increase women’s economic participation” (Morsy 2009), were other aspects.

Additionally, as I attended one meeting with potential partner NGOs and women's groups and foreign experts visiting UNIFEM Egypt office to validate the project design, the question of safety of women in Egypt today was raised. The experts wanted to know whether the political arena is ready to adopt women's safety or the project will not receive political support. The civil society representatives confirmed that now is a perfect time to address women's safety in Egypt. They made it clear that it is true that the People's Assembly and Presidential elections will monopolize the political arena for the coming two years. Nevertheless, the overall environment is welcoming because of the recognition of sexual harassment, as a problem in Egypt, thanks to years of feminist movements and women's groups lobbying with policy makers.

However, it seems to me that women's safety on public spaces should have been tackled earlier. Sexual harassment has prevailed in Egypt for long and not a phenomenon of the millennium. I have found an interesting article, through a textual analysis I had undergone, in an Egyptian magazine called "*Al Ethnein*" (Monday), which discusses sexual harassment in Egypt in 1954(see appendix two) . For the Arabic reader it would be clear that the language used to describe women's concerns and feelings towards harassment then, is very different than today's.

The article's language indicates that harassment was not aggressive or demeaning as it is today, but it was more of an irritation. It was not even called "harassment", but "*Samaga*" (annoyance or nuisance). Nevertheless, the complaints (stalking, cat calls, and flirts even in the presence of male partners) then still are the complaints today. The difference between the past and the present is the severity and immorality of the incidents.

What I want to say here is that if I “hypothetically” considered harassment existed since the 1950s (during which this article was published), why did it take us 50 years to recognize it is a problem? Why did our feminist movements focus on political and economic empowerment before working on the roots – that is – empowerment through safe mobility? Can this be explained by looking at the leaders of the Egyptian feminist movement? Are the interests of the elites the driving forces of this movement?

The evidence based research

According to the UNIFEM literature, primary research on notions of security as perceived by women is imperative before launching the safe city program. Given that I was working closely with UNIFEM Egypt on their Safe cities Greater Cairo Region, which seeks to gain support for a women’s safety audit and guide policies to make intervention areas safe for women and girls, my research represents part of the program’s evidence-based research component.

The questions posed by this research are novel in the sense that they move beyond analyzing sexual harassment to bring other safety concerns of women to the foreground. Violence against women sometimes takes place subtly and hence remains as a “silent disease”. This research adopted a qualitative comparative approach. The research participants were two groups of young working women from two very distinct neighborhoods in Cairo: Manshiet Nasser and Heliopolis. I have chosen “working” women based on my hypothesis that work exposes women more to the public space. However, the “young” criterion was to satisfy my

hypothesis that young women tend to question social realities and continuously adopt adaptive techniques to maintain their safety, more than older women.

As I discussed my choice of areas with UNIFEM's country coordinator, it was confirmed that in the Egyptian context program's intervention areas are all informal settlements (following the global criteria mentioned above). It was clear to me, however, that the country coordinator did not adopt this (stigmatizing) way of thinking when designing the Greater Cairo project. She believed that women in general are exposed to sexual violence wherever they are, informal or formal settlements. However, accepting and including all intervention areas as slums was mainly to assist in improving and developing these areas for both men and women. She hopes that the interventions would provide slum dwellers with some of the basic needs they have lacked for long.

What is safety?

What is safety? When trying to answer this question one comes across several perspectives such as occupational health and safety, traffic safety, building security, etc. Safety and security have multiple meanings. Programs targeting women's safety are mostly concerned with the personal physical safety of women. Feelings of safety in any given space are defined by our own past or present experiences of that space or the experiences of friends, relatives or people we know or have heard about. For instance, if a woman has experienced a violent incident in a certain space, she would probably feel less safe every time she accesses that particular space.

Many women around the world tend to limit or modify their behaviors in order to maintain their personal safety. Many women worldwide have surrendered (some mentally and in

practice while others in practice only) to the fact that they are at risk of becoming victims of violence whether by simply walking on the streets, returning late from work, taking buses or parking their cars, simply because they are women. Hence, most women have developed techniques to reduce these risks; some avoid going out alone at night while others avoid or minimize their walking distances, and the list of adaptive techniques goes on.

UNIFEM's operationalization of public space includes the streets and other public neighborhood spaces; public spaces of work, both in terms of women's productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities (e.g. markets, water distribution sites, river beds); public transportation (e.g. buses, taxis, trains); routes to and from schools and educational institutions; public parks and other recreational and sports facilities (Youth Centers); and other public recreational spaces, such as coffee shops the urban public space, in their operational definition of urban public space (Morsy 2009).

Gender-based violence against women and girls in public spaces as covered by the Safe Cities Program, includes sexual violence, including sexual harassment (verbal, physical); unwanted sexual advances (such as being touched, grabbed or brushed against in a sexual way); rape or attempted rape and fatalities resulting from such violent assault, and degrading remarks or gestures of a sexual nature. Furthermore, stalking — including via use of modern communications technologies (e.g. SMS/texting), and other emerging forms of gender-based violence — will be included on a case-by-case basis depending on local context (Morsy 2009).

My research however, will try to expand its scope to include threats and crimes such as theft, drugs, murders, and prostitution. In doing this I seek to engage my research participants in

deep reflective sessions which will help them consider other threats aside from sexual harassment that could bring an added value to the program. Additionally, if sexual harassment emerges as the sole or most threatening factor in the public space, then this in itself has a value that would take sexual harassment discourse to another level.

Despite the operationalization of violence, the baseline component, of UNIFEM's program, aims at using a participatory approach. This approach will work on developing the indicators of what constitutes safety and threat to women in the intervention areas¹¹, to be used during "safety audits". These indicators will also be discussed with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and women's groups working in these areas to ensure a comprehensive list of safety indicators in each area.

The Tools and Methodologies of Safer Cities programs

In crafting a 'model' global program, the initiative adopts a strong evidence-based approach, building on the pioneer efforts and lessons learned of civil society organizations, some local authorities and UN agencies (such as Women in Cities International and UN Habitat) which began addressing the issue of gender-based violence in their work on cities and women's rights, as well as, UNIFEM's methodological innovations in other countries.

The program's premise is that through a process of community women's empowerment, community organization and mobilization for social change, and partnership with and capacity

¹¹ The term "intervention" areas is adopted by UNIFEM Egypt in order to distinguish between the areas where the project will be implemented and the other areas that will be used as "control" areas for the sake of the impact evaluation.

development of local government authorities, practical measures for improving women's safety in urban spaces can lead to significant reductions in the prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls within a five-year time frame (UNIFEM 2009-1).

UNIFEM will utilize and integrate community-based approach to address issues and forms of violence against women and girls in the public spaces. As opposed to a top-down strategy in which action is imposed from above, the project will work with and through members of the community to foster power, raise awareness, and provide support. In this way, community members will be able to take action themselves.

Moreover, the project will employ a media advocacy strategy to combat violence against women. The project will conduct awareness raising campaigns to change community attitudes and behaviours about women and girls' rights, in addition to establishing partnerships with men and youth networks, youth councils in universities, and media.

The project will focus on the capacity development of the "Right Holders"¹² and "Duty Bearers"¹³, with an ongoing policy-oriented advocacy targeting the private sector, local authorities, national women machineries, relevant line ministries and community organizations. The project will aim at building a constructive dialogue and partnership between local government and the civil society to ensure women and gender equality issues in the local budgeting, as well as the planned infrastructure development with the community.

¹² In UNIFEM's language it includes women, other grassroots and community members

¹³ In UNIFEM's language it reflects Local authorities'

As I pondered on the element related to local governments' roles, I questioned how applicable would it be in Cairo. In Egypt, the local government is very weak and very bureaucratic. This was confirmed by a GTZ (The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) representative, backed by his experience through their Participation-Oriented Development Program in Densely Populated Urban Areas¹⁴. Through my internship and presence in UNIFEM I have learnt that for anything to take place in Egypt at least two criteria need to be fulfilled; the political willingness for the program's objectives and acquire the "blessing"¹⁵ of the concerned ministries. It was hence clarified to me that the Egyptian program will contextualize the areas which have to do with the local government to fit the nature of the political system in Egypt.

Safety Audits' Background

According to the Safe Cities approach, changing the physical environment is one of the powerful means for reducing violence against women. The main tool used to conduct a strategic analysis of a given area is the women's safety audits. This tool is one of the global tools that will be employed by UNIFEM Egypt in their Safer Cities Greater Cairo Program. Given its popularity and controversy, an elaborate look at this tool is necessary.

This tool was first developed in Canada in 1989, following the recommendations of the 1989 report on violence against women, by the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC). METRAC is a not-for-profit, community-based

¹⁴ <http://www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/maghreb-naher-osten/aegypten/5663.htm>

¹⁵ A term used by the UNIFEM country coordinator.

organization that works to prevent and end violence against diverse women, youth, and children (Guberman 2002, UN Habitat 2007 -2, Women in Cities International 2008).

The process was developed in response to women's stories, which depicted their concerns for personal safety in public places in the city. Women described where they were afraid to go, the characteristics of those areas, and when they were afraid to go there. They talked about what they did to protect themselves, and what they did not do for fear for their safety (Guberman 2002:2). Moreover, it is believed that this tool also helps in identifying other threats, in the physical environment (such as open manholes impeding wheel chaired people's movement), to other marginalized groups, who are usually overlooked by policy makers.

The safety audit typically works like this: 5-6 women get together, identify the geographic area they want to 'audit', and do so based on a series of questions on a checklist. The checklist is based on factors that affect safety (Guberman 2002:2).

Women's safety audit was then developed by UN Habitat in different cities undergoing the safer cities program, as well as other NGOs and groups of women all over the world. Since this tool exists today in many different formats and has been widely adapted, it is no longer considered the creation of merely one organization. It is in a constant state of modification and improvement.

Understanding that changes in the physical design alone will not end sexual assault and harassment of women, the safe cities programs include upgrading of infrastructure as a primary intervention. The physical environment, its layout and design are only one part of what affects our sense of safety. Although METRAC's original checklist in 1989 focused solely on the physical environment, the checklist has grown and developed to cope with the scope of women's

(and other vulnerable groups) concerns. Hence, the checklists today include issues of attitudes and behaviors, policies and practices, and how effective they are.

Not only does the safety audit encourage physical environmental changes, but it also “aims to empower women to take ownership of public space and participate in local decision-making” (Women in Cities International 2008:9). It also helps improve policy makers’ understanding of how men and women experience the urban space differently. Other positive outcomes of the audit process, include participants’ increased interest in their communities, the development of new relationships between organizations, governments and service providers, gaining new skills such as the use of cameras, interview skills, and work in groups (Women in Cities international 2008).

For any city aiming to use this tool, cultural adaptation is an essential first step since the physical and cultural environment have to be analyzed and understood. UNIFEM Egypt is currently undertaking this first preparatory phase, in partnership with the Social Research Center (SRC) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and in the process are developing the tool for Egypt.

Safety Audits: A Critical Appraisal

The audit process has been used by several organizations as a women’s empowerment tool since women use their own “language, gestures and symbols” (Guberman 2002) to develop recommendations for decision makers. However, there seems to be doubts around its success at the institutional level. Sometimes audits fail due to the absence of a gender-sensitive approach adopted by the implementing institution. As the literature confirms, danger would carry different

connotations to different women; danger and risk are also very different for men and women. Furthermore, women and men use spaces in different ways, thus if women's perspectives are not taken into consideration, certain safety concerns will not be disclosed.

Guberman (2002) describes the audits as becoming “diluted” whereby they are no longer focused on women's needs and concerns. Rather they became gender neutral. Additionally, they end up focusing on solely the physical environment and exclude the complex relations between attitudes, behaviors, policies, practices, and the physical environment. As a UN-Habitat report, argues, as safety audits become gender neutral they become less successful (Women in Cities international 2008).

Aside the gender neutrality, a safety audit could fail in generating any meaningful results due to other factors. Lack of resources to implement the recommendations highlighted by the process is a primary concern. UNIFEM Egypt has considered this problem and plans to benefit from the growing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)¹⁶ culture in Egypt and engage some private sector corporations to sponsor the physical/ infrastructure-related implementation.

A second identified factor that hinders the success of an audit process is failure to follow-up – that is – acquiring recommendations from the women with no further action taking place. First of all this could be the result of another problem which is ineffectual diversion of funds.

¹⁶ Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is about how businesses align their values and behavior with the expectations and needs of stakeholders - not just customers and investors, but also employees, suppliers, communities, regulators, special interest groups and society as a whole. CSR describes a company's commitment to be accountable to its stakeholders. (<http://www.csrnetwork.com/csr.asp>)

I personally foresee that this problem might take place in the Egyptian context, however not due to failure on the side of UNIFEM or other implementing institutions but due to the impossibility of change in given situations. To elaborate, I shall give an example, if women identify the inability of fire fighters to get into their area and this jeopardizes their lives and families' at times of emergency, this is primarily due to the very narrow roads of their neighborhood. In this case, widening the roads is practically impossible, and so a direct infrastructural intervention does not seem possible. This is where I believe the community participatory approach is highly relevant, for the people might think of local solutions for this.

Additionally highly regulated government procedures are another problem experienced by other cities which adopted the safety audits and safe city approach. I do not foresee this happening in UNIFEM's project, since the Egyptian office has a rich social capital and a large network with top policy officials and decision makers in the country. I would, nevertheless, expect governmental procedures to encumber the work of a small NGO seeking to replicate the model in its area of work.

Nevertheless, I have never worked for a UN agency before and most of my work experience was through local NGOs working on a small scale. I therefore, cannot confirm the degree of success of a safety audit in an Egyptian context. My field work for this research however proved that women are willing to walk around and pinpoint areas of threat as was the case for my visual component. I would only question Egyptian UNIFEM office's capability in orchestrating all the activities identified and the input of large number of partners involved.

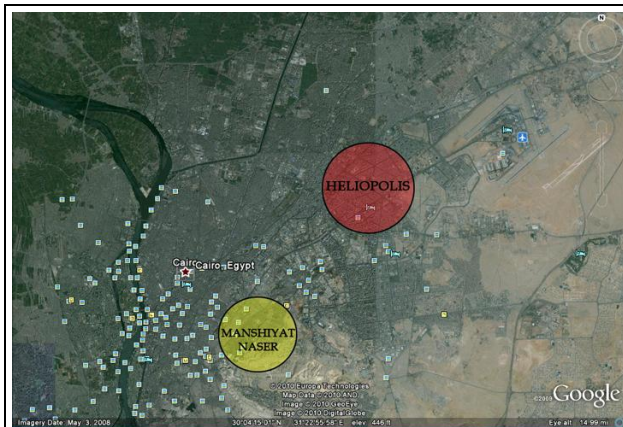
The coming chapter will provide an indepth understanding of the research sites and relates this to the narratives of women. In relating these narratives with the construction of safety in UN bodies I hope I can critically reflect on the possible changes in the discourse on women's safety in Egypt that could take place.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JOURNEY...THE SPACE

Background Knowledge on Research Sites

As stated in chapter one, this research adopted a comparative approach whereby Manshiet Nasser, an intervention site by UNIFEM's Safe City Program and Heliopolis were the two research field areas. A brief background on both areas is imperative to shed light on the distinctiveness of each and to place the narratives of both groups in their context.



Google Earth: Location of Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser in relation to Cairo



Google Earth: a close up of both areas

Manshiet Nasser – The Garbage Collector’s (Zabaleen) Community

Manshiet Nasser is one of the well-known informal settlements in Cairo. In a study commissioned by UN Habitat (Sims 2003), Manshiet Nasser was identified as a “Type B: Informal Area on Former Desert State Land”, which means it is one of the areas that has emerged as the result of constructing private residential buildings on vacant state land under a process known as “Hand claim¹⁷”. Other informal settlement types identified in this study were type A: informal areas on former agriculture land, type C: deteriorated historic core and type D: deteriorated urban pockets.

It is important to understand how slums are defined within the discourse on informal settlements. The recent operational definition of the UN Habitat identifies a list of factors lacking in a slum’s household. These are¹⁸; access to improved water; access to improved sanitation; security of tenure; durability of housing (permanent and adequate structure in non-hazardous location); and sufficient living area (not more than two people sharing the same room). Hence, if one or more of these factors are absent in a given neighborhood, it is considered a slum. In the Egyptian context a slum means “*manteka aashawai*” which literally translates to “random area” implying that it has illegally emerged in an unorganized manner. The term, in fact, carries derogatory connotations within the Egyptian’s daily discourse. On the other hand, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) defines slums as

¹⁷ وضع اليد

¹⁸ <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/mdg/>

“Neighborhoods that have been constructed by individuals either on their own agricultural land or on vacant state desert land under the process of “hand claim” without formal licenses or building documents”(Khadr, Hamed and Nour Draft report)

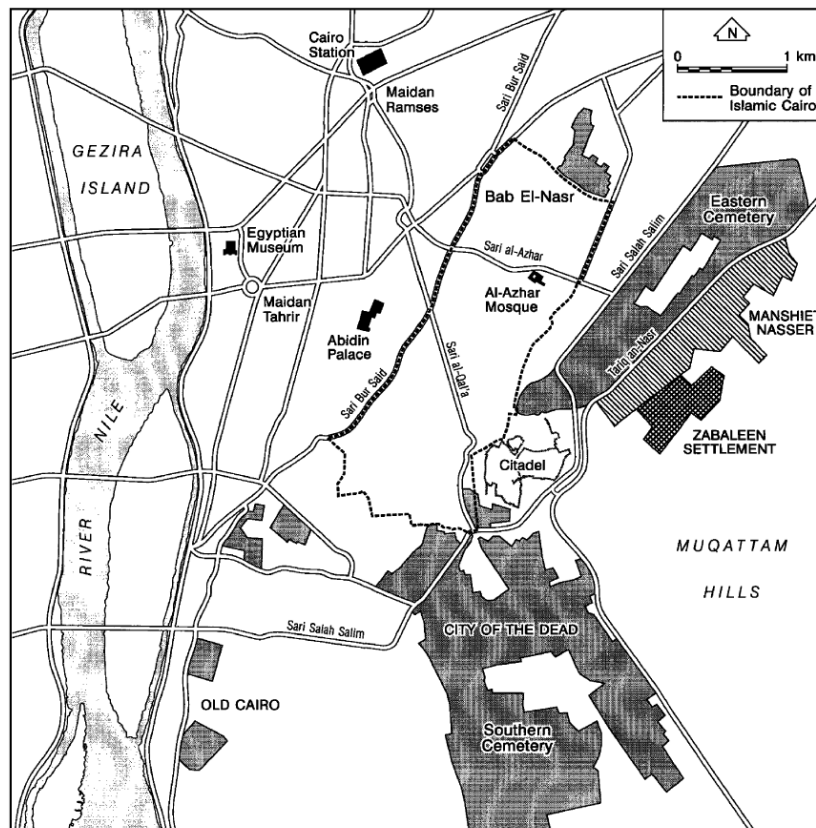
Pursuing this definition, in 2000 CAPMAS identified 76 areas, in Cairo governorate that match the definition. Slum literature in Egypt challenged this definition for it backed the government’s negligence to take responsibility for providing these neighborhoods with the basic needs and facilities, on the grounds that they are “illegally built” (Batran 1998; Sims 2003).

