

Hanaa Motasim
Catholic University of Leuven
Department of Architecture, Urban Design and Regional Planning (ASRO)
Kasteelpark Arenberg 51
Leuven, 3001 (Heverlee)
Belgium

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Hana_taha@yahoo.com

Displacement and the Perception of Space – Internally Displaced Persons in Khartoum

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Faculte des Lettres des Sciences Humaines, Mohammed V Agdal University, Rabat, Morocco
and
International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Abstract:

Displacement could be identified as a disruption of the everyday dynamics; a sudden change which causes a profound questioning of what may have seemed self-evident (Heynen and Loeckx 1998). Displacement may manifest in manifold ways ranging from physical displacement to more complex modes of mental and metaphorical displacements. The discussion I choose to bring to the fore revolves around the perception of space in a condition of displacement. Space, here, is not restricted to the domestic space, it is also not limited to the physical space; space here becomes the flexible stage, the constantly shifting platform upon which the various manifestations of displacement take place.

In this paper, I choose to investigate how space is perceived on one hand, and how it is used, appropriated and transformed on the other. Therefore, not only am I dealing with questions of physical displacement (migrations) in defining the plight of the southern Sudanese Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have arrived at the borders of a capital city (Khartoum), but also with the complex multitude of changes in the social, cultural and economic environment which has caused them to design their own distinct ways of perceiving and interacting with space; drawing their stand-points of resistance towards an all encompassing forceful urban environment that is in everyway different from the lands and cultures from which they were forced to flee. All these different and complex ways in which displacement manifests cause us to pay a particular interest to space as a stage that witnesses the phenomenon¹.

Keywords: Internal Displacement, Space, Spatial Tactics, Khartoum, Sudan

Introduction

Almost half of all the internally displaced persons on the globe 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.² My case study group, namely southern Sudanese IDPs, have been subject to a multitude of complexities; their region has always been ground for constant conflicts, both the government and the rebels have been responsible for the mass destruction of villages, poisoning of wells and the targeting of civilians (Pendergast et al 1994). An estimate of 2 million southern Sudanese have died during the prolonged war, and the majority of the remaining population have been uprooted and displaced from their places of origin (Ojaba et al 2002). Nearly half a million fled to neighboring countries whilst the majority has become displaced within state borders (Ojaba et al 2002).

This article attempts to shed light on how 'space' is perceived by the displaced persons in Khartoum, who constitute up to a third of the city's population. The impositions which the 'displaced' have encountered upon their arrival in the city may have caused them to design their own distinct ways of perceiving and interacting with space. 'Space' is, thus, altered by 'tactics' of resistance, defined in the words of Michel de Certeau as "movement in the enemy's field of vision" (1980:6).

1 Internal Displacement

This section draws out the significance of my research subject. It stresses the fact that although the number of IDPs worldwide has by far surpassed the number of refugees registered by the UNHCR (Cohen and Deng 1998), the attempts to parallel that in scholarly research have been insufficient. Internal displacement, thus, needs to come forth as a subject separate from that of Refugee Studies. With the exception of the causes of their flight, IDPs do not share much in common with refugees, the simple fact that they are still within the jurisdiction of their own governments (which might have been the cause of their flight) causes them to be highly politicized in comparison to the former group, another fact is that IDPs remain within the 'boundaries' of their *own* countries, and are thus, less confined (as is the situation of refugees) to camps. These differences among others might mean that Internal Displacement is affected differently *by* (and also reflects differently *on*) space, it is that difference which I seek to outline.

1.1 Overview of Internal Displacement

A definition coined by the former UN Secretary-General's Representative on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis Deng 1998, states that Internally displaced persons are "...persons or groups of persons "who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border." (Cohen and Deng 1998)

Internal displacement as a phenomenon it is not at all uncommon; having occurred in several countries at different frequencies in the past, however, in regard to its documentation and the structuring of its framework it remains a relatively new term which establishes the IDPs as a category identifiable by humanitarian and UN agencies. In the late 1980s the problem of internal displacement came onto the international agenda. Several factors contributed to its becoming a subject of international concern. One was the growing number of internally displaced persons (from a mere 1.2 million in 1982 to over 20 million by the year 1997), and the other was the fact that the political advantage that motivated many states to accept refugees during the cold war changed in the 1990s to a desire to limit their entry (Barutciski 1996, Cohen and Deng 1998, Duffield 1997). According to Cohen and Deng, this has not only been the case in Western governments but also in other parts of the world, spurring a direct interest in protecting and assisting persons displaced within their own countries as a means of discouraging them from seeking asylum abroad (Cohen and Deng 1998).

