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# City-making in Africa:

Urban planning and the reconfiguration  
of Tuti Island, Khartoum, Sudan

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## Abbreviations

**CPA:** Comprehensive Peace Agreement

**KPP5:** Khartoum Fifth Physical Plan

**KPPPU:** Khartoum State Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities

**KSP:** Khartoum Structural Plan 1991-2001

**NIF:** National Islamic Front

**PC:** Popular Committee

**SPLM/A:** Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

**UNCTAD:** United Nation Conference on Trade and Development





# City-making in Africa:

## Urban planning and the reconfiguration of Tuti Island, Khartoum, Sudan

*City-making in Africa cannot be understood merely as a product of imposed urban plans by powerful actors and state apparatus, nor produced accidentally by the everyday practices of the inhabitants, it can be rather understood as a transversal engagement between those two aspects of city making. Through an ethnographic account on the different visions of planning Tuti Island – a river island located at the junction of the Blue and the White Niles in Khartoum, the capital city of the Sudan – I argue that city-making is rather the production of complex processes where different (f)actors (human and non-human, material and moral, global and local, past and present...etc.) conjugate to reconfigure different urban spaces that constitute cities in Africa.*

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Master Plans of African Cities

In the past ten years, many master plans for African cities are advertised on the websites of national and transnational architectural consultancy houses, and real-estate development firms. These master plans divert from the colonial and post-colonial traditions (Hannerz, 1980; Njoh, 2007)<sup>1</sup> and envisage Middle-eastern, and South east Asia urban planning models, with their skyscrapers, iconic architecture, and trendy labels (e.g. the eco-city, smart city, creative city, etc.) (Watson, 2014). However, most of these master plans were hardly implemented due to the huge gap between these envisioned utopias and the everyday realities of African cities (Jaffe & Konig, 2016). In the everyday realities of African cities, uncertainty is at the heart of processes of urbanisation (Simone A. , 2013). De Boeck (2013) stated that the gap between envisioned urban master plans and the everyday realities of the inhabitants in African cities is broadened due to the ambiguity of urban planning rules and regulations, the lack of knowledge on what constitutes the everyday life of the city dwellers, and the introduction of new forms of venture capital, or any other form of private equity financing, in the context of globalisation and neoliberalism. Accordingly, most of these urban master plans are only remaining on the websites of the developers or abandoned in a governmental office (Watson, 2014).

However, despite these plans at most not implemented in the way they are envisioned, it does not necessarily mean they are completely abandoned, but they are negotiated, contested and in a continuance process of being reconfigured. They converge and diverge with other planning visions that are made by different individual and social actors, and along the reconfiguration processes of these master plans some of the

element are being implemented and others are omitted. Regarding the case of Tuti Island, I will explore how the current envisioned master plan for Khartoum (KPP5) -where the island is a central element in the plan- is negotiated, contested, and intersecting with other planning visions for the island proposed by different individual and social actors.

City dwellers are main actors in the processes of city-making and they do not simply consume master plans developed somewhere else, or imposed by others but they actively engage with these plans (Caldeira, 2016). Quoting Simone: "The exigencies of dwelling require a constant process of converting what is accessible into the tools of new possibilities and attention" (Simone A. , 2013, p. 245). In the case of urban planning, despite that government officials have no intentions to engage with the people through participatory planning approaches, the city dwellers still find their way to establishing negotiation grounds via complex social relations and networks (Barrios, 2011).

Through an ethnographic account on the planning of Tuti Island - a river island located at the junction of the Blue and the White Niles in Khartoum, the capital city of the Sudan- I argue that city-making is rather the production of complex processes where different (f)actors (human and non-human, material and moral, global and local, past and present, etc.) conjugate to reconfigure different urban spaces that constitute cities in Africa. I will first discuss the recent government master plan known as KPP5 and how the plan opened the door for venture capital that mainly targeted the water fronts to be transformed into luxurious real-estate developments. The juxtaposition of the urban real-estate development projects on Tuti Island's waterfronts, led by the state and private investors, and the different planning views proposed by the residents of the island will be the focus in the empirical case to illustrate the entangled relationships between different individual and social actors in the process of reconfiguring the island as an urban space.

#### 1.2 Situating urban planning in Khartoum

Urban Planning programmes are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural, legal, political, and economic circumstances in the

<sup>1</sup> Hannerz stated that colonial urban planning entrenched the common feature of all colonial cities: organised, sanitary, and aesthetic European districts, versus chaotic, filthy, and obnoxious native ones. Njoh termed 'residential segregation', where colonial cities were primarily built to allow the coloniser to maintain a hold over the colonised, to facilitate plundering, and to assert their "supremacy".

countries where they are designed and implemented (Fürst, 2009). Historically, urban planning in Africa can be traced back to the pre-colonial and colonial urban planning practices (Silva, 2015). Post-colonial national governments preserved some of the laws and regulations of urban planning and land acquisition that allows the state to own most of the land, and demolished other laws and regulation that limits their control of land (Silva, 2015). In general, urban planning is a multifaceted process of shaping and reshaping urban spaces guided by different visions, knowledge, experiences, and interests (Ahmed, 2018a).

When Sudan became under the colonial power in 1899, the first thing the Governor-General Kitchener did was to construct a colonial city in order to have a grip over the colonised by rearranging their dwelling spaces, to facilitate plundering, and to assert the supremacy of the European power (Njoh, 2007). However, William McLean, a Scottish colonial officer and architect had the upper hand in setting the very comprehensive town plan for Khartoum and he introduced the neighbourhood classification (i.e. first class, second class, third class, and native lodged areas) (McLean, 1980). Besides the control over the colonised natural resources, the colonial town planning prioritised the wellbeing of the European settlers by making sure they are living in hygienic and safe neighbourhoods with huge green spaces, clean streets and excellent water and electricity supply (Home, 1990).

After Sudan gained its independence in 1956, the capital region was sporadically expanding. Old neighbourhoods were overpopulated, new settlements were emerging especially after the drastic degradation of livelihoods in other regions. Many people came to Khartoum either as economic migrants or seeking refuge from civil wars and famines. The city was expanding over the rural areas and people were settling at the edge of the city. They came with different praxis, values, and beliefs, which founded different urban realities that created ruptures, especially for those who are idealising colonial urbanism, these urban transformation are seen as “de-planning” (Ahmed A. M., 2000). Although some regulations that work close to urban planning, such as land laws, did not in principle witness major reforms (Wekwete, 1995; Berrisford & Michael, 2006), but in terms of practice these laws are interpreted and appropriated in various ways by different actors, to reach different goals.

### 1.3 Khartoum Fifth Physical Plan KPP5

In 2007, Khartoum State Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities (KPPPU) issued an agreement with MEFIT<sup>2</sup>, an Italian consultancy, to design a twenty-five years (2008-2033) master plan known as Khartoum Fifth Physical Plan (KPP5) (Lucio, 2007), which is the most recent master plan for the capital region following four master planning projects<sup>3</sup> designed

2 “MEFIT is involved in a wide range of activities, such as regional/urban planning, complete design of commercial/industrial centres, new city planning, and energy projects. MEFIT’s experience and expertise in consulting, engineering and project/program management allows an original overall approach to project development.” <http://www.mefittd.com/about-us/>.