The History of the Area



Source: Google Earth

Manshiet Nasser is located at the foot of the Muqattam Mountain east of Cairo. There are two main entries to the area, one from the main highway (known as *autostrad*) and the other opposite the Citadel. The Manshiet Nasser community was originally a group of squatters, primarily migrants from Upper Egypt (specifically from Qena, Sohag and Assiut) who initially resided in different areas in Cairo (near the historic bazaar area, and Gamaliya). Some of those migrants were specialized recyclers of low grade steel, which later became a vibrant trade and a recycling center for cheap building supplies was established. Those people were evicted several times before their final removal to the Muqattam hills in 1960. The name “Manshiet Nasser” was then chosen in honor of president Gamal Abdel El Nasser “to help ensure continuing land tenure” as explained by the elderly residents of the area (Tekce, Oldham and Shorter 1994).



Source: Fahmi and Sutton (2006)

The houses were constructed out of tin shacks. The area as a whole lacked the entire basic infrastructure. Water was obtained from mosques across the road in the cemetery, while kerosene lamps were the main lighting source (Tekce, Oldham and Shorter 1994). Accordingly, “high mortality and morbidity rates (especially among children), high incidence of animal epidemics, widespread illiteracy, poor environmental conditions, and low income” were the main traits of the community in the 1970s (Fahmi and Sutton 2006).

The leaders of the old settlement (known as Ezbat al Safih, before the eviction to the Muqattam) became the leaders of the new ones, who grouped people coming from the same area of origin together in residential blocs. The principles guiding social relationships in this community are kinship and place of origin, which contributed to the emergence of a local governance system inspired by the Bedouin system of governance as led by a *Umda* (similar to a Mayor) for the management of conflict resolution. However, this system did not last as the government authorities weakened the system. This is because as the community grew, so did the conflicts and needs of the community which necessitated the need to interact with official bodies, especially when it came to negotiations around the supply of urban services. As a result, the government authority started growing and the community system collapsed with the death of the *Umda* in 1989.

Manshiet Nasser hosts Christians and Muslims. For the sake of my research I will focus on the Christian part, for this is where I have established relations with many women over a period of nine years. The Christians mainly work as garbage collectors and are known as the *Zabaleen*. This Christian group is clustered together in the area near the second entrance opposite

the citadel, known locally as *El Zarayeb*. Yet some Christians also live in *El Dweiqa*. The Muslims inhabit the remaining part of the area commonly known to them as *El Ezba*.

The Zabaleen Environmental Development Program (ZEDP), a World Bank upgrading program, established in 1977 was followed by other projects by international donors throughout the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. these programs contributed to major changes in the living conditions of the Zabaleen. Improvements took place in the physical infrastructure, health, educational and social facilities. The era of tin shacks thus became a history passed on from generation to generation through oral history telling.

My mum told me the area has changed; the houses were not built of concrete they were like shacks, now there are huge buildings and wide streets (Madiha)

Moreover, the *Zabaleen* have established community-based organizations (CBOs) which helped in the improved infrastructure and launching micro-enterprises (often exporting plastic and other materials abroad). In the 1980s, they began to enroll more of their children in schools, especially girls, whilst NGOs and (CBOs) introduced health and hygiene programs.

Today if you walk through the streets of the area, high concrete buildings are visible and some of the major streets are paved and moderately lit. I understood from my field research that in the *El Zarayeb* area (or the *Zabaleen's* area) there are no apartments for sale, all apartments are for rent and the maximum rent would be around 350-400LE/month. Most tenants would not choose to leave the area or their apartments but rather improve them. This is due to a variety of reasons such as access to cheap and “valued goods and services, ambiance and affective relationships” (Tekce, Oldham and Shorter 1994).

The area is not that bad, the lifestyle is cheap, but people are not aware, they are not mature, they should realize that time changes and people change, so they have to change their habits (participant NI)

The main source of income for the *Zabaleen* community members is generated through garbage activities. It is believed that the *Zabaleen* used to collect up to 3000 tons of garbage every day and up to 85% of that waste was recycled by them directly through micro-enterprises that generate jobs and incomes for some 40,000 people (such as producing handmade crafts from rags and paper) (Fahmi and Sutton 2006). This was before the introduction of private garbage collection companies. The money generated from the recycling activities is invested in building houses for family members.

Sorting and recycling of garbage is a household activity managed by women and children. This task represents the backbone of the trading activity of a *Zabal*. The garbage is collected, from the affluent areas of Cairo, where rich and expensive raw materials (such as tin from cans, fine plastic from water bottles, cardboard from cereal boxes and the like) are sorted out and resold in kilos or tons. However, due to lack of awareness among most Cairenes, the garbage arrives all mixed up; with organic and non organic items in the same bag. This makes the sorting task a strenuous and unpleasant task for most women, taking up to 10 hours every day. It is important to note that residential and industrial activities are interconnected spatially, whereby workshops or commercial shops are below the residential building and most of the sorting activity takes place in a yard inside the building or in front of it.

My field experience showed that most young girls today try to avoid getting married to men working in garbage collection, to stay away from this demanding and repulsive task that is on top of their other household responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking and taking care of the

children. They would rather get married to a man who owns a shop or works in any trade but not in garbage.

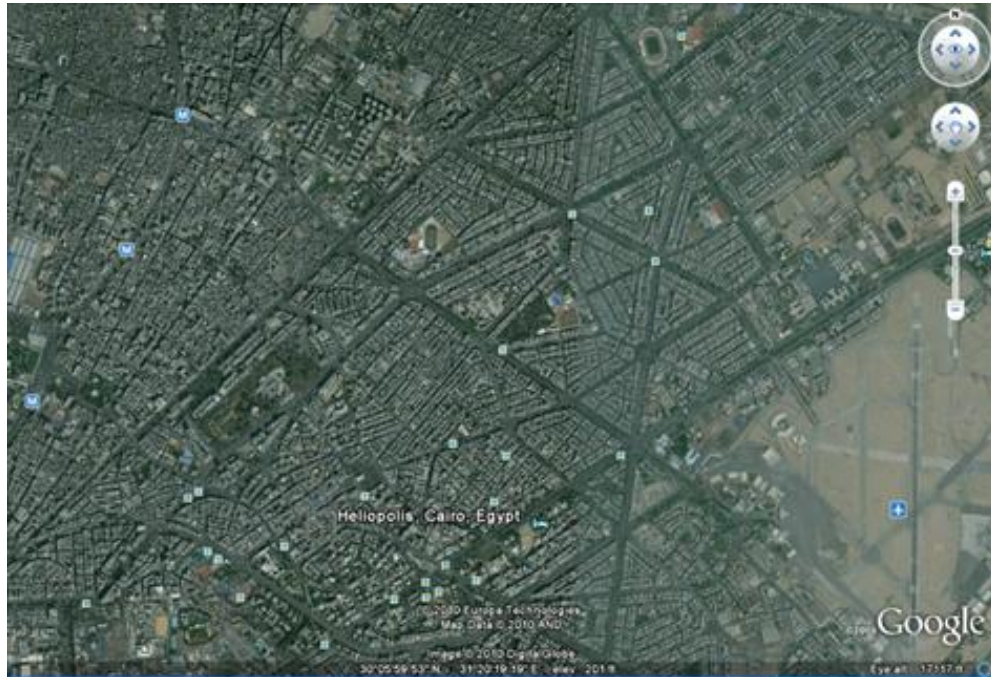
Tekce, Oldham and Shorter (1994) provide an insight on women in Manshiet Nasser which was relevant for my field work. First they note that most women in El Manshia (as known by its residents) are young between 20 and 35. Women usually interact among themselves at the grocery stores or in front of each others' houses. Grocery shops are considered safe areas for women without incurring criticism from community members. It is rare for a woman to visit non-relatives.

In sum, life in Manshiet Nasser still follows in many aspects the style of villages of Upper Egypt. "*Dokhla Baladi*", where the groom checks the bride's virginity on the night of the wedding and the bride's family proudly raises a handkerchief with blood confirming her virginity, is still practiced. Honor crimes are still prevalent. Showcasing the furniture in the whole neighborhood before the wedding day is also still very common. Today, these traditions kept from village life are sources of nuisance for many young women in the area, a theme relevant for contextualizing women's fear and definition of personal security.

Heliopolis – A recreational city

Whenever I mentioned I was conducting a comparative study between Manshiet Nasser and Heliopolis, to any Egyptian friend, I got different reactions. Some believed the difference must be intriguing and expected that interesting findings would be generated. Others inquired about the reasons behind the stark differences between the two chosen areas. To many Cairo residents, Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser are not to be placed on the same plane of discussion

for comparative purposes. One could deduce that the two areas belonged to the two extremes of a continuum.



Source: Google Earth

Geographically, Heliopolis lies on the northeast of Cairo. It is well known by tourists as the area where Cairo International Airport is located. It is also familiar to Egyptians as the area of President Mubarak's private residence. Additionally, it is the site where the Egyptian Presidential Palace, the Almaza Military Air Base and Egyptian Air Force headquarters are located.

The period between the end of the nineteenth century until the 1950s was considered an era of renaissance in the architectural and social structure of Cairo. Tracing the history of

Heliopolis, many of the buildings, stores and deserted recreational spots still stand today. The impact of the British occupation and the significant presence of foreigners in the city affected upper class Egyptians. Cairenes developed a fondness for the *Khawajat* (foreigners) demeanor and foreign ways of seeing, became the way the city saw itself (Al Sheiby 2006).

As a result, this upper class, which Al Sheiby (2006) called the “leisure class”, started to move out of their residences in old Cairo to the newly constructed quarters by foreign investors and constructors, like Garden City. Heliopolis was later to become one of these quarters. However, since its inception, when the Belgian industrialist Baron Edouard Empain persuaded the government to grant him the land, it was intended to be a leisure city.

In 1894 Baron Empain obtained the commission to provide Cairo with a tramway system which is considered the first seed in the birth of Heliopolis. According to Al Sheiby (2006), Heliopolis was established as a result of the presence of a tramline.

The Heliopolis Oasis Company (Societe des Oasis) was established to start the construction projects on the deserted land in the north east region of Cairo. Al Sheiby (2006) indicates that the company’s name reflects the initial objective of Heliopolis –that is- becoming an island of greenery in the midst of the desert. Nevertheless, when the economic crisis hit Egypt in 1907, two years after the Heliopolis Oasis dream started, the dream had to be altered and the city of leisure had to be transformed into a residential area.

In order to attract people to purchase residential units in the new city, the Company started installing the necessary infrastructure. The electric metro, public and private lighting, and water and garbage removal were among the several services offered. The area hosted Egyptians

and foreigners varying in their economic status from middle class employees to wealthy traders and government officials. The architecture of Heliopolis was and is still (in certain areas) unique and attractive to the eyes. El Korba (an area in Heliopolis) still carries the architectural design that prevailed in the past.

However, Heliopolis today is different than the Heliopolis of Baron Empain. As most Cairenes would have noticed between 1960 and 1990 construction was void of any architectural aesthetics. Today, as I walk down the street where I live, I see “ugly” brown or irregularly colored blocks standing one next the other. Maybe only recently, few architects are reviving the importance of architectural appeal and one could see a handful of appealing buildings scattered throughout Heliopolis.

It is true that Heliopolis still accommodates wealthy Egyptians, such as those living in villas on Oruba Street or owning buildings in the district, yet it is also housing middle class families who are living in rented apartments, some of which are still following the old renting laws, which means they pay less one hundred pounds a month¹⁹ where the apartment if sold is worth a million²⁰ or slightly less²¹ depending on the street and area.

Heliopolis is thus catering to different economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, some of the wealthier segments of Heliopolis’ residents have recently purchased new villas and larger apartments outside of Heliopolis as in El Rehab City and New Cairo. One reason behind the

¹⁹ <http://www.coldwellbankeregypt.com/property/1285.html>

²⁰ <http://www.coldwellbankeregypt.com/property/10859.html>

²¹ <http://www.coldwellbankeregypt.com/property/1590.html>

move is the search for a more luxurious style of living. Another reason is the crowdedness of the city and absence of any recreational public spaces that used to be present in the past. Most parks have become fenced and some transformed to buildings, the hippodrome is locked and deserted and even the sufficient spaces for pedestrians to enjoy walking around have vanished. City Stars (a known mall) has become one of the very few leisure places for Heliopolis residents, being free to everyone and providing ease of walking around. The mall replaced the streets of Heliopolis for leisurely walks.

Heliopolis today, as many districts in Cairo, suffers from lack of parking spaces with a yearly increase in the number of private cars. Most Heliopolis households own at least one private car. A *Bawab* (doorman) is an important person for most Heliopolis households. He is the man who is supposed to guard the house and assist in quick errands from the neighborhood. A *Bawab*, usually comes from Upper Egypt and is either on his own or brings his family to live with him in a one room at the base of the building. In some recent buildings, the *Bawab* is replaced by a private security firm represented in a security guard and believed to be more professional.

The history of both settlements thus confirms their distinction, the origin of the area, the background of its inhabitants or current life style.

The Journey Begins...

As research and media attention are focused on sexual harassment, I find that there should be more attention devoted to women's safety in public spaces. Sexual harassment could be a strong source of danger, yet it is surely not the exclusive threat. Although I am the researcher, I am a woman myself. I started an exercise of deep reflection on risky situations that I avoid, but no longer do it consciously as it became more of a habit. When I discovered that there are a lot of issues and rights that I as a woman have given up in order to maintain my safety, I realized that it is worth exploring.

For me this research was a journey that I decided to take with all my participants. It did not start out or end on the day of the focus groups or interviews. I asked my participants to reflect on issues of unsafety in Cairo's public space before they arrived to the focus group. More intense reflections and perceptions were taken during the interviews. After each focus group I asked several participants to go through the realizations they have reached while participating in the focus group.

I also requested that they take a deeper look at their routes to work, home, shopping areas or any daily activities and take pictures of what they considered a source of risk, threat, unsafety or a simple hindrance to their freedom of accessing the public space. I adopted this approach which I shall call a "pictorial safety audit" when I realized that the Egyptian version of UNIFEM's audit tool would not be ready by the time I submit my research. I shall present some of these pictures in this chapter to prove that textual, visual, oral, or practiced evidences

converge to say the same thing – there is more on Cairo’s public spaces other than sexual harassment.

I am starting off this section with two commentaries from two participants; one from Heliopolis and another from Manshiet Nasser, on how they felt while participating in this research.

Just wanted to tell you that I enjoyed it so much and found it to be very beneficial (DONIA - Heliopolis)

”لا مش لازم نخلص.. عاجبني الموضوع ده” ن.س

“No lets not finish..I like this”(NI –Manshiet Nasser)

I added these testimonies to show how much women want to express and be heard. This chapter is the space I gave to some women living in Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser to reflect on and share their perceptions, fears and victories on the public spaces of Cairo. By no means do I intend to generalize my findings, but I aspire that more women will go through the journey we took, develop a new outlook regarding the spaces around them and start seeking change.

Heliopolis Residents

.....انا نفسى اتمشى (I aspire to walk around)

We are currently negotiating our right to walk around and we no longer think of our right in jogging or riding a bike (Donia, Focus group one Participant)

After conducting two focus groups for Heliopolis participants, one for those women working inside the area and the other for those working outside, I figured out that the area of work is not linked to safety or risk matters, but merely a traffic issue. Accordingly, I decided to present their discussions and themes covered as a collective, while identifying the differences and commonalities that each group had around certain issues.

The focus groups took place at the researcher's house since most participants are acquaintances. For the first group there were three Muslim and two Christian participants, with two out of the three Muslims being veiled (wearing the head cover). The second group had six participants, two of which arrived late and did not join the first two questions. In this group there were two Muslims and four Christians; with one of the two Muslims being veiled.

My choice of participants was not accidental, but I wanted to make sure that different groups (yet not all groups) of working women living in Heliopolis were being represented; the Muslim and the Christian, the veiled and the unveiled.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants I intended to refer to them using pseudo names. However, I will use my first name when I refer to myself.

On “Public” and “Private”

When examining the two focus groups which were conducted at different times, the first striking variation was in the answers to the first question; which was a free listing question asking them to take half a minute to think of the public places they enjoy accessing. One participant from the second group asked me to “*primarily define public*”. I redirected the question back to the participants asking *them* to define public. They had different definitions including “any place outside one’s house”, or “the streets and means of transportation”, and “the malls and restaurants”. From here the discussion on private versus public kicked off and this was the main purpose of the first couple of questions; understanding how women define public space. In the first group, however, there were no questions asked, they directly started writing their list on the papers provided. The conceptualization of the term “public” took place after the participants have listed their places and the researcher had to poke questions about how public or private were the places listed.