1.2 Scholarly research and Internal Displacement

Displacement, particularly in the field of migration and refugee studies, has long been described as a condition of uprootedness followed by a total collapse of social structure. This “functionalist” perspective perceived refugees and forced migrants as an “anomaly” to the otherwise stable setting of the sedentary society (Agier 2002, Kibreab 1996, Malkki 1995). However, not only were displaced persons depicted as derooted but also as traumatised subjects, with the refugee status “in and of itself” constituting “a recognizable psychological condition”(Malkki 1995). Such rigid positions may have posed serious problems to studying displacement, simply because they depicted displaced persons as weakened, traumatized individuals suffering from identity issues³. This has offered little or no chance to illustrate how displaced persons were able to deal with conditions to which they were subject and how they have been able to transform situations to their benefit (Agier 2002, Grabska 2006, Harrell-Bond 2004, Kibreab 1996, Koser 2003, Malkki 1995, Turton 2003).

The increase in mobility which has been witnessed in the last couple of decades, particularly by globalisation, has caused a shift in anthropological perspective. The postmodernist works of Appadurai, Clifford, Said, Rosaldo, Hannerz, Hebdige, Robertson among others, all attest to this shift. Appadurai, has criticised the way in which anthropologists bind people to place, he criticised the view in which the “native” is depicted not only as a person who is from and belongs to a certain place, but rather as someone who is “somehow *incarcerated*, or confined” to those places (Appadurai 1988). Clifford has also noted that the common notions of culture are more biased towards “rooting than travel”⁴. These positions have in return caused a clear shift in refugee and migration studies, although it came much later (mid 1990’s onwards) One of the main reasons for this delay could be attributed to the fact that most displacement and refugee studies are prepared for, and funded by international organisations, whose main set of criteria deviates from scholarly research towards a different set of priorities. According to Malkki (1995) “these institutional, organizational settings have had subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) effects in shaping the questions that scholars have formulated about displacement and refugee settlement” (Malkki 1995:506). An example of the influence of the frameworks developed by international refugee agencies on a wider world of scholarship is the widespread use of the bureaucratic UN model of the three “durable solutions” to refugee problems – repatriation, integration, and resettlement” (Malkki 1995:505) With re-‘settlement’ as the ultimate goal, there is not much space for recognising movement as an inherent characteristic to be studied.

Anthropological work on Internal Displacement, however, is extremely limited, most case studies have examined the background to displacement and the conditions experienced at a national level (Banerjee et al. 2005, Cohen and Deng 1998, IDMC 2002, Hampton 1998) whilst ‘analyses of how individuals and small groups of IDPs are affected by and cope with war and displacement are usually missing’ (Brun). The last couple of years, however, have witnessed a growing interest in detailed researches; several authors to mention are Shanmugaratnam et al (2003), Brun & Lund (2005) and Lund (2003). However, most of these scholars have focused on contexts other than Africa, Cathrine Brun and Ragnhild Lund for example, base their researches in South-east Asia. We argue that this gap in research is rather paradoxical to the fact that Africa has more than half the number of displaced worldwide and is thus the continent with the highest level of internal displacement.

1.3 IDPs versus Refugees

In comparing IDPs and refugees, particularly in development studies, most researchers and scholars have focused mainly on the differences in legal rights needed to access international protection (Hathaway 1991, Deng and Cohen 1998, Vincent 2000), whilst very few discussions have been made to analyze how the fact of (staying within borders) might have affected the condition of ‘displacement’ in itself.

A frequently echoed argument amongst researchers emphasizes that nearly all aspects between IDPs and refugees are similar including the causes of displacement and the experiences of being displaced. Such an analogy may, however, be quite shallow, exuded from the fact that IDPs have been insufficiently studied as a distinct group of persons. In fact there has been several debates that strongly support merging the two groups (refugees and IDPs) under one title, and thus unifying them as a single category (Borton et al. 2005, Holbrooke 2000), this argument is based on the fact that identifying IDPs as a separate group could be at odds with the humanitarian principle that assistance should be determined by needs alone (ICRC). Unfortunately, these policy oriented positions have had, and might continue to have, a negative effect on scholarly work (Malkki 1995). Scholarly research should be allowed to diverge or converge with policy-oriented debates and discussions, and should not be forced to go in parallel with positions that are linked to bureaucratic and rigid frameworks that structure International Humanitarian Agencies.

