

# The Perception of Urbanity in a condition of Displacement Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sudan \*

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**Keywords:** Displacement, Margins, Movement, Identity, Mobility, Home, camps, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), urban anthropology, Sudan, Africa

## Abstract

I attempt in this paper to unravel the complexity and ambivalences that may emerge as a result of this displacement. By looking more closely at war displaced persons, more specifically within the borders of their own countries, I tend to critically question the notion of 'urbanity' by questioning the simple notion of 'home'. I attempt to analyze how it could be perceived by the southern displaced in Khartoum, who constitute up to a third of the city's population.

I have in my masters research touched upon elements that have emerged as a result of this 'displacement'. I have observed that the meaning of 'home' had undergone certain transformations which allow for the displaced to make sense of the condition to which they were subjected. 'Home' I have observed becomes the mobile, what can be carried to the next place in the next journey. Both Simone in *For a city yet to come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* and Malaquais, in "*Duala / Johannesburg / New York: Cityscapes imagined*", argue the notion of 'movement' in the African Continent. They both conclude that a new and rather different urbanity does exist in Africa, this new urbanity is defined by the constant movement of people, whether physically or metaphorically, thus, those who have not yet traveled are continuously dreaming it. Thus notions of 'home', 'stability' have once more been questioned.

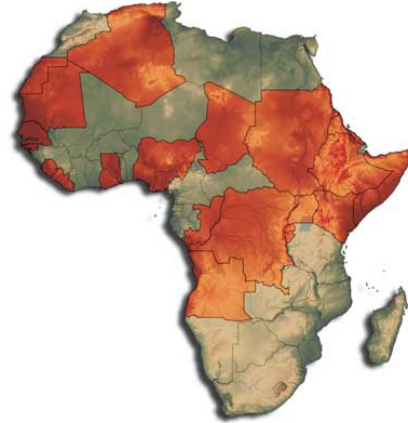
This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in 2006, large parts of the text have been extracted from my MSc thesis submitted in compliance with the Masters of Human Settlements, Department of Architecture Urban and Regional Planning, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2006. Thesis title: 'Displacement, Identity Transformation and its Expression in Architecture and Urban Reality'.



## Background

“Africa remains the continent with highest numbers of people who have been internally displaced due to conflict ...”<sup>1</sup>

Almost half of all the internally displaced people (25 million) live on the African continent. Sudan alone accounts for more than 5 million IDPs, followed by Uganda with 1.7 and the DRC with 1.1 million. During 2006, significant internal displacement has occurred in Chad, the CAR, the DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan’s Darfur region.<sup>2</sup>



The precariousness of the living conditions which most IDPs are subjected to only succeeds in stimulating further displacements; “with regard to access to essential services such as water, food, shelter, health care and education, most IDPs live in conditions that are clearly inferior to those of the local population.”<sup>3</sup> The fact that these people are still within the borders of their own countries also lends them the opportunity of ‘movement’, something which the experience of refugeeness robs of the individual. Only recently has the issue of Internal Displacement come under the umbrella of the UN, before that IDPs had remained under the jurisdiction of their own governments, which may, in many cases as in Sudan, have been the primary cause of their displacement in the first place.

IDPs in Sudan and particularly southern Sudanese IDPs have been subject to a multitude of complexities. Their region has always been ground for constant conflicts, however it was the last (1983 – 2005) which has been characterised as the most destructive, increasing in intensity when the NIF (National Islamic Front) took control of the government in 1989 and officially declared Jihad on the southern people.<sup>4</sup> According to Ruiz; “the massive level of often deliberate death and displacement has been one of the century’s largest yet *least-recognised* tragedies.”<sup>5</sup> In 1994 an article titled “Scorched-Earth War” referred to the war of south Sudan as “*the forgotten war*”.<sup>6</sup> Chelala also shares the view and refers to the tragedy as the “*most ignored conflict*.”<sup>7</sup>

Both the government and the two rebel groups<sup>8</sup> have been responsible for the mass destruction of villages, poisoning of wells and the targeting of civilians.<sup>9</sup> An estimate of 2 million southerners have died during the prolonged war, and the majority of the remaining population have been uprooted and displaced from their places of origin.<sup>10</sup> Nearly half a million fled to neighbouring countries whilst the remaining majority (approximately 5 million) have become displaced within state borders.<sup>11</sup>



Ruiz describes the conflict as both pervasive and devastating; he notes that it has become “virtually impossible to find a southerner who has not lost a relative.” He explains that although man-made violence has been the major cause of displacement, drought which has struck the area with “unmerciful regularity” has displaced hundreds of thousands more.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the displacement of people from their homes had greatly increased the risk of man-made famine, which swept the area leading to the death of hundreds of thousands. In 1988 alone more than 250,000 were reported to have died as a result of man-made famine.<sup>13</sup> The Sudanese Government’s hostile attitude towards the displaced has been noted in a number of reports, the Government forces have been accused of bombing villages and displaced persons’ camps in the south.<sup>14</sup>