The places mentioned by the participants of the first group were:

- Heliopolis Sporting Club
- El Korba area
- Oasis restaurant and café’ complex on the way to the airport
- El Rehab
- City Stars Mall
- A Feluka (small rented boat in the Nile)

- The new Tivoli restaurants and cafés complex
- Zamalek in general
- Azhar Park
- The Shooting Club
- Cinema (City Stars)
- Mc.Donald’s El Merghany branch particularly

As a couple of participants have listed sporting clubs, I inquired whether they considered them public or private. They explained:

- **DONIA²²: its public...but.. it’s not public no (with some hesitation and giggles)**
- **NAILA²³: actually, I consider it....(was interrupted by DONIA)**
- **DONIA: its private but not very private as well.. I consider I’m with El Sha’ab (all “people” in slang).. a certain standard of “El Sha’ab”**
- **RANIA²⁴: I also wrote the club like DONIA, because it is public, it is not private like our house.**

The conceptualization session did not last long with the first group and I realized the terms public and private were not clearly defined, so later on I decided to send an email asking

²² Donia is 26 and got married three years ago. She is a graduate of Faculty of Commerce at Cairo University. She is self employed as a make-up artist.

²³ Naila is 27 and got married last year. She is a graduate of the Faculty of engineering at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (a private university). She just finished her Masters in Architecture and works as a Teacher Assistant at her university.

²⁴ Rania is a 25 –year- old Egyptian woman. She is a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Ein Shams University. She just got married last summer. She is working for a multinational corporation.

those participants to reflect again on what they defined as public and private and send me their replies via email. I got replies from two of them as follows²⁵:

*“For me there's a broad definition for public and private spaces which are simply places where **everybody** has access to or not..So a public space is an 'open to public' plaza for example where anyone can enter without having to pay or show an id or anything...*

Private spaces have more categories I think, starting from semi private which could be your building court (where only residents or their friends, family etc should be allowed in) and this is where I would also put a club cause it is not open for everyone yet not as private as your house for example. so it is permissioned for a group of people usually having sth in common (social , financial class but kind of wide range too. Therefore I would say that between completely private space (my room maybe) and public space (the street) there are different categories too..” SALLY²⁶

“About private and public places....What i feel is, that although for example the club is a private place but since it's huge and with a variety of different people and most of them i do not know or even know where they're from specially if i'm on my own there it gives me the feeling of somewhere

²⁵ I have simply copy- pasted the replies, even keeping the typos and grammatical mistakes as they are, since this has become a common trend in informal emails.

²⁶ Sally is 25 years old and is a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Ein Shams University. She just got married last winter. She works for a local landscape firm.

public, although if i'm there with a group of my friends I may feel that i'm more comfortable and more at ease and get the feeling that i'm in a private place.

So, the factors that make me feel that i'm in a private place is:

Size, standard of people, quality of things in the place, safety & know how of the people.

Factors that make me feel i'm in a public place:

Well since i'm talking about most of the public places in Egypt...

Cleanliness, lower standard of people, absence of security and inefficiency” DONIA

As for the second group, the full conceptualization of the term “public” took place during the session. Initially, what most of the participants have reached was that a public space is “*one where there are people (strangers) and it’s outside any “house”*”. Only one participant, AMAL, was not very convinced and when I asked how she defined public, she mentioned the following:

- **AMAL²⁷: for me a street, transportation, mall, public garden are public spaces, but I don’t feel that when I go to a restaurant or an outing at night that this is public, I know there is no clear boundary but that’s how I feel.**

After sometime of brainstorming, the different spaces listed by the group members of the second focus group were:

²⁷ Amal is 27 years old, a graduate of the American University in Cairo (AUC), having majored in Economics. She works for an international bank in downtown.

- Restaurants
- Malls (City stars)
- Church
- Sporting club
- Historical places
- Khan el Khalili (a known artisans market place in Islamic Cairo, near El Azhar Mosque)

The club was also a controversial place; the way it was perceived differed from one participant to another. MYRIAM²⁸ considered that it's a place out of home where she meets different and strange people, hence a club fits her criteria. MYRIAM added that “the club is similar to a restaurant, it's a place where there are strangers, but you know that the standard accessing this restaurant is more or less the same as yours”. SANDY defined it as a place outside of the frame of house and where she meets people she does not know even if this is a closed or indoors space. YOUSRA²⁹ confirmed SANDY's definitions while emphasizing the anonymity of the people in the place by giving an example about work and how she does not consider it public (albeit out of the house) because she knows everyone there. Hence, although a club was not fully public for it is not accessible to everyone, it entailed a degree of publicness according to these women.

AMAL, however, faced some challenges trying to categorize restaurants and hotels; she felt that they are open to anyone, but not really public. Hence, I summed up the two proposed definitions of public according to this group; “a place free for entry to everyone” or “a place

²⁸ Myriam is 28 years old, a graduate of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS) at Cairo University. She works for a local networks company in Maadi.

²⁹ Yousra is 25 years old and a graduate of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the German University in Cairo (GUC). She works for a local NGO in Mohandessin.

outside of homes and where you meet strangers”. SANDY eventually said “it’s different ways to look at it”.

It is clear from the past review, that publicness although carrying some common features such as outside of home and meeting strangers, was also perceived differently by each woman, and each woman had her list of factors contributing to her feelings of the level of publicness of the place.

Although Yücesoy’s (2006) and Phadke (2007) presented a definition for public space as “those areas of the city that are legally open to everybody: streets, parks and places of public accommodation” as well as, buildings and public buildings of semi-private and semi-public buildings (such as shops, cafes, cinemas, malls), Yücesoy’s (2006) confirmed that the term “public” should be evaluated on a continuum. This continuum ranges from more public to more private based on their function in social life from one person to another. “We experience the urban public space with varying degrees of publicness and privateness based on our perceptions, conceptions and the relational context” Yücesoy’s (2006:5).

Nevertheless, as I reflected more on the places the women listed, I find that most of them lie in the semi-public and semi-private category according to Phadke (2007). Although one would expect that access to power, economic capital or political position would grant women more access in the public space, Phadke argues that this is not the case. Women with greater access to economic capital (sometimes defined as middle or middle-upper class women as is the case of Heliopolis women) are welcome in certain “public” spaces such as malls and coffee shops. Yet these spaces are spatially governed- that is, “these are not public “public” spaces, but privatised spaces that masquerade as public spaces and they are carefully protected through glass

barriers from where the risks and uncertainties of everyday life are carefully edited out” (Phadke 2007:1514).

On safe space

I get horrified in Taxis

(MAYSA, Focus group one participant)

In a Taxi I won't feel safe but at least I won't hear fifty thousand provoking comments (AMAL, Focus group two participant)

After having dedicated substantial time trying to reach a definition of the term “public”, I inquired about whether the places the women enjoyed accessing were safe and what makes them safe. The first group did not reflect on what “safety” entailed, whereas the second group did. MYRIAM mentioned that there is no place that is 100% safe, even our homes.

- **AMAL inquired “safe from what? Now, when you ask about safety, I subconsciously think of safety from harassment. So, when I mentioned historic places as safe, that’s because it’s a place full of tourists, hence not much harassment, but I could also think that it’s not safe from bombings, so safe from what?”**

This, I found, was a remarkable comment, for it shows that for some women safety is translated in terms of absence of harassment and not safety from being hit by a car for instance. Again this was supported by other studies; Phadke (2007) referred to the fact that the discourse on women’s safety is the discourse on her sexual safety. I can confirm that throughout all the

interviews and focus groups I have conducted, sexual safety of women was what mostly influenced their mindsets.



This is right in front of my house.

I don't like passing in front of those "el shorta el 3askareya" (military policing) guys

They are doing nothing but starrng at you and saying rude comments and there's nothing you could do about it. They keep telling you where to park and where not to..etc.

I don't feel threatened by them, but I just hate their presence (RANIA-Focus Group one)

The participants of the second group argued that safety was not absolute and all the spaces they have listed could be theoretically unsafe, but there were surely factors that made them list those spaces as more enjoyable and potentially safer than others.

Some of the spaces, such as churches and mosques, were perceived by all participants as seasonally safe with factors like weekends, Ramadan or religious festivities and public holidays affecting their degree of safety. Common examples of unsafe places, identified in both groups, were Khan El Khalili (during Ramadan), malls during weekends, and the streets in general especially after an important soccer game in which Egypt won, because people tend to behave in manners that are sometimes insecure and alarming.

Concerning the factors that the women pinpointed affecting their security, one factor that came up repeatedly was “lighting”.

- **YOUSRA: Light is important so that people can see each other and so no one harasses the other and to avoid having dark corners with drug addicts. It happens. It actually happened under my house in Heliopolis, there was a broken street lamp so a group of youth gathered under it and shared shots of drugs.**

Additionally, familiarity and the presence of people were other factors. However, the presence of people was meant in the sense of not being a deserted place yet not being too crowded. Spaces mostly referred to as “too crowded” were Al Mouski and Attaba (popular cheap shopping areas), public means of transportation (a point that will be tackled shortly) and spaces that entertain alcohol and smoking such as pubs and private party ballrooms.



That's our parking area (at work); where two incidents of "bag snatching" have happened (RANIA –Focus group one).

- **SANDY³⁰: I don't feel comfortable because I'm unsafe in these spaces (pubs and private parties ballrooms), due to the possibility of having someone burn you with a cigarette or spill a drink on you or bumping into you and you can't tell whether it's for harassment or crowdedness, all of this alarms me.**

One factor mentioned only by MYRIAM was the size of the space. According to her, the smaller the space the safer, for it limits the number and variety of people that could cause a

³⁰ Sandy is 23 years old, a graduate of the British University in Egypt (BUE) majoring in Business Administration. She works for a petroleum company in Maadi.

threat. Furthermore, YOUSRA hinted that places that are accessed for a purpose (such as a supermarket, hospital or clothes shop) are usually safer than those places which people access for no clear purpose as in the case of many malls today.

Also, different women hinted at their fear of kiosks in the streets especially at night because groups of men gather there. According to these women, men present in groups pose a greater threat, because they usually like to harass them in order to show off in front of each other (displaying machismo).

Cairo's Public Transportation: Is Segregation the Solution?

Interestingly, for the two groups, most of public transportation was perceived as unsafe. Group one placed the new "CitiCab" as the safest option in the market. Group two mentioned that the train was the most convenient, specifically because of their financial ability to entertain themselves in a first class carriage.

In group one, there was an argument related to the underground's (commonly known as the Metro) safety. The disagreement was whether it was safer when it's crowded or empty. For some participants, it is the crowdedness of the metro that makes them anxious, while for other this crowdedness gives them an aura of security, especially because they used to use the women's cart. SALLY said "*the metro is a nuisance because it's crowded not because it's unsafe*", but DONIA said "*I think it's unsafe because it's crowded*". For both participants the main threat was of a sexual nature; however theft was also another threat.

This discussion and argument erupted in both focus groups with the discussion taking several directions; crowded versus empty, safety versus convenience and finally feelings of alienation which is a point I will tackle shortly. Below is a dialogue between group two participants with regards to safety and public transportation:

- **AMAL: I won't feel safe in a Taxi, but at least I won't hear fifty thousand provoking comments!**
- **SANDY: for me the metro is safer than a taxi**
- **AMAL: the metro is "bahdla aktar" (inconvenience)**
- **SANDY: yes it is but in terms of safety..... (leaving the comment open)**
- **AMAL: most of the spaces I do not like accessing are due to the fact that I look very awkward among the rest of the people there**
- **SANDY: but don't you feel safer in a women's cart than in a taxi with a man?**
- **YOUSRA (adding on SANDY's comment):... and he is in control**
- **AMAL: I have self (meaning she carries self defense)**
- **YOUSRA: ok...(a silent moment) ah this is something important**
- **SANDY: although I'm against the idea of separating men and women and all this talk, unfortunately I feel safer in a women's carriage than being on my own with a man in a taxi**
- **AMAL: I look awkward in most of the public transportations. If I'm in the women's carriage in the metro I feel like I'm "crossed" out or as if I'm coming from another continent or another planet. I don't like people (including women) looking at me as if I'm an Alien.**
- **SANDY: for me the serious harassment that happened to me was in a taxi**
- **AMAL: that's why**

- **MYRIAM:** even if I worked in the metro station itself I won't use the underground!

In sum, taxi is perceived as a highly risky option for most women, some of them would never use it and choose to walk rather than take one. Others would use it to avoid “Bahdla” (inconvenience) in other public transportations or feelings of alienation. Nevertheless, women in Heliopolis have unanimously agreed that all public transportations are unsafe and all of them own their cars to maneuver around the city and no longer need public transportation.

Standard of People, Standard of People

Any man I do not know, is a threat

(YOUSRA-Focus group two participant)

The “standard or quality of people” present in a given space was the major factor, affecting women’s perceived safety. It was mentioned with an apparent consensus among the participants of both groups.

- **AMAL:** it’s not about the size of the space, but the quality of people
- **MYRIAM:** I hate accessing Khan El Khalili or Azhar area during Ramadan, the crowdedness is abnormal, very “very” (*emphasizing*) low standard of people due to the presence of “Moulids³¹” you don’t know what could happen.. thefts maybe.

³¹ Religious festivals

- **YOUSRA:** the places I enjoy accessing would be the parks that are NOT free. For instance a free park like the one on the way to the airport wouldn't be a place I would go to because there is a category of people there that I wouldn't want to deal with. But somewhere like Azhar park has an entrance fee, so you are kind of "limiting" the type of people entering. The same applies for restaurants that are not "that cheap". So I would go to Abou Ramy (*a restaurant in a popular district near Islamic Cairo*), but I wouldn't be really pleased about it. On the other hand, I would feel more comfortable going to a restaurant like "Rostary" for instance – for the same reason of limitation. As for a mall, I wouldn't access all malls, as well. Basically I would access any place where certain categories are excluded.

As I inquired more about what my participants meant by the quality of people, these were their elaborations:

- **AMAL:** People who more or less resemble me socially. I know they wouldn't want to steal or kidnap or harass me. They are people who think like and were raised up, more or less, like me. For example, when I used to go to university (*AUC*) I knew that most of the people are from the same socio-economic class, they have the same background, more or less. Thus, the possibility of me being intimidated by their actions was almost absent.
- **YOUSRA:** When I think of the quality of people, it's out of my hands not to add (*on AMAL's criteria*) people who are financially less than me. I have a certain belief that the men, who are financially less than us, are unemployed and

delinquent. They don't do anything but wasting their time annoying women.

They could even steal me to buy drugs or because they are simply poorer.

The presence of families also defines the quality of people. When I'm in a place where there are families, I usually feel safe, because individuals (*men*) would respect themselves in the presence of families.

Consequently, the characteristics of those who are labeled as belonging to a different social standard and potentially harassers were poor and unemployed. However, as the participants started discussing these characteristics they found that poverty or financial standard aren't necessarily the sole indicators, for they have been exposed to harassment from old men, as well as, financially capable ones who were driving luxurious cars.

Hence, AMAL reiterated what she meant by "different social standard" confirming that she did not mean lower economically but "*people who are used to seeing women only in Galabya (traditional robe for rural men and women) – it's simply someone who hasn't seen women!*"



This is right next to our building; there are workers everywhere. It doesn't feel safe to go alone in this street, especially at night. (even if it's only a one-minute walk, till I reach my car) (RANIA – Focus Group One)

Uneducated was added to the list. However, after a long discussion, “difference in upbringing” or “bad upbringing” was seen as the main justification for the different harassments that are occurring from different men belonging to various social classes.

Most of these characteristics match those of the textual analysis of Egyptian newspapers and magazines that the Land Center for Human Rights³² conducts on a semiannual basis to trace reports on violence against Egyptian women. In their 2009 report that was issued in January 2010, they mentioned the following:

³² <http://www.lchr-eg.org/>

We have noticed that men who commit violence against women are usually from the poor strata and working in unsustainable (marginal) jobs or are unemployed or are listed criminals. There were also many cases of sexual assault that were primarily committed by drivers (Land Center for Human Rights 2010)

Nevertheless, all women additionally expressed serious agitation towards children or kids who use dirty words, hit and run. They explained how their state of helplessness is aggravated when the kid runs, it is even more demeaning. When I inquired about the age of these young boys, the women mentioned they are usually in the preparatory stage, around fourteen or fifteen years old.

As I moved forward with my questions, I wanted to test whether these women believed in the discourse linking slum area dwellers and the rise in violence, harassment and aggression witnessed recently.

Most women from both groups refused this kind of discourse. The first group refused to generalize that these lower standard people are necessarily from informal settlements.

- **RANIA: Sometimes it's the porter's son who harasses though he lives in Heliopolis and not a slum.**

Although the women refused linking violence and harassment to slum dwellers, their narratives embodied contradicting views. Some of them have participated through a church or organization in charitable activities in slum areas and they confirmed they were not harassed.

However, they affirmed that the image they held, before going from other people about these areas was that they would be strongly offended.

Participant NAILA recalled when she was preparing her thesis and wanted to conduct her research in Dweiqa (a slum area part of Manshiet Nasser). Everyone around warned her that if she went there “she will not return” and so she gave up and did not conduct her research there.