3 Urban Planning projects designed in post-independence Sudan are collaborations between the Khartoum State- represented in its planning authorities- and transnational architectural firms such as Doxiadis, a Greek consultancy, planned two major plans, one in 1959 and the other in 1999, which was co-planned with Moneim Mustafa Company

during different successive regimes (Murillo, et al., 2009; Refaat, 2015; Ahmed, 2018a). The structural plan for the state of Khartoum aims to formulate a spatial development strategy for the regional and urban development of the state and the national capital, Khartoum. This spatial development is based on the improvements and controls necessary for the current situation of the state in terms of economic, social, employment and environmental aspects, in addition to achieving the future goals of regional and urban development. Additionally, the aims of KPP5 is to control land allocation, minimise the occupation of agricultural land for urban usage, and to guide the management of the rapid urbanisation in the capital region.

KPP5 is intricately linked to the discovery of oil and the flow of foreign capital into the country. After Sudan was integrated into the petrol production system, foreign investors from China, Malaysia, Egypt, and the Gulf Region saw Sudan as a new investment opportunity (Choplin & Franck, 2010a; Choplin & Franck, 2014b). Especially after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 between the Sudanese State and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) bringing to an end the longest civil war in Africa (UNCTAD, 2015). Oil production money was reinvested in the construction and real estate sector which is the most solid and reliable investment at that moment and it had serious implications on the city’s prioritising in urban planning design and implementation (Choplin & Franck, 2010a).

The master plan was targeting the structural arrangement of the capital region ‘Greater Khartoum’. Khartoum State Cabinet established a supreme committee for observing the implementation of KPP5 (Ahmed, 2018a). Little information on KPP5 can be found on MEFIT’s website, but the plans are to be found at Khartoum State Ministry of Planning and Physical Development archives. Hamid and Bahareldin (2014c) stated that KPP5 targeted Khartoum’s urban environment focusing on the “protection” of the vegetation cover (e.g. forests, and agricultural land). In addition to that, KPP5 targeted the “preservation” of the rural settlements and the water beds, creating urban parks, and expanding green and recreational areas on the waterfronts of mainland Khartoum and Tuti Island (Bahareldin & Hamid, 2014c).

Many urban planning officials described KPP5 as the tool to transform Khartoum to a global metropolis with an ecocity concept. However, this master plan paved the road for ‘speculative urbanism’ where the state, as the main landowner, leads processes of land speculation and the dispossession of those who are living on and utilising the land (mainly for agricultural and horticultural activities) and selling it for urban development investors (Goldman, 2011). These urban development projects could be upper class gated residences, touristic areas, and business districts. Watson (2014) described them as the ‘African urban fantasies’ that are far from the realities of African cities and exclude a large section of the cities’ residents who will not be able to live in these luxurious waterfront developments and in addition to that, they might find themselves subjected to eviction and displacement if they are living in areas that are redesigned to accommodate these urban fantasies.

Tuti Island is one of the sites where these urban fantasies are taking place. It is a good example to illustrate that a master plan like KPP5 neither remains on the websites of the interna-

(a Sudanese consultancy). Another example is MEFIT, who besides planning KPP5, they previously planned a master plan for Khartoum, in 1977. For more information see (Ahmed, 2018a).

tional and local architectural consultants and real estate development firms, nor it stays in the planning authorities' archives. These urban fantasies are affected by the local circumstances of the cities they are designed for, they are contested by different local views and interests, and they are appropriated by different individual and social actors, as I will show in the coming sections.

#### 1.4 Tuti Island: location and socio-economic life

Tuti is a crescent-shaped river island located at the junction of the blue and the white Niles in Greater Khartoum, the capital region of Sudan (figure 1). According to the national census of 2008, the island has a population of 12,000<sup>4</sup> and a size of 950 acres. Tuti was the nuclear of Khartoum. It is one of the oldest human settlements in the region and the city grew from it due to the migration of the people to mainland Khartoum and founding villages along the riverbanks (Lobban, 1982a). The island consists of a residential area surrounded by farms and orchards. The residential area consists of an old centre known as the old town, which is surrounded by recent developments, and in total it has five neighbourhoods. Before the construction of the bridge which linked the island to mainland Khartoum in 2009, ferryboats and pontoons were the main means of transportation in and out (Davies, 1994).

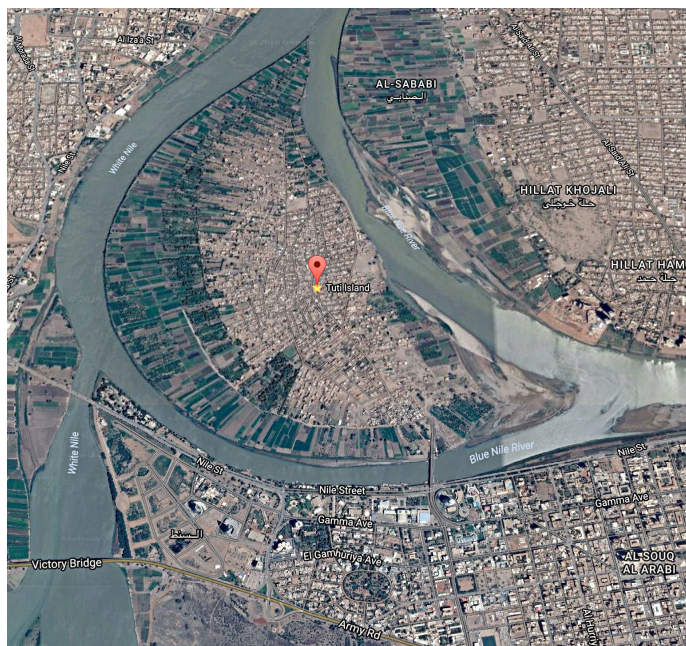


Figure 1: An aerial image of Tuti Island's location  
Source: google earth 2016

The residents of Tuti Island, especially engineers, described it using vocabulary such as organic, vernacular, traditional, etc<sup>5</sup>. This is due to the current physical condition of the island, which is “officially” recognised as unplanned (Ahmed, 2019b). In general, an unplanned area in Khartoum by definition is when the land use and ownership are not officially determined and recognised by the state, there is no official map for the area, plots sizes are unidentified, and the public services (e.g. electricity, water supply, and public transportation) does not reach the area. Accordingly, Tuti Island is regarded as unplanned although the island has some sort of order and

has public services, but because of the ambiguity of land use and ownership, and the fact that the island does not have an official map (only few sketches drawn by the engineers and geographers living on the island) makes it officially unplanned (Ahmed, 2019b).