They have also been accused of forcefully relocating the displaced persons in Khartoum to camps where services were non-existent, and of abducting children and forcing them to undergo military training in order to be returned to the south to fight their own people.<sup>15</sup> One of the serious accusations however, was the prevention of aid from reaching vulnerable groups in the south, because the government identified them as “southerners” and thus part of the enemy camp.<sup>16</sup> The SPLA also had their share of the blame; they have been accused of stealing relief food, and recruiting children into their ranks, however the abuse from the side of the SPLA has been reported to be much lower than that of the government. Ojaba links that to the SPLA’s dependency on the local population for material and moral support.<sup>17</sup>

The main frame of the war in the south could be described as following; First, the government, aiming to control the rebellion in the south, armed Arab raiders “*murahileen*”, who turned against civilians suspected of loyalty to the SPLA, the Arab *murahileen* torched hundreds of villages displaced their populations. In turn the SPLA attacked the government held towns in hope of pressuring the government of Khartoum towards changing its policies. As a result people’s lives got disrupted and millions were forced to migrate away from their lands and villages.<sup>18</sup>

Ruiz describes one tragic episode as following:

...10,000 displaced Dinka scrambled aboard a government train leaving Aweil. On the way, some 7,000 were dumped at Meiram, where children were kidnapped and adults were assaulted by militia, and thousands starved. After an arduous journey lasting more than three weeks, fewer than 2,000 Dinka reached Khartoum. Many died in the train station after arriving in the Capital.<sup>19</sup>

On the 9th of January 2005 the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), bringing an end to the war, since then between 1 and 1.2 million IDPs have returned spontaneously to



their places of origin<sup>20</sup> Throughout this paper we implicitly question the subject of ‘IDP resettlement’ simply because it implies that ‘stability’ could be reconstructed effortlessly. Taking the extent of the tragedy and its long duration it may be fair to say that the southern Sudanese who remained within the borders of their countries have been for most of their lives ‘on the move’, this lends much to our main debate on how ‘movement’ stimulated, in this condition, by displacement, could indeed become a habit, and perhaps even more ‘a culture’.

### **Significance of the research**

It is in fact strange that a discipline such as architecture, meant to structure peoples environments and sustain their permanency and stability, be concerned with issues of displacement, dislocation, and migrancy. However in a world in which conflicts and instability affect the lives of millions, the notion of ‘home’ is slowly changing: ‘home’ as a stable physical structure begins to lose its significance while other forms of remedial solutions are devised. The UNHCR estimates that 25 million persons are internally displaced amidst war and persecution. This continuous condition of displacement forces us architects and urban planners to gain a better understanding of the condition, which needs to be addressed in our discipline if feasible and proper interventions are to be made.

More recently than ever before, anthropologists are starting to see through to the potentials of creativity generated by conditions of displacement and disruption, Kibreab asserts that although “displacement is generally an impoverishing experience, the changes that accompany it may under favourable conditions stimulate social change and development”<sup>21</sup>. According to him, “the losses and sufferings ... may unleash new sources of energy and creativity.” He also notes that “the breakdown or weakening of old cultural values, power relations, gender statuses and clan allegiances brought about by displacement, may stimulate change and innovative adaptation”<sup>22</sup>

However, our main concern here is not limited to the changes taking place within the displaced populations but rather on the impact of such changes on the larger geographic location and thus on urbanscapes in general. Such research might therefore offer the platform for a more productive, and tangible re-thinking of the city.

Malaquais, who also studies the concept of ‘movement’ in the African context, notes the following;

“From the processes of moving, of thinking and planning movement, so fundamental to urban centres like Douala today, stem extraordinary rich bodies of knowledge – about cities, peoples and geographies, political and economic systems, societies, cultures and art forms. The futures of a Douala, a Kinshasa, a Lagos, if these cities are to offer their inhabitants conditions less



dramatic than exist for most today, rests on harnessing such knowledge. The challenge for those whose tomorrows may lie in the balance is to create the networks, home-grown, yet expanding beyond the local, to share this knowledge. For, in the sharing, its potential is staggering.”<sup>23</sup>

The argument which Malaquais and Simone lend this subject is that movement does not stop at experiences of refugeeness or internal displacement, according to them, movement occurs on the African continent in all forms and scales, ranging from mass movement across vast distances to individual movements in the world of the imaginary. Thus ‘movement’ gains more ground as a phenomenon to be studied and characterized. Simone goes as far as warning against systems which enforce stability, he argues that such systems may be ignorant as to the nature of the systems which stimulate ‘movement’, such ignorance he warns could generate further complexities;

“Without understanding movement as part and parcel of the very lifeblood of particular local social institutions, analysts miss possibilities of policy and programmatic engagements with an important social infrastructure – albeit of limited visibility due to its dispersion and complexity – that cuts across rural, periurban, urban, national, and regional boundaries.”<sup>24</sup>

Our role therefore as architects and urban planners is to study such concepts vigorously in order to devise solutions that are sustainable, in other words, more flexible to the shifts that occur within the social compositions of the population. Thus, a sense of stability might in fact be forged “from the very instability of the compositions and relations of those institutions that try to provide a platform for social connectedness and collaboration.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Theoretical Framework**

In order to discuss the theory of ‘displacement’ it makes most sense to start of by studying the concept of ‘emplacement’ and how it is manifested in its most physical construction ‘the home’, a subject in which extensive literature is available. The theory of displacement in its simplest form may be the exact opposite of any definition that ‘home’ may imply. Thus we choose to start of by defining home, then shifting to defining ‘home in a condition of migrancy or displacement’ which is usually intertwined with the changes that ‘home’ undergoes in a context of modernization and globalization. Finally we plunge into literature on the subject ‘displacement in the African context’, which has its own unique system, layerings and connotations.