On the other hand, participant SANDY justified the spread of crimes in Ard El Golf area specifically by reiterating a rumor she heard about El Darb El Ahmar (a popular neighborhood next to El Azhar) inhabitants hanging out there:

- **SANDY: it’s a very “very” (*emphasizing*) informal site and is full of “baltagya” (gangs), this is why Ard El Golf is not safe. Areas like El Darb El Ahmar are very poor, with unawareness, drugs, and terrible upbringing. So yeah I believe informal settlements breed up violence**
- **DALIA³³ (in response to SANDY): but there is no country with only one social class on its own, there is always “this” (meaning the poor) beside “that” (meaning the rich)**
- **SANDY: what I mean is that if these factors are present for instance in a household in the same building as yours, the same problem will happen. If a boy**

³³ Dalia is 23 years old, a graduate of the Faculty of Business Administration at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport. She is self employed as a founding member of a local media company.

isn't well brought up and takes drugs it's the same issue. So it's not slums per se, but maybe in slums all these factors are highly concentrated

- **DALIA:** some men are well off and yet would stop their car wanting you to get in with them...
- **YOUSRA (in response to the previous discussion):** my own philosophy is that unemployment plus poverty threatens the man's machismo as he can't feed his household. So what will enrich his masculinity would be sexual issues; he could go rape a girl to express his manhood!
- **DALIA:** If you consider the maids; most of them are the ones working and their husbands are staying home, probably taking drugs. The intimate relationship between both is hence distorted. As a result the man "diverts" to fulfill his masculinity

Accordingly, most of the women felt that harassment is violence committed by poor and rich men. However, they perceived the poor as having masculinity problems and are experiencing frustration both of which were factors possibly justifying their higher tendency to harass, abduct and rape.

Other threats

Aside spaces that are potentially intimidating due to the possibility of harassment and the quality of people accessing these spaces, these women have included other sources of threat. These threats emerged after a long discussion, and all the stories on harassment were over. It is

true that harassment has influenced these women's mindsets that they could not think of any danger other than it.



That building is just in front of my office. I never park there. Coz walking in the street (in front of it) will end up with something of this building falling over my head. The building looks very unsafe & some thieves or “rapers”(rapists) might use for hiding. In addition to all of these tires hanging from the building that can just fall at any second (YOUSRA –Focus Group two).

- **SANDY: other than harassment, streets are no longer safe for driving.**
- **YOUSRA (in addition to SANDY): ..and the trucks are scary,**

- **YOUMNA³⁴ (in addition to YOUSRA):.. especially on the ring road**

As I inquired about possible crimes taking place, the term crime was primarily translated to most women's mindsets as murder. However, after proceeding with the discussion they realized that "crime" includes more than just murder. Theft, especially of mobiles and bags was common, and a couple of participants from both groups recounted incidents of theft that they or their parents were exposed to. Some of the incidents reiterated included theft under the threat of a weapon. These incidents all took place in Heliopolis.

Beggars were another distinct source of threat referred to by the first group. The fact that they approach one's car very closely, pass their hands through the windows or keep on nagging, worries many women. They expressed their fears of any stealing act that might take place and this they explained, justifies their automatically locked cars.

Additionally, drug consumption seemed to be common in different "known" areas in Heliopolis, which is perceived as dangerous, because no one knows what these young people could do after they are completely stoned. Hence, they pose threat not only to women, but also to everyone as well.

³⁴ Youmna is 27 years old, a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Ein Shams University. She works for a local architecture company in New Cairo.



I just wanted to show that at night it's a bit scary since the area where my house is located is a bit uncrowded. There are guys who smoke and drink and take drugs and that makes me feel very insecure especially if i'm back late and alone. They are always there since the place is dark and in a decent area where the police is not usually available and that is more insecure for me...(DONIA – Focus Group One)

It was made clear by one participant that prostitution, which is also common on some known streets in Heliopolis (such as Merghany) is not a cause of threat per se, but discomfort. She raised an interesting point, in relation to this, whereby any woman standing by the side of the street, whether she is waiting for a taxi or even waiting to cross the street could be perceived as a prostitute and cars would be stopping for her. Clothes no longer distinguish standards or the prostitute from the other women.

I find that this latter source of discomfort is related to what Phadke (2007) referred to as risk of reputation. It was implicitly expressed when NAILA said “*because my street is known for the presence of prostitutes, I avoid walking there*”.

The issue of reputation was further raised in response to the question on night shift work and whether women should accept such jobs or not. I find the discussion that took place worth quoting here:

- **SALLY: the gazes of the Bawabeen (porters or doormen) influence me**
- **MAYSA³⁵ (in response to SALLY): the idea of what my surrounding community thinks about me isn't of importance. As long as I know what I am doing and the important people in my life know khalas! (*that's it* in slang Arabic)**
- **RANIA (after reflection on both comments): but I think we can't generalize, Heliopolis Bawabeen got used to the fact that women go out a lot and return late.**

She gave a comical example on how *Bawabs* get used to Heliopolis residents' habits

My Bawab would one day see me dressed normally, then at night he sees me (while going to a wedding) with “no clothes”, so he gets used to our style of living.

Another similar discussion or slight argument erupted among the second group participants:

- **YOUMNA: No she shouldn't quit, it depends on how will she go back and forth**
- **MYRIAM (in response to YOUMNA): ...it could be a night shift but she finishes in the morning so it's no problem**

³⁵ Maysa is 25 –years- old. She is a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Ein Shams University. She is single, working for a local interior design firm.

- DALIA (in response to MYRIAM): ..people’s perception about her would be “zebala” (dirty)
- MYRIAM:.. but I think if she is a doctor or a nurse people won’t say anything
- DALIA:... (giggling), that was in the past
- YOUMNA (in response to MYRIAM):... they would say “ah she says she is a nurse.....” (*with sarcasm*)
- DALIA (in response to MYRIAM):... others would be talking
- AMAL (in response to DALIA)... who are the others?
- DALIA:.. the neighbors and the bawabeen
- AMAL:.. wouldn’t a bawab talk seeing u dressed like this? (*pointing at her jeans and top attire*)
- DALIA:...but even your colleagues at work, they would look down at you given you accepted to work that late
- YOUSRA (commenting generally):.. the type of people in the public space late at night are very different. I used to work in a pharmacy and as it got late in the night the type of clientele was scary
- DALIA (in response to YOUSRA):.. also this type of people would feel that you deserve being harassed being out on your own that late
- YOUSRA: ... or they would say if you are scared go back to your mummy babe!

Controversy erupted over people's perception of women working late and whether in Heliopolis things should be different than other places in Egypt (especially in popular neighborhoods). There seemed to be a group of women believing that people talk even if they are in Heliopolis, while others felt that Heliopolis residents are different and they would understand that some jobs dictate that a woman returns late. As for the Bawab, group one concluded that any new Bawab (coming from Upper Egypt probably) would be shocked at first and then he gets used to their style of living.

Both discussions ended with some of these women fearing to break a normative order which dictates that women should not return late to their homes. It is important to note that "late" in the context of Heliopolis was perceived as after midnight. Phadke (2007:1511) referred to this as "the risk to "reputation" of accessing public space against a normative order that defines women's proper place as being in the private spaces of the home". She added that this type of risk includes other risks such as "the risks of loss of matrimonial opportunity and a questioning of sexual virtue"(Ibid). This risk is even more evident in the narratives of Manshiet Nasser women, coming shortly.

On the Importance of Work

Given that one of my criteria for choosing the research participants was that the women are working women, I wanted to enquire about the relationship between work and vulnerability to threats –that is – whether going out to work is perceived as more exposure to threats or not. With the consensus of all participants, work was seen as exposing women to more threats, yet this helps them gain more confidence, teach them how to deal in different life situations and become more independent.

An interesting comment was mentioned by MAYSA “*the Egyptian street will get used to women’s presence*”. It was interesting to see how some Egyptian women could be thinking of what I might call a “silent movement” to “take back the Egyptian street”.

Additionally, participants linked increased feelings of safety to access to work, because as the woman gains confidence while present in the public space, she does not seem as vulnerable to potential offenders. Hence, “*the more the woman goes in and out of the public space, the more her personal feeling of safety increases*” said SALLY. NAILA even said that “*women staying home are more vulnerable*”.

This feedback is again perfectly in line with the findings of the Land Center for Human Rights’ 2009 Annual Report on Violence against Egyptian women. The report concluded that women who do not work such as housewives are increasingly becoming victims of violence such as murder and sexual abuse. The report explained this recorded increase to these women’s vulnerability due to their lack of life experiences (given that they are mostly present in their houses).

Heliopolis Residents’ “Technologies of the Self”

Throughout the focus groups and women’s narratives, Foucault’s “technologies of the self” became more evident. Women from Heliopolis have unconsciously developed their own techniques to ensure better safety while being in the public space.

Below are some random statements (not a discussion), reflecting some of the first group’s techniques.

- **NAILA:** I sometimes have an eye contact to read the man's intentions (is he attempting to harass or minding his own business), but this is just for a moment.
- **MAYSA:** I feel safer, having friends with me in the car late at night.
- **SALLY:** I actually used to go to a private lesson, five minutes away from my home, by bike and I was harassed all the way, so I ended up quitting riding the bike after a couple of times.
- **MAYSA:** A woman shouldn't take a night shift if she does not have her own car or haven't a man to drive her home. If the work's bus drops her in front of her house it could be possible.

Here is a dialogue or a discussion that took place among the participants of the second focus group.

- **AMAL:** I like going to Khan El Khalili, but I do not go there alone when it's crowded. I could go on my own on a morning, as I usually like buying silver from there.
- **MYRIAM:** yeah because at night, you need to have a man with you. A group of women going on their own at night isn't possible as well
- **YOUSRA:..** the presence of male friends no longer makes a difference
- **SANDY:** ...yeah but it's the feeling you are safer

- **MYRIAM:** ..and even if something happened (while you are with a man) it would be verbal but no one would approach or physically harass you

Other random statements were of high relevance among this group's participants as well.

- **YOUMNA:** I wouldn't go like how I look now to a construction site, I would have to change my clothes style. I would also not go alone, I have to take someone from the office or be accompanied by a male colleague.
- **MYRIAM:** A man was asking for directions and as I directed him, he touched me so I stopped answering anyone on the street or keep a long distance between strangers and me.
- **SANDY:** I would protect myself in the future by returning early and lock my car while driving.
- **YOUMNA:** If I am going to a wedding and wearing a formal dress I wouldn't park away and walk with the dress. I would have a coat or something to cover me up.
- **DALIA:** I would valet park during weddings or evening parties.
- **YOUSRA:** I would wear a sweat shirt (not a tight top) in El Muski (*a popular shopping district*).
- **DALIA:** During summer, I would put a shawl on my "cut" or strapped top till I reach my destination.

Aside the aforementioned techniques these women adopted, they have listed some places they would no longer access such as: Damascus street (known street in Heliopolis where mechanics are clustered), play station shops and net cafes, and “*Qahwa Baladi*” (traditional coffee shops).

Some women felt that spaces like “*Qahwa Baladi*” were controlled by men, and they were brought up (by their mothers) believing that they are not socially proper for women to access. Accordingly, some women do not access these places for cultural reasons, while others felt that their safety was threatened in such places. Other techniques included slowing down their pace of walking in case they felt someone was following them in order to ensure that the person is not stalking them.



I took that picture from my car, as I was too scared of someone seeing me.

*This place is a narrow street near my office, I usually avoid walking there, as the men are always sitting on this “Zahwa baladi”(traditional coffee shop) in the street, smoking, drinking tea & harassing the female passengers.
I am also convinced that these men are stoned, so I feel insecure being around them
(YOUSRA- Focus Group Two).*

Unfortunately, most women in both groups have given up their right of maneuvering around the city on foot. Their cars are the main means of traveling around the city. Nevertheless, most of them have expressed their genuine desire to walk freely on Cairo’s streets and that the leisure of simply walking around or loitering are not freedoms granted to women anymore. Riding a bicycle, motorcycle or jogging on the streets have become highly gendered activities in the Egyptian society.

The following random comments on the importance of car for Heliopolis women are analytically important.

- **MAYSA: I can go anywhere as long as I’m in my car**
- **YOUMNA: Harassments might have decreased after I grew up as I have a car now.**
- **MYRIAM: The secondary school and university years are the highest periods of exposure to harassment (due to their dependence on walking and public transportation and absence of a car)**
- **NAILA: I wouldn’t expose myself to “Bahdla” in order to feel safer, so I’d rather not go out. I am someone who if I do not have a car I wouldn’t go down. It’s very sad but it’s a fact.**



*I pass from this street everyday on my way home.
I always think of what will happen to me if my car stops for any reason on that place,
what will happen if I have to move out of my car.*

*These small alleys horrify me, because the men inside always treat me as if I am a
different species of women, other than what they are used to seeing. I feel scared being
in a small place where all the men know each other, coz if one of them decides to hurt
me in any way, the others will join him & won't protect me (YOUSRA – Focus Group
two).*



This is on my way to work. Though it's a deserted area, but I feel safe as long as I am in the car.

This makes me wonder, if Heliopolis' women lost their ownership to a private car, would that lead to what Phadke (2007) referred to as the risk of loss of opportunity to engage city spaces and the loss of the experience of public spaces?

On What Affected their Perceptions of Safety and Threat

Because we have witnessed a lot we no longer offer help

(YOUMNA Focus group two participant)

Personal experiences in certain spaces and shared experiences with friends and colleagues are the most influential factors that impacted these women's perceptions of safety of certain place. Participant NAILA said:

“It feels closer- violence and crimes became closer”

RANIA added that if her car broke down anywhere late at night, she would panic and feel scared, even though she knows how to fix the problem, but

“All the bad stories that I heard from friends would invade my mind and paralyze me”

This matches the definition of “Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments” referred to in their Women's Community Safety Audit Guide:

Feelings of safety in a particular space can be determined by our present and past experiences of that space, of a similar space, or by the experiences of other people we know or have heard about. We may also feel more or less safe in public spaces as a result of whether or not we have ever experienced a violent incident. Women who have experienced violence express more concern for their personal safety in all situations than women who have not experienced violence (WISE 2005).

Another related factor contributing to women's vulnerability is their lack of trust in the police institution. When I asked them about their perception of the police and whether they knew where the closest police station was, they all knew the nearest one to their houses. Not all of them knew the nearest one to their place of work. Nevertheless, all women unanimously agreed that the presence of police does not make them feel safer. Most of those who went to the police

station were for ID issuance or passport or finalizing papers for car insurance. And when I asked them whether they would go to report any harassment or violence committed against them, these were some of the replies, in a discussion during the second focus group:

- **YOUMNA: They are the ones who would harass me!**
- **DALIA: I am scared to go there (a police station) in the first place; my wallet got stolen once and I had to wait till the following day for my brother to come with me to file a suit**
- **AMAL: I would never go on my own**
- **DALIA (interrupting): “Al amen el markazy” (National Security Forces) are the worst**
- **AMAL: yeah they made me cry once! (because of the horrible verbal harassment)**
- **YOUSRA: I once had a fight because of them!**
- **YOUMNA: or when you are driving close to their cars (National Security Forces)..ouf!**
- **DALIA: yeah you feel as if they will all hop on your car**

To this end, it is clear that personal safety concerns Heliopolis women and that once they get over their harassment stories and incidents, other threats emerge. Nevertheless, some of these women are slowly and silently challenging feminine passivity and submissiveness by working and engaging themselves more in the public spaces of Cairo.

Manshiet Nasser Residents

El Manshia is the safest place we access (group three participants)

For the Manshiet Nasser research participants, I have conducted two indepth interviews, each lasting for an hour and a half, with two women living in Manshiet Nasser, but working outside of it. The reason for my choice of interviews in their case is the rarity of their case; not many women work outside the area, and this is based on my field experience for eight years in the neighborhood. As a result, I wouldn't have found at least five women within my circle of network working outside the area.

On the other hand, I have conducted a focus group for women working inside the neighborhood – specifically for the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE). The focus group included five women most of whom I know since I started my field work, eight years ago.

In this forthcoming part, I will present Manshiet Nasser research participants' feedback and narratives, while contrasting these to the narratives and findings from the Heliopolis participants. However, I shall elaborate on the commonalities and differences in my last chapter. It is important to note that the area of work is highly linked to safety and risks in the case of Manshiet Nasser and this will be clarified in this part.

Additionally, I will present the pictures that were taken. These pictures were captured by participant HEND along with four other young working women, who did not participate in the interviews or focus groups. HEND was supposed to take the pictures on her own, but for safety

reasons she took her four friends to accompany her and assist her in finding the spaces of unsafety that they encounter. Although the input of the four young women was not planned, I find that they have contributed to the visual auditing by taking a lot of pictures that added to the wealth of this component. I have added some of the pictures they have taken covering all the themes they have focused on.

All interviews and the focus group took place in a private school, where these women were present over a weekend for a camp organized by an organization I volunteer for. The place was very convenient, for I had the chance to be present with my participants alone with no interruptions. If I had conducted these interviews in their NGO in Manshiet Nasser I wouldn't have had this luxury of quiet space with no interruptions for long.

As shown in the literature on the area, the *Zabaleen* community which is mostly Christians inhabits a certain area of Manshiet Nasser commonly known as El Manshia or El Zarayeb, and the Muslims inhabit the rest of Manshiet Nasser (often known as El Ezba). El Zarayeb starts from the area's entry in front of the citadel and ends at the location of APE. My field work was mainly conducted in *El Zarayeb*, thus all my research participants were Christians. The group of women working inside the area was randomly chosen from the NGO. The two women I interviewed were identified and asked to participate in person, not on a random basis, given their special case. These two women are referred to as Madiha and Nashwa.

