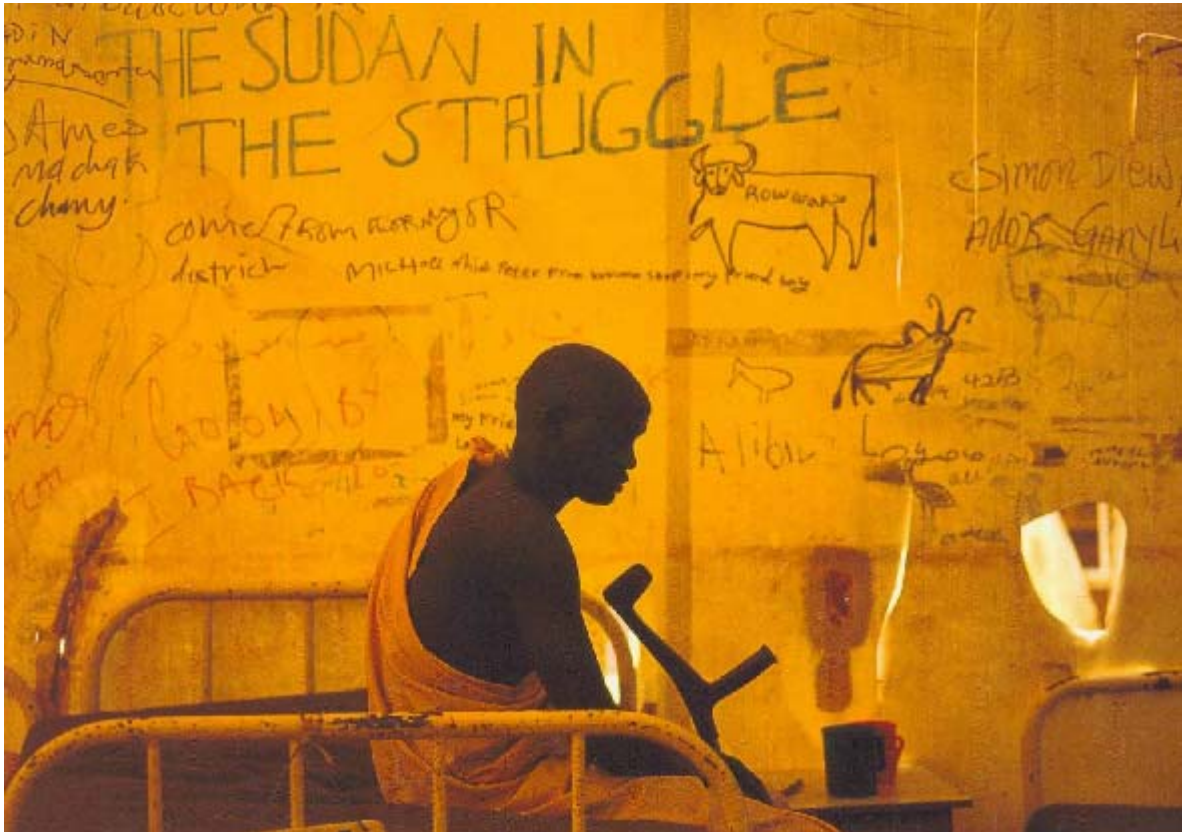


Deeply Divided Societies Charting Strategies of Resistance

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Abstract

This paper is a discussion of domination and resistance, again the arena is Africa, yet here it is not in relation to a western colonial power, this discussion here concerns a new form of colonialism, an internal colonialism, in which the leading group of a particular country, view themselves as superior and justify their aims of carrying out civilising missions to enlighten the 'other'.

The arena is Sudan; a country encompassing a mosaic of ethnicities, yet the greatest disparity being the North-South dichotomy, which both sides blame on the British colonial Policy. Whether or not the British 'divide and rule' strategy is the sole reason for all the atrocities committed in the civil war, is relatively questionable. The problem, in our opinion, is far



more layered and has more depth than what the 61 years of British governance may have issued.

A number of the Sudanese refer to the Civil war that erupted in 1955 a year before the date of independence and continued until 2005 with a ten year period of peace between 1973 and 1983 as a 'War of Visions', a 'Conflict of Identities' in Francis Deng's words. Yet, in this paper we will not discuss the complicated issues of politics, power and representation. Our focus in this paper is on the scale of the 'individual' the 'displaced southern individual' who was forced to seek refuge in the capital city of Khartoum during the prolonged war. We discuss the elements of imposition which he/she may have encountered upon arrival in the city, impositions that are a constant reminder of the tragic history of oppression. We refer to Khartoum as a 'deeply divided society' which we explain through the words of Oren Yiftachel as; "societies which are composed of non-assimilating ethnic groups which occupy their historical (real or mythical) homeland."¹ In this paper I intend to illustrate that resistance still remains a possibility amidst all the aforementioned impositions. However, innovative methods of conveying it need to be devised. It is in fact true, as bell hooks well explains, that the presence of those who dominate changes the nature and the direction of the words of resistance ...

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in 2006, a large part of the text has 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'.

Keywords: war, displacement, imposition, control, deeply divided societies, resistance, state, margins, identity, Sudan, Khartoum

The paper is divided into five themes;

Theme 1 - Voices from the author

Theme 2 - Political Overview and the Assimilation Policies of the North

Theme 3 - War and the Displacement of the Southerners to the Northern Capital – Khartoum

Theme 4 - Impositions

Theme 5 - Resistance



THEME 1 – Voices from the Author

Gossips between the (northern) girls in university, chatting discreetly, their voices lowered ...

Did you hear about the young man with slave origins 'Abd' who dared to ask an Arab girls hand in marriage! How dare he! What was he thinking? Was he insane!!

That day I saw a crazy southern woman screaming her lungs out at the poor bus conductor. Yah, well of course. They are all like that! So uncivilized!

Did you know that the southern woman living close to us in that hut was selling 'Araki' alcohol spirits. I saw some soldiers visit her place frequently. Yah, well that's normal, plus she's probably offering sexual services also!

The girls burst in laughter.

Be quiet, hush! a southern student is approaching. She might hear us!

.....