## Defining 'home'

Home is "a place, region, or state to which one properly belongs, on which one's affections centre, or where one finds refuge, rest or satisfaction"<sup>26</sup>

'Home' as a traditional conceptualization is defined as the place which signifies the stable physical centre of one's universe; it could be described as the "safe and still place" to which one returns. Home could further be defined as the pattern of regular doings and furnishings, a physical space in which "certain communitarian practices are realized."<sup>27</sup> Home is thus, the place which gives structure to time and embodies a capacity for memory and anticipation.<sup>28</sup>

## Shifting definitions of 'home'

"The condition of displacement is thus both unstable and contradictory and can develop in different unpredictable ways."<sup>29</sup>

In conditions of displacement and migrancy the concept of 'home' undergoes radical change. Morley argues that for migrants in an alien environment "the space of home carries a particularly strong affective charge". He takes the argument further by affirming that geographic displacement causes the home to function strongly as a "sanctuary and nucleus of identity."<sup>30</sup> Heynen and Loockx argue in their article "*Scenes of Ambivalence*" that a condition of displacement *may* be prone to being "perverted by an all-encompassing and forceful system that seemingly provides an answer to all instability and insecurity." In such a situation they explain that "Conservatism ... can dominate, resulting in an oppressive environment, whereby the range of possible meanings and attitudes ... decreases rather than increases."<sup>31</sup> Mandy Thomas asserts that for those who are dislocated from a homeland, the house becomes the "concrete manifestation of the more abstract notion of home"

However, displacement could create the exact opposite effect. Displacement, and in particular multiple displacements, could lead to the loss of the symbolic notion of 'home' as the "stable physical centre", instead 'home' becomes closest to what Morley describes as "a rather mobile symbolic habitat".<sup>32</sup> We argue that such a condition could cause the stable signifiers of 'home' to become threatening; attachment to stable structures could thus be regarded as a sign of vulnerability and weakness.

At times home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference ....<sup>33</sup>



Home in some conditions might become the mobile, the portable, according to Morley “language and culture themselves provide the migrant with the ultimate mobile home.”<sup>34</sup> John Berger explains that in the contemporary “mobile world” of today, a much more plurilocal concept of home is needed, home for many of the world’s mobile population “may be inscribed not in a building or territory but in “words, jokes, opinions, gestures, actions ...”, in routinised practices and habitual interactions, in styles of dress and narrative forms.”<sup>35</sup> Thus Morley affirms that home may change from the singular physical entity which is usually fixed in a particular place to become a rather “mobile” symbolic habitat, “a performative way of life and of doing things in which one makes one’s home while in movement.”<sup>36</sup>

### **‘Movement’ in the African Context**

“For so many, in Douala as in other cities of the continent, movement of this kind has become so common that it is something of a cliché to say that Africa, today, is a continent on the move.”<sup>37</sup>

Simone describes Africa as “a space of intensified movement”<sup>38</sup>, movement which is not confined to a specific scale of size or period of time “a process without a foreseeable end”. Movement, according to Simone may encompass in the broad scale “migration, displacement, and accelerated social mobility.” He notes that it may be the precariousness of conditions which stimulate such ‘movement’, in his words “movement... has been appropriated as a multifaceted strategy of urban survival – accumulation but also control. It reflects the increasing material unavailability of specific urban territories as platforms on which to constitute the semblance of stable and coherent social existence.” Movement thus becomes “an increasingly “normalized” social practice deployed to constitute an experience of stability linked to the capacity of individual and social actors to continuously orient themselves to shifting terrain of economic activity and political disposition”. Simone questions the limitations of the term ‘migrant’, if migrancy is defined as the “incessant shifts in place of residence and work” why should the rural populations arriving in the city be termed as migrants, whilst ongoing careers within the city which require the same incessant shifts not?<sup>39</sup>

“With both increased affiliation and affinity with movement, a highly mobile collective subject is configured. The identity of this subject, although unstable and not thoroughly consolidated, resonates with long and multiple African traditions of locality.”<sup>40</sup>

In the following section we argue that the displaced southerners have lost the symbolic notion of ‘home’ as the “stable physical centre”. Our discussions are based on the findings of semi-structured interviews which I have conducted with displaced Dinka families in Khartoum.<sup>41</sup> Our aim is to emphasize the manifestation of the aforementioned theory in the everyday life of my interviewees.