Using the same lens of studying refugees for that of IDPs is not commendable. Two main reasons contribute to my position; the first and most important is that of confinement; the refugee camp as Malkki reports “was a vital devise of power” a spatial concentration and ordering of people. The administrative and bureaucratic processes it facilitated within its boundaries, segregation of nationalities; the orderly organization of repatriation or third-country resettlement; medical and hygienic programs and quarantining; “perpetual screening” have had far-reaching consequences (Malkki 1995:498). A broader discussion of “the camp” has been brought to the fore by political, social and spatial scholars (see also M. Agier, M. Balbo, G. Agamben). Internal displaced persons have, on the other hand, had in most situations relatively more freedom to move within their country's boundaries settling in places of their choice; it is true that these choices were at many times limited and at times imposed by social, economical and political factors, however the fact remains that the spatial conditions in the duration of their displacement is far from that of refugees.

The second reason lies in the political positioning of the IDPs via-viz their governments; as they remain under their respective jurisdictions. Resistance therefore cannot be exercised blatantly but rather takes the form of what Michel de Certeau refers to as ‘tactics’. In theorizing this interplay de Certeau distinguishes between two forms of actions; ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’. ‘Strategy’, he argues, can hypothetically be embodied as a place from which ‘relations can be administered with an exteriority of targets or threats’, ‘strategy’ thus, seeks to distinguish itself from the surrounding environment, which is subject to its ‘power’ and ‘will’. On the other hand, ‘tactics’ is the re-‘action’ to those strategies but which is determined by the “absence of a proper place”. Tactics, thus “has no place except in that of the other ... it must play with the terrain imposed on it, organized by the law of a strange force. It does not have the means of containing itself in itself, in a position of retreat, of anticipating, of gathering itself: it is movement “in the enemy's field of vision””. (de Certeau 1980:6)

De Certeau's descriptions link to the later discussion of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986) of how people resist the spatial discipline of the state; the authors distinguish between the “ordered and the hierarchical machinations of the state, and the “war machine” of the nomad, who moves by “lines of flight” or by “points and nodes” instead of by place to place”. The nomad, thus, “escapes the state by never becoming reterritorialized, slipping through the “striated spaces” of power, and remains undisciplined, a metaphor for all the forces that resist state control.”

The focus till the end of this paper, is on spatial ‘tactics’ which the displaced use to as way of staging resistance, resistance to what de Certeau terms as ‘strategies’ of imposition. As will be illustrated through the case-study, the government of Khartoum indeed works on placing the displaced under its supervision, and seeks to achieve its goal through the reordering of space. The displaced react by becoming ‘mobile’ and thus refusing to be placed under the scrutinizing gaze of the authorities. Space is thus the medium, the instrument and the receptacle of displacement. This slightly ambiguous statement is what we seek to clarify in the next section

2 Space

Literature that has been published on internal displacement has succeeded in encompassing policy-oriented discussions, social consequences of displacement and experiences of the displaced. However, ‘space’ as a concept and a tool to study displacement has not been adequately addressed, leaving a clear void that needs to be filled. Displacement has an enormous impact on ‘space’, it occurs in it, it moves through it, and it alters it in a multitude of ways. Of the spaces on which displacement has a significant impact is that of the ‘city’ where displaced flock in search for services. Internal displacement, thus, tends to have its greatest impact on urban spaces where the fragmented social structure allows for the displaced to fit in through the apertures that do not exist in closely knit rural communities.

This second section, thus, discusses the concept of space, it sheds light on how space has been approached in conditions of displacement with a particular focus on the architectural article by Heynen and Loeckx (1998) *Scenes of Ambivalence: Concluding remarks on Architectural Patterns of Displacement* .

2.1 Space and ‘displacement’ – Architectural Perspective

It may in fact be strange that a discipline such as architecture, meant to structure peoples environment and sustain their permanency and stability, be concerned with issues of displacement, dislocation, and migrancy. However, a growing awareness on the impact of this phenomenon on cities, urban spaces, and architecture has spurred a discussion as to how this subject could be theorized. The article focuses generally on tracing the

architectural manifestations of “displacement” embedded in social reality, and which may be “provoked by phenomena such as migration, (post)colonialism, instant urbanization, and globalization of the world economy” (Heynen and Loeckx 1998). In such a position, displacement is not limited, to physical displacement caused by conflict, but displacement includes all what causes a subject to question what has seemed before to be self-evident, ‘displacement’ is thus “any intrusion that provokes a disruption” (Heynen and Loeckx), a result may lead to the re-organization of space or the re-organization of one’s perception of space to deal with the condition.