There aren't that many southern students in the University of Khartoum, they are quite few. They are polite but distant. They always greet us for our religious festivals; I don't remember ever greeting them in Christmas². They keep to them selves most of the time, they gather in the main street of the university, chatting, making plans for the evenings, however, most of the time they meet to discuss politics.

They have their own spaces, I usually find them under that same tree, with there backs against that same bench, chatting away endlessly, talking usually in Arabic or English, so I can make out a few words as I pass by. The south has over 80 different languages and dialects, so they are forced to speak either Arabic or English, depending mainly on the situation and perhaps the subject of the discussion.

I started finding it frustrating, the fact that no matter how long you knew some southerners, you always remained the familiar stranger, it never went beyond that. The invisible barrier was there at all times, in all situations, blocking all forms of communication ...

I feel now that my only wish is to give that invisible barrier a form in order to remove it, or at least alter its position, a bit...

When I chose this topic for my paper, I felt that it might be the gateway for me to explore the chances of finally being able to address that barrier, to reach out and feel it, to try to make sense of it. That's what usually frustrates architects, feeling things but being unable to define their forms, reasoning and depths. Perhaps it is only because of my education as an architect that I believe that indeed this barrier is a space that can be measured, classified and defined. I attempt in this paper to do exactly that...



Background Information

With an area of approximately 1,000,000 square miles, not only is Sudan the largest country in Africa but it is potentially one of the richest, having vast untapped resources of agricultural lands, oil, uranium, gold and other reserves.³ Sudan is also a mosaic of different ethnicities and cultures, causing it to be termed ‘the microcosm’ of Africa;

The Sudan has often been called a ‘microcosm of Africa’ because of its diversity manifest in a wide range of areas. Its inhabitants may call themselves Arabs, or Africans, or indeed, Afro-Arabs ..., they profess a number of religions, including Islam and Christianity; they speak different languages and dialects and pursue a varied range of lifestyles... All those diversities are evocative of the African Continent.⁴

The most pronounced disparity however, may be that between the northern and southern segments of the country; a report made in 1956 (the year of independence) by a special commission to investigate the southern disturbances delineated the North-South dichotomy as follows;

Firstly ... there is very little in common between Northern and Southern Sudanese. Racially the North is Arab, the South is Negroid; Religiously the North is Muslim, the South is pagan; Linguistically the North speaks Arabic, the South some eighty different languages ...⁵

THEME 2 - Assimilation policies of the North – A history of Cultural Imposition

Ever since 1821 the region of South Sudan had suffered tremendous upheavals, starting with the arrival of the Turks up to the civil war with the Government of North Sudan which ended only in 2005, having only a decade of peace (1972 - 1983) in between. One hundred and eighty three years of turbulence had caused radical change to the region. Change that transformed the Southern Sudanese identity tremendously, what had emerged was a new identity, the identity of resistance...

At the time of independence the northern government of Sudan inherited a South that was radically different from the North. With one third of the country having different traditional systems and having evolved along Christian/Western lines, the country was destined for trouble. As a reverse to the British policies which had hindered the national integration, the Northern government decided to apply a reintegration policy in favour of Islam and Arabism.⁶

Thus, the departure of the British signified the start of a new form of colonialism; an internal colonialism, in which the culture and religion of the Northerners was forcefully imposed upon the southerners. In the minds of the southerners, the northern governance was simply a transfer of power from the British to their “old enemies”; the Arab Northerners. The conditions were further agitated by the continuous failure of the Northern government to share power with the Southern political elites, thus, reinforcing the belief that the Northerners were in essence colonial successors to the British. This left the southerners alienated and insecure, ultimately leading to armed rebellion.⁷



The Northern Government reacted in the form of ruthless suppression of the local *resistance*, and attempted to assert law and order through crude military force. Deng argues that the northern administration was “totally ignorant of the South and its cultures and viewed the people condescendingly as primitive, wild and pagan.”⁸

THEME 3 - Civil war and the displacement of the Southern Sudanese

Since the year 1983 the region of South Sudan has been engulfed in a tragic civil war which has led to the death of 2 million and displaced over 5 million from their homelands. A small percentage of those displaced sought refuge in the neighboring countries whilst the majority became displaced within state borders causing Sudan to become the country which has the largest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the world. The majority of those displaced internally sought refuge in the capital city of Khartoum (a figure reaching up to 2 million) forming slightly over a third of the city’s population. Prior to that, the southerners would never accept such migrations and viewed them as ‘shameful’ and were criticized through Dinka songs.⁹ Migration, during the South-North hostilities, Deng affirms; was a “fear of death and an escape towards more secure towns in the North.”¹⁰

THEME 4 - Khartoum – A Multitude of Impositions

In this section we will be defining the environment to which the majority of southern Sudanese have been displaced, describing elements of imposition which they encountered. We argue that three forms of imposition may have contributed to the estrangement and alienation of the displaced southerners.

The first form of imposition is a spatial imposition, manifested through signs in the fabric of the city that tend to symbolise a strong ‘Arab/Islamic’ character, which we refer to as “imposition through the ‘spirit of the place’”. The general argument is that Khartoum has a strong “Arab/Islamic” desert character, which makes it difficult for the southerner displaced population to integrate. For them the changes are too drastic; from Savannah to Sahara, from indigenous settlements to Islamic towns, from superiority to inferiority...

The second form of imposition that we will be discussing is related to governmental laws and policies and the strategies which the authorities adopt to deal with the displaced. In this section we will be discussing relocation programs the city authorities had undergone for the removal of the displaced squatters. We will explain how the displaced ‘who have not integrated’ have been forcefully relocated to areas at the extreme fringes of the city; areas in which services were practically non-existent.

The third form of imposition is by the people, this section reflects upon how the Northerners, who form the majority, view themselves as superior to the southerners. It is important to slightly delve into it, since it portrays the depth of the conflict and the essence of the problem that causes the discriminative behaviour of the Northerners towards the Southerners, thus, causing ethnic grievances which threaten to tear the city apart.



Imposition through the “Spirit of the Place”

Every place sets of a series of signs; these signs could express a single meaning or many, they may coincide and they may not. Signs are given of by the landscape and the built fabric, they are usually expressed in feelings that the place evokes in oneself. Norberg-Schulz¹¹ who published his profoundly elaborate book *Genius Loci*, in 1980, serves to give us a number of clues as to the signs the city of Khartoum gave, directly before the mass exodus of southerners due to the start of the second civil war in 1983. Norberg-Schulz argues repeatedly as we will further explain that Khartoum sets clear ‘Arab/Islamic’ signs. He asserts, through his narratives, that the town is in complete harmony with the nature of its desert environment. Our position however, is that the city communicates clear signs of imposition.