The Island is known as the home of a subdivision of the Mahas ethnic group, who are part of the Nubian ethnic confederation originated from Northern Sudan. They migrated to the island in the 15th century, over 700 years ago and they claim they are one of the founders of the capital region. The British archaeologist and colonial officer Anthony John Arkell stated that Tuti Island was first occupied by the Anaj people who were one of the famous pre-Islam groups in Nilotic Sudan (Holt, 1960). After the migration of the Arab to Sudan in the 14th century, the Anaj were replaced by the Jamu'iyā tribe who are seminomadic pastoralist groups, and the ancestors of the current Mahas subdivisions obtained the island from the Jamu'iyā (Davies, 1994). The Mahas were known as agrarian societies and they were experienced in using the River Nile banks for irrigated agriculture. In addition to that, when they migrated to the central parts of Sudan they brought with the sophisticated agricultural technologies and a very advance system of land ownership and utilisation (Davies, 1994).

The agricultural land on the island is known as saqya (plural: al-sawāqī) (figure 2), which means an irrigated land. The saqya is not just simply an agricultural land but it extends to represent a keeper of the local history of the island. Historically, the island had 81 saqya and they are named after the families who lived or used to live on the island. However, with the expansion of the island's population, the increasing level of western education of the Mahas, and the shift from agriculture to civil professions, most of al-sawāqī were used for accommodating the growing population of the island. Al-sawāqī are divided into small plots of land using a traditional method known as the squaring process which is simply dividing the land into squares to facilitate the process of constructing or inheriting and selling the land and/or the buildings. Since the colonial era Tuti Island had an ambiguous landownership: some people claim to have a freehold but do not have any documents that prove their ownership; others say that it is only the central part of the island or the old neighbourhood that was registered under the name of Tuti Island's residents, while the irrigated land is only for agricultural purposes. This ambiguating in land ownership is caused by the state not recognising customary land ownership, and imposing the state regulations of land acquisition over customary owned land, which states any agricultural land that is not registered under any name is automatically owned by the state (Sudan Democracy First, 2018).

It is important to mention that not all Mahas groups living on the island are ancestors of the first wave of migration, some came to the island in recent waves of migration from Northern Sudan. Today many people from various parts of Sudan as well as foreigners and refugees live on Tuti Island and the population is growing to be significantly diverse. However, many Mahas groups on the island formed the Tutian identity which is demarcated by a shared social memory of struggle and the families' histories. For example, the Tutians are the ones whose ancestors fought against the British Government in 1944 during the colonial era in Sudan (1898-1956), when the former planned to extract land from the island to build an agricultural research centre that facilities the interest of the colonisers in expanding the agricultural production in Sudan and evacuate the people living on the island to mainland Khar-

4 The National Census 2008, Republic of the Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics.

5 Interviews 2014.



toum. In addition to that, the people whose ancestors - and currently them- were involved in protecting the island from the floods and recorded heroic stances in saving the island from the flood and refusing evacuation are considered to be part of the Tutiian distinctiveness.

As I mentioned above, most of the new generation of the island left agriculture and only 2.6% of the population are farmers, and they are mostly men who came to the island from different parts of Sudan as agricultural workers. Regard-

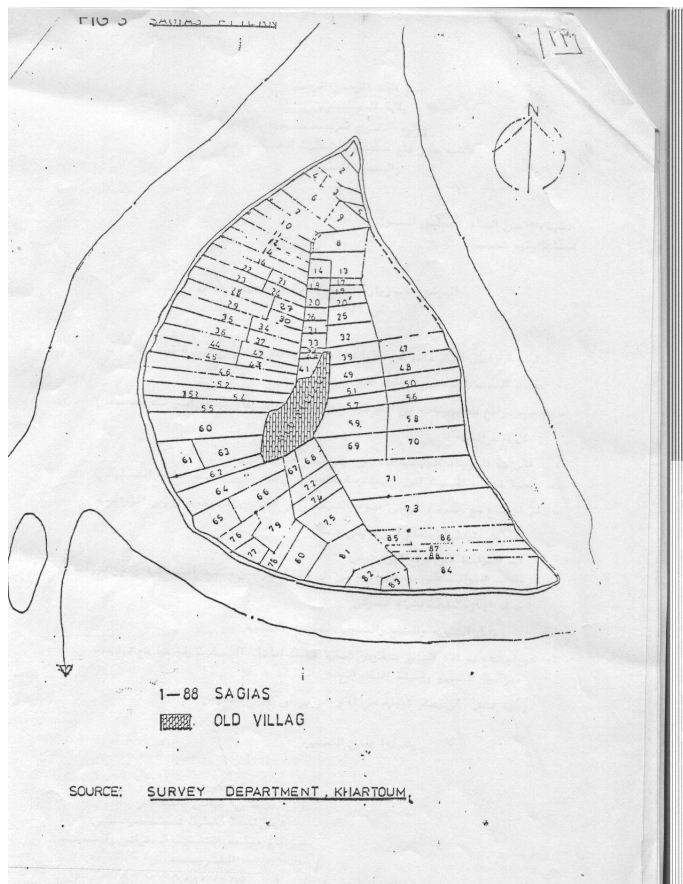


Figure 2: Al-sawāqī map produced by the land department  
Source: Tuti Island mosque archives

ing the rest of the population, 70% are civil servants, professionals, and workers in both the public and the private sector, and 27.4% are self-employed and run businesses (Tuti Island Household survey 2003)<sup>6</sup>. It is crystal clear that the inhabitants of Tuti are from different socio-economic backgrounds. The island is teeming with voluntary work and there are many voluntary associations, which are mainly based on family affiliation, educational background, profession, religion, charity, social activities, etc. The large number and variety of voluntary associations is known as one of the modern town characteristics and they are the host of new political views, religious practices, recreational activities, and occupational welfare (Little, 1957). One of the highly active associations on Tuti Island is Tuti's Engineers Association who played a significant role in the planning negotiations on the island as I will show later.

Most of the people of Tuti identify as middleclass professionals, which means the educational level and profession are the main criteria for determining who is a middle class. They are either doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and employees of other occupations in both the public and private sectors.

6 In 2003, The University of Khartoum Graduates' Association on Tuti Island, conducted a household Survey to provide urban planner with basic statistics on the Island's population.

Most of the members are actively participating in the planning negotiations, contributing from their different educational and professional background. The engineers, for example, are the ones who have the technical scientific knowledge of how to tackle urban planning problems, and medical doctors contribute generally to public health issues and discuss how the absence of planning on the island led to some health hazards. The University of Khartoum graduates' association were often conducting research on the island's socioeconomic conditions and providing results of household surveys that offer statistics for planning proposals. In this sense, the middle-class on Tuti Island can be understood as a socio-cultural milieu, not merely a socio-economic strata (Neubert & Stoll, 2015).

In Sudan, the middle-class has certain characteristics, appearances, and lifestyle and they are intersecting with religious and political views, generations, ethnicity, family origins, education, economic status, and the place of residence. However, in Tuti Island education plays a key role in the formation of a collective experience of being middle-class. They demonstrate technical knowledge and a specialised language in their everyday life practices. Long time before the introduction of the western education in Sudan in general and Tuti in particular, the island is known as one of the famous centres for Quranic education. When the Mahas migrated to the central parts of Sudan they were not just searching for fertile land for agriculture, but they acted as the Islam's missionaries and they built several Quranic Schools (Khalway, single: Khalwa) (Khojaly, Sarar, & Ibrahim, 1998). The Tutians described the island as a university town, where Khalawy Students came from various places of Sudan to study Quran and Sunna doctrine, and after they finished their education some of them stayed, got married, obtained land, and practiced agriculture. During the British colonisation, the Tutians were one of the first people who received western education and quite significant number of them were from the first Sudanese to be recruited in the public sector at that time (Khojaly, Sarar, & Ibrahim, 1998).