The theoretical line of investigation offered by the article seeks to illuminate ‘displacement’ as “an instigator of creative practices and of cultural change, operating in many different registers of architecture”. From that standpoint the authors argue that architecture can function as a receptacle, an instrument or as a staging of displacement. The first stance (architecture as a receptacle) sees architecture as a “medium” which represents the social and cultural changes that take place in the “condition of displacement”. In the second condition, architecture is seen as causation, an instrument used as an instigator of cultural change. And finally in the third condition, architecture is seen as a stage “a theatrical space of negotiation” (where people may “perceive themselves as trying out new roles” modifying their texts, changing their costumes, and perhaps even altering their body language in order to make up for the loss of their self-evidence) the built environment thus becomes the scene for this “acting out” taking either an active or passive position in the play.

3 Internally Displaced Persons in Khartoum

3.1 Historical Overview of Political conditions

At the time of independence (1956) 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 (Deng 1995). 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 (Deng 1995). The Northern Government, in return, 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.” (Deng 1995)

In the realm of politics, power and representation, the focus of this section 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. I will 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. 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.

3.2 Strategic Impositions by the State

The majority of the southern Sudanese displaced, had no option other than seeking refuge in the state capital, by positioning themselves there, they officially declare themselves under the state policies and against the rebels in the south (and thus relatively safe). However, the political tensions as well as the long established grievances and rooted hatred, causes the state to treat this group of displaced persons with extra measures of suspicion and distrust. The environment that receives the displaced persons is an environment laden with strategies of impositions (both imagined and real) contributing to the estrangement and alienation of the displaced southerners. These impositions may have taken several forms, such as impositions manifested through signs in the fabric of the city that tend to symbolise a strong ‘Arab/Islamic’ character, or impositions by the discriminative behaviour of the general Arab/Islamic public, however the imposition which I focus on is that intentionally applied by the state to confine the displaced persons within paths or spaces that are controlled and supervised.

In the start of the 1990s and after the large wave of southern Sudanese displaced which flocked into the city, the city authorities took the decision to plan and implement one of the city’s largest relocation programs. The program was proposed by Dr. Sharaf Eldin Bannaga, then the Minister of Engineering Affairs, and which targeted so-called ‘squatters’ which he defined as people “who were not integrated in the society”, his intentions were verified beyond doubt when he stated that by ‘those not integrated in the society’ he meant those who settled in Khartoum after ‘1983’

(Bannaga 2000). The year 1983 was the year the civil war between the north and south parts of the country ignited; it was of course from that period of time that the southerner displaced flocked into the city in hope of finding refuge. The relocation program involved moving about 250,000 IDPs to the outskirts of the city (the extreme outskirts), areas from which any planned movement or demonstrations could be noticed very well in advance.

In his report "Displaced Populations in Khartoum"; Loveless classifies four settlements in the Khartoum State as camps, all of which are relocation settlements. His criteria for distinguishing the 'camp' was what he described as the ratio of "Southern to non-Southern residents", according to him "this may be partly attributable to the greater degree of control exerted on the Southern war-displaced" these camps, he asserts, are more tightly administered than other settlements in the capital (Loveless 1999).

3.3 Methods applied in the field

In the light of the complicated history of the war, displacement and impositions applied by the northern government, approaching the field had to rely heavily on the reading of subtle signs and movements that ripple underneath a normalized exterior. My position as a northerner conducting a research on southern Sudanese IDPs meant that the level of suspicion and mistrust between me and my research group was high. Two approaches were thus applied; the first was choosing to view the 'communication-barrier' differently i.e. noting the difficulties in obtaining information and using them as a significant part of my observations; and further reading them as symptoms, or natural reactions, employed to tell us more about the circumstance; the condition of displacement / resistance. The second and the more important was a mapping of the built fabric, the physical reality, to understand 'space', how it is used, transformed and appropriated. Mapping space included a survey of the areas most frequented by my research group, a reading of how these areas related to the overall city, why they were chosen and how they were used. Finally, in-depth interviews⁵ were conducted to fill in some of the missing gaps.