### **Displacement - Fieldwork (Narratives, Observations and Interpretations)**

*I continue asking questions, scribbling constantly on my note pad... suddenly Naryak stood up, "you should give us your mobile number", I felt that she was trying to provoke me, to test my intentions. By now I had gotten used to such attitudes, I shrugged my shoulders and smiled, "sure, no problem" I started reciting the number of the mobile I was carrying, it belonged to my mother, but I was sure that she would be understanding if I explained the circumstances, "Wait! Stop! I cant find a pen!" she looks at her cousin for help, he rummages through his pockets and finally finds one "Here", Naryak takes the pen and repeats the question again "What is your number..." as I recite Naryak places the tip of the pen on the light-color painted wall, then she starts scribbling the number. There! Directly on the wall! In the guest area!!!*

*I am baffled, why didn't she write it on a piece of paper, was it that normal for her to scribble on the wall? Naryak's mother sitting on the bed next to us, didn't flinch, she didn't react at all, she just kept calm as Naryak continued scribbling the numbers which I recited...<sup>42</sup>*

### **Families interviewed:**

The majority of the families I interviewed had changed their locations a number of times since arriving in the Capital, in some situations it was a forced relocation and in other situations it was voluntary. However at the time of the interviews all the interviewees were living in permanent homes with permanent land tenure. We specifically intended to conduct the interviews with families who already had stable land tenure since we were of the view that such a condition was necessary to make them feel stable and confident enough to construct permanent structures and to appropriate them accordingly, thus becoming emotionally attached to the space. We regarded those structures as being the physical constructions closest to being termed as 'homes' in the location of displacement. All of the families we interviewed had arrived in Khartoum before 1990.

### **Narratives of the relocation:**

Nearly all of the people I interviewed in Dar al Salaam – Omdurman and Dar al Salaam-Jebal Awliya had similar stories regarding the relocations; a typical example which I will be elaborating is that of Hanaan<sup>43</sup>

Hanaan is a middle aged Dinka woman who migrated with her family from Abieye in the mid 1980s, at the start of the hostilities. She and her family were removed to Dar al Salaam in 1991. Previously she had been living in Gamayir, an area on the direct outskirts of Omdurman which has been re-planned and sold as first class plots to well of residents. Hanaan admits that the authorities did in fact transport her belongings to Dar al Salaam. She was allocated a 300 m2 plot of land and was not paid any compensation for her house which was demolished in Gamayir, which was an 'oda' (room).



“The construction of such a ‘room’ cost about 10 000 Sudanese pounds in 1988, which amounted to about a three-year income of an unskilled labourer.”<sup>44</sup>

Hanaan explains that it was a very difficult experience. Although they had dismantled all of the materials which could be transported, they were unable to construct an *oda* in the new site. They therefore had to live in a *rakuba*<sup>45</sup> until the financial status could improve. Hanaan explains that during that period the ‘father of her children’ had been ill, he had been working as a driver then, they therefore had to survive on the small day-jobs that she was conducting. With money coming-in in small quantities it was almost impossible to save up for the construction of an *oda*, they therefore continued living in the *rakuba* for a whole year.

The *rakuba* provided shelter to Hanaan, her husband, and her two daughters, in addition to that they were also providing shelter for her husband’s mother, and Hanaan’s older sister who was divorced and had to move in with Hanaan bringing along her two children.

Hanaan was unable even to construct a boundary wall around her *rakuba*, she explains that the only way for them to secure their privacy was by the *shawalat* (empty sacks) and twigs. She explains that after some time some people from the neighbourhood teamed up like brothers and helped them construct a toilet.<sup>46</sup> However, after sometime the toilet got destroyed by the rains but they made use of the rubble to make mud-bricks for the construction of the *housh* (boundary wall).

Regarding the rain drainage, Hanaan insists that their original site in Gamayir had been much better; “In gamayir we were living in a very nice place, it was high, we never had rain water problems. Hanaan also explains the developments that had taken place in gamayir after their relocation “now that location is althawra 6, now it has very nice buildings (2 – 3 storey villas), we were living in the area that is now the petrol station there ... when we settled that area was a garbage dump, now look at it!”

After one year in Dar al Salaam, Hanaan and her husband were able to afford buying building materials for the construction of their *oda*, a number of youth in the neighbourhood gathered to help them, Hanaan showed her appreciation by making food for them until the construction was complete, “if one makes some food the people gather and chat and help each other build, that was how we managed it”.

After some time the financial situation of Hanaan improved, so they decided to build another room opposite to the first, she also managed to construct a veranda and covered it with twigs and *shawalat*. After that they bought a truck of sand for the construction of the *housh*, they managed to buy it from their neighbours who sold it to them at a much lower price than that of the market. Hanaan explains that the first autumn after the construction passed by safely, however the second autumn reduced one side of the boundary wall to rubble. Rebuilding it took a much longer time.



I comment to Hanaan that the government claims to have provided Dar al Salaam with services, she shakes her head slowly and comments in disdain; “we dug the pit latrines. No they did nothing here, in jabaroonaa they were given pit latrines, but here we did everything ourselves with our own energies, here they did nothing, they just gave us an empty plot of land and left us to fend for ourselves!”