"My grandfather in the morning wore a suit and took the first ferryboat to go to his office on the other side of the river, when he is back from work he takes off his suit and puts on his Arragy<sup>7</sup> and Sarwal<sup>8</sup>, ride his donkey and go to the farm to work."<sup>9</sup>

Back in the days this was the lifestyle of many the Tutians; half of the day they work in the government offices, and the second have they work as farmers in their land. Nowadays, this lifestyle hardly exists, but on the other hand education in determining their distinctiveness and status is growing to be even more significant. This educated strata of the Tutians played an important role in the Sudanese history of national resistance against colonialism and 11 men from Tuti Island were the founders of the very first Sudanese political party (Elfadol, 2016).

In general, one of the most stereotypical ideas about the people who live on Tuti Island is that they are known as an "isolated community". The way outsiders perceive the Tutians is reflected in what they say about them. For example, the population of the island is known inclusively as families and relatives; if an outsider moves to the island, they will always refer to him/her as a stranger. Outsiders perceive the Tutians as antago-

7 Arragy is a white tonic mean wear in Sudan.

8 Sarwal is a loose white trouser, men in Sudan wear it with Arragy.

9 An interview with a member of the Tuti Island Engineers Association January 2016.



nistic, while they perceive themselves as the island's keepers, and any unfriendly behaviour towards strangers is only to investigate who is coming to the island and who is leaving, as they seek to protect it from incomers who do not respect their conservative lifestyle. Outsiders always wonder how the Tutians can cope with the frequent flood incidents, and the risk of losing their lives and property. Several times, during interviews, the Tutians raised concerns about the "strange faces". In the beginning of the 20th century, when the population size of Tuti was 2,000 and it was under the administration of Shaikh Ahmed Ibrahim Burr<sup>10</sup>, he used to monitor every person who came to the island. Shaikh Burr commanded the sailors to report if there was a "strange face" visiting Tuti. Visitors had to report their identity and the purpose of their visit, and the sailors escorted them to their destinations and made sure they left the island<sup>11</sup>. No doubt that this is not the case anymore, but I suggest this is where the idea of the Tutians being unfriendly came from. This image of Tuti Island made it very difficult for successive national governments to intervene with any physical planning efforts to upgrade the physical conditions of the island, and it is only when Tuti Island was hit badly by a flood episode in 1988, when they started to seriously consider planning the island.

## 2 The planning of Tuti Island

### 2.1 Tuti Island in successive master plans

Since the British colonisation, Tuti Island was not included in any master plan. The cost of developing Tuti island was not tangible because of the Nile acting as a physical barrier. British officers, such as Sir Macintosh Khartoum's governor complained that people who were living on the island were stubborn and they were always disputing (Khalifa, 1980). Post-independence, Tuti Island was connected to the electricity network in 1963 and to running water in 1966 (Davies, 1994).

The island was featured differently in the successive master plans of the capital region. In Doxiadis Associates master plan in 1959, which was designed to respond to the rapid growth of Khartoum's population, the island was proposed to be a recreational area, which means the land use will change from agricultural use to recreational/commercial use (Bahreldin & Eisa, 2014d). Doxiadis's plan entirety imbedded is the arching concept of the Metropolitan city (Acheampong, 2019). In the Regional Plan for Khartoum and master plan for the three Towns of 1974, it was proposed that Tuti will remain an agricultural zone, and to build a watching tower on the island (Bahreldin & Eisa, 2014d). In Khartoum Structural Plan 1991-2001, the fourth plan, Tuti was proposed to remain as a farmland and to build a bridge that links Tuti with mainland Khartoum (Bahreldin & Eisa, 2014d). The main outcome of KSP is the bridge that links Tuti with the rest of the capital city, there is only one asphalt road, and land prices are increasing, which means that some plans are partially implemented, and others are only drafted. Lack of funding resources, increasing number of internally displaced people in the peripheries of the capital region played an important role in hampering the implementation of master plans. Nevertheless, urban plans are not just the production of state apparatus but the city dwellers actively design their own plans according to how they experience

places they dwell in and they also take the initiative through popular efforts to realise some of their ideas as I will show in the coming sections.

### 2.2 The planning negotiations of Tuti Island

In 1988, Khartoum experienced one of the worst floods ever occurred in the past century<sup>12</sup>. The flood hit Tuti Island very badly, especially the eastern bank, which is the most vulnerable spot on the island's shore. For weeks, the flood disconnected the island from the rest of the city and the state government could not provide any assistance to the residents. After the flood ended a group of the 'notables' of Tuti Island formed a committee called 'Saving Tuti Island'. The committee developed a vision of how to improve the physical layout of the island and they started to negotiate this vision with the physical planning authority at that time. This committee comprised the well-known and respected people among the Tutians, and most of them were the senior male members of the Mahas families on Tuti Island, who had high ranking positions in the government at that time, or who used to be high ranking civil servants in previous governments. However, before the committee could achieve any success a military coup occurred in June 1989 and it brought the National Islamic Front (NIF)<sup>13</sup> in power. The new government immediately started to reform the bureaucratic structures and the agreement reached between Saving Tuti Island Committee and the former government was revoked (Ahmed, 2019b).

Political instability played a significant role in hampering the development of urban plans and policies in Sudan. Planning officials remain in their positions for short periods of time before being replaced by others who adhere more to principles of the regime in power, and the result is that there are many discussions on urban planning but less action taken to formalise and realise these plans (Post, 1996). This was witnessed in what happened to Saving Tuti Island Committee who attempted to engage the new government in their efforts to develop a physical plan. The committee provided a report on the current physical layout of the island and the problems they faced such as land erosion on the eastern part of the island caused by the strong water flux of the Blue Nile. When the committee met the minister of Housing Construction and Public Utilities to discuss the report and their vision, they did not reach an agreement. Soon after that meeting, Khartoum State Governor dissolved the committee for overlapping with the new local government structure at the neighbourhood level represented in the new Popular Committees (PC)<sup>14</sup>. The state authorised PCs to represent the people at the neighbourhood level, hence, neighbourhood planning negotiations with the planning authorities became the responsibility of the PCs and it was the only recognised body to represent the neighbourhood's residents' needs (Ahmed, 2019b).

The main issue with the popular committees in any place in Sudan is that they mostly did not represent the people. On the contrary, PCs were politicised and they only worked to gain political recognition from the ruling regime (Pantuliano,

12 The Island was also hit by severe floods in 1946, and 1998 (Simone, 1994).

13 NIF is a political coalition founded in 1976 and led by Dr. Hassan al-Turaby.

14 A popular Committee is an elected or appointed body of volunteers that administers the affairs of a neighbourhood (Pantuliano, et al., 2011; Hamid, 2000).