Those who visit Khartoum are immediately struck by the strong *quality of place*. The horizontal expanse of the barren desert country, the slow movement of the great life-giving Nile, the immense sky and the burning sun, combine to create a singularly powerful environment¹²

The Arabic city:

Norberg describes the traditional city of Omdurman¹³ as an Arabic labyrinth; “the wide regular streets of the colonial city ... form a meaningful counterpoint to the labyrinth world of *Arabic Omdurman...*”¹⁴ He also speaks elaborately about the ‘interiority’ of the settlements in his descriptions;

The basic interiority of the Arab settlement is still preserved. The labyrinths were generated by the gradual clustering of units, leaving the streets as secondary “intervals”. This approach to urban design is still used in the squatter settlements along the periphery, which thus repeat the *constituent principle of Arab towns*. The spaces formed in this way have an eminently human quality, changing shape and size according to the needs.¹⁵



The Desert city:

Everywhere the desert is present; not only at the periphery of the habitat it enters between the houses, but also at the very centres of the three towns we have the sand of the desert under our feet, and everywhere we feel its infinite presence. ...¹⁶



Norberg-Schulz explains how the people of Khartoum live in harmony with the *desert*, which although “during the frequent sandstorms... becomes ... threatening” they have however, understood it and adapted to it accordingly.¹⁷ “In spite of their diversity the three towns have one basic fact in common; they allow for dwelling in a desert country.”¹⁸



The Islamic city:

The only vertical element is the slender needle of the Minaret, which reminds man that he does not only live on earth but also under the sky.¹⁹

To the Southerners who arrive in Khartoum, the slender minarets do not evoke the feelings which Norberg-Schulz describes; instead they are a constant reminder of inferiority, oppression and cultural imposition of which they had been suffering since the Mahdist Revolution in 1885.²⁰ It is not only the minarets but the entire design of the traditional settlements which have the mosque at their very centre.



After Independence a number of governments adopted the Islamic Order, Sudan was to adhere itself to the Arab, Islamic World. The process started in the second military regime (1969-1985), and was strengthened after the Islamic State was declared in 1983 it however reached vast scale under the present regime of the NIF (National Islamic Front) which took power in 1989.²¹ The governments encouraged the construction of mosques, and seemed to be intent on turning the three towns into a city of a thousand minarets. It would happen that three mosques would be constructed next to each other, where there is no real necessity, or in poor a neighborhood where the people were in more dire need of basic services or food supplies.





Thus, Norberg-Schulz's descriptions of Khartoum, cause it to become a city which imposes a specific culture upon 'African/Non-Muslim' southerners, giving them no chance to penetrate and live comfortably. The only location which remains to accept them becomes the periphery.

There they settle hoping that the city would expand and finally include them, unfortunately this is never the case. As we will describe in the following section, the city expands and the displaced are moved further and further onto the periphery through a system of multiple demolitions by the authorities who target those 'who have not integrated'

With time, the southerners are forced to camouflage themselves within the city. To dissolve into the fabric, to become unseen, unrecognised, forgotten in a sense...

The Second Imposition: Imposition by Authorities

The bus goes on and on, I am about to dose off, the heat and sand are blowing in through the vehicle's window. Rania²² notes that we are nearly there to keep me awake. We had left behind all signs of the city, every thing had slowly vanished; even the asphalt road had come to an end leaving us to a dirt road that kept rattling the minibus in all directions..

'There! Can you see it! That is Dar el Salaam!²³

I turn around and look out of the window, at first I couldn't see what Rania was talking about, perhaps she was just fooling me. I'm about to turn and glare at her when I finally see it. Yes indeed there was something there amidst all the swirling dust, tiny objects protruding from the earth, indistinguishable having the same colour as the earth and the dust in the air...





Dar al Salaam Omdurman – Photograph taken by Author - Fieldwork 2006

Khartoum, is a city which has experienced dramatic population influx over the recent decades, the city has grown from 500,000 in 1956 (date of independence) to 1.8 million in 1983, to around 4.4 million in 1998. Of the latter estimated figure, 1.8 million are categorised as “displaced”, majority of which are Southerners and Nuba who fled the civil strife in the south.²⁴ Due to the complex history of displacement, Khartoum has emerged as a city which could be classified as a *deeply divided society*. The population is clearly divided into a majority; the Northerners (both in numbers and position) and minorities; IDPs such as Southerners and Westerners. The most alien of the IDPs, however, are the southerners, as a result of the religious and cultural differences which we had been describing in the previous section. For political reasons (the war) they also present a continuous threat to the authorities, who sought to dilute their gatherings and enclaves.²⁵

The government as is explained below seeks continuously to take action against those “who have not integrated into the urban society”^{26,27}, this is a call for the displaced to camouflage themselves into the existing cultural fabric of the city and warns against any signs of differentiation. It also facilitates the “implementation of Islamic legislation”²⁸.

‘Planning as a control of Ethnic Minority’

In his article “*The Dark Side of Modernism: Planning as a Control of an Ethnic Minority*” Yiftachel questions the very nature of planning, whether it is reform or control. He elaborates further by explaining that, planning in *deeply divided societies* usually takes the form of *Control*. He defines ‘Control’ as; “regulations of development enforced from above, with the aim of maintaining existing patterns of social, political and economic domination.”²⁹ He argues that planning if viewed as having the capacity to reform and improve cities, regions, and societies is too idealistic, narrow and often unrealistic³⁰. He also notes that very little research has been focused on the instances when planning begins to become a repressive agent of change, particularly in the context of ethnic relations.

Yiftachel, who discusses the context of Arab settlements in Israel³¹, differentiates between two types of multi-ethnic societies; pluralistic societies and deeply divided societies. Pluralistic societies he defines as “composed of immigrant groups which tend to assimilate over time, and are usually governed by liberal-democratic regime.”³² In such societies, he argues, one’s ethnic affiliation is a private matter, and ethnic movements mainly focus on the



attainment of civil and economic equality. He argues that in such societies; ethnic affairs are usually entwined with class issues, which form the most dominant social problems.