Hanaan managed in time to construct another *housh* in 1995, yet this one did not last long because it was not constructed properly and could retain some of the rain water which weakened it and caused it to fall. From that time on Hanaan and her family were unable to save up again for constructing a new housh, it was only very recently that she and her daughter teamed up to re-build for the third time.

Hanaan’s house now is composed of an incomplete *oda*, covered by *shawalat*, a pit latrine, and a boundary wall for privacy, one of her two rooms which she mentioned above had been reduced to rubble by rains.

## Manifestations of Displacement

### Natalie’s Home

In Natalie’s home I conducted the interview with (Natalie’s cousin) Moris. Moris is in his early thirties, he has two wives and five children. The interview gives interesting insight as to the ‘notion of home’ in the condition of displacement seen from the point of view of a male Dinka southerner. Moris explains ‘home’ as a condition of extreme instability.

The house was bought when Natalie’s family started arriving from Wau in 1979; it is a concrete construction which has 3 bedrooms, a kitchen, two bathrooms (which include toilets), a guest seating area, and a rooftop used for outdoor sleeping. It is important to note here that what I mean by ‘family’ is the extended family, which includes the uncles and their wives and children. Moris describes the number of family members who arrived in Khartoum in the early 80’s as follows;

*When did you arrive here in Khartoum?*

*We arrived from Wau, a long time ago, our uncle first came to settle in Khartoum in 1979*

*How many were you when you arrived*

*My father, my uncles and their children*

*How many children*

*Our oldest uncle had five children, Natalie’s father had 8 children, my father had 3 wives...*

*My father had 12 wives but he divorced four, so he had eight by the time he was coming to Khartoum, but he only bought 3 of them here with him. My father had then 21 children.*

When the house started to become congested another house in HajYousif was bought, when that too became congested a third was bought, also in HajYousif. According to Moris, the life



of this extended family has become a continuous movement between these three homes.<sup>47</sup> The house in which I conducted the interview had 8 girls and 13 boys living in it. The income for the house was generated through a number of sources, several of the young men in the house had casual jobs, as for the university graduates they had professional jobs. The family also had a number of houses and shops in Wau which they were renting. In addition to that members of the family who were abroad in America were occasionally sending money. Yet the relatively well-off economic status does not guarantee investment on the physical structure of the house.

Upon inquiring how 21 persons fit into the three bedroom house, Moris explains that during the weekdays the house is empty in the morning, everybody goes either to work, school, or university, they all leave, in the evening they return, and by then he explains that the sun would be down and that the rooftop would have cooled, they spread the mattresses and sleep. The next morning the cycle repeats itself.

*You see, let me tell you, in the morning time most of the people are out of the house, those who go to work, those who go to schools and universities, the house is empty, but when night falls the house becomes compacted with people, we divide the roof into two parts; part for the girls and the other part for us.*

The head of the household is Natalina.<sup>48</sup> Natalina herself has only two children, yet it is her responsibility to take care of all the people who were staying in her home. Concerning the food, Moris explains that Natalina cooks only once; whoever is present will be served;

*And how is the program of the food, does Natalina cook for all these people  
Natalina cooks lunch, at that time if you are at home you eat, if you don't catch the lunch nobody will feed you, it would be difficult anyway because everybody comes at a different time than the other. Maybe for the girls and the children it is a little different, but us the boys we have to grab something to eat from outside, anyway we earn so we should be able to feed ourselves by ourselves.*

Moris literally defines the condition as an “unstable situation”<sup>49</sup> he describes that if one arrives too late in the evening he might not even find a place to lay his head; “sometimes if you come too late you find some one already slept on your bed you have no choice but to sleep on top of the car trunk.”<sup>50</sup> At one point Moris defines the condition of the house at night as a “hospital ward” metaphorically explaining the large number of mattresses and persons sleeping.

According to Marc Auge, ‘non-places’ have become the real measure of the present time.<sup>51</sup> Rapport and Dawson argue that these ‘non-places’, are in fact transit points and temporary abodes, the authors give examples of waiting rooms, stations, hotels; spaces “where travellers break step and thousands of individual itineraries momentarily converge”.<sup>52</sup> To all these examples, Moris therefore adds the ‘home’, which he refers to as the ‘hospital ward’, in fact



the connotation of the hospital ward is even stronger than that of the hotel and station; the hospital ward is a temporary abode that one does not visit or use with free will, it is a space that needs to be used due to circumstances of illness, weakness and vulnerability. The ‘home’, therefore in the mind of Moris becomes a forced temporary abode, a place of weakness.