10 The mayor of Tuti Island during the British colonisation era.

11 An interview with Ali one of the local historians of Tuti Island.



Figure 3: A map that Demonstrates a Physical Plan for Tuti Island Created in 1996.  
Source: The archives of the Tuti Island Engineers Association.

et al., 2011). Tuti Island's PCs were not an exception. At the beginning of the former NIF, they were appointing people from the island to be the members of the PCs, and it comprised a significant number of people who live in Tuti Island some of them are not necessarily from the Tutians, and a part of them are Tutians, however, what unites them is their political views, as more than 90% of the PC members are supporters of the ruling party. Having most of the PC members from the regime supports was a key policy of the former regime to empower party members. In 1992, the Tutians presented their demands regarding planning the island to the PC and the PC promised to pass the message to the then Sudanese president at that time - Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir - who was visiting Tuti Island for the pledge of alliance ceremony<sup>15</sup>. The head of the PC presented their demand for planning Tuti island and al-Bashir

announced during the ceremony that he will refer this matter to the planning authority and promised the Tutians that he will build a bridge to link the island with mainland Khartoum<sup>16</sup>. In addition to that, al-Bashir promised to solve the legal issues of land ownership, which is to register al-sawāqī as a freehold on Tuti Island and the residents who will be affected by this process will assure that they will get rewarding compensations. After the ceremony, and in response to the president's recommendations, the Khartoum State Governor established the Tuti Island Planning Office. However, nothing has been done regarding al-Bashir's promises and the Tutians felt they were only used by the PC for political gains rather than having ratified plans to upgrade the physical layout (e.g. upgrading roads, constructing a bridge to link the island with mainland Khartoum, creating open public spaces, improving public services, etc.) and the legal conditions (e.g. solving inheritance disputes, determining the type of landownership, determining land utilisation, inventory of shifting in land use, etc.) (Ahmed,

15 At the beginning of the NIF regime, the former president al-Bashir used to visit neighbourhoods to introduce their vision at the local level in a festive and celebrating manner, and this event is known as the pledge of alliance ceremony.

16 Interviews 2013.

2019b).

As a result of the PC political orientations and actions, most of the residents started to question the members' willingness to solve the planning issues of the island, and it led to people taking matters into their own hands. A group of expatriates who are from Tuti Island but live in different countries of the Gulf Region, where most of them were working in the urban planning sector in the countries they live in, came together and conducted a research on how to plan Tuti. On one hand, the Tutians positively received the plans and described it as

to that, they also hoped there was a permanent solution to the damages caused by floods every year. The residents are also concerned about compensation because upgrading the physical environment comes at the risk of someone losing all or part of their property, and they have no hope for the government giving them a rewarding compensation, which could be a piece of land in some parts of the island, or a place which is well located on the mainland. Besides compensation, there are two issues related to the legal status of land on Tuti Island; the first issue is the land title; the second issue is the changing

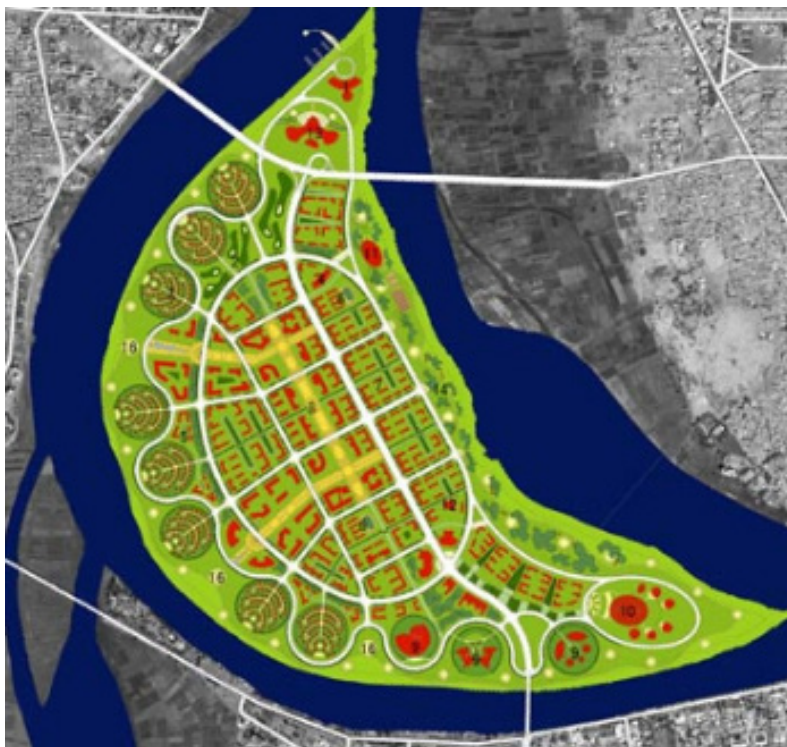


Figure 4: Abouda's plan in collaboration with Diwan/Qatar: the white lines shows the proposed roads and bridges on the island.

Source: <https://wikimapia.org/7545693/Tuti-Island-يوت-ةريزج>

a plan that genuinely addresses their current demands, and on the other hand, some of the members of PC saw it as an infringement upon their authority. The expatriates contacted the PC members in an attempt to involve them in the plan, but they only hindered the process and they made it clear to the Tutians that now the island is not the priority of the planning authorities due to directing all their efforts to remove squatter settlements from other parts of the city (Bannaga, 2012).

This vortex of planning negotiations among the Tutians and with the planning authorities continued without any tangible outcomes. However, in 1996, the PC established a joint committee with some of the people who were engaged in the previous negotiations, chaired by the General Director of Technical Affairs at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities. This committee managed to generate a map (Figure 3) produced by the Khartoum Surveying Company. The map demonstrates the main roads and public services' locations on the island, and it was supposed to show the preliminary outlines of upgrading the physical condition of the island. Nevertheless, the plans were again aborted by a newly appointed State Governor for Greater Khartoum who revoked all previous agreements.

In general, from my discussions with the residents of Tuti, most of them are hoping that planning the island will mean having better roads, better public services, efficient refuse disposal and sewage, and public spaces and parks. In addition

of the land use. Regarding the land title, Tuti Island is registered as an agricultural land. According to the Sudanese laws for land acquisition agricultural land is not registered as a freehold in this case they will lose many rights when changing the land use. One of these rights is a rewarding compensation, and the second will be the type of planning, which means will the island be upgraded according to the village organisation act<sup>17</sup> rather than the town planning act<sup>18</sup>. Regarding land use,

17 By 1991, the Village Regulation Administration was activated; in 2000, the name was changed to the Urban Development Administration.

A change in the policy of the government towards squatters was registered. The new package of policies included different solutions for different types of squatters.