On the other hand, he defines, deeply divided societies as “societies which are composed of non-assimilating ethnic groups which occupy their historical (real or mythical) homeland.”³³

According to him, ethnic movements in these societies tend to promote goals of cultural and regional autonomy. In such societies, Yiftachel argues, ethnic conflicts are potentially more explosive, and may threaten the structure or unity of the State. It is for these reasons that government policies, in such societies, often attempt to control the minorities, hoping to prevent serious challenges which may affect the territorial integrity of the State. Thus, Yiftachel concludes that “control policies typically attempt to retard the minority’s economic development, contain their territorial expression, and exclude them from the state’s centres of power and influence.”³⁴

Yiftachel does not exclude that planning to control segments of the population is also used in Western (pluralistic) democratic societies. However the methods of control differ, in such societies, he explains that relatively subtle ways are used, mainly through market mechanisms. In contrast, ethnicity in deeply divided societies has meant that the use of *planning as control* in many cases becomes quite explicit and blatant.³⁵

He argues that the constant use of planning as a tool for control is likely to exacerbate social tensions, that may have an explosive potential.³⁶

Our argument here is that the explosion of riots and protests that took place in Khartoum and many government controlled towns of Sudan (which was ignited by the sudden death of Dr John Garang) could be a manifest of the deeply divided society dilemma. It is the magnitude of the riots which lasted for three days (causing tremendous material damage and leading to the death of over a hundred persons in the Capital) which causes us to explore further into the causes. One suggestion is that a number of inconveniences which had been harboured by the southerner minority had finally found an outlet through the riots.



Source: <http://treyjackson.typepad.com/junction/images/sudan3.jpg>

Source: http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/media/images/41372000/jpg/41372857_shopriot_afp300.jpg

Khalid Mustafa Medani³⁷, however argues that the riots were a reflection of the ‘class’ rather than ‘ethnic’ grievances, he explains it as follows;

Like the war itself, the unrest on what Sudanese term "black Monday" has been widely depicted as driven by ethnic or religious hostility between the "Arab" Muslim



north and the "African" Christian and animist south. But while Garang's death was the immediate spark, the three days of riots were not a spontaneous protest against "Arab" northerners by southern Sudanese "Africans." Rather, the riots were ultimately a reflection of economic and political grievances long harbored by a wide range of poor and marginalized Sudanese — southerners and others — living in and around Khartoum's urban fringe. The disturbances, like Sudan's civil war, are best understood as the outcome of frustration resulting from years of neglect and political repression of the periphery by the central government.³⁸

Medani's viewpoint indicates that he considers the Khartoum as a 'pluralistic society' and thus appears to underestimate the magnitude of the problem. We believe that the 'periphery' is predominantly characterized as those who were displaced by the civil war in the south, who ended up in the 'periphery' due to 'political repression by the central government'. One of the important forms of repression is 'territorial control' which we argue is the mode of planning control which the governmental authorities of Khartoum have applied to the displaced southerners. According to Yiftachel, territorial policies can be used as "a most powerful tool of control over minorities, particularly in deeply divided societies, where ethnic groups often reside in their own regions."³⁹

The Third Imposition: Imposition by the people

On the 9th of January 2005, the day the peace agreement was signed, the southerners went out on the streets to celebrate the beginning of a new era. Hope has finally loomed in the horizon.

On that day, my cousin sitting in a cab looked out, seeing the joy, perhaps for the first time, on faces which pain and sorrow had been etched.

Cheerfully she commented to the cab driver that it was great and that we should also be out with them to celebrate the peace. "Us...." the driver said in disdain ".....celebrating peace with those slaves!!!"

Although most capital cities attempt to act as melting pots to their usually diverse populations, Khartoum stubbornly refuses to do so. The Northerners in Khartoum see themselves as Arabs, and as superior to the southerners. Francis Deng explains in his book "War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan" the conflict and the enormous ethnic disparity which nurtures further hatred and disrespect between the people;

'The North, two-thirds of the country in land and population, is inhabited by indigenous tribal groups. The dominant among these groups intermarried with incoming Arab traders and, over centuries, dating back to time immemorial but heightened by the advent of Islam in the seventh century, produced a genetically mixed African-Arab racial and cultural hybrid. The resulting racial characteristics look very similar to those of all the African groups cutting across the continent below the Sahara. However unlike the situation of these countries, where people identify themselves as Africans, the northern Sudanese see themselves as Arabs and deny the strongly African element in their skin colour and physical features. They associate



these features with the “negroid” race and see it as the mother race of slaves, inferior and demeaned.’⁴⁰

Deng affirms that calling the southern Sudanese “slaves” *abeed*, to their faces remains a common practice amongst the northern people. Even now, he explains, while northerners are more discreet about the slur, it is still frequently used in intimate circles and more openly in jocular conversations.⁴¹ The irony he asserts is that the Northern Sudanese who refer to the Africans in general as slaves, visibly have evidence of the ‘African slave origin’ in their skin colour, and therefore can be assumed to have some genetic inheritance from a slave origin. In fact Deng, mockingly remarks, that it is the southerners who are the progeny of those Africans who escaped enslavement. This basic fact he explains, escapes the Northern consciousness.⁴² Deng, who analyses the Northern tendency to exaggerate Arabism and Islam, attributes this behaviour to a feeling of deep-seated inferiority complex which the northerners have as a result of their obvious marginality as Arabs.⁴³

In this section we have highlighted that the displaced southerners have been subjected to multiple impositions, ranging from subtle signs set of by the physical landscape of the city fabric to heavy-handed methods of forced relocation actions by the city authorities. Hidden below these two impositions is the more serious ‘*identity conflict*’ which we characterise as the essence of the discriminative attitudes of the northerners towards the displaced southerners. These impositions have caused feelings of alienation and insecurity to generate, which at times revealed their explosive potential. The riots which followed the death of Dr John Garang, turning Khartoum within seconds to an insecure war zone, are a clear manifest of the depth of the crisis. Though indeed the riots have been triggered by the death of Garang, yet, the actual magnitude of the problem has deeper roots and could be best described as a *deeply divided society* dilemma.