On Public and Private

For all participants from Manshiet Nasser, public and private discussion did not last as long as it did in the Heliopolis groups. None of the participants asked what I meant by the term

public and so the conceptualization of the term “public” took place after the women listed their preferred spaces. I started off both the focus group and the interviews with the same free-listing question of spaces the women “enjoy” accessing (not necessarily safe). The findings from the focus group and interviews were as follows:

- Monasteries
- El Attaba
- Carrefour Mall Maadi
- Geneina Mall
- Fun Fair Park
- Downtown
- Gardens

When I inquired on how did these women define “public”, these were the responses I received:

- **MADIHA³⁶: A place open to everyone.**
- **NASHWA³⁷: A place where there are many people and everyone could enter it. It’s not privatized and fenced.**
- **MARTHA³⁸: It’s a place anyone could access anytime and it’s not private.**

As I asked some of the participants on how they view monasteries within this definition, they slightly withdrew their assertion that they are public for they know monasteries are open to Christians only. Here, as I pondered on the spaces mentioned, I could find that the majority of spaces mentioned lie towards the public side of the Yucesoy’s continuum and not as in the case of Heliopolis’ participants; semi private and semi public. Places like El Attaba, Downtown, and gardens are open to everyone and at anytime. None of the participants here mentioned restaurants, cafes or clubs. Additionally, most of the areas referred to were for shopping purposes. I would return to the “purpose” point at a later stage for its imperative to understand how women define or see their claim to the public space in terms of purpose.

³⁶ Madiha is 24 years old. She is single and a graduate of the faculty of Tourism, Helwan University. She works in a private sporting club in Maadi

³⁷ Nashwa is 25 years old. She is engaged and a graduate of a private institute. She works in a local factory in downtown.

³⁸ Martha is 25 years old. She is single. The last education certificate she holds is the preparatory one. She works in APE

Cinema was mentioned by several Heliopolis participants as an enjoyable place to access, it was mentioned by MADIHA, but in a different context. To her, Cinema was a place she would have loved to access yet cannot because of the traditions in the area stigmatizing the cinema as an improper place for decent women.

Manshiet Nasser residents did not consider that going around for errands in their area is considered “going out”. MADIHA said “*going out means out of the area, going for an errand in the area isn't outside it's as if I'm in my house*”. The area's streets are not perceived by some of these women as public, but more towards the private part of the continuum. NASHWA reinforced this point view when she indicated she wears an “Abaya” (loose dress) while walking around the area, but would wear more formal clothes if she is going out of the area.

Hence, it's clear that there is a common understanding of what a public space is, yet there is a difference in the perception of what a street or “going out”, entails between Heliopolis and Manshiet Nasser residents. There is also a clear distinction between the spaces accessed by both groups; most of the spaces accessed by Manshiet Nasser women for a couple of purposes; worship or shopping, while most of the spaces accessed by Heliopolis women were for a different purpose – that is – entertainment, socializing, playing sports and also shopping.

On Safe Space

MADIHA was the only one to refer to the absence of absolute safety in any space. According to her “*in any place one feels unsafe; one is prone to any incident, harassment or theft*”. Although none of the participants inquired about safety from what, there was a subtle

consensus that the prime threat was harassment. In most of their narratives on what makes a safe space, harassment was implicitly referred to as follows:

- **MARTHA: A place where there are no men! (giggling with other participants)**
- **NASHWA: It's a place where there is a system. I wouldn't tell you they shouldn't allow certain people getting in, for eventually everyone pays and gets in, but the space needs to be "open". I mean the space should not have hidden areas. Also it (the design of the space) should not encourage "one" taking the "other" in an isolated area.**

In NASHWA's narrative, she hinted to a point similar to YOUSRA's, which is the limitation or screening component, whereby certain categories of people are filtered out in order for them to feel safer in a given space. It is true that NASHWA did not mean the exact same thing, for YOUSRA referred to the screening of a certain category of people who are from a different social standard. However, NASHWA meant trying to filter certain people prone to behave indecently. I do not assume that both subconsciously meant the same people, but there is a possibility that the same description ends up to be the same category of people but described from different angles. In several comments it was clear that she has witnessed indecent scenes in gardens that she perceived as risky for her sexual safety and this is why she reinforced the absence of hidden areas.

Al Attaba was mentioned in both interviews as a place women access a lot for shopping, despite the fact that it is unsafe:

- **NASHWA: I like shopping there but it's not safe. They (the men) always verbally harass there. Some could even touch you and or stalk you. Others could come to you and ask you where you want to go to give you a ride. Shopping there is cheap and nice, but I'm worried when I go, especially at night. At night they seize the opportunity that it's dark and stalk you and could even get into the same transportation with you.**

Most of the harassment came from the men selling on tables in the middle of the streets. They could grab a woman from her arm to watch their products or keep verbally harassing the passersby. City Stars was similar to El Attaba, but in the context of Heliopolis residents. Most of Heliopolis participants have indicated that they have heard of scary stories about City Stars parking, children being kidnapped and were exposed to some harassment, yet their preferred shopping spot was still City Stars. In this however, I believe it was the relative convenience of city stars that attracted women, however in the case of El Attaba; it is probably one of the few “available and affordable” shopping areas for Manshiet Nasser women.

In terms of factors influencing feelings of security; familiarity, the presence of shops and lighting were of the common ones contributing to the physical safety of a space; and again safety from harassment or abduction.



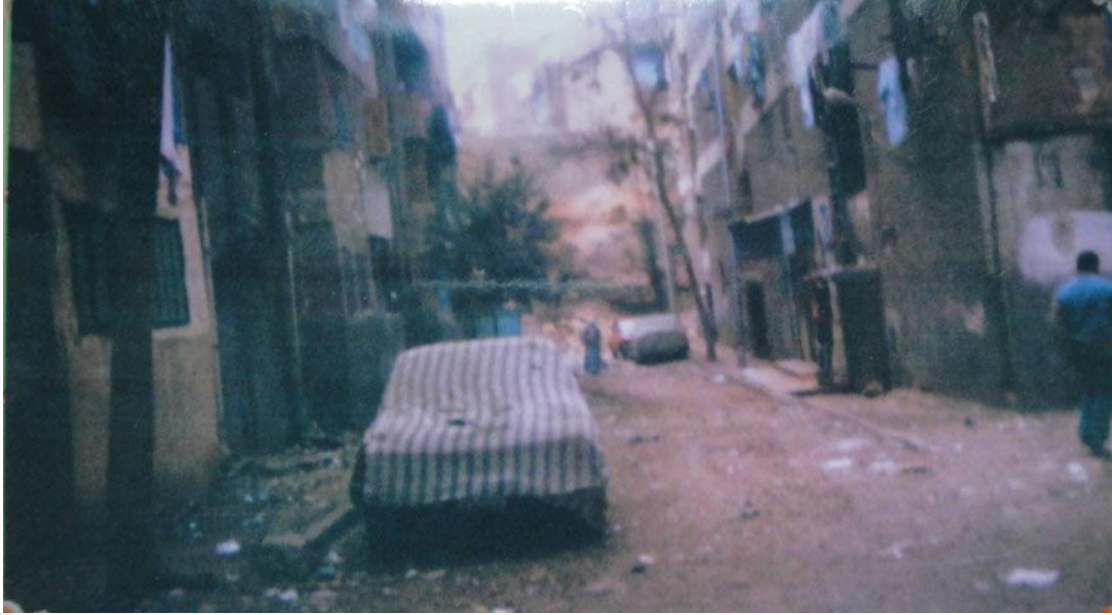
(The two arrows show the two side street the women showed me)

We are scared accessing those streets in El Masaken area. We usually access them for there are good hairdressers and it's where our exams are often held. However the men there physically harass. They usually compete against each other who will give us a kiss or hug us!

- **NASHWA: Presence of shops would make a difference if they are open during our working hours, because the owner of the shop could ask the guy stalking us to stop.**

Again, like in Heliopolis, the absence of lighting, in small “*Haras*” (alleys) encourages groups of “boys” to gather to get drunk or stoned. I mentioned “boys” for they are not adult men, they were described as boys who have dropped out of school and get access to drugs, alcohol and “Kolla” (a local addictive inhalant) behind their parents’ backs. These boys are dangerous when drugged for they are not aware of their behavior and have harassed some of the participants

either very early in the morning on their way to work or on their arrival from work. Interestingly, during the focus group the women agreed that adult men no longer hide their drug consumption habits; they explicitly smoke hash and other types in all of the “*Qahwas*”.



A street in an area known as “El Masaken”. It’s the worst area in Manshiet Nasser. The street as seen in daylight is deserted and its very unsafe at night especially with the presence of youth consuming drugs



This is the area near the market in “El Ezba” area and its very crowded which makes it a potential space for physical harassment , as in men or kids bumping into you

Dogs were a recurrent source of threat for all participants. I was intrigued by such a threat that I inquired about the reason behind the spread of “aggressive dogs” on certain streets. NASHWA gave a thorough explanation that was complemented by participants from the focus group.

- **NASHWA: The dogs either come from the *Bawab* of a wealthy neighborhood who wants to get rid of a newly born dog. He, thus, gives it to the Zabal (Garbage collector). Or when some of the residents in the area are scared from**

robbery of their equipment and houses, they buy these special guarding dogs. These dogs could get violent because of the maltreatment.

- **BASMA³⁹ and MARTHA: Dogs protect properties like trucks, donkeys, houses, and even from potential rape.**

Most participants have indicated that theft was common in the area, not referring to casual stealing of a woman's bag on the streets, as was the case in Heliopolis, but robbery of houses and "*big stuff*" as referred to by one of the participants.

Transportation was also a source of threat for all Manshiet Nasser women. This was evident when I inquired about the reasons behind the focus group participants' preference to work inside the area.

- **BASMA: My dad told me no work "down"⁴⁰**
- **HEND⁴¹ (in response to BASMA):... the same reason, my parents know the NGO⁴². They told me it's safer than "down" with all the harassment and inconvenience present in transportation**

³⁹ Basma is 19 years old (but 25 in the official certificates). She is married since two years. She did not join the formal education but finished literacy classes. She works in APE

⁴⁰ Down indicates places outside Manshiet Nasser for it's on a hill so they feel they are high and other external places are down.

⁴¹ Hend is 21 years old. She is engaged. She did not join the formal education system but finished literacy classes. She works in APE

⁴² The Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE)

- **NESMA⁴³: Me too to avoid transportation. We hear of bad incidents happening to and from other women who go “down” and use transportation.**
- **BASMA: But now there are many factories that have their own buses picking the girls from the area and bringing them back. It’s a better option.**

I knew from my personal links with the participants that none of them owns a car and they mostly rely on public transportation for moving around. Even a taxi was not hinted at in their discussion. Because transportation is viewed as dangerous and exposes women to inconvenience and harassment, along with the absence of a private car, many women in Manshiet Nasser have opted to work within the area to avoid the hazards encountered by their peers who work outside. Having had participants working outside I have quoted some of the incidents they were exposed to and retold to their friends:

- **NASHWA: I was once on a microbus with a bearded driver and I was the last passenger. The driver’s gazes were not comforting and the door of the car had something broken, which added to my fears. I decided to stop before my original end point and took another bus rather than continue with this man. There is a proverb that says “slander your money rather than slander yourself⁴⁴”**

During another incident during which I was also the last passenger, the driver told me do not you know that the last woman on the bus gets kidnapped? But

⁴³ Nesma is around 28 years old. She is single. She did not join the formal education but finished literacy classes. She works in APE

⁴⁴ هين قرشك ولا تهين نفسك

I told him that I am not afraid and God is with me. I also told him you won't do anything to me and so he did not mention anything until I went down.

Additionally, the chaos ruling the usage of the public space was considered a factor menacing their physical safety.

- **NASHWA: The side streets are usually not clean or organized. There are many workshops there, and the trucks are randomly parked, the cattle and dogs are not tied. I could easily stumble into anything in the dark or get chased after by a dog or so.**



This area is in "El Zarayeb" area. It has a lot of garbage including dead animals and the street is very slippery and I could easily slip. Also near the area there are violent dogs, but I couldn't take their picture as I was scared



This picture is shot in “El Zarayeb”, a street called Saad Azer. The area is locally known as “Mostashfayat” (meaning hospitals) because the garbage there is the waste of hospitals. It’s very unsafe on the health level, we are scared to walk fearing a needle or anything with blood gets into our feet. We are afraid to place any food in our balconies fearing from flies carrying contamination from this waste. The scenery there is also horrible; there is a lot of blood and sometimes organs or dead stuff.

One of the obvious differences in the narratives of women from Manshiet Nasser and those from Heliopolis is the discourse on the “standard or quality of people”. This term was not even uttered by any of the participants from Manshiet Nasser. As I inquired about the men who are alarming to them in the public space, all women agreed that there was no clear description.

- **MARTHA and NESMA: the old men are more than the young**

- **BASMA:** Outer looks no longer tell. The youth in our area are following the latest fashion trends so you can't tell a delinquent guy from a decent one.
- **MADIHA:** There is no clear description; there are men the age of my dad who do strange things. It's not the poor only, there are ones with cars and they look very decent and they harass and call onto girls to ride with them. It has nothing to do with rich and poor or old and young, it has to do with the environment and the upbringing.



This a view of one of the Qahwa Baladi, the picture is blurred as I was sneaking to take it, by placing the camera on the level of my waist and pressed the shutter button so the man doesn't see me. We usually get verbally harassed by similar men.

There was quite a controversy that I have noticed within the women's narratives; focus group members and NASHWA have confirmed that they are harassed in their area on the route

to their work and that the areas mostly potential for harassment are the streets on which an *Qahwa Baladi* is located, only MADIHA has denied being exposed to harassment from men in the area.



This area is known as “El Sekka” as there is a railway passing through the edge of the area facing the autostrad. This area lacks any lighting at night and is full of Qahawa Baladi which makes it very unsafe for us to walk through it.

- **NASHWA:** You could find that someone from my area seeing me harassed and he does not protect me. Men from my area could also harass me.
- **MADIHA:** I get harassed on the street outside of my area on the way to the bus stop and in the transportation. No one harasses from my area, on the contrary they defend me against men from outside. Even while passing by “*Qahawa Baladi*” no one in my area says anything, but if I passed by an “*Qahwa*” “down” they would.

What has been agreed upon by all women that no man dares to physically harass a woman from his area, because of the closed community and the fact that everyone knows the other; hence a fight could erupt due a physical harassment incident.

On the other hand, physical harassment takes place from preparatory kids, which is the same problem Heliopolis residents complained about; this remarkable discussion took place as I inquired about other common areas of harassment:

- **MARTHA: yeah El Gabarty school**
- **BASMA: but those are kids**
- **MARTHA: you do not get scared except of those preparatory kids!! They do strange things (with a shy smile on her face)**
- **HEND: they could hit you on the back!**
- **BASMA: no no(emphasizing) there is worse than this as well (not mentioning what but just stating the fact)**



This is a dumping site in El Zarayeb area and its usually children who work in it. These children are dangerous for they throw us with stones whenever we pass by this particular site

As I inquired about the common acts of violence and threats to safety in the area; adultery (and prostitution), theft and fights using white weapons⁴⁵ were the top ranking crimes throughout the focus group and interviews. Honor crimes were also said to be common, but they were not truly “honor” crimes; some participants indicated that the women were killed for exposing a family secret, while others said they were victims and others said they were truly honor crime for the woman was maltreated by her husband or forced to get married so she committed adultery. The exact motive behind this type of crime is unknown, however what is known is that most of

⁴⁵ These include daggers, Swords, knives and other sharp metal objects

the murders committed in the area are against women. Women (specifically wives) are the typical victims of murders, while men are victims during street fights.

Adultery and prostitution entailed more than honor crimes; women's reputation was highly at stake in the area. Risk of reputation was discussed at length as I posed a question checking if there was a best time for women's presence in the public space.

- **MARTHA and BASMA: it's not preferable for women in our area to get out, after sunset. This is mainly to avoid people's talk; "where is she coming from where is she going?"**

So as I interfered to comment that accessing public space at night is merely to avoid talks and not for the presence of risks, I was confronted with these points of view

- **MARTHA: people's talk is risk also!**
- **BASMA: ...people's talk is the basis of risk. In our area it's really hard hard (emphasis), people keep asking where is she going and coming from**
- **MARTHA: people translate our actions the way they want and start inventing stories like we were out dating.**
- **BASMA: well for me I can't go out at night without my husband**
- **MARTHA: when I go to visit my sister, I can't return at night, so I sleep over, then return in the morning to my work directly. Even so, once I returned the other day from another route so some people started asking me where were you?**

I actually prefer people who ask me rather than those who interpret on their own.

The discussion continued as I posed another question on night shifts and whether women would accept taking night shifts for triple their current salary.

- **NESMA: if within my area, maybe**
- **MARTHA: a woman in Heliopolis could accept it, for she has her own car and people know where she is working but in our area it's hard. In our area the proverb "reputation precedes life"⁴⁶ applies. It means your life could come to an end, but your reputation (especially the bad one) will not. This proverb applies throughout all of Egypt**
- **MARTHA: the problem is that prostitution is widespread; most women fear their husbands go to "rented" apartments. On the other hand, most men think all women, apart from their wives, are prostitutes.**
- **NASHWA : Impossible!! Because of people's talk and I can't guarantee the quality of people present on the streets at midnight. They could annoy me and there might not be people who could defend or protect me.**

Although participant MARTHA hinted that Heliopolis residents could accept night shifts due to their access to cars, Heliopolis residents themselves did not feel they could drive that late

⁴⁶ السيرة تسبق العمر

by themselves. The quality of people present at midnight or after was referred to by both groups of residents.

Phadke's (2007) risk reputation is a serious risk affecting women in Manshiet Nasser. Nevertheless, women have developed some techniques in order to be able to visit relatives such as sleeping over at sisters or brothers and return in the morning or call a brother to pick them up. However, most women in the area have given up accessing the public space after nine or maximum ten in the evening. As I asked about whether a brother could pick his sister very late at night, NASHWA assured that people would still blame the girl and question from where the brother picked her up.

Accordingly, women are very vulnerable to people's talk, harassment (from kids, young and old), abduction, drug addicts, and even dogs and cattle. The presence of policing was not perceived as a source of increased security.