18 By 1950, the Town Re-Planning Act was the first planning act to deal with cities and towns in the Sudan's history of planning by laws. This act was basically focusing on area re-planning, as the number of squatter settlements were increasing. Community participation in this act was achieved through obligating the government to show their intention to develop any re-planning scheme and then later make this scheme public by using appropriate media. Citizens affected by re-planning also have the right to appeal against the "re-planning" committee's decisions" (Bahreldin & Ariga, Evaluation of two types of community participation in development projects. A case study of the Sudanese neighborhood of Al-shigla, 2011b).



according to the Sudanese land use act, any changing in land use requires the land owner to pay to the state and upgrading fee; in this case it is changing the land use from an agri-

būda is working close with partners from Egypt, China, Malaysia, and Qatar, and other Sudanese investors. “It is happening,” said Ahmed, “We will soon see the beautiful garden and



Figure 5: Diwan 3d layout

Source: Tuti Island Engineers' Association

cultural use to urban use i.e. building houses. The upgrading fee is 75% of the land area, and the owner must have no less than 25% and it is justified by the reason that changing land use requires public services, roads, and open spaces and the government take the land for the public good. However, in practice this was never the case most land was sold to private investors, or the upgrading fee is pecuniary, which defeats the rationale behind the upgrading fee. In the midst of all these negotiations, banners of fancy waterfront projects were erected, and the negotiations started to take different trajectories.

### 3 KPP5 and waterfront development on Tuti Island

#### 3.1 Tuti Island in KPP5

Unlike previous master plans, Tuti Island was in the centre of KPP5, the types of planning interventions are on the level of policy and land use. KPP5 proposed, a youth satellite city, green houses, a station for water transportation, and two more bridges (one connecting Tuti Island with Khartoum-North and one connecting Tuti with Omdurman) (Bahreldin & Eisa, 2014d). What was problematic however with KPP5 that it merely focused on tourism and transportation, to attract local and international investment, and to solve the traffic bottleneck in the centre of Khartoum, by making Tuti Island the roundabout of the city (figure 4).

“This is what we are afraid is going to happen,” said Ahmed, an engineer from Tuti, while showing me some pictures on his laptop. The pictures are for a project called Diwan Tuti Island Water Front, which is a waterfront project led by a Sudanese business person who is called al-Fātiḥ Abbūda, who through brokerage and land speculation managed to obtain land on Tuti Island estimated around 15% of the agricultural land. Ab-

orchards of Tuti Island turning into forests of concrete.”

#### 3.2 Diwan Tuti Island Water Fronts

Most of the companies that design and promote satellite cities state that these cities are made to accommodate the expanding African middle class that generates demand for formal housing, public utilities, infrastructure, and services (Watson, 2014). However, the principle reason that these projects are not realised or accommodating the targeted middle-class is that the planners themselves have no profound knowledge of what constitutes middle-class. The planners have an imagined middle-class ideal which doesn't adhere to the everyday life practices, worldviews, and lifestyles of the so-called middle-class. Urban dwellers, in general, are not passive consumers of urban plans produced somewhere else, they rather actively engage with these plans in various ways, ranging between resistance to appropriation, according to the circumstances surrounding these plans. Even in cases where state sponsored housing projects where people are not engaging at the planning stages, and where they are expected to consume the idealised state constructed middle-class image, they rather engage with material aesthetics of the places they dwell in in order to assert their distinctiveness (Nielsen & Jenkins, 2020).

In the case of the Tuti Island development project, the advertisement of the project always stressed on attracting foreign capital more than meeting the demands of a growing middle-class. The residential areas are described as luxurious and it does not fit the middle-class definition used by the African Development Bank<sup>19</sup>; those who spend US\$ 2-20 will

19 “an absolute definition of per capita daily consumption of \$2-\$20 in

not afford apartments where one square meter costs over US \$1000. No doubt that the Tutians want to have clean and well-served residential areas, however, Diwan's apartments, in general, are not desired by the Tutians because they prefer to live in houses which are appropriate for conservative Muslims' lifestyle, where males and females occupy separated sections in the house, and this is not available in the Diwan's apartments. Diwan is a project that was supported by local politicians and government officials and there are different interests that excludes any idea of compensating the landowners who will be affected by the project. The corruption at the state level plays a key role in how plans are made, negotiated, and implemented. After the process of approving KPP5 as the official master plan, implementation was to be done by dividing it to projects displayed for bidding. When Abbūda obtained the land in Tuti, he paid to the government an upgrading fee<sup>20</sup> to shift the land use from agricultural utilisation to investment utilisation. Rumours were circulated among the Tutians saying that Abbūda financed the construction of the Tuti Island-Khartoum Bridge by paying to the government US \$50 per square meter.

Diwan will be constructed on 160,000 square metres. The first element in the project is the residential area, which has a total size of 35,733 square meters, and it consists of three complexes with facilities such as kindergartens, supermarkets, car rental agencies, travel agencies, swimming pools, and playgrounds. The residential area includes buildings that contain two types of apartments, one of 250 square metres, and the other of 200 square metres. The larger one has three bedrooms, one living room, two bathrooms and a toilet attached to the living room, a kitchen, and a terrace. The second apartments have only two bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom and a toilet, a kitchen, and a terrace. The second element in Diwan is the food court. It contains several restaurants and cafes that have indoor and outdoor sitting areas with a view of the Blue Nile. The estimated land space of the food court is 5,730 square metres. The third element in Diwan is the yacht club, which will be built on 14,530 square metres and contain a multipurpose hall, restaurants, and an anchorage where yachts and small boats can be anchored. The fourth element in Diwan is the hotel. It is a two-story building that will be constructed on 17,895 square metres, with 112 rooms, a conference room, a restaurant, and a multipurpose hall. Finally, the fifth element is the two buildings of Bank of Khartoum and Omdurman National Bank.

Diwan waterfront project was not welcomed among the majority of the Tutians describing it as the "ogre of investment threatening virgin Tuti" (Ahmed, 2019b). The island is referred to as a virgin highlighting the meaning of pureness, and the investor who is described as the ogre, is compared to a monster in the Sudanese folklore who kidnaps the little children especially the little beautiful girls. Such analogies clearly express the antagonistic feelings of the residents towards the waterfront project and they went further in trying to engage with the plans through adopting new modes of political actions, claims, and contestations (Caldeira, 2016).

### 3.3 The 2007 catastrophic plan

Concurrently with Diwan, in 2007, some of the members of the CPs established an agreement with the Khartoum state government to plan Tuti Island. The plan is known among the Tutians as the catastrophic plan of 2007. The PCs members ignored the opinions of the island's residents, and they wanted to close the case of planning Tuti Island.

The first clause was to upgrade the land from agricultural use to urban use, which requires paying an upgrading fee either to be paid in cash money or by deducting some of the land and not less the 25% will remain for the owner. The second clause was to upgrade the residential area on Tuti Island, both the old town and the new developments, according to the Village Organisation Act, which means some of the buildings will be demolished and the compensation is not clearly stated in the agreement, but only mentioned that it will be within the capacity of the state's budget. The third clause was to allocate land for the coming generation of the Tutians in a place where they can still be together as a community and keep the social ties. The fourth clause was to start a cadastre operation to produce an official map for the island. The last clause was concerning the termination of the agricultural designation, appointing the PCs members who are part of this agreement to commit to obtain waivers from the owners of the farmland, and the Ministry of Urban Planning will appoint a judge to formalise the inheritance procedures and to prepare the required legal announcements.