Whether intentionally or not, the reality of the condition, is that the city of Khartoum is in fact full of signs which signify exclusion, and are constant reminders of the long and tragic history of cultural imposition to which the southerners have always been subjected. Khartoum reflects a drastic change to the southerners in relation to the secure lands of the south from which they originate; this causes the displaced to have a constant feeling of vulnerability and exposure. In order to minimise the effect of this harsh exposure, the displaced southerners begin to camouflage themselves into the fabric of the city, hoping at best to be over looked and ignored. Furthermore, the forced assimilation policies, by the authorities remain the continuous threat for all those who refused to ‘integrate’ and dissolve into the fabric. The displaced southerners therefore choose to adhere to the surrounding settlement fabric, as a way to avoid further humiliation and ill treatment.

In the following section we will explain that resistance still remains a possibility amidst all the aforementioned exclusions. However, innovative methods of conveying it need to be devised by the southerners. It is in fact true, as bell hooks well explains, that the presence of those who dominate changes the nature and the direction of the words of resistance ...⁴⁴



THEME 5 - Forms of Resistance

Our focus in this section is to highlight contradictions and ambivalences in the perception and use of the city by the displaced southerners. To achieve this and to be able to develop a complete view of the situation we divide the section into two parts. The first part defines the public space in the city centre. Here we focus on the southern youth (usually the males) who are able to occupy 'specific' "empty territories" in the city centre and transform them into socio-cultural base points from which they voice their resistance. From these points they are able to stress their clear resistance to the assimilation policies of the north; in fact we will discuss that such "forced assimilation and integration" policies, cause the southerners to adopt new and sometimes "alien" forms of resistance.

The second part defines the public space in the settlements, which are located at the extreme fringes of the city and completely disconnected from the urban fabric. Subtle resistance develops through the names given by the inhabitants to the settlements, and through a few visible elements that represent religious and cultural resistance.

"We refuse to be what you want us to be, we are what we are, and that's the way it's going to be"

Bob Marley⁴⁵

Although the southerners constitute approximately one-third of the population of Khartoum,⁴⁶ however, their visibility is impeded by the official vision of the "Arab Islamic" capital. The Arab/Muslim majority indeed stage a "law of land" tendency as an all-round tool to deny southerners access to numerous places in the city. The presence of the southerners in the city centre is restricted to "work"; it is them who keep the fanatic pace of the construction going, who sweep the streets and clean the houses of the wealthy, who drive the buses that take the people to and from work, who clean the cars in the parking lots and polish the shoes of the employees. As bell hooks best describes the experience; "We could enter but we could not live there."⁴⁷ However there remains a deep acknowledgement amongst the southerners which states that: "we (are) a necessary, vital part of that whole"⁴⁸ it is us who give life to the city.

In this section we describe the territoriality that emerges (by the minority) as a form of resistance. We will explain that the southerners occupy the "empty territories", spaces that are devoid of 'social economic values' to the dominating group (the Arab/Muslim Northerners) and use them as points of departure. Points from which they address the world, from which their voice is represented and their thoughts are conveyed, in those spaces they become the present, the dominant, the prevailing... It is those spaces which bell hooks describes as "*spaces of radical openness*."⁴⁹

In such spaces/territories the displaced southerners feel at home, language and dress are used clearly as signs of resistance, insisting to talk one's language and refusing to assimilate into the 'Arab/Islamic' culture is used as a "lifeboat" to "keep ones identity from going under"⁵⁰ hooks stresses the role of language as "a place of struggle" she explains that the oppressed

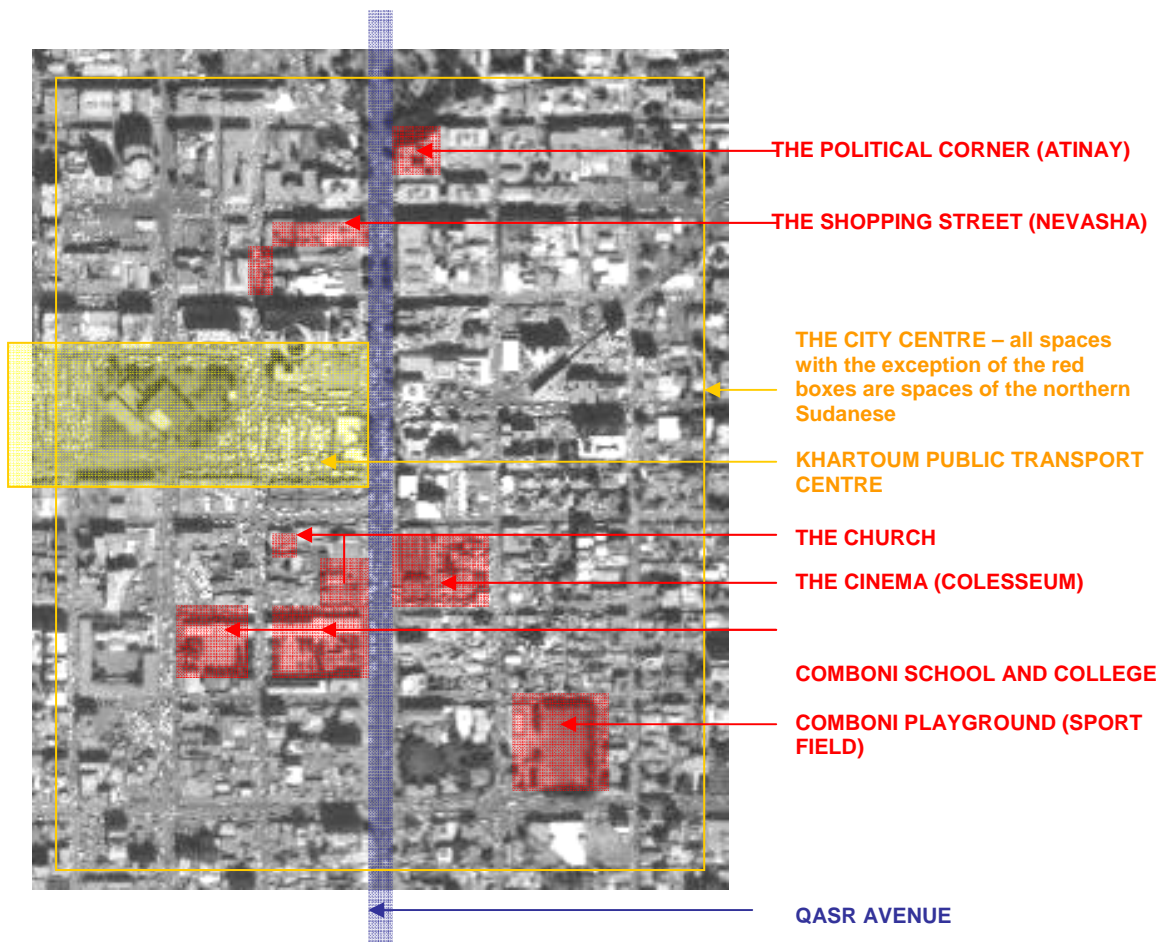


struggle in language to recover, reconcile and reunite. hooks asserts that the “words” used are not without meaning in fact they are an action and indeed a resistance.⁵¹