- **MARTHA: No the police officers do not add to our security. In big, serious fights, they come and take money from both fighting parties and leave.**
- **BASMA: In serious fights they do not show up except after people have almost killed each other**
- **MARTHA(elaborating on her first comment): after they take bribes from the participants in the fights, they go and collect innocent people so that they return to the station with "convicts"**

Work Inside or Work Outside: This is the Question

The discussions on women's work and the place of work were highly informative and unlike Heliopolis' residents whose areas of work had nothing to do with safety, the areas of work of Manshiet Nasser women were deeply embedded in the discourse on sexual safety and reputation.

Both of my interviewees who worked outside of the area have opted for this option due to the unavailability of work inside the area and their need for money to secure their future and possibly assist in furnishing their future houses when they get married. I had an elaborate discussion with participant NI on what she most hated about the area and it was through this discussion that the link between the area of work and the risks of loss of matrimonial opportunity and a questioning of sexual virtue was rendered explicitly:

- **CAROLINE: Has the area changed since you were a child? Can you elaborate?**
- **NASHWA: The only thing that has changed is people's fashion. However, there are negative habits that, since I was born, are still prevailing. So the change is in the clothes and they are no longer less than the people living in wealthy areas, but in terms of habits it's impossible for them to change**
- **CAROLINE: Why do not you like the area?**
- **NASHWA: The prejudice prevailing based on the time people go in and out of the neighborhood annoys me. If someone returns late they would think that this person was in a bad place, or if he has a bad friend then he is a bad person. A girl shouldn't return late. After 9pm is not good for a girl's reputation; they would start saying**

her work finishes early then she must have been in a bad place or was with “someone”

- **CAROLINE:** Would being out till late with a friend or a colleague give you any extra freedom or prevent people’s talks?
- **NASHWA:** No, they would think we are a “duetto” (duet) together and know each other’s secrets and we are going together to the same “place”. When I go to my sister’s, who is a street next to our house, I call my brother to come and pick me up so as to avoid the comments of neighbors (who are family as well)
- **CAROLINE:** What else don’t you like?
- **NASHWA:** The wedding night, they have to wait for...(the honor I continued) it’s awful, look this has stopped in many other places, but not in our area. Even in our family, during my sister’s wedding she did not want to pass through this but because she was working outside the area, she was forced to. My family told her “it’s because you are working and outside you have to do it”. People have doubts in the girl who works. Working outside the area exposes me to this more than working inside of it, because working inside people see where am I going but outside they do not know anything,
 - **CAROLINE:** If you were working in the NGO would it happen?
 - **NASHWA:** Yeah my parents would do it, but maybe wait till the following day.
However, now that I'm working outside they will do it on the same night.

MADIHA also referred to her disapproval of the traditions still prevailing in the area:

- **MADIHA: It's an informal area, because there is no planning for it and the people are still behaving in a disorganized way. They have improved or developed from the outside, but not the inside, their thinking is still *Aasha'wai*.**

She did not refer to the wedding and showcasing of a woman's honor, however she did not perceive that working outside exposes her to more questioning on part of other people. She usually returns at seven and rarely at nine. She is convinced that as long as a girl is decent no one would speak about her and as I asked her to define what she meant by "decent girl" she said:

A decent girl is known from the way she behaves and talks. She walks minding her business, she does not laugh out loud in public, she does not yell or call out others , she does not jolly or poke fun with others using hand. She sets boundaries or limits that she does not cross and does not allow others as well to cross. However, if she dresses in a way that isn't acceptable and laughs loud, once she is late they wouldn't find excuses for her

Most women felt that despite the inconveniences of working outside or even inside, work was important to sustain their future households and it teaches the woman many things. Learning how to deal with different people with different mindsets (than those prevailing in the area) was one of the benefits of working outside.

Contrary to this participant MARTHA felt that a woman should work only if the household needs the financial support. She firmly believed in the breadwinner model, whereby the woman's place is at home taking care of all its related duties and a man's role is to work and earn for the family. She defended her belief by referring to how working women have exploited

their position by disrespecting their husbands (being equal breadwinners) and the marriages collapsed because of that.

Manshiet Nasser Residents' Technologies of the Self

Most of the women who have participated with me have been working inside Manshiet Nasser and this by itself is a technology of self, for they are protecting themselves from exposure to risks outside their area. I have also referred to other techniques such as spending the night over at their sisters' and return the other day in the morning.

Additionally, some of them indicated that while finishing some errands in the area, they would wear something similar to an "Abaya" (long loose dress) to hint at the purpose of their presence on the streets and that it is within the area. In terms of clothes, some also mentioned that their dress code while they are with their fiancés differs than when they are on their own. Being with a male partner gives them more space to wear some "tight" clothes or "Bermuda" pants.

One woman indicated she is never afraid because she knows how to take revenge if she got harassed. She reiterated an incident when her sister hit a man who intentionally bumped into her, with her slipper.

Most women go shopping with an escort usually a friend, cousin, or sibling to decrease their vulnerability to harassment and have a support in case of any trouble.

As a result, with reference to Phadke (2007) "the manufacture of both purpose and respectability in order to legitimize women's presence in public space", most women from

Manshiet Nasser have subconsciously worked on manufacturing purpose (through certain dress code such as *Abaya*, or returning with obvious shopping bags) and respectability (by minding their own business, not laughing outloud...etc) to legitimize their presence in the public space.

CONCLUSION

The costs of violence against women, apart from the human costs, go beyond lowered economic production and reduced human capital formation but also include the costs associated with political and social instability through intergenerational transmission of violence, as well as the funds required for programs for victims/survivors of violence (Secretary General Report on VAW 61 session of GA. P 36)

My Internship..A Guide

My internship with UNIFEM has helped me choose the framework for my research. The ample literature and internal reports and documents that I have had access to, have introduced me to the conceptualization of safety within the UN and the concept of safety audits, which is a novel approach not yet practiced in Egypt.

I have used the themes and adapted some of the questions that were posed in safety audit tours to develop my own questionnaires and focus groups. As a result, my focus groups indirectly tapped on different themes related to women's security without intimidating my participants.

The visual component of my research was also inspired from the safety audits. I have found that when women were asked to reflect on their daily routes, they find certain threats that they might not think of while participating in a focus group or interview. The visual content has confirmed the premise on which this research has been based on – that is – the presence of other threats encountered by women in Cairo's public spaces. The pictures the participants took covered most of the themes covered in the focus groups and interviews, despite the fact that

some of these pictures were taken before the actual focus group or interview took place and without the participants' knowledge of what the interviews would entail.

Interestingly, Manshiet Nasser's pictures were all taken in daylight confirming women's narratives on the difficulty of being present out in public spaces after sunset. Some of the pictures were also taken from a distance to avoid questioning, since they were only protected by their presence as a group of women.

Heliopolis' pictures however, included a couple of shots which were taken during the night, indicating the relative freedom of accessing public space at night which women in Heliopolis have compared to Manshiet Nasser's. Interestingly, many of the Heliopolis participants' photos were shot while they were in their cars. Some indicated that they were afraid from questioning, while others seemed to be comfortable taking shots through their cars. This again confirms that women living in Heliopolis feel safest in their cars while maneuvering around the city.

As a result, the visual content has linked narratives with practices. It has revealed that the narratives I recorded from my focus groups and interviews were not just "talk" where women's practices were different. I have placed the pictures based on each theme covered in the focus groups or interviews. I have not commented on them, merely leaving the participants' comments as they are. In doing this, I wanted the reader to get engaged and interpret the links between the narratives and the pictures on her or his own.

Additionally, through my presence in UNIFEM, I have participated in several meetings with women's networks and NGOs working at the grassroots level. These have helped me better

understand the nature of informal settlements (like Manshiet Nasser). They confirmed that women are willing to talk about their concerns, but in the presence of female researchers they knew well and this has guided me in deciding to just focus on the women I know from the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE), for I have had established a long term relationship with them.

It is this strong relationship that has helped me get their visual materials. These women have taken many pictures of the areas they fear most in Manshiet Nasser. They told me “*if it were you who tried to take these pictures you would have been scolded*”. They were a bit scared themselves when they were taking them, but they went in a group of five to support each other and provide different views.

Personal security a neglected issue

Having had access to the Safe City Greater Cairo project proposal and related literature also assisted me in understanding that personal security is becoming a serious issue in urban areas. Violence has and is increasing as a result of the impact of complex forces (such as neoliberalism and globalization, yet not exclusively) on city life. With two-thirds of humanity estimated to be living in towns and cities by 2030 (UN habitat⁴⁷), personal security of city residents becomes imperative.

Personal security is, thus, an important aspect of gender justice and of social development. “Fear for personal safety is a major factor in limiting personal mobility which

⁴⁷ <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=3157&catid=41&typeid=24&subMenuId=0>

effects large numbers of individuals, particularly in inner city areas” (Lynch and Atkins 1988: 260).

In urban settings, intersections of insecurity occur based on, and are compounded by, factors such as gender, race and class identities and/or nationality status. Generalized violence also ‘hides’ specific forms of violence against specific groups – such as against women and other socio-economic and ethnic minorities. Concerns with urban crime often focus on protecting property rather than lives, with acts of violence against women and girls, or other minority and excluded groups, considered as isolated cases by indiscriminate perpetrators (UNIFEM 2009-1).

Nevertheless, as I have argued, perceptions of safety and risk are gendered experiences. Not only do men and women worry about the same risks but with different degrees, also both perceive different risks. Women not only perceive and experience cities differently than men, but they also use public spaces in different ways. Women often go shorter distances but to more diverse destinations in fulfilling their productive and reproductive roles, while men tend to go longer distances to a fixed destination that is their workplace (UNIFEM 2009 -1).

It is argued that women are exposed to higher violence in the private domain than in the public and that it is men who are more prone to violence in the public sphere. However, official statistics do not register the violence and intimidations women encounter everyday in urban public spaces. A clear and known (by now) reason behind this, is women’s embarrassment to report, especially when it is a man they are going to report to. Hence the continuous violence against women, which includes intimidation, groping, sexual comments and harassment, threats, and other nuisance crimes with sexual undertones, goes unnoticed and underreported.

The social construction of safety

Danger could be real or simply perceived (or imagined), but both influence women's behavior in public spaces. Lynch and Atkins (1988) quoting Hough & Mayhew (1985) have expressed the sentiments of many of my respondents, arguing

There is nothing irrational in worrying about an occurrence that may be very unlikely to happen, but is exceedingly distressing if it does.

My research has confirmed that women's perceptions of risk in public spaces are influenced by both the social and the physical settings. Fear is socially produced through different sources of knowledge. Primarily knowledge is garnered from personal experience as well as from conversations with other women who may have been victims.

Parental and spousal admonitions are another source of knowledge. As children, women are inundated with parental and societal warnings regarding their behavior and appearance in public. "Norms" on how they should walk, talk and dress in public have influenced their mindsets that they have automatically developed defensive strategies to maneuver safely in the public spaces.

Highly publicized media stories also affect the social production of fear. As indicated by my participants, media plays an important role in their perceptions of risks. The vast number of television and satellite channels along with the numerous newspapers are competing to report the most violent and horrifying incidents. This often misleads people's (women's) impressions of the

frequency of such incidents. It additionally exacerbates women's fear of the public spaces, to the extent that some women could have developed "agoraphobia"⁴⁸,

I add another newer source of knowledge –that is- emails (see Appendix One). Women (and men) from Heliopolis (and others who have access to emails) including myself are receiving, almost on a monthly basis ,an email warning about a new way of kidnapping, theft (of cars, credit cards), harassment and rape. The point is we never know the source of these emails, and they get easily disseminated to large numbers of people. I personally remember when I was an undergraduate, an email was widely sent to many women (and possibly men) warning us not to take taxis as there was an insane taxi driver in Heliopolis who kidnaps girls. I recall very well that I stopped taking taxis to the bus stop to reach my university for some time and my parents used to drive me to the bus stop early mornings.

Empowerment...again?

The research aimed at expanding the scope of investigation on violence and threats experienced by women in public spaces. It also intended to juxtapose the UN narrative on safety with that of the research participants'. In doing so, it has tapped on an often "exploited" term in the development field – women's empowerment.

Women's narratives on themes such as work, adaptation techniques and threats have been the driving forces for my reflections on empowerment. Kabeer (1999) has guided my thinking accordingly. Kabeer argues that empowerment is hard to define, but she sets certain benchmarks

⁴⁸ The definition of agoraphobia is a fear of being outside or otherwise being in a situation from which one either cannot escape or from which escaping would be difficult or humiliating (from Medicine Net)

that could guide in grasping what the term entails. She explained that empowerment could be viewed as the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them (Kabeer 1999:437).

Mahotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) described Kabeer's definition as distinct because it contained two elements which help distinguish empowerment from other closely related concepts: 1) the idea of process, or change from a condition of disempowerment, and 2) that of human agency and choice, which she qualifies by saying that empowerment implies "choices made from the vantage point of real alternatives" and without "punishingly high costs".

Additionally, Mahotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) hint at the availability of different attempts by scholars to develop a comprehensive understanding of empowerment by thinking of it as a process with several components. Kabeer's articulation as a choice making process entailed three inter-related components: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; agency, which is at the heart of the process through which choices are made, and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices.

Resources, however, are argued to be considered as catalysts or enabling factors for empowerment and are not empowerment per se. Hence, education and/or employment are viewed as enabling factors of empowerment. Thus, women's access to education does not mean they are empowered. "Agency", however, is the essence of empowerment, and achievements are the outcomes.

Considering this in the context of the Safe Cities approach and my research is vital. First it is important to understand a term coined by Bourdieu - doxa" which indicates the aspects of

tradition and culture which are so taken for granted that they have become naturalized (Kabeer 1999:441).

Throughout women's narratives it is clear that some of the techniques women adopted were in line with "doxa", such as not going out late at night, while others were implicitly challenging it. For instance, the mere presence of few women in Manshiet Nasser working outside the area challenged the taken for granted norm of women not working outside their neighborhood, is one form of agency. Maybe in that case safety is not the resource that led to this agency but maybe their education and critical awareness of the importance of exposure to people from different backgrounds.

According to Kabeer (1999), safety, economic status and class should all be viewed as resources and these resources emerged in this research as affecting women's agency and mobility. For example, it was clear that the travel patterns of Manshiet Nasser women were more constrained by security fears than those of Heliopolis (due to lack of access to a car and prevailing traditions). However, some women from Heliopolis showed constrained mobility practices as well due to perceived fear and did not make use of their economic status and class as resources. This is perfectly in line with Mahotra, Schuler and Boender (2002:9) who emphasized the following:

While resources—economic, social and political—are often critical in ensuring that women are empowered, they are not always sufficient. Without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interests, resources cannot bring about empowerment.

This is extremely imperative for UNIFEM and Safe Cities approaches working on empowering women. Safety is a resource that UNIFEM seeks to make available for women so they could have greater access to public space (more mobility as an achievement). However, without the essence of empowerment – the agency component - resources cannot lead to achievements. So if the project succeeds in making spaces safer, but women have not recognized and utilized this due to presence of factors hindering agency, no achievement would take place.

Safety is NOT enough

Trench, Oc and Tiersdell (1992) argue that women's fear of threats on public spaces are believed to be tackled using one of three strategies; general environmental improvements, segregation, and tackling directly the root causes of crime.

General environmental improvement is one of the strategies adopted by UNIFEM with the help of the safety audit tool. I have discussed this aspect with UNIFEM's country coordinator explaining that design can only create the preconditions for a safer environment, but cannot be a substitute for changing the conduct of the offending individual. I also added that those who are determined on criminal activity (such as drug consumption, harassment or theft) will not be deterred by changes in the built environment alone; they would actually find ways to destroy such environment in ways that fits their activities. For example increased lighting in an alley or a side street could be halted by the criminal's throwing of a simple stone to break the lamp.

In response the country coordinator emphasized that improving the built environment is only one outcome out of four outcomes targeted by the project. She confirmed that UNIFEM

Egypt realized the Egyptian context in which this project will be implemented and that they did not miss other aspects influencing safety in a given space when designing their program.

On the other hand, segregation which involves separate protected provision of services reserved partly or solely for women is highly controversial. It is viewed by some institutions and policy makers as a “resource” that will help women in achieving more access to public spaces. It was completely refused by UNIFEM.

Literature (Lynch and Atkins 1988, Loukaitou-Sideris and Fink 2008) shows that women seem to have mixed reactions to segregation. Some women, as participant AMAL, did not necessarily trust all other women and felt like “an alien” amongst other women, which intimidates her to use the women only car in the underground. Others feel segregated transport facilities would draw attention to them as targets.

Last March, women only taxis were introduced to Cairo streets⁴⁹. I sent different female friends emails asking them what they felt and here are some of the feedbacks I got:

I think that's a great idea to solve the problem of sexual harassment. on the other hand I think there is a dilemma...through the cafes, taxis for females though safer I believe we are in danger of legalizing segregation; it is like ur saying ok to segregation rather than make men and women assimilate in healthy way in the society, I'm not against having female drivers, I'm only reflecting that making cabs only for females can have its downfalls on the long run along with other "female only services (LN)

*In my opinion, this is a disaster!!
It's an unhealthy sign of a society going BACKWARDS.
Instead of solving the problem "sexual harassment" we are only solving the symptoms & now the problem of harassment will get uglier, as men will see less*

⁴⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/womenonly-taxi-hit-cairo-streets-1921271.html>

women around, so the first female that will be seen around will take a more harsh share of harassment.

We are turning into Saudi Arabia, because before we know it, people will give you THE look (howa enty ezay say3a kda) when u start ridding the normal cabs & why wouldn't extremist start banning the men & women to ride in same cab together!!!

This is simply UNHEALTHY !! (YOUSRA)

It's ok to have women as drivers DEFINITELY I AM FOR THIS and i respect women who struggle for their living and do not care if men would be mean to them... actually they are the ones standing against the problem.