Fieldwork – June 2006- Sketches by author – Not to Scale  
Natalie’s home - El Deim Khartoum

## The Suitcase



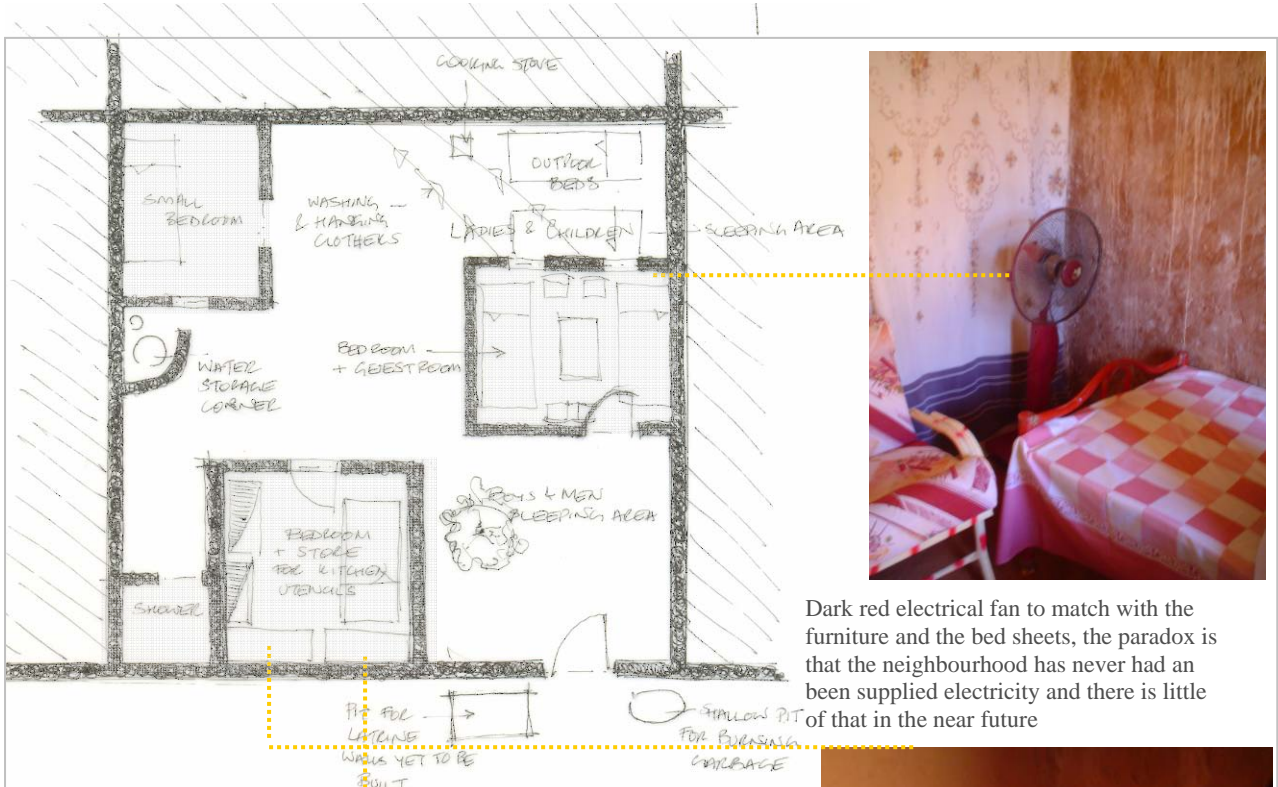
The condition of displacement is best manifested in the significant presence of the suitcase. Morley argues that the “migrant’s suitcase” may hold more meanings than imagined. He explains that sometimes a particular object is “taken on the exile’s journey and comes to function as a synecdoche for the unreachable lost home, and to act as a focus for memories of the exiles past life.”<sup>53</sup> Morley argues that the ‘home’ could come to be symbolized by a suitcase which contains the “most talismanic possessions”, that of a particular person or an entire family. Irit Rogoff asserts that luggage always functions as a sign of “unease, displacement and dislocation”. He describes luggage as both “concrete material belongings and of travel and movement away from the materialized anchorings of those belongings”.<sup>54</sup> Thus, even when the migrant or displaced arrives at his or her location, the suitcase will remain as a “potent symbol of the journey ... made, and of the unstable potential for further movement.”<sup>55</sup> In several of the ‘homes’ I interviewed, the suitcase has become an element that blends with the furniture and becomes part of the overall image of the space. It is not an object to be obscured or hidden under a bed; instead it is emphasized and arranged at a corner with special care.

### The Significance of Furniture in a condition of Displacement

#### Rania’s home:

Rania stays on the weekends with her uncle and his family, in Dar el Salaam Omdurman. Her uncle has five children; the oldest (who is in his mid teens) lives with his friends closer to the city centre and visits ‘home’ occasionally. The house has three mud-construction bedrooms, however it does not have a pit-latrine, and therefore the members of the house are forced to use the toilet of their neighbors. The house also does not have a kitchen, the kitchen utensils are placed in one of the bedrooms. Although the conditions are as such, yet money is being invested in buying more furniture and cooking utensils. Much attention is being paid to the

color of the furniture and whether or not they match with each other. One of the eye-catching paradoxes is the electrical fan bought to match with the set of chairs in the guest room (which is also the parent's bedroom). An electrical fan in a neighborhood to which electricity was never supplied!