Such “empty territories” in the city centre are therefore sanctuaries for the displaced southerners, who search to interact with those with whom they share mutual understandings of life, interactions that are not dependant on “long explanations, but can proceed on the taken-for-granted premises of a set of shared assumptions.”⁵² In these spaces they find recognition, their voices are heard. *Here* they talk freely; their speech is no longer erased by the “garrulous and fully relaxed talk of the community.” *Here* they feel free from the gaze of the “other”. *Here* they can be themselves with out getting any strange looks from anyone...

Map 2: Khartoum City Centre / Source: Google Earth, colours and descriptions added by author – (Fieldwork 2006)

Map indicating spaces in the city centre used by the southern IDPs. The city centre provides a clustering of several ‘Colonial / Western / Christian’ functions at close proximity provides the suitable atmosphere. Such spaces were mostly introduced by the British, during the Colonial period, they are regarded by the dominant group (the Arab/Muslim northerners) as “empty territories” spaces which they consider devoid of social and economical benefits.



The Shopping Street – Naivasha:

To enter the Naivasha,⁵³ I have to descend down a number of steps, one, two, three... I'm there now... a feeling of insecurity takes over almost immediately. The space is compacted with southerners, mainly men, standing, selling, buying, chatting, walking, every activity one can imagine. I shuffle past, my intentions were to take some pictures and perhaps interview some of the southerners... this has all vanished now, all what keeps turning in my mind is the thought of how to reach the end of the

corridor, the thought of how to exit the space! I try not to look too nervous; it will only make things worse. Some one from behind spots the camera that I am carrying, “look she has a camera!” but his tone was playful, intimidating, not very threatening, I walk on, I feel a hundred pair of eyes burning my back. What was it that brought me here in the first place! Take a deep breath! Don’t Panic! It will be over in a few minutes, you don’t have to come here again ... ever!

The southerners’ shopping street, (which they now refer to as *Naivasha* in relation to the name of the city in which the CPA was signed) can hardly be termed as a street. Informal sellers sitting in the shade of an L-shaped veranda, spread white cloths on the ground or on wooden racks and display their assortment of items, which range from mobile phones and electronic devices to leather shoes and wallets. Many of the clothes displayed are, as Natalie would describe “Nelly style” referring to the famous Black American Artist. The sellers stay there from dawn till late at night, then they pack up and leave for home. More importantly, however, is the significance of the territory as a meeting place, where southerners, especially male youth, gather to chat. Natalie describes the western culture which many of the southerners adopt, especially the Nuer, as alien;

... the western culture for them is alien, you find some of them wearing like (Nele) low-waist jeans and tight shirts, they just want to defeat the Arab culture by anything, even if that culture they adopt will not survive they still want to fight using it.⁵⁴



Southerners’ shopping street ‘Nevasha’ (Sunday noon) - Photograph by Author
 Southerner wearing ‘Nele’ style – Photograph taken by author’s acquaintance

The Church

The Church forms the most vital symbol for the Southern Christians in Khartoum; “it is the focus of their lives and the most powerful body of representation of their interests”⁵⁵. Nearly most of my interviewees agreed that the church indeed plays an extremely important role; they also added that it acts as a public function which brings the people together.



*...what I find interesting is that the people come all the way to pray here in this Chapel. There is only one reason that they come here, you see the people live in very far places from each other, some in Jebal Awliya, some in Dar el salaam Omdurman and some in Hajyousif, so this may be the central place for them to meet.*⁵⁶

The Parish Priest explains that the church hands out relief to those in need, and plays an important role in trauma counselling amongst the southerners.

Many of the displaced southerners consider the practice of queuing up for handouts and relief degrading “people find the notion of standing in line undignified, and would sometimes decline to go to distribution for this reason”⁵⁷. The Parish Priest on the contrary, affirms that the southerners do in fact go to the churches for aid; “they don’t go on the streets, they come to the churches ...”

Natalie argues that the role of the church and thus that of Christianity could be manifested as an anti-Arab/Islamic attitude of resistance. He explains it as follows;

... you can find that most southerners are Christians because most Arabs are Muslims, not because they believe in Christianity, but at times only as an opposition, I do not say that this is a rule, but many have this attitude .

The Cinema:

It has become a very common observation, how southerners are fond of going to the cinema, to the extent that it is voiced in the jocular conversations of the Northerners. According to the manager of the Cinema Coliseum in the Qasr Avenue, many of the male southern youth pour in on Thursdays to watch the movies presented, the tickets he comments, are extremely cheap about 1500 Sudanese pounds (less than a dollar). The cinema usually plays a selection of Indian movies, since they are very popular amongst the viewers. He stresses that the Indian movie provides the ultimate entertainment because it is a combination of drama, action, romance, comedy, and dances, “everything that a spectator would ever need”. The manager of the Cinema also expresses his concern regarding the decreasing numbers of spectators, which he mainly attributes to the end of the war and the return of a number of people to the South.⁵⁸

The cinema Coliseum was a grand place in the former times were many educated northern elites used to spend their weekend evenings. However, it has deteriorated rapidly since 1983, the year the Islamic laws were passed. It now is an unkempt place which displays outdated Indian movies, the northerners have stopped going there leaving yet another “empty territory” to be exploited by the underprivileged. The southerners who can afford prefer to go to other cinemas in the city. This particular cinema has become the “territory of the uneducated/male/youth and street children” many of whom are southerners.