YES for women as taxi drivers NO for women only riding with women.(MN)

Hence, segregation is like putting a bandage on a deep cut that needs surgery. It is a strategy which leaves the environment as dangerous as it ever was but exempts women from the consequences. Again, looking from an empowerment perspective, segregation will NOT empower women, for it will perpetuate the notion that women must operate under some kind of protection and thus may actually contribute to increasing women's fear of crime and violence, discouraging even more women from using public transport/spaces and hindering their mobility.

So we are left with the last strategy, which is tackling the root causes of the problem or VAW & G. Stanko (1997:488) has helped me articulate a crucial finding in relation to this:

“Lurking within our safety talk is an acknowledgement of blame –both from the self as well as from the wider community if they get it wrong. “Woman” recognizes that what is at risk is more than just an encounter with men’s violence. It is also a risk of self, a fear of being judged to be imprudent or to be exposed as being beyond prudence. Many criminologists fail to see our fear of crime as a display of our boundaries of self respectability, constructed within the many features of a gender stratified society”.

This research has highlighted the seriousness of women’s reputation. The risk of reputation exacerbates feelings of vulnerability. Women are always the ones being blamed for any harm that happens to them. If they get harassed, they are blamed for dressing inappropriately

or not following the modest codes of behavior. If they return late, they are perceived as having been out on a date or had an affair with someone. Even when they get raped, they are blamed for having seduced the criminal. Women's reputation is always at stake and young ones in particular fear for their marriageability if their good reputation is in anyway questioned.

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) study "Clouds in Egypt's sky" concluded that 53.8% of the men they surveyed blamed men's sexual harassment of women on the women. Media also portrayed the fact that women are always blamed for any aggression perpetuated against them, as was the case in Youssra's "*Qadeyat Ra'y Aam*" (a public opinion case), a soap opera aired on the Egyptian Channel One during Ramadan, where three women were raped and the struggles they confronted when one of them decided to report the incident.

As a result, I find that in order to grant women more mobility, safety alone as a resource is not enough. What is also needed is similar to what Kabeer (1999:441) has suggested; "the passage from doxa to a more critical consciousness through the creation of competing alternatives, so that "common sense" propositions of culture begin to lose their naturalized character". Programs like Safer Cities Greater Cairo Region need to work on changing the norms (doxa) related to women's reputation and the discourse on prudent versus imprudent and decent versus indecent woman.

This is partially fulfilled in the Greater Cairo program where another (one was the improved infrastructure) expected outcome of the project is the increased awareness of local communities on women and girls' rights in public spaces. The activities designed for this outcome also seem promising; however they are mainly focusing on sexual harassment. As a

result, I recommend that UNIFEM orients the activities of the third outcome in a way that encompasses norms about women's reputation in general and work on providing "competing alternatives" to shake the naturalized comprehension on women's integrity, which would be major resources affecting women's agency.

Final words..

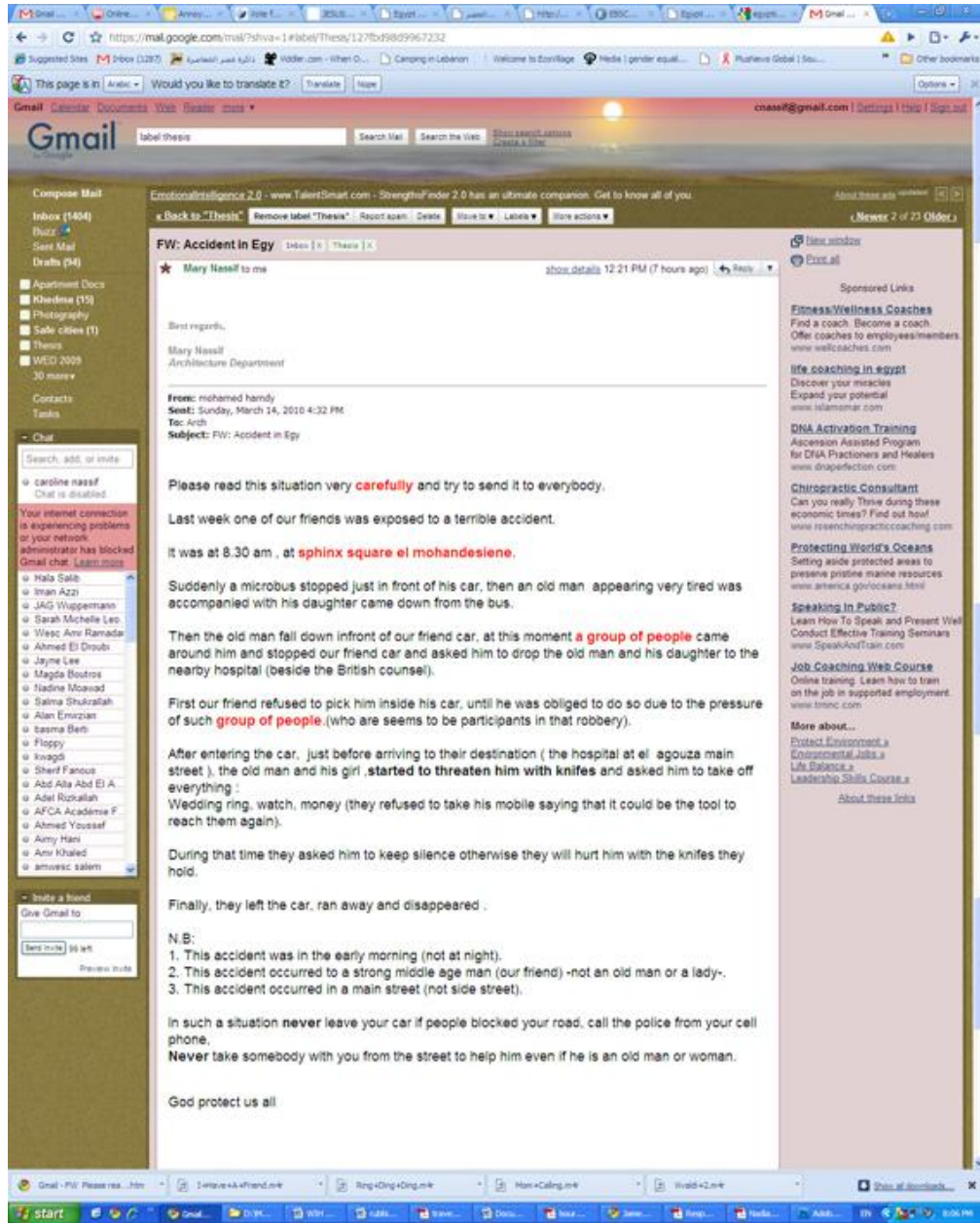
Safety, as Phadke (2007) mentioned, is directly linked to the level of claim that one feels to a space. It is the recognition of women as citizens with legitimate rights to the public space that has the capacity to convert women's relationship to the public space and the public space's reaction to their presence. Thus, "safe city for women is safe city for everyone", for when the city belongs to all citizens, it is safer to everybody.

Appendix One

Warnings Emails



An email warning Christian girls from a new way of kidnapping them



An email warning from a way of robbery during daylight.

Gas Turbine Operators - MeeFog.com/Gas-Turbine - Seeing 20% power loss on Hot Days? MeeFog augments MWs for only \$25/kW

Back to "Thesis" Remove label "Thesis" Report spam Delete Move to Labels More actions

label:thesis Search Mail Search the Web Show search options Create a filter

Compose Mail

Inbox (1422)

Buzz Sent Mail Drafts (95)

- Apartment Docs
- Khedma (15)
- Photography
- Safe cities (1)
- Thesis
- WED 2009
- 30 more

Contacts Tasks

Chat

Search, add, or invite

- caroline nassif Invisible
- Oops - Your AIM session has expired. Sign in again.
- Engy N Alfons Waiting On God
- myhelou
- Hala El Sonbaty
- Maram Khaled El baka2 lel Allah
- mo zamzamy
- Rami Morgan
- Abd Alla Abd El A...
- Adel Rizkallah
- AFCA Académie F...
- Ahmed El Droubi
- Ahmed Youssef
- Aimy Hani
- Alan Emirzian
- Amr Khaled
- amwesc salem
- Andrea Groves
- Arab Lotfi
- Atle Mikkola Kjosen
- ayman farag
- Aziz Mitry

Options Add contact

Invite a friend Give Gmail to:

warning4 Inbox Thesis

★ **Yasmine Nagui** to me show details Apr 15 (7 days ago) Reply

imagine u r a girl & this happens 2 u in the middle of a nite

From: Samir Saad
Sent: Sunday, December 20, 2009 2:10 PM
Subject: IMP info

Hi All,

It's a very IMP info...Please follow & tell others as well.

It seems that thieves invented a new way to force car drivers to stop.

If you are driving at night & were attacked with eggs on your car's windshield, please do not operate your wiper or spray water/liquid of any kind. Eggs when mixed with water turns milky & it will block your vision up to 92.5 %.

You are then forced to stop at the road side & can be the victim of robbery.

This is the latest technique used by robbers.

Take care & Drive safe. (Please do care to share this information with all your friends & relatives so that we can alert every1 about this new way of robbing people, especially during the long Holidays which fall soon).

DISCLAIMER:
 NOTICE: This e-mail message and all attachments transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of Credit Agricole Egypt (the addressee) and may contain legally privileged and confidential information. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or an employee or agent responsible for delivering this message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, copying, or other use of this message or its attachments is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately by replying to this message and please delete it from your computer.

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 Rugged & Field Tested XRF Analyzers
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Johstar The Plastic Man
 Malaysian plastic bag manufacturer T-Shirt bag/Garbage bag/Bag on Roll
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 Waste Management Industry
 2 Wheel Plastic Waste Containers
www.helesi.com

RNA Pouch Unscramblers
 Flexible feeders for food industry
 Flexible high speed systems
www.ma-Uk.com

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[Craft Bags >](#)
[Garden Flower Pots >](#)

About these links

An email warning from another form of robbery.

Warning 3

Yasmine Nagui to me

NEW FORM OF KIDNAPPING.

Please take a minute to read this. This is very scary and could happen to any of us. Seems like every nice thing people do for one another can be perverted.

A new twist on kidnapping from a very smart survivor:
About a month ago there was a woman standing by the mall entrance passing out flyers to all the women going in. The woman had written the flyer herself to tell about an experience she had, so that she might warn other women.

The previous day, this woman had finished shopping, went out to her car and discovered that she had a flat.

She got the jack out of the trunk and began to change the flat. A nice man dressed in a business suit and carrying a briefcase walked up to her and said, 'I noticed you're changing a flat tire. Would you like me to take care of it for you?'

The woman was grateful for his offer and accepted his help. They chatted amiably while the man changed the flat, and then put the flat tire and the jack in the trunk, shut it and dusted his hands off.

The woman thanked him profusely, and as she was about to get in her car, the man told her that he left his car around on the other side of the mall, and asked if she would mind giving him a lift to his car.

She was a little surprised and she asked him why his car was on other side.

He explained that he had seen an old friend in the mall that he hadn't seen for some time and they had a bite to eat, visited for a while, and he got turned around in the mall and left through the wrong exit, and now he was running late.

The woman hated to tell him 'no' because he had just rescued her from having to change her flat tire all by herself, but **she felt an easy** . (Trust that gut feeling!)

Then she remembered seeing the man put his briefcase in her trunk before shutting it and before he asked her for a ride to his car.

She told him that she'd be happy to drive him around to his car, But she just remembered one last thing she needed to buy (Smart woman!!)

She said she would only be a few minutes; he could sit down in her car and wait for her, she would be as quick as she could be

She hurried into the mall, and told a security guard what had happened, the guard came out to her car with her, but the man had left. They opened the trunk, took out his locked briefcase and took it down to the police station.

The police opened it (ostensibly to look for ID so they could return it to the man). What they found was rope, duct tape, and knives. When the police checked her flat tire, there was nothing wrong with it; the air had simply been let out. It was obvious what the man's intention was, and obvious that he had carefully thought it out in advance. The woman was blessed to have escaped harm.

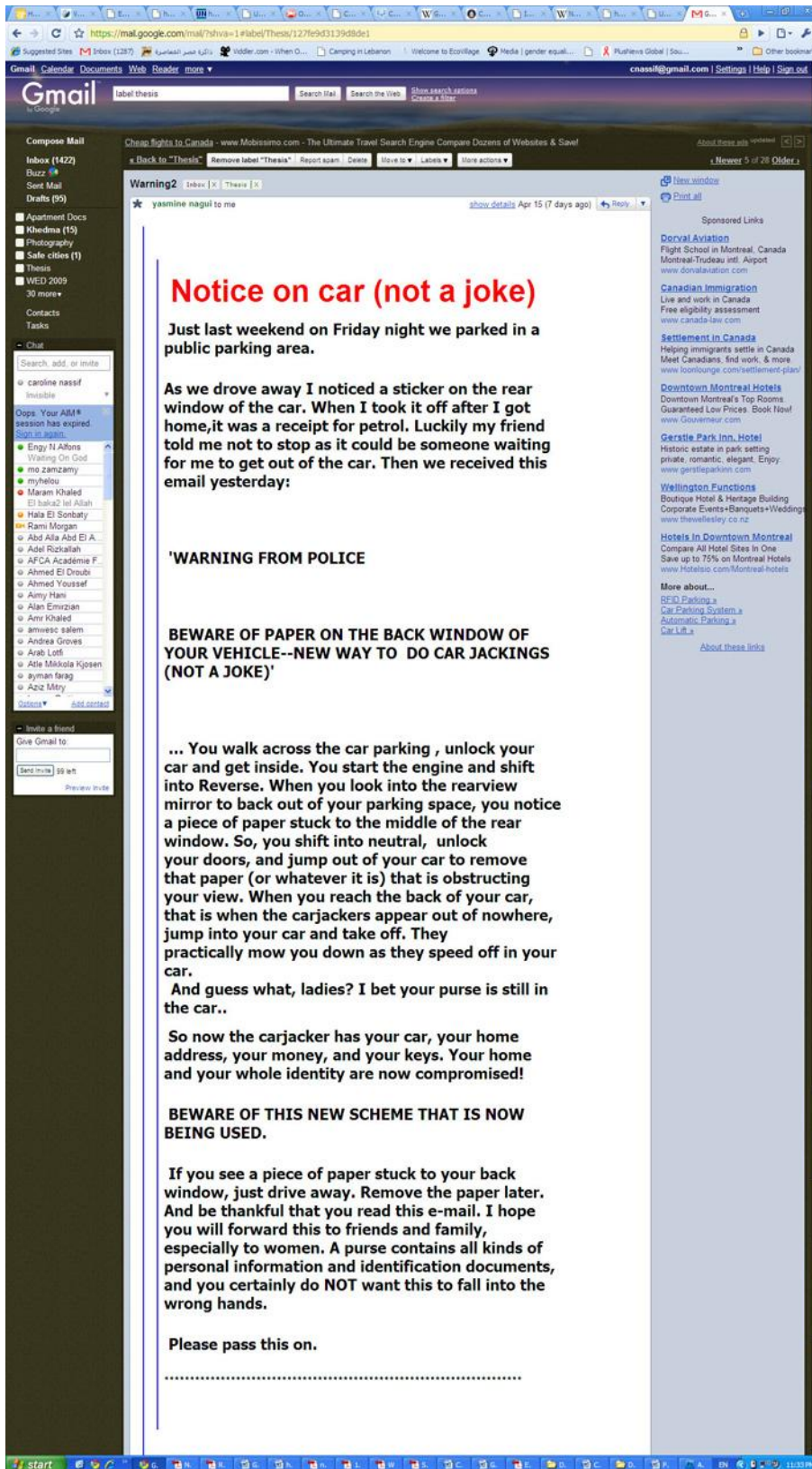
How much worse it would have been if she had children with her and had them wait in the car while the man fixed the tire, or if she had a baby strapped into a car seat? Or if she'd gone against her judgment and given him a lift?

I'd like you to forward this to all the women you know. It may save a life. A candle is not dimmed by lighting another candle. I was going to send this to the ladies only; but guys, if you love your mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, etc... you may want to pass it on to them, as well.

Send this to any woman you know that may need to be reminded that The world we live in has a lot of crazies in it. Better to be safe than sorry.

PLEASE BE SAFE AND NOT SORRY

An email warning from a new form of kidnapping women (regardless of religion).



Appendix Two

El Ethnein Article



- استتعينوا ببوليس نسائي تتوفر فيه ((الوحاشة)) ! •
- اولاد البلد أكثر شهامة وأدبا من بعض الشباب المثقف ! •
- هل صحيح ان الشباب عندنا ((يخاف •• ولا يختشيش)) ؟ •

الامور ، على شغل أوقات الفراغ عند الطلبة بعمل ما ، أو بالاشتراك في النوادي ، بدلا من أن يمضوا نصف يومهم « ملطوعين » على نواصي الشوارع ، أو متمسكين في مختلف الأماكن ••• كما ان رقابة أولياء الأمور للشباب ضرورية جدا ، ليجرؤوا - على الأقل - أين يقضى اولادهم أوقات الفراغ •••

المشكلة أعمق !

وقالت الآنسة « عائدة المازني » :
- اعتقد ان الوقت قد حان ليقوم المسئولون بتأليف لجنة تضم اصحاب الرأي ، لبحث المشكلة من جميع الوجوه ، وتقترح علاجا سريعا ناجعا. واعتقد ان المشكلة أعمق بكثير من أن تعالج باقتراح ارتجال ، لأن هفوة الظاهرة تتصل بالبيئة والمدرسة والبيت •••

■ ماذا تقترحين لو كنت عضوا في هذه اللجنة ؟

- اقترح مضاعفة عدد رجال بوليس الآداب ، والقيام بحملة واسعة النطاق ، عن طريق المحاضرات والسينما والصحف والراديو لتوجيه الشباب ورفع مستواه الحقلي وصرفه



السيدة سميرة الشافعي
مقابلة شريفة 1



في ندوة الأدبيين:

احمد زهير
مشكلة
المفارقة

خلوها تستفتي !