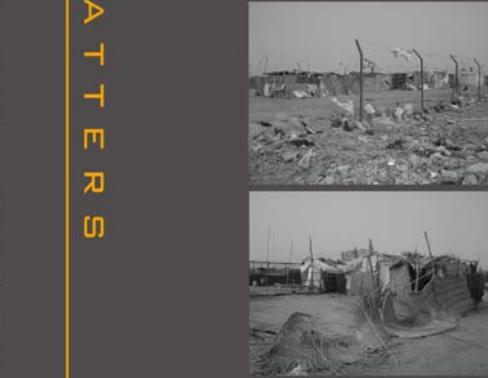
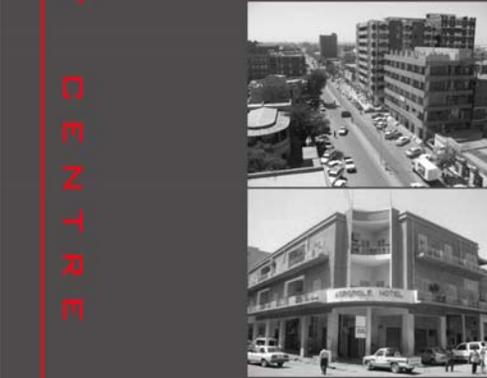
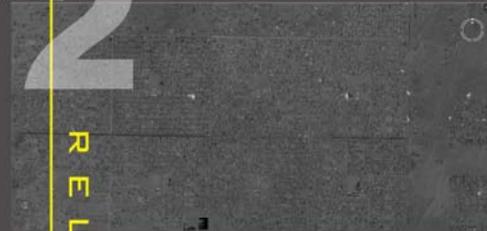
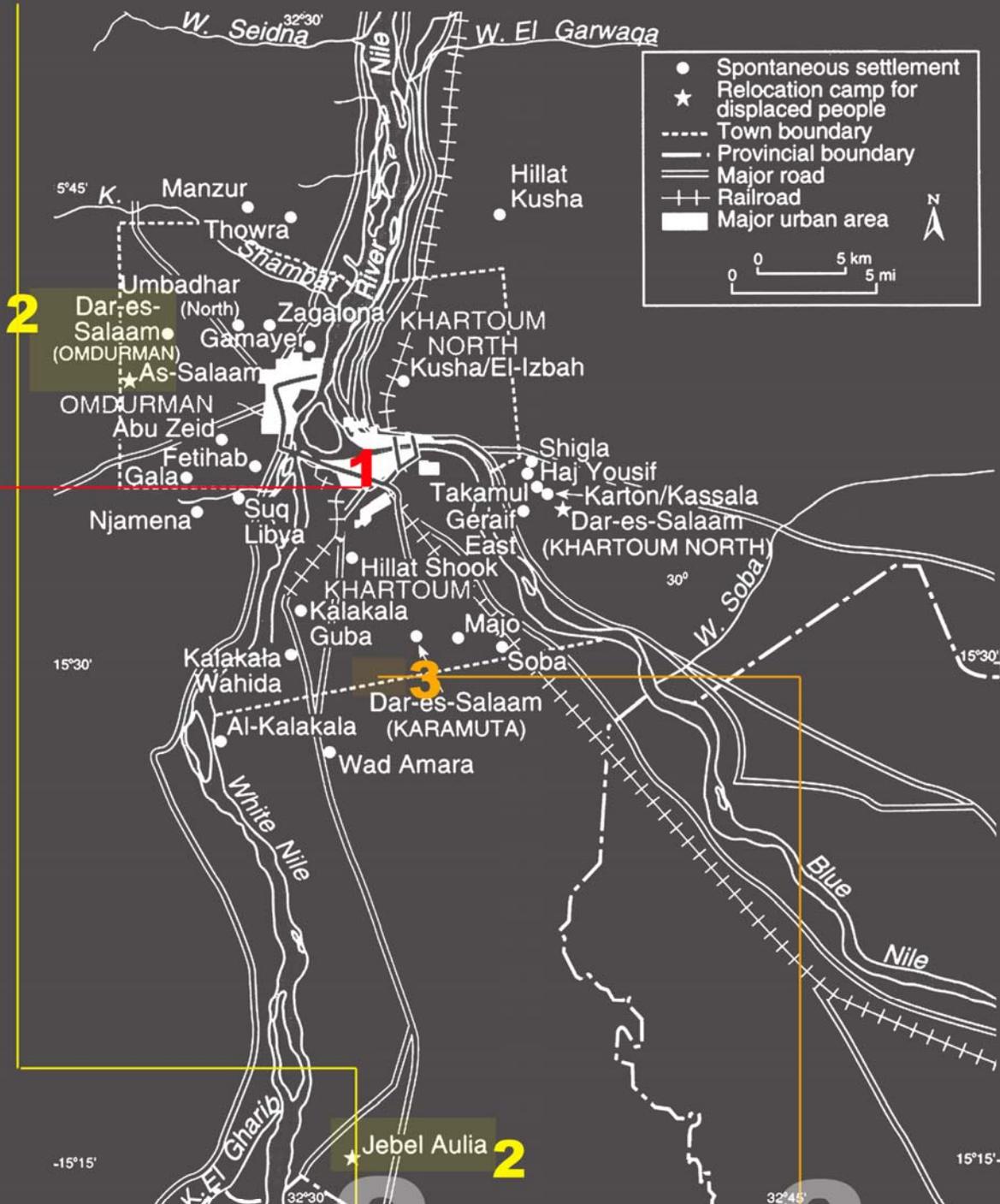
Fieldwork Sites