The Night School ‘Comboni school’ and the The Sports Field ‘Comboni Playground’

For the southerner’s education is not primarily attributed to finding employment⁵⁹. Education amongst the displaced is perceived as an essential component to becoming ‘street wise’. City



life which is entirely different from the villages is administered through documentation and bureaucracy. Thus, people who understand the written word become more oriented and confident in their dealings with officialdom.⁶⁰ Night schools, to which the older youth go⁶¹, are a centre for the discussion of politics, the discussions act as eye-openers to those who are not acquainted with the North/South politics. However people also meet to chat, flirt and date. These meetings continue even during the summer vacation period.⁶² Thus the night school becomes the territory of the educated southerners.

The Margin – A space of Radical Openness?

In her article bell hooks explains that the Margin, which is usually identified as a space of deprivation and exclusion, is in fact quite the opposite, she views the Margin as a space of radical possibility, “a space of resistance.”⁶³

One of the first things to notice in the settlements is that the typologies of the southerners’ homes fade into the main frame of the settlement pattern; no form of resistance is expressed blatantly through the typologies of the homes. The southerners camouflage themselves and become unnoticeable, their homes can hardly be told apart of the homes of the different displaced ethnic groups (Westerners, Easterners, Nuba) in the area. The settlements are a homogenous palette, nothing stands out. This may be partly attributed to the threats by the authorities which we have explained in the previous chapter towards all structures that have not “integrated into the urban” fabric. However signs of subtle resistance could be presented through visible external elements such as ‘doors’ or through the names given by the inhabitants in reference to the settlements.

Doors

“All squatters were given the option of free transportation of their belongings and families to the new sites including salvaged building components (roofs, beams, **doors**, windows, frames etc)”⁶⁴

The only tangible difference between the homes in the homogenous settlements generates from the one ‘external element’ that can be classified as “portable” and could be dismantled and transported in case any further displacement occurs; this element is the ‘Door’. The Doors develop a special significance and becomes representative of the inhabitants of the house. Thus doors to a large extent are the only externally visible signifiers of the inhabitants of a specific house. They could also be used as elements of resistance to situate the position of the family living within the space.





Photographs taken by Author – Dar el Salaam Omdurman May 2006

Dar el Salaam Jebal Awliya – SPLM Flags

Naming of the settlements

Many of the displaced, who live in the most degrading conditions, use their sense of humour to keep themselves from going under; this can be clearly portrayed through the names they use to refer to their settlements. The names also simultaneously represent their resistance to the appalling living conditions.

Some examples of the names are as follows:⁶⁵ (translation of the names is in *italics*)

Hillat Silik: “*The settlements of barricades*”, a temporary camp in Mayo, the people where moved in three years ago from the Salama were they had they homes destroyed. The inhabitants are a mix of many ethnic groups from west east and south Sudan, all houses are ‘rakubas’ a steel barricade surrounds the settlement, it has only two exits, the settlement is also termed ‘*Abu Ghreb*’ in sarcastic reference to the Iraqi prison.

Jabaroona: “*we were forced*”, a settlement in Omdurman west, the inhabitants were forcefully moved from AlGamayir in Omdurman, to the area at the fringes of the city. When they arrived the whole area was desert and they were not given any services, the area is now a notorious neighbourhood, the majority of the inhabitants are Dinka

Zajaloona: “*we were thrown in and locked*”, a term one would use if thrown in jail, a settlement in Omdurman, similar to the above story

Hillat Kusha: “*The settlement of garbage*”: a settlement in Khartoum Bahri, close to the Bahri Industrial Area, a dump site on which people settled probably to be in close proximity to the industrial area for employment

Hillat Alkhawaja Dagas: “*the foreigner who was fooled*”, a neighbourhood in Mayo, where it is said that the international aid agencies brought in a lot of supplies. The inhabitants sold most of the things and used the sorghum the foreigners brought to brew beer and got drunk, after getting drunk they chased the foreigners out, again after sometime another foreign agency found them in terrible conditions and re-supplied them, again the same thing happened

Mansoorah 1,2 and 3: Three neighbourhoods named “*Mansoorah*”, after the rich neighbourhood in Egypt, the irony of the naming is striking, most of the homes are

constructed from mud, electricity comes only from 7pm to 12 o clock midnight (5 hours per day)

The names of the settlements are usually issued by the inhabitants to portray their resistance, either *directly* such as the case of “Jabaroona” and “Zagalona” or *indirectly* by sarcastic names such as “Mansooraa” and “Khawaja Dagas”. The language and the choice of words clearly portray a condition of struggle, Hooks explains through her personal narratives that “often when the radical voice speaks about domination” it is addressed to those who dominate, she further elaborates that the presence of those who dominate “changes the nature and the direction of ... words.”⁶⁶ Language she asserts is a “place of struggle.”

Conclusion

As we have explained above, a large portion of the southerner youth have become attached to the city centre, which they feel is their place of ‘*presence*’. In the “empty territorial gaps” they are able to invent “spaces of radical openness” to create and define their own territories. The centre thus, becomes a haven for the southerner male youth, who emerge from the most invisible ‘absent’ parts of the city. The school, the church, the sports field and the shopping street, all begin to fulfil a double function, they become the locations which represent resistance.

The spaces thus, begin to develop a double meaning, the school is no longer only a space for education, a sports stadium becomes a chatting arena, the shopping street is no longer for shopping, and the church is not solely for prayer ...

We also explained that some subtle forms of resistance do in fact generate in the planned settlements at the margins, they may be expressed through the designs of the doors, which we argued are the only externally visible elements of significance, and through the names given to the settlements.

In this paper we have attempted to illustrate that the multitude of impositions generated by Khartoum has only succeeded in generating a ripple of resistance, which may be subtle at times, yet not so subtle in others.