Dark red electrical fan to match with the furniture and the bed sheets, the paradox is that the neighbourhood has never had an been supplied electricity and there is little of that in the near future



Radio works with batteries, but no supply of electricity for the loudspeakers  
Fieldwork – May 2006- Sketches by author – Not to Scale  
Rania's home - Dar el Salaam Omdurman



Kitchen utensils in bedroom

## Hanaan's Home

The same discussion applies to the home of Hanaan. Hanaan who is in her mid 40's lives with her husband and 2 daughters, her home consists of a shallow-pit latrine and two mud-construction rooms. One of the rooms was completely destroyed by the rains, whilst the other has lost its mud roof, but is currently roofed by *shawalat* (empty sacks) and twigs. This room is where Hanaan places all her collected wealth, 2 beds, with their mattresses and bed sheets, a set of small tables, two plastic chairs and an electric fan (again in a neighborhood where electricity is non-existent).



Blue and red chairs to match with the bed sheets, the fan placed on a set of small folding wooden tables.

Photograph to the left shows the exterior of the room

Fieldwork – May 2006- Sketches by author – Not to Scale  
Hanaan's home - Dar el Salaam Omdurman



## Conclusion

We have discussed in this section that the “home” has lost its meaning as a space of “stability and permanence”. It is no longer the sanctuary where its members seek refuge. It becomes an empty shell, to be filled, emptied and refilled with inhabitants and furniture; suitcases become the common theme, indicating “departure”. The “home” is a space which is empty during most of the day, only to be refilled early in the evening where a meal is cooked and children are fed before darkness engulfs the space. The men come in much later only to place their heads on a bed and rest till the morning, and then depart. To them the house becomes a non-space, a space that is to be avoided rather than dwelt in.

*The brief episode of Naryak<sup>56</sup>, a girl of about 16 years of age, scribbling on the interior walls of the home is puzzling at first sight, yet as one attempts to reason such behavior he or she would understand that this a normal reaction due to the multiple displacements that the southerners have undergone, stable objects lose their meanings and mobile objects become significant...*

The enclosed space in Khartoum is a store, a place where women place their “furniture” with which the man is the enemy. Any element that symbolizes stability becomes threatening. For him the comfort is in the suitcases, which can be transported with the least effort.

The ‘woman’ is torn between two worlds, the northern “Arab” culture, where the home is the base, and the constant fear of attachment. The women therefore try to construct a mental image to signify security and permanency, thus the presence of the electric fan in the corner, next to the photograph of the waterfalls, and the well stretched bed sheets, interiors that are in contradiction with the external envelope. For the ‘man’ the attachment is the mobile, under that category fall a number of things, clothes, the mobile phone, the watch, the leather belt, the wallet ...

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Internal Displacement Report p. 23 [http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/8C961FBD643EBF59C12572BF003DA259/\\$file/Global\\_Overview\\_2006\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/8C961FBD643EBF59C12572BF003DA259/$file/Global_Overview_2006_Africa.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Internal Displacement p.23

<sup>3</sup> Internal Displacement p 23

<sup>4</sup> Hiram A. Ruiz, "The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement," in *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, ed. Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998) p 140

<sup>5</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 139

<sup>6</sup> Pendergast and others, "Scorched-Earth War," *Africa Report* 39, no. 3 (1994) p 37

<sup>7</sup> Cesar Chelala, "Sudan: A War against the People," *The Lancet* 359 (2002) p 161

<sup>8</sup> In August 1991, differences that had been simmering between the SPLA/SPLM leadership led to a split and the creation of a southern splinter group which came to be known as the Nasir faction, later named SPLA-united, the splinter group was led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol

<sup>9</sup> Scorched-Earth War p 37

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Ojaba, Anne Itto Leonardo, and Margaret Itto Leonardo, "Food Aid in Complex Emergencies: Lessons from Sudan," *Social Policy & Administration* 36, no. 6 (2002) p 665

<sup>11</sup> Food Aid in Complex Emergencies p 665

<sup>12</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 139,140

<sup>13</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 146 & Food Aid in Complex Emergencies p 670

<sup>14</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 140 & Scorched-Earth War p 37

<sup>15</sup> Hiram A. Ruiz, "The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement," in *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, ed. Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998) p 141

<sup>16</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 146

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Ojaba, Anne Itto Leonardo, and Margaret Itto Leonardo, "Food Aid in Complex Emergencies: Lessons from Sudan," *Social Policy & Administration* 36, no. 6 (2002) p 681