Relocation sites and squatter settlements: I chose to conduct my fieldwork in three relocation sites (Mayo farms, Jebal Awliya Dar el Salaam, and Dar el Salaam Omdurman). Two of the settlements (Jebal Awliya Dar el Salaam, and Dar el Salaam Omdurman) were at the extreme periphery of the city, a result of the early 90's relocation movement. They were physically isolated from the city's urban functions, and were planned in accordance to the government's scheme, which included wide roads, administrative functions for supervision, and an attempt to create a mosaic of ethnicities in opposition of the ethnic clustering that occurred in the squatter settlements. The third settlement 'Hillat Sillik' is an unplanned squatter settlement which lies in Mayo; it is closer to the city centre than the rest. (Map 1)

Khartoum City Centre - Qasr Avenue:

Within the vicinity of the city centre, Al-Qasr Avenue combines a cluster of public-urban functions which attract the southerners to gather; these spaces are closest to be described as islands amongst the 'all-Arab/Islamic-ocean' of functions. The southerner 'young/male' population which frequent the centre are in constant movement between these spaces, which include; the southern-shopping street, the College, the Chapel, the Cinema, the (missionary) night school and the Sport Field. The Qasr Avenue could thus be considered a metaphor of the urban cosmology where the southern IDP population stage their presence. It was important to study the space, how it is perceived and how it is manipulated by 'tactics' of resistance.

Al-Qasr Avenue (previously Queen Victoria's Avenue) was designed by the British General and Architect (Herbert Kitchener) during the colonial period (1998-1956) to be the main axis of the city. It is thus a wide avenue of about (40 meters) leading from the railway station directly to the Palace. The road continued to be a focal point well into the post-colonial period, having staged several protests and revolutionary marches. The large square mid-way is the main centre for public transport, the majority of Khartoum's population pass through that point once or several times as they commute across the city. The choice of Al-Qasr avenue by the southern Sudanese as a space upon which 'tactics' of resistance are staged is thus rather critical, forcing the authorities and the population of Khartoum to acknowledge their focal existence. (Map 2)



1 CITY CENTRE

2 RELOCATIONS

3 SCATTERS



KHARTOUM CITY CENTRE



THE CITY CENTRE – ALL SPACES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RED BOXES ARE SPACES OF THE NORTHERN SUDANESE

- ATINAL POLITICAL CORNER
- NAVASHA INFORMAL MARKET
- COLLEGIUM CINEMA
- CHURCH
- COMMON SPORT PLAYGROUND
- COMMON SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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.

3.4 FINDINGS

My 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 I divide the section into two parts. The first part defines the perception of space in the relocation 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. The second part defines the public space in the city centre. Here I focus on the southern youth (usually the males) who are able to occupy 'specific' "empty territories" in the city centre and transform them into pivotal 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 I will discuss that such "forced assimilation and integration" policies, cause the southerners to adopt new and sometimes "alien" forms of resistance.

The Margin – A space of Radical Openness?

The bus goes on and on, I am about to dose off, the heat and sand are blowing in through the vehicle's window. Rania 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!' 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...

(Field experience Author –Darelsalaam- 2006)



A comparison between squatter settlements (e.g. Hillat Sillik) and the relocation settlements (e.g. Dar el Salaam Omdurman/ Dar el Salaam Jebal Awliya) may give us a clearer view as to why resistance becomes subtle, double-coded, mystified etc. The field experiences I have had as a northerner in both spaces differed greatly due to these differences. This tells us more about how differently resistance is staged in relation to space.

Squatter Settlement – Hillat Sillik	Planned Relocation Settlement – Dar el Salaam Omdurman/ Jebal Awliya

Ethnic Clustering	Ethnic Dispersion
Crooked paths, difficult to administer and access with vehicular transport	Straight wide roads, easy to administer and manoeuvre with vehicular transport
Closer to the city centre	Extreme far fringes of the city
Private space extends to the surrounding area (space of presence)	Private space (space of presence) limited to the plot
Resistance more blatant	Subtle resistance