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¹ Oren Yiftachel, "The Dark Side of Modernism: Planning as a Control of an Ethnic Minority." ,p 218

² I fear that my tone betrays me, that a sense of condescendence might slip, that the wrong impression be taken

³ 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 669

⁴ Mansour Khalid, *The Government They Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution* (London and New York: Kegan Paul, 1990) p 4

Cit. in: Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1995) p 24

⁵ Sudan government, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Southern Sudan During August 1955 (Khartoum: McCorquedale, 1956) p 81

Cit. in: *War of Visions* p 27

⁶ *War of Visions* p 137

⁷ *War of Visions* p 136

⁸ *War of Visions* p 136

⁹ *Dinka of the Sudan* p 138



¹⁰ *Dinka of the Sudan* p 163

¹¹ Christian Norberg-Schulz, author of a number of books on architecture, studied in Zürich with Siegfried Giedion and Harvard with Walter Gropius, at IIT with Mies van der Rohe and in Rome with Nervi. He has been a professor at the Oslo School of Architecture since 1966 and has been a visiting lecturer at numerous universities throughout the world.

¹² Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions London, 1980) p 113

¹³ Omdurman, forms a slightly over a third of greater Khartoum

¹⁴ *Genius Loci* p 113

¹⁵ *Genius Loci* p 120

¹⁶ *Genius Loci* p 115

¹⁷ *Genius Loci* p 115

¹⁸ *Genius Loci* p 115

¹⁹ *Genius Loci* p 118

²⁰ Refer to Chapter 1 – The conflict

²¹ Adil Ahmed Mustafa, *Khartoum Blues: The 'Deplanning' and Decline of a Capital City* (Habitat International 24, 2000, 309-325) p 315

²² Rania is not the actual name of my friend, she has changed her name to rania upon arriving in Khartoum, her real name I do not know

²³ DarelSalaam Project relocated a quarter of a million displaced to the extreme fringes of the capital

²⁴ Jeremy Loveless, *Displaced Populations in Khartoum :A Study of Social and Economic Conditions* (England: Save the Children Denmark, 1999)p 7

²⁵ *Displaced Populations in Khartoum* p 13

²⁶ Sharaf Eldin Ibrahim Bannaga, "Al-Shorouk: The Organisation of Villages in the State of Khartoum," (Zurich: The Habitat Group at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, 2000).p 50

²⁷ The government assures that *only* two groups of the affected population who were relocated:

Squatters: Persons relocated were defined as village dwellers who were *not integrated in the village society* because of their short stay (**settled after 1983**). However squatters who were integrated in the urban community and settled in villages surrounds before **1983** were not subject to relocation and considered as villagers except those whose homes were affected by the planning process. The squatter whose plot of land due to planning became less than 200m², the minimum registration area, was relocated.

Displaced persons who settled near villages recently and erected mobile shelters were relocated. They were very mobile and were able to move from one place to another very quickly. They also adapted themselves in the new relocation sites within hours from arrival.²⁷

1983 was the year the civil war started! It is from that period that large numbers of southerners displaced from their war torn regions started to arrive in the city!²⁷The intention of the authorities, therefore, becomes extremely obvious regarding their policies against the displaced southerners. Furthermore, his reference to those living in *rakubas*, as "very mobile and could move from one place to another" signifies extreme ignorance as to the social and economic reasons as to which the displaced chose their sites.

²⁸ *Displaced Populations in Khartoum* p 13

²⁹ Oren Yiftachel, "The Dark Side of Modernism: Planning as a Control of an Ethnic Minority." ,p 217

³⁰ The Dark Side of Modernism p 217

³¹ Although the context of Khartoum an Israel are dissimilar, yet we view that the discussion of the ethnic minorities and the deeply divided society applies to the condition of Khartoum

³² The Dark Side of Modernism p 218

³³ Oren Yiftachel, "The Dark Side of Modernism: Planning as a Control of an Ethnic Minority." ,p 218

³⁴ The Dark Side of Modernism p 218

³⁵ The Dark Side of Modernism p 219

³⁶ The Dark Side of Modernism p 220

³⁷ Khalid Mustafa Medani is an associate professor of political science and Islamic studies at McGill University and an editor of Middle East Report. He contributed this article from Khartoum



- ³⁸ Khalid Mustafa Medani, "Black Monday: The Political and Economic Dimensions of Sudan's Urban Riots," Middle East Report Online, August 9, 2005, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080905.html>
- ³⁹ The Dark Side of Modernism p 220
- ⁴⁰ Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1995) p 2
- ⁴¹ *War of Visions* p 5
- ⁴² *War of Visions* p 5, 6
- ⁴³ *War of Visions* p 64
- ⁴⁴ bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden (London and New York: Routledge). p 204
- ⁴⁵ Cit. in: Choosing the Margin p 207
- ⁴⁶ Ibrahim Foud Noor, "The Southern Sudanese Migration to Khartoum and the Resultant Conflicts," *GeoJournal* 25, no. 1 (1991) p 13
- ⁴⁷ bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden (London and New York: Routledge) p 206
- ⁴⁸ Choosing the Margin p 206
- ⁴⁹ Choosing the Margin p 208
- ⁵⁰ *Home Territories* p 47
- ⁵¹ Choosing the Margin p 204
- ⁵² Descombes, quoted in M. Auge, *Non-Places* (London: Verso, 1995)
Cit. in: *Home Territories* p 48
- ⁵³ The name of the southerner's shopping verandah
- ⁵⁴ Interview by author – Natalie – see appendix
- ⁵⁵ *Displaced Populations in Khartoum* p 22
- ⁵⁶ Interview with author – Parish Priest of Comboni Chapel – see appendix
- ⁵⁷ *Displaced Populations in Khartoum* p 20
- ⁵⁸ Interview with author – see appendix
- ⁵⁹ Which is near impossible in a system dominated by Northerners
- ⁶⁰ Jeremy Loveless, *Displaced Populations in Khartoum :A Study of Social and Economic Conditions* (England: Save the Children Denmark, 1999)p 32
- ⁶¹ Rania started school at 18 she is now 24 years old and is doing her high school education.
- ⁶² The group interview I conducted in Comboni was during the summer vacation, yet many students were gathered in groups chatting and discussing.
- ⁶³ bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden (London and New York: Routledge) p 206
- ⁶⁴ Sharaf Eldin Ibrahim Bannaga, "Al-Shorouk: The Organisation of Villages in the State of Khartoum," (Zurich: The Habitat Group at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, 2000) p 38
- ⁶⁵ I should note here that the terminology is issued by the inhabitants but is used by both northern and southern citizens; the names become common terminology and are eventually used in addresses and public transportation routes
- ⁶⁶ Choosing the Margin p 204

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