ثم استأنفت السيدة سميرة الشافعي الحديث قائلة :

- اذكر اني شاهدت في الاسكندرية اثنين من الشبان يضيقان الحناق على فتاة صغيرة السن ، وكانت تسيير مسرعة تكاد ترفض لتتخلص من هذه المضايقة ••• وفي خلال ذلك مرت برجل البوليس الذي وقف يمتع نظره بهذا المشهد دون أن يتحرك ، فاقتربت منه وقلت له :

- الا ترى كيف يطارد الشبان هذه الفتاة ؟

فاجاب في عدم اهتمام :

- ايوه يا أفندم ••• شايفهم ققلت :

- ولماذا لا تقبض عليهما وتذهب بها الى القسم ؟

فاجاب في أسلوب القانوني الضليع :

- خليها تستفتي أولا ••• وأنا اوديعهم في داهية ! « الجانون » كده !

ضرورة جدا !

ثم اختتمت حديثها بقولها :

- ويجب - الى جانب العقوبة الراجعة - أن تعمل المدارس ، وأولياء

من « معاكسة » السيدات في الطريق؟ واجابت السيدة سميرة الشافعي بقولها :

- ان الشباب عندنا - وبخاصة المأثور : « يخاف ولا يختش » فيجب تشديد العقوبة على كل من يرتكب هذه الفعلة السمجة التي يدلل بها من يرتكبها على ضمته ، وفساد تربيته ، وانحطاط أخلاقه

وأول ما ينبغي اتخاذه من التدابير هو تبسيط الإجراءات القانونية ، فبدلا من أن يطلب من السيدة الذهاب الى القسم أو المحكمة ، يكتب في تسدوين ملخص أقوالها بمعرفة رجل البوليس الذي يقوم بضبط الحادث •••

ويجب عدم الاكتفاء ببوليس الآداب وحده ، بل يجب أن يتضامن رجال البوليس جميعا في مكافحة هذه الظاهرة الخلقية الوضيمة ••• انسا نلاحظ - مع الاسف - ان رجال البوليس الذين في الشوارع لا يحركون ساكنا وهم يشهدون شابا يطارد فتاة أو يلقي على مسامعها ألفاظا بذيئة ، وكذلك رجال المرور ، وما ذلك الا لأن ههذه الحوادث ليست من اختصاصهم •••

الصحف قد اثارنا موضوع « الماكسات السمجة » التي تتعرض لها السيدات والفتيات في الشوارع ومحطات الترام و « الاتوبيس »

ونشط الكتاب والباحثون الى بحث المشكلة ووصف ألوان العلاج وقد رأينا أن نستطلع آراء لفيث من السيدات والآنسات في ههذه القضية التي تحتل المرأة فيها مركز « المجثي عليه » ••• ومن ثم تكون المرأة أقدر من سواها في وصف الداء ، والدواء

ووجهنا الدعوة الى لفيث من السيدات والآنسات أعضاء « اتحاد فتيات مصر » اللاتي توفرت عندهن الشجاعة الكافية لمواجهة المشكلة وبحثها •••

واشترك بعض الطالبات الجامعيات في المناقشة ، لكنهن آثرن اغفال اسمائهن خشية الاستهداف لسماجة بعض الطلبة ومضاعفة حملة « الماكسات » عليهن •••

وطرح على المحاضرات السؤال التالي :
■ ما الذي تقترحين لمنع الشباب

كانت

– إن كان زواجا ، فانا – منذ التو والحظة – قابل ...
 ونهرته الوالدة ، فهول مبتعدا ، وهو يتعثر في جنبه وقطانه ويقول :
 – كفى ... انها سؤال وجواب فلا داعي « للخناق » !

في السينما ..

وحدث أن كانت إحدى الآنسات تشهد حفلة دار سينما مع أسرته ، فجلس إلى جوارها رجل في الستين من العمر ، واهن القوى . لا يكاد يقوى وضع قدمه على قدمها ...
 وأخرجت الآنسة ، وخشيت أن تخبر زوجها بالأمر فتكون مشاجرة قد يخرج منها ذلك العجوز قتيلا ، وحاولت أن تردعه بلطف ، فلم يتردد ، وعندئذ مدت يدها و « قرسته » في قصبه رجله ، فرصة شديدة كادت تنتزع بها قطعة من لحمه ... فصاح متوجعا لشدة ألمه ... وجزع المتفرجون الذين بجانبه ، ووطنوا أنه أصيب بعرض مفاجئ ، فسأله بعضهم :
 – فيه حاجة ؟ تلززم مساعدة ... ؟
 فأجاب وهو يغادر مكانه في عجلة :
 – لا ، متشكر ... بس حاسس إن قلبي « طيق » على ... وعازب أطمع في الهوا ... !

فقر .. ومغازلة !

وأخذت الحاضرات في سرد أغرب و « أزدل » حوادث « الماكسات » التي صادفتهن ، فروت الآنسة عائدة أنها كانت يوما تستقل الترام ، في مقصورة السيدات ، وإذا بشباب تبدو عليه جميع ألوان « البهذلة » ... فأصابع قدميه تكاد تطل من حذائه البالي ، وبدلته مصابة « بجرب مزمن » ولحيتته لم يحلقها من شهر ، وشعره القدر يتدلى على قفاه ، ومع

(البقية على الصفحة التالية)

التالي كان يربط أمام المنزل ، فإذا تعب من الوقوف ، جلس على دكة بواب المنزل المقابل ، وهو يقدم للسيبوس المسجابر الفاخرة ... !
 وحدث أن غادرت المنزل ، فسار خلفها ، وأخذ يتحدث إليها في جراءة غريبة ، ونهرته قائلة :
 – ألا تخجل من هذا التصرف السخيف وانت في سن جدى ؟
 فأجاب في صفاقة :

– ما أنا عارف انى عجوز ...
 ولذلك أتمسك بتجديد شبابي بالاكسير الذى ينبت من نظرات عينيك !
 وكان وهو يتحدث إليها لا يكف عن ترقيص حاجبيه ... وأراد أن يعض في مضابقتها ، فهدته بتسليمه إلى البوليس ، وعندئذ تاب إلى رشده وولى هاربا وهو يقول :
 – بوليس ! هيه وصلت للبوليس ؟
 ده عيب حتى لما تسلمى واحد قد جدك للبوليس !

ثم اختفى عن أنظارها ، ولم ينس وهو يتمتعها أن يلتفت خلفه ويحييها « برقصة » سريعة من حاجبيه !

لا داعي « للخناق » !

وحدث لاحدى الحاضرات أن كانت تسير برفقة والدها فلحظت أن هناك شيئا مغمما يتبعها ، وكلما دخلنا إلى أحد المحلات التجارية ، وخرجنا منه ، وجدناه في انتظارها ...
 واعتنم هو فرصة خلو الطريق من المارة ، فلحق بهما وسار بجوارهما ، وقال باللغة العربية الفصحى وهو وهو يحرك أواخر الكلمات ، ويضغط على مغارجهما بشدة :
 – لست أبغى غزلا ، ولا تشببيا ، ولا نسيبيا ، ولا « بصبصة » ...
 ولكنها أمنية جالت بخاطري ...
 ودهشت السيدتان من هذا « اللغوى » المغازل ... بينما تابع هو الحديث قائلا :

والاستهتار إلى الحد الذى لا يتورع معه عن مغازلة السيدة التى تكون مصحوبة بزوجها وأولادها وباقي أفراد أسرته ... وكانها يعتقد « سي روميو » أن نظرة واحدة من عينيه الساحرتين كفيلا بأن تجعل الزوجة تترك من معها وتترامى على قدميه ولسان حالها يقول : « يا حبيبى تعال الحقنى » !

طيش الشيخوخة !

وقالت الآنسة سعاد المازنى :
 – ولكن ... ماذا يوجه الاتهام إلى الشباب فقط ؟ ماذا لا تتناول المشكلة أولئك المتصابين الذين جاوزوا مرحلة الشباب ، ممن لا يتورعون عن مغازلة الفتيات اللاتي في سن حفيداتهم ؟ قد يكون للشباب من طيش شبابه عذر ... ولكن ما عذر الكهول والشيخوخة الذين يبلغ بهم الاستهتار إلى الحد الذى يخرجهم عن وقار السن ، وحكمة الشيخوخة ؟

مغازلة مضحكة !

ومضت الحاضرات في سرد ما اتفق لهن من « مأكسات الشيوخ » ... فروت احدها من انها كانت تجلس مع أسرته في أحد الاماكن العامة ، وإذا برجل لا تقبل سنه عن الخامسة والستين ، أصلع الرأس ، يصبغ بالخصاب شاربه وحاجبيه ، ويتمتع بصلصة حمراء « كاللقفاصة القشورة » يتخذ مجلسه في مواجهتها ، وكلما اتجه نظرها نحوه أخذ يرقص لها حاجبيه بسرعة مدهشة ، جعلت شكله عجيبا إلى درجة لم تتمالك معها من الضحك ... !
 وتوهم صاحبنا ان ضحكها دليل على وقوعها في هواء ، فظل يتابع هذه العملية ، ويمازح « الجارسون » ويضمن مزاحه عبارات الغزل الرخيصة ، ولما انصرفت السيدة مع أسرته ، اقتفن أثرها حتى عرف منزلها ، وفي اليوم

عن الاسفاف في التفكير إلى الحد الذى يستتبع لنفسه معه معاكسة السيدات في الطريق ، متناسيا أن أمه وأخواته يتعرضن لهذه المأكسات من أمثاله ...

كلمة حق !

ثم قالت الآنسة :
 – وأستسمح زميلاتي عذرا إذا « حكيت » معي كلمة الحق ، فرأيت أن أدلى بها ... اننى أرى إن بعض الذنب يقع على السيدات والفتيات اللاتي يسرفن في التبرج ، ويرتدين الملابس الخارجة عن دائرة الحشمة ، يقصد استغلاف الأنظار ، وكسب أكبر عدد من المعجبين ... وهن بهنهنه الأزياء « الخارجة » يدفعن الشباب إلى معاكستهن ، ذلك لأن الشباب الغرير ، يعتقد ان التي تبرمجهاستها من خلال الثياب ، إنما توجه اليه دعوة صامتة إلى مغازلتها ... !
 فلو قيض لى أن أكون عضوا في تلك اللجنة ، لاقتصرحت تنظيم الأزياء النسائية بحيث يتوفر فيها الجمال والاناقة والحشمة ...

شمشمة !

وعارضت الآنسة « اعتدال حمودة » هذا الرأي ، وقالت ان الزى « الخارج » لا يبرر اندفاع الشباب إلى المعاكسة ... والإا كان معنى هذا أن يسباح للجائع أن يقتحم محل « الحاتى » ويملا بطنه مجانا لأن دخان الشواء آثار شهته !

وقالت الآنسة سعاد المازنى ضاحكة :

– إذا لم يبع له القانون حق التهام الطعام مجانا ، فهو على الأقل يمنحه حق « الشمشمة » وملء خياشيمه براحة الشواء ... !
 وتدخلت السيدة سوسن الفتى قائلة :

– الأزياء لا دخل لها في الامر ، لأن الشباب قد بلغت به القحمة



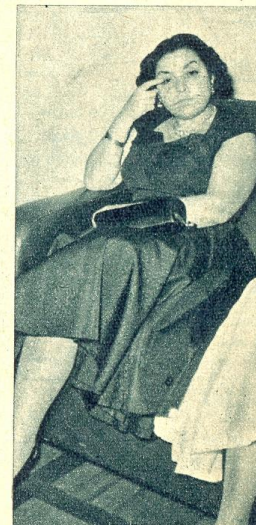
الآنسة عايذة المازنى الساعة السادسة ، بلقة الغزل الحديث!



السيدة سوسن الفتى المغازلون الشيوخ « العن » من الشباب!



الآنسة اعتدال حمودة البوليس النسائى هو العلاج الوحيد!



الآنسة سعاد المازنى « القروص » في السينما !

ذلك لم يخجل من الوقوف في ميدان العتبة وهو يشير إليها بالنزول... ولما لم تحفل به ، وضع أصبعه على ساعته ، ثم أظهر لها ستة أصابع ورسم بيده دورة في الهواء ، بما معناه انه سينظرها في هذا الموعد غدا الساعة السادسة !
وأضحك منظره جميع ركاب الترام ، وعبدت إحدى بنات البلد الى «تهزيته»... فأشارت اليه أن يدنو منها ، فما أن لمح اشارتها حتى خف اليها مسرعا ، فصاحت به قائلة :

– تبقى مش لاقى تخلق... ودابر تمالك الستات ؟ يا أخى اختشى من جزمك المرقعة ، والا من بدلتك « المزينة »... والا من شكلك الى يخوف المعريرت !
وتراجع الشاب غير حافل بهذا « الدش »... وأخذ مكانه في محطة الترام ليستأنف « الشعبطة » في ترام آخر !

خاطف الخذاء !

وذكرت السيدة سوسن ، انها تعرف صديقة لها كانت تستقل الترام ، فوقف شاب على السلم وأخذ يوجه اليها عبارات الغزل البذيئة ، ولما لم تحره اهتماما ، غافلها وأمسك بفردة من الترام واختفى عن الانظار... وأقبلت عليها إحدى بنات البلد توسيها قائلة :
– ولا يهملك... خليا «بعضها»...

بوليس نسائي ..

وانتقل الحديث الى علاج هذه المشكلة ، فاقترحت الانسة اعتدال أن يزود بوليس الآداب بعدد كبير من « البوليس النسائي »... ولا شك ان نزول المرأة الى الميدان سيكون له أثره في مكافحة هذه النزوة الخلقية الخطرة ، لان الشاب « الماكس » لن يرتاب في السيدات كما يرتاب في الرجال...
فناقشت الحاضرات هذا الاقتراح ، في شيء من الدعابة ، فقالت السيدة سميحة :

في الفخ !

– أخشى أن يحتاج « البوليس النسائي » فيما بعد ، الى من يحميه هو نفسه من « الماكسة »... اذا كانت سيدات البوليس من ذوات الجمال !
الانسة سعاد : بالعكس... فوجود « بوليسات جميلات » يجعلهن بمثابة « مصائد » محكمة لصييد الماكسين بالجملة !

السيدة سوسن : وماذا يكون الحال لو استسلمت « فتاة البوليس » الحسناء الى معاكسات الشبان... ألا ينطبق عليها المثل القائل : « جه يكحلها ، عماها » ؟ !
الانسة سعاد : المسألة بسيطة لتختار الحكومة « البوليس النسائي » من السيدات والفتيات اللاتي تتوفر

عندهن « مؤهلات الوحاشة »...
الانسة عايدة : تبقى ما عملناش حاجة... لانهن سيكن « زى الرجالة »... وعلى ذلك نختصر الطريق ونحلى البوليس من الرجالة زى ما هوه !
السيدة سميحة : واشمعنى البوليس النسائي ناجح جدا في « بلاد بره » ؟ أنا أعتقد أن يكون الالتحاق بالبوليس النسائي مقتصرا على الفتيات والسيدات المثقفات اللاتي يقدرن مهمتهن حق قدرها ، ومع ذلك فلنبدأ بتعيين عدد قليل بمثابة « تجربة » فإذا كتب لها النجاح ضوعف العدد...
أولاد البلد

أولاد البلد

وطرح عليهن السؤال التالي :
■ ان الحملات ضد « معاكسة السيدات » موجهة في الغالب الى الطلبة... فهل كل « الماكسين » من طلبة المدارس حقا ؟
السيدة سميحة : هذا هو المشاهد في القاهرة والاسكندرية ، وهي ظاهرة خطيرة تدل على ان العسلم قد فشل في خلق شباب عاقل متزن...
الانسة اعتدال : ومما يؤيد هذا الرأي ، ان الغالبية الكبرى من « المهنيين » الذين يقعون بين يدي رجال « بوليس الآداب » من الطلبة والموظفين... ويندر أن تجد بينهم واحدا ممن نسيمهم « أولاد البلد »... مثلا...
السيدة سميحة : في الواقع أن « أولاد البلد » أكثر شهامة ورجولة

من أغلبية المتعلمين والمتقنين... وهم يتفانون في الدفاع عن الفتاة التي يضايقها الشبان ، وقد حدث كثيرا ان أمسكوا بالشبان الوقحين وأوسعهم ضربا غير حافلين بالضرر الذي يسود عليهم... بعكس الشبان المتعلمين أو أنصاف المتعلمين ، فانهم حين تستغث بهم الفتاة ، يهبون لانقاذها ولكن ليستخلصوها لانفسهم !

الغازلات « الراكبة »

وقالت السيدة « سوسن المفتي » : – ويجب أن لا ننسى أن هناك نوعا خطرا من « الماكسة » وهو الذي يصدر عن راكبي السيارات... ان بعضهم يتماذى في وقاحته وهو آمن في سيارته اذ ليس أسهل عنده من الفرار عندما يستشعر الخطر...
تم ذكرت ان كثيرا من السيدات يتعرضن لهجوم سافر من أصحاب السيارات ، وبعضهم يمسك بسيد السيدة أو الفتاة ويحاول ادخالها الى السيارة بالقوة...
واقترحت السيدة سوسن أن تؤلف من بوليس الآداب فرقة من راكبي « الموتوسيكلات » لمراقبة هذه الفئة الوضيعة من أصحاب السيارات ، بشرط أن يرتدى أفراد الفرقة ملابس مدنية ، وأن تكون « للموتوسيكلات » الخاصة بهم أرقام غير حكومية حتى لا تعرف شخصياتهم...
وب

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