Sara thinks it's a good idea for me to come and see Hillat Sillik. "It's horrible! The conditions! You should see the place! They were removed from Salama! Their homes were destroyed, they lost nearly everything!" Intrigued I agree to come with her to see the place. As we get closer I clutch the camera protectively in my fist... perhaps I could use it as a brick if someone gets too close... I try to push such hallucinations and fears to the back of my mind, the very back... I will not recall them ... everything will be fine! We walk past two iron posts, one of two openings in the boundary of barricades. The place is calm not many people are around, I feel relaxed to see a cluster of women wearing "toubes"⁶ As we pass by them Sara asks if they knew any Dinka⁷ living in the neighbourhood, "Yes, if you walk past the market place, yes, you will find many Dinka houses there." Following the set of directions we were given we arrive in front of a rakuba⁸, Sara asks a small child playing outside "Boy, is this a Dinka home?" the child nods and continues with his game. We enter accordingly into the space, a young Dinka woman ushers us into a small rakuba room, so we could wait until her mother arrives ... already my fears had started again to mount ... perhaps it was the way the girl had eyed me ... I'm not sure. Her mother arrives, she is a well built woman, not fragile and thin as the Dinka women I know... she sits across of us... and keeps eyeing us suspiciously... she doesn't talk. Sara starts speaking; fumbling to structure a coherent sentence that explains why we have showed up here... the woman continues to listen to Sara while eyeing me threateningly... when Sara finishes, the woman starts talking slowly "I know why you are here! Do you know who I am!" I chuckle nervously, what was that supposed to mean? "I could lock up the space and no one will be able to leave"... the efforts to keep the fear at the back of my mind were collapsing... this is not where I wanted to be... Sara stood up, I did the same. "Thank you anyway for your help" Sara said with strange confidence, she then extended her hand and shook the woman's hand firmly, I did the same ... it was only when we were several meters away, did I realise that I had been holding my breath... I inhaled trying to take as much oxygen into my system as I could... enough oxygen to flush out the terrible experience ...

(Field experience Author – Hillat Sillik - 2006)



The sense of the space in Hillat Sillik radiates with blatant resistance, that is not the case in the relocation settlements, in fact one of the first things to notice in the relocation 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 spatial configuration. The southerners camouflage themselves and become unnoticeable; their homes can hardly be told apart of the homes of the different displaced ethnic groups in the area. The settlements are a homogenous palette, nothing stands out. This may be partly attributed to the threats by the authorities (which I have explained in the previous section) 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.



DarelSalaam- 2006

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)” (Bannaga 200)

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:⁹ (translation of the names is in *italics*)

Hillat Silik: *“The settlements of barricades”*, a temporary squatter settlement 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

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)

Dar el Salaam: *Land of peace*, the name given to the settlement by the government and is used sarcastically by its inhabitants mostly of which are IDPs

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 "Mansoorah" and "Dar el Salaam". Although subtle resistance appears in the relocation settlements it is seen only by the inhabitants of the area and not by the state (to whom 'resistance' is addressed), movement to the city centre to stage 'tactics' of resistance thus becomes necessary, this is what we will be discussing in the next section.

The City Centre – Qasr Avenue

"Sometimes I wonder, when I get out 6.00 in the morning, and the buses are full and transport becomes very difficult, I wonder where all these people are going, I ask myself and I don't get an answer, most of these people don't have jobs."

(The Parish Priest describes the mass exodus of southerner IDPs that takes place every morning to the city centre)

Although the southerners constitute approximately one-third of the population of Khartoum (Ibrahim 1991), 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." (hooks 2000) However there remains a deep acknowledgement amongst the southerners which states that: "we (are) a necessary, vital part of that whole" (hooks 2000) it is us who give life to the city.

In this section I describe the 'tactics' that are adopted (by the displaced) as a form of resistance. I 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 resistance in their line of flight. Points from which they address the world, from which their voice is represented and their thoughts are conveyed, in those spaces they appear to become the present, the dominant, the prevailing.

The Shopping Street – Naivasha:

To enter the Naivasha,¹⁰ 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!

(Field experience Author – Naivasha- 2006)

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. Most of the items are sent by families living abroad, in America and elsewhere (also collected from church and humanitarian aid agencies). The prices of the products are extremely high to the extent that even the northerners do not afford them; they are preserved for the elite of the southerners meant to be bought and worn on special occasions. However, since 'the space of presence' for the displaced becomes "the space of movement", investment consolidates on mobile objects, what can be taken with you to the next place in the next journey; thus, items such as the clothes, the leather belt, the mobile phone become significant, and are heavily invested on to give a sense of security to oneself.

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 space as a meeting place, where southerners, especially male youth, gather to chat. Many of the clothes displayed are, as Natalie would describe "Nelly style" referring to the famous Black American Artist, Natalie describes the western culture which many of the southerners adopt, especially the Nuer¹¹, 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.¹²



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" (Loveless 1999). 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.*¹³

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” (Loveless 1999). 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 Missionary Night School ‘Comboni and the The Sports Field ‘Comboni Playground’

For the southerner’s education is not primarily attributed to finding employment¹⁴. 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 (Loveless 1999). Night schools, to which the older youth go¹⁵, 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.¹⁶ Thus the night school becomes the space of resistance by the educated southerners.

