Annual Theme: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Urban Marginality in Africa, the Middle East and Asia

Chaired by Prof Ulrike Freitag and Dr Nora Lafi

Monday, January 26th, 2015, 5 pm

„They Thought that We Were Criminals”: Sports and Urban Marginality in Addis Ababa, 1920s to 1970s

Lecture by Katrin Bromber (ZMO)

From the 1920s onwards, modern sports became an essential feature of urban life in Ethiopian cities. Especially the capital Addis Ababa saw the emergence of a lively athletic scene, with soccer and boxing often appearing as ‘problem children’. Taking a closer look at these two kinds of sports between the 1920s and 1970s, the presentation discusses the places where they were trained and performed, the negative aspects which were initially attributed to boxing and soccer as well as the difficulties both athletes and sport enthusiasts met as a result. From an urban studies’ point of view, the Addis Ababa case is especially interesting, since it was purposely built as a multi-centered city. Thus, also in physical geographical terms it might challenge our understanding of urban marginality both in the social and physical sense.