What makes this agreement catastrophic was the changing land use from agricultural to urban land use. The Tutians demanded to be exempted from paying any upgrading fee because they already changed the land use by building houses on the agricultural land as result of the island overpopulation. The agreement focused on regeneration which completely differs from what Tutians were expecting. Regeneration means that through government's finance the island's layout will be reorganised and public services will be improved to encourage private investment. Regeneration impacts land and property possession, land utilisation, planning methods, and compensation procedures. However, it was stated that the people who will be affected by the planning will be compensated in a new residential plan outside of Tuti Island in al-Şālḥa area south of Omdurman.

Therefore, the plan was considered by the Tuti Island Engineers Association members as a disaster and they referred to it as a catastrophic plan. The upgrading process will lead the people to lose their ownership and it opens the door wide for land speculation. The ambiguity of the compensation process made the people question the intentions of the planning officials who are accused of favouring the investors and ignoring the real demands of the island's residents. Most of the people will not be able to pay the upgrading fee in cash money and it is likely that the government will deduct the upgrading fee from the size of the land. The engineers then organised a public speech and presented a proclamation that was titled 'No... We will not leave Tuti until the camel passes through the eye of the needle'. The spokesperson of the engineers' association stated that the planning authorities are treating the waterfronts as an empty space and they are planning accordingly. The engineers emphasised that they will not surrender to the pressure from the state and from the investors, they island will remain for the Tutians and they promised the residents that they will not rest until their claims are granted. Consequently, they immediately started to work on an alternative plan and to revoke the catastrophic one.

2005 PPP US dollars to characterize the middle class in Africa" (AFDB, 2011).

20 An upgrading fee is payed to the state when the land utilisation changes from one form to another (e.g. from agricultural use to urban use, or from urban use to Investment use...etc.).

## 4 The alternative visions for planning Tuti Island

### 4.1 The first aid plan

In 2008, the plan made by the engineers' association was openly discussed with the other residents and it gained wide acceptance among them. The first step that was taken in the plan is to disapprove Tuti Island being regenerated according



Figure 6: A hand drawn map that illustrates the three zones of Tuti.

Source: Tuti Island's University Library Archives (2008)

to the Village Organisation Act. The engineers made it clear in their proposal that Tuti Island is not a village, but it is a town. They stated that the island administratively affiliated to Northern Khartoum Administrative Unit<sup>21</sup> and all regulations to organise the neighbourhoods of the Northern Khartoum Administrative Units applies to them. From a demographic perspective, the engineers referred to some studies they made asserting that the people living on Tuti Island have different occupation, which they consider it as an urban characteristic, and one cannot find in a rural area where people are practising the same occupation (e.g. farming, animal husbandry, fishing, etc)

Moreover, the engineers stated that the size of the village's population does not exceed 3000, while Tuti island has a population that is more than 24,000<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, they demonstrated that although the island was historically the home of some subdivision of the Maḥas ethnic group, today the island has a heterogeneous population; people from all over Sudan as well as foreigners live on the island. Furthermore, another point they raised is that most of the building patterns on the island do not resemble any traditional building practices, on the contrary, Tuti was one of the first places in Khartoum to build houses from red bricks, and nowadays, there are many houses on the Island that are constructed with blueprints and using permanent material. The engineers illustrated that Tuti Island has infrastructure and public services (e.g. electricity, water supply, roads, public transportation, schools, clinics,

etc.) which differ from the infrastructure and public services in rural areas. They added to this the idea of lifestyle, which means in this case, a distinct way of living, which consists of particular social activities, norms, traditions, and morals that distinguish the Tutians from any other group (Sobel, 1982). Tuti Island is similar to any old inner town in the city. The island has a concentration of related families, which is likewise a familiar characteristic of many neighbourhoods on the mainland. The first aid plan name reflects its temporal nature, as it treats the very urgent physical condition while developing a long-term plan for the island. In conclusion, the association committee suggested to plan Tuti Island according to the Town Re-Planning Act instead of the Village Organisation Act. They believe that Tuti is one of the grand towns of central Sudan, and town re-planning is more suitable for the current situation.

The engineers sectioned Tuti into three zones using its topographic structure as a central measure. The first is the centre of the island or old Tuti; the second is the midmost range or the new developments, and the third is the visible range that includes farms, orchards, and riverbanks (figure 6 and 7). They were stressing on the regeneration of Tuti Island and at the same time preserving their heritage, and their social cohesion.

According to a blueprint developed by the supreme committee for city planning in 1996 (figure 3), the engineers demanded that Tuti must be registered with its current building state as a freehold, in addition to upgrading land use from agricultural use to urban use without paying an upgrading fee. Moreover, the government must open an office to facilitate the registration procedures and to organise the compensation processes with an assistance from one of the well-informed people of the island. In addition to that, and in order to improve the flow of traffic, which will become unbearable after the opening of the bridge, it will be a necessity connecting the main roads, and immediately compensating the affected property owners. In order to guarantee that the coming generations of the Tutians will be together they suggested a new extension of Tuti Island to be located in al-Sālḥa, south of Omdurman, close to the location where the new international airport will be constructed. Regarding the irrigated land (locally known as al-sawāqī), due to the increasing population the Tutians used most of this land for building new houses that accommodate the island's population growth. However, there are some plots between the houses that have no buildings known as the internal sawāqī, the engineers demanded that the internal sawāqī land use must upgrade from agricultural land use to urban land use even though there are no buildings. This will help them to avoid land speculation and preventing investors to penetrate further into the residential area and just stay at the riverbanks. The only point they agreed on with the catastrophic plan was to stat a cadastre and produce an official map. Another important aspect of the plan is to appoint a judge to handle all the unsolved land issues such as inheritance and to prepare the required legal declarations.

Nevertheless, this plan also faced a lot of criticism from engineers who are living in the diaspora, in the Sultanate of Oman, explaining that it is an emotional plan but has no strategic vision regarding the future of the island, and the Town re-planning act if not implanted correctly it will also subject the island to speculation. Therefore, the diaspora engineers developed another plan they called the strategic vision of Tuti Island.

21 An Administrative Unite is part of the local government structure of urban areas in Sudan (Pantuliano, et al., 2011).

22 The household survey statistics and the official statistics of the island's population are significantly different the former is 24000 and the other is 12000, the household survey is down by the Tutians and they counted every person who belongs to Tuti even if they don't live there (e.g. diaspora, the students who study abroad), while the official statistics counted only the people who actually live on the island.





Figure 7: the island's three zones  
Source: Tuti Island project archives

#### 4.2 The Strategic Vision for Tuti Island (Tuti Island Master Plan)

This plan is known as Abdultawāb's vision (Bahreldin & Hamid, 2014c). Abdultawāb is an engineer from Tuti Island and he is an active person in the planning efforts, he was living abroad for a while before moving back to Sudan. He is the son of one of the notables of the Island -Mustafa Khalid- who played a huge role in the history of struggle and resistance during British Colonisation in Sudan. The main catchphrase for this plan is 'Tuti for the Tutians' and Abdultawāb described it as objective, scientific, and practical.