Summary

As we have explained above, a large portion of the southerner IDP youth move to the city centre, in which they stage is their space of ‘presence’. There they have been able to manipulate specific spaces (scarcely used by the northern population) and convert them into ‘points and nodes’ of resistance in their ‘line of flight’, using the metaphor of the nomad to resist state control; and thus are “continuously slipping through the “striated spaces” of power, to remain undisciplined” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). In fact the metaphor of the nomad (as specific to our context) is best described through the words of Francis M Deng, who has written extensively about the Dinka (the largest southern ethnic group) describing a distinct aspect of their lifestyles in their places of origin; namely that of the “cattle camp”. In his words, “the young people move from place to place according to the availability of adequate pastures, and sometimes according to the youths’ desire to keep out of control of the elders at home”(Deng 1972). Whether the southern IDP youth stage a mimetic appropriation of the cattle camp to escape the power of the state in Khartoum remains unknown, though (in my opinion) highly likely. The ‘tactics’ of resistance staged in the city centre causes the spaces to develop a double-function, thus, 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 ...

Discussion and Conclusion

What then is space? Space is the instrument used by the state for discipline, Space is also the medium by which resistance is staged, Space is further the stage (the chessboard) upon which the players shift roles and positions in the continuous interplay of ‘strategies’ of imposition and ‘tactics’ of resistance.

What is the role of the church, the chapel, the missionary school? Are they sanctuaries? Or nodal points of resistance? Owing to their centrality and pivotal position in the urban fabric of the city, we suggest the latter. The precarious, informal market place, the shifting bodies, the continuous oscillation between spaces, fits the role of staging resistance via motion, appearing to be *there* and yet *not there* at the same time. The ‘double-coding’ of humor, dress, religion, and education allows everything to be read in a multitude of ways, forcing spaces to develop a ‘double-function’ in order to suit the double-coding involved in the interplay of positions.

The two reasons which I used to set aside 'refugees' from 'IDPs' at the start of my paper, namely 'confinement' and 'political positioning', have had their clear impact on 'space'; the relative freedom of movement and the political positioning of the IDPs via-viz the state have stimulated what de Certeau referred to as "movement in the enemies field of vision" - 'tactics'. I have dedicated the last part of my paper to discuss those 'tactics', the reasons for their emergence and how they develop their own distinct ways of functioning. I have managed through this endeavor to touch only upon a small part of these (so-called) tactics. This, however, is rather normal when one attempts to study a phenomenon designed precisely to remain obscure, no person is therefore expected to grasp its complete form, after all these 'tactics' have and will continue to change and shift in relation of the 'object' of power, here being the state. My descriptions are thus only part of an incomplete, changing whole.

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¹ This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in 2006, parts of the text have been extracted from my MSc thesis submitted in compliance with the Masters of Human Settlements, Department of Architecture, Urbanism and Planning, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2006. Thesis title: Displacement, Identity Transformation and its Expression in Architecture and Urban Reality

² Internal Displacement Report p. 23 [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/8C961FBD643EBF59C12572BF003DA259/\\$file/Global_Overview_2006_Africa.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/8C961FBD643EBF59C12572BF003DA259/$file/Global_Overview_2006_Africa.pdf)

³ It is important to note that we do not take the position in which the displaced persons are completely in control of their situations and conditions and thus need no assistance, it is understandable that displaced persons are in more need of assistance than other groups, however we do stress that working with displaced persons will produce more positive results if it is taken clearly into account that they are capable devising their distinct techniques in dealing with complex situations, at times even more innovative and effective than those imported and imposed

⁴ More recent works that focus on movement, particularly in the African context include Braidotti 1994, Malaquais 2005, Simone 2004

⁵ A total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted, an in-depth interview with the Parish priest at the chapel, a focus-group discussion at the school, a minimum of 3 in-depth interviews in the relocation settlements and the squatter settlement, and a couple of general interviews with educated southerners about the overall condition

⁶ The dress of Northern Sudanese women, a cloth that the woman wraps around her body and head

⁷ The largest southern Sudanese ethnic group

⁸ A semi cubic temporary structure constructed of twigs and lined with reeds, plastic sheets and mud

⁹ 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

¹⁰ The name of the southerner's shopping verandah

¹¹ The second largest ethnic group of southern Sudan

¹² Interview by author – Natalie – see appendix

¹³ Interview with author – Parish Priest of Comboni Chapel

¹⁴ Which is near impossible in a system dominated by Northerners

¹⁵ Rania started school at 18 she is now 24 years old and is doing her high school education.

¹⁶ The group interview I conducted in Comboni was during the summer vacation, yet many students were gathered in groups chatting and discussing.