<sup>18</sup> Food Aid in Complex Emergencies p 669

<sup>19</sup> The Sudan: Cradle of Displacement p 145

<sup>20</sup> Internal Displacement p 29



- <sup>21</sup> Kibreab, Gaim, "Displacement, host governments' policies, and constraints on the construction of sustainable livelihoods" p 58
- <sup>22</sup> Displacement, host governments' policies, p 58
- <sup>23</sup> Malaquais, Dominique. "Duala/ Johannesburg/ New York: Cityscapes Imagined" p 19
- <sup>24</sup> Simone, AbouMaliq, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* p 122
- <sup>25</sup> Simone, AbouMaliq, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* p 121, 122
- <sup>26</sup> Oxford English Dictionary  
Cit. in: *Home Territories* p 16
- <sup>27</sup> M. Douglas, 'The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space', *Social Research* 58, no. 1.  
Cit. in : Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, eds., *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 1998) p 6
- <sup>28</sup> *Migrants of Identity* p 7
- <sup>29</sup> Hilde Heynen and Andre Loeckx, "Scenes of Ambivalence: Concluding Remarks on Architectural Patterns of Displacement," *Journal of Architectural Education* 52, no. 2 (1998) p101
- <sup>30</sup> David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge) p 51
- <sup>31</sup> Hilde Heynen and Andre Loeckx, "Scenes of Ambivalence: Concluding Remarks on Architectural Patterns of Displacement," *Journal of Architectural Education* 52, no. 2 (1998) p 101
- <sup>32</sup> *Home Territories* p 47
- <sup>33</sup> Choosing the Margin p 205
- <sup>34</sup> David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge) p
- <sup>35</sup> J. Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* (London: Writers and Readers Press, 1984) p 64  
Cit. in: *Home Territories* p 46,47
- <sup>36</sup> *Home Territories* p 47
- <sup>37</sup> Malaquais p 7
- <sup>38</sup> Simone, AbouMaliq, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* p 119
- <sup>39</sup> *For the City Yet to Come* p 119
- <sup>40</sup> *For the City Yet to Come*: 120
- <sup>41</sup> the interviews were generally focused on the current conditions of the displaced in the city, their use of public space, and the displacements to which they have been subjected. However it is important to note that the overall atmosphere of the interviews was slightly tensed, due to reasons which I have mentioned in the introduction, this made it was relatively difficult to conduct in-depth conversations with my interviewees especially concerning intimate matters such as the notion of home, feelings, hopes etc. Requests to photograph certain spaces in the homes where refused at will, which created an additional hindrance. I therefore depend mostly on observatory notes taken within the homes.
- <sup>42</sup> Naryak's attitude was the first hint that stimulated me to conduct my research in the subject of displacement and its manifestations in the built environment. Naryak has been displaced from her home of origin as a child. Originally from an area called Faring in the Unity State, Naryak her mother and older brother had to walk from their village up to Malakal, from which they took the barge to Kosti, then took a bus to Khartoum. They arrived in 1993 where their father had constructed an oda and was awaiting them. Naryak grew up in Khartoum, she has just finished high school and is waiting to be admitted to university. Naryak's older brother is in his first year of university education, and her younger brother is still in school. Naryak and her family are currently living with her mother, 2 brothers and 2 relatives in a brick and cement plastered 2 bedroom house in Dar el Salaam Jebal Awliya. Her father had died recently leaving the home to be managed by the Naryak's mother. Naryak is now about 16 years of age, at the time of the interview she had just finished her high school education and was awaiting the results. Naryak's action could nor be translated as ignorance.
- <sup>43</sup> A middle aged Dinka woman currently living in Dar al Salaam- Omdurman, Hanaan has been in Khartoum since the 1980s, she explains her experience with the authorities, which had forcefully moved them to Dar al Salaam in 1991 – see appendix
- <sup>44</sup> Ibrahim Foud Noor, "The Southern Sudanese Migration to Khartoum and the Resultant Conflicts," *GeoJournal* 25, no. 1 (1991) p14
- <sup>45</sup> A rukuba is a semi cubic temporary structure constructed of twigs and lined with reeds, old jute and plastic sacks as well as old cardboard, flattened out old tins and other garbage material.



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- <sup>46</sup> A pit of about 2 to 3 meters dug into the ground, the room itself if a roofless mud structure, to allow the burning sun rays to render the place sterile
- <sup>47</sup> The distance between this house which is in Khartoum and those in Haj Yousif (Khartoum North) could reach up to 1 or 1 ½ hours of travel by public transport.
- <sup>48</sup> Her husband had died years earlier
- <sup>49</sup> Interview with author – Moris – Natalie’s Home
- <sup>50</sup> Interview with author – Moris – Natalie’s Home
- <sup>51</sup> Marc Auge, *Non-places* (London: Verso, 1995)  
Cit. in : Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, eds., *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 1998) p 6
- <sup>52</sup> *Migrants of Identity* p 6
- <sup>53</sup> *Home Territories* p 44
- <sup>54</sup> Irit Rogoff, *Terra infirma* (Routledge, 2000)  
Cit. in: *Home Territories* p 45
- <sup>55</sup> *Home Territories* p 45
- <sup>56</sup> Unfortunately Naryak and her family did not allow me to take any photographs of the interior spaces

\* This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in 2006, large parts of the text have been extracted from the author’s MSc thesis submitted in compliance with the Masters of Human Settlements, Department of Architecture Urban and Regional Planning, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2006, under the direction of Professor Hilde Heynen. Thesis title: ‘Displacement, Identity Transformation and its Expression in Architecture and Urban Reality’.

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