

METRO 2 SOUDAN Research Program

Metropolisation and in between spaces

Stakeholders, dynamics of power and identity reconfigurations in the Greater Khartoum

I. Questions and scientific interest of the project

This research project aims to analyze the stakeholder's plays and the power relations revolving around the rural-urban linkages inside the Greater Khartoum conurbation. The diversity of those peripheral areas under permanent recharacterizations is the starting point of this project.

- On a functional and economic level we find residential, industrial, agricultural, pastureland areas or even wasteland (waste ground).
- On a socio-spatial and environmental level we find luxury compounds, old IDP camps, rural villages recently absorbed by the city.
- On a legal and administrative level we are assessing urban districts, rural and urban administrative units under multiple processes of reorganization and redistricting.
- On a sociocultural and anthropological level we find very diverse ethnic, tribal, religious and statutory affiliations.

Spaces both relegated and coveted, on one hand they enlighten the urban development policies which exclude certain populations and activities, and on the other, they reveal the accentuation of land issues in the capital since the economic opening of the country, leading to an influx of petrodollars and the implementation of policies of liberalization (1995-2000). They should be a relevant analysis gateway of the change in political and economic context of Sudan after the separation of South Sudan (2011). The continuation of projects of luxury residential compounds in the current economic recession will be examined by the project. The program will help understand the sociological transformations of popular neighborhoods at a moment of return to Khartoum for South Sudanese. We should also underline that if these spaces of splits and separations are rooted at a very local level the involvements of dynamics and networks at a regional level (seasonal work migration, forced migration...) and at an international level (real estate investors, business project management) are central within this processes. We hypothesize that these urban areas experiencing rapid changes, articulating projects and networks at different scales, are a gateway of current urban issues and power relations that are established/formed in the

city. What economic and social opportunities do they offer? To whom? What tensions or conflicts are emerging around the appropriation of those spaces, or resources that they entail? What identities reconfigurations and inequalities are coupled to the reconfiguration processes?

Thus, the tension between these “in between” spaces will form a key area of research, paying particular attention to the emergence of new actors (private and public) and to the regulation modes within/of these areas.

At a broader level of analysis, the project will also interrogate the dichotomy between "urban" and "rural" Sudan. Our hypothesis is that this dichotomy conditioned widely the Sudanese Studies (and outside Sudan, the disciplinary approaches such as anthropology, geography, law).

For example in the field of anthropology, which constitutes in Sudan a strong and fruitful tradition, it does exist an implicit bias about the “rural” nature of Sudan. This bias leads anthropologists to often neglect the studies in an urban context. The recent transformations and the accelerated expansion of the Greater Khartoum invite research to fill this gap by carrying out new fieldwork and research in Sudan’s urban spaces. This project aims to go beyond the simple research of residual rurality traces in urban space, and to seize the more complex forms of interweaving of cultural factors in those "spaces in between”.

At the geographic level, the project follows dominant geographical trends, particularly rural as urban analysis that since the 1980s has focused analysis on the links between town and countryside. Our project is developing an analysis of the Greater Khartoum where little work has been done in that direction. It will contribute to the spatial reflection conducted about other Southern cities on the specifics of an area neither rural nor urban, but spaces often termed, “in-between” or “intermediate.” This will aim to identify the interweaving in land use, and analyze how the players appropriated consciously or not, or even are using the plural nature of this space.

Finally, from the perspective of law studies, the purpose and approach of this project will concentrate on legal practices implemented by the various social actors (individuals, communities and the state) to break the supposed dichotomy between two normative areas: firstly, the state and Islamic law (as prerogative of the urban) and, secondly, customary law (as prerogative of the rural). The analysis of legal practices (particularly with regard to access to land, the related conflicts and institutional mechanisms for their resolution) in the situations considered by the project should be able to shed light on the contradictions and permeation between two different legal systems and their real combinations in the production strategies of the city and its contemporary mutations.

II. Context. New urban dynamics in the post-secession Sudan. The splits of the peripheral area of the greater Khartoum

This exploratory project aims at raising a first inventory of the impact of the secession of the South Soudan on the reconfigurations in process over ten years in the Sudanese capital. As a result of drawing hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and the urban policies set up against those displaced people, the greater Khartoum area is often referred to as the archetype of the "city in crisis". Khartoum, since the beginning of the years 2000 and the explosion of the oil extraction has known radical transformations.

The peace agreements between North and south Sudan were signed in January 2005, reinforcing that the land-sector and the real estate of Khartoum would become the major focus of the petrodollar market – and were hence driving the recent strong growth until the secession of South Sudan on 9 July 2011¹. The lucrative oil market has not only reinforced the hegemonic role of the capital – as the unique economic pole of the country – but has equally bolstered the conurbation's attractiveness, without redressing deep regional discrepancies (Denis 2005). Building sites have grown up everywhere, residential compounds are alongside marginalized districts and long established camps for displaced people illustrate the entry of the country in the financial and globalized nature of modern Khartoum.

Obviously, the creation of the Republic of South Sudan as an independent state affects such a situation. Conflicts for resources have been recurrent since Sudan's independence, and are even growing today in the border region between the two separated countries. The Republic of the Sudan has lost part of its control over oil resources of the region, and trying to measure the impact of that on urban investments lead us to multiple research questions. Moreover the secession has provoked the return in the South of around two third of the displaced people originally from the south living in the capital and should have lead to a demographic decay. This potential demographic decay also leads us to a number of questions. In particular it means finding out if the south Sudanese's displaced people have been already been replaced by the arrival of new waves of displaced (from Kordofan and Darfur especially). Real estate left unoccupied in such a context would seem an opportunity in the Sudanese economical context. Also the partition of the country left

without any official status the southerners still living in Khartoum. Research has not to date adequately addressed such a transformation.

The purpose of this project is to inquire about the future of the peripheral areas, which are characterized by a strong social co presence with a particular attention on the stakeholders plays and on the relations of power (balance of power) revolving around those areas.

Insofar as those transformed spaces are the centers of projects and networks of different scales, they are not only a privileged entrance to current urban issues and power relations, but they also are a catalyst of the Sudanese's stakes (issues) in a new and specific moment of Sudan's history.

III. Scientific and technical objectives of the project

The project is based on the creation of an interdisciplinary working group on the topic of urban requalification and reconfigurations of power relations in the peripheral areas of the Greater Khartoum. The research project is structured around a problem on conflict and seeks to answer three central questions:

- Who is producing the city today in the urban periphery of the Greater Khartoum?
- What specific opportunities and conflicts are developing in these areas?
- How are transformations of identities and inequalities coupled to these processes of urban restructuring?

We hope that a multidisciplinary reflection on the urban fringe of the Greater Khartoum would identify common processes to different selected fieldwork (disadvantaged areas, luxury compounds, urbanizing villages ...) about the production of the urban governance, and to advance on the definition of space (the urban / rural interface) in the cities of the "South". This project aims to demonstrate the relevance of micro-local (especially about land tenure) approach to conflict as excellent catalyst of Sudanese issues. Ultimately, this exploratory program should lay the groundwork for a more ambitious program of research on urbanization in North Sudan theme on which there is a lack of research since the late 1990s. On a different scale, this project aims to question the dichotomies "rural" vs. "urban" in the Sudanese context.