The plan has six main aims. Firstly, Tuti remains for the Tutians in present as well as in the future; Secondly, to make the centre of the island a public space; thirdly, integrating Tuti in the urban fabric of the capital and dismissing KPP5 that wants to transform Tuti Island to a roundabout to solve the traffic problem in the centre of Khartoum; Fourthly, to focus on the island's beautification; Fifthly, is to assure the steadiness of the social ties and social structures of the island's community; finally, is to allocate an area on the mainland for future generation to move in their but continue being together at the same place will protect the island's community from losing its social ties.

Building on the zoning of the first aid plan map (figure 6), the plan treated every zone differently. The first zone-Old Tuti- topographically is a rocky land and it is the high point on the island. Old Tuti has an ambiguous legal status in regard to land allocation and property rights, as it is stated that the ownership is communal. It is the area where the old generation of the Tutians (over 70 years old) live, who according to the household survey, they only represent 7% of the island's population. The population of old Tuti is extremely diverse and it is not limited to the old generation of the Tutians. The most distinctive feature of the old neighbourhood is the narrow zigzag alleys that reflects the social ties among the older generation of the island.

The second zone on the island -the new developments- built on al-sawāqī. Topographically it is a lowland, a mixture of rocks and clay. This area was customarily demarcated through a process called squaring, and it means to divide the land two squares and distribute it among the family members who own the land. According to the household survey, most of the island's population live in the new development around 93% of the island's population. The buildings can be described as contemporary and are built according to official blueprints produced by architectural firms and ratified by the building authorities, which created a hybrid legal situation, a mix between

state regulations and customary regulations. The streets are wider compared to the old area. All these features make it exceedingly difficult to upgrade this area at the present, or even in the near future. However, there is only room for improving the physical infrastructure and the public utilities.

The third zone consists of farms and orchards close to the riverbanks surrounding the new residential areas. The soil in this zone is a mix of sand and clay. Regarding the ownership, only 5% on the island's population own this area despite being the largest in size comparing it to old Tuti and the new developments.

Abdultawāb and his co-designers based the plan on four main principles. The first considers that the current physical structure of Tuti Island prevents an immediate, comprehensive regeneration process; therefore, an extended strategic plan is the best option. Secondly, any current or future regeneration of Tuti Island requires a new residential development beyond the boundaries of the island, which would need to be four times bigger than the current size of the island. The third point is that a small percentage (5-7%) of the population lives in old Tuti. Therefore, it could be the city centre, under the responsibility of the state government, after compensating the occupants, whose houses will be impacted by the renewal processes. Finally, although the current physical structure of the island does not allow any immediate implementation of the plans, it should be possible to improve public services. They also identified some points to be considered when planning the new developments. First, the place where the residential development should be is al-Şālḥa, which is located south of a planned Emirati investment city on the banks of the White Nile, in Omdurman. Next, the size of the residential area should not be less than 4,000 acres. Finally, the central principle of the compensation should be that every square metre in old Tuti is the equivalent of 10 square metre in al-Şālḥa, and 1 square metre in the island's newer residential development is the equivalent of 15 square metres in al-Şālḥa.

The expatriates who were the masterminds behind this plan see it as the ultimate solution for Tuti, and it is the only plan that could develop the current living conditions, preserve the island's identity, and keep the ownership for future generations. However, it is a challenge for them to convince the residents with the master plan, since many people see them as dreamers and expatriates who are only emotionally motivated by the idea of the homeland, while the rest of the people are motivated by their daily struggles with depraved physical conditions, inadequate public services, and the negative attributes of the construction of Tuti Island Bridge.

The master plan has some inputs that makes it applicable and one can expect some satisfying outputs. The first input is Old Tuti, and the procedure is to determine the percentage of Old Tuti's land that will be taken by the planners to allow planning it in the most "modern" way in the future. The estimated size is to be 10 % due to the existence of some public services and buildings that require special treatment (e.g. the Grand Mosque, Tuti Island Social and Cultural Club, the police headquarters, the bus station, and the marketplace). The second input for Tuti Island is the cultivated area, and the percentage of land to be deducted to allow planning (approximately 20-40% of the total size) will be determined after reaching an agreement with the owners of the land. Regarding the new developments on Tuti Island, the appropriate project for the current state would be to improve the quality of the public services and the roads. The previous planning project designed by the engineers' association includes paving the roads, enhancing water and electricity services, and sanitation, takes into consideration the requirement for each constituent project to be consistent with the master plan. They also suggest including media as an essential component of popularising the project (e.g. public lectures, talks, booklets, etc.). It is essential for them to establish an association or a company for the farms' owners, which would create a better environment for investment and facilitate the planning and implementation processes. They proposed making a joint agreement with the government and investors on how to invest in land, instead of individual agreements. In addition, they proposed a feasibility study to provide the investors with accurate knowledge to increase the chances of a secure investment.

The Expected Outcomes of the expatriates' project are several. They propose constructing a 50-acre public space that would contain all the public services and would constitute the centre of New Tuti. The public services would be much better than now, and the people of Tuti would have better living conditions. Investment in farmland would take place according to the vision of the owners. It is vital to adopt an investment plan that guarantees the connectivity of future generations who will move to the new residential areas, and crucial for them to benefit from the land they inherit from their parents. Finally, Tuti Island would benefit more from the newly constructed bridge because it would facilitate the regeneration project.

The catastrophic plan, the first aid plan and the master plan present Tuti as a contested place. The most acceptable plan is the engineers' plan; the people state that they are living today, not in the future, and that it would be more practical to find solutions for the current problems of congestion, environmental deterioration, and inadequate public services. "The island is not for investment" some of them said. This island is the only shelter they have, and most of them did not show any interest in investing in real estate in the future. People said that as long as they were alive, they would never allow such interventions that would change Tuti into a different, unknown place, and if their children agree to do so, it will be after they are dead and buried. These three planning views entered the everyday conversation of the people who are living on the island, and people started to sense the disputation.

## 5 Conclusion

Urban Planning is a complex process where different individual and social actors are directly or indirectly involved in different aspects of the planning process. The real estate developers are always looking for investment opportunities

where they can maximise their profit, and Tuti is a dream for them. The virgin nature of Tuti Island means that there are not many buildings, which for them reduces the costs of developing the island, and at the same time the location of the island promises a lot of profit because it could be transformed into a luxurious complex, with exceptional natural surroundings that will lend it extra value. Nevertheless, what real estate developers do not understand is that Tuti Island's waterfronts are not empty spaces where they can simply land and start building resorts, malls, and clubs. The waterfronts are not detached from the rest of the island; they represent the green interface of Tuti that gives it its special scenery - the farms and orchards which are an integral part of Tuti island. There are a lot of agricultural activities even if the developers want to project an image of how these fields are misused by this limited scale of agriculture. The developers, with the assistance of the state authorities, make a lot of statements that the riverbanks in the capital city are only suitable for tourism, and these agricultural activities can be moved to any other place. On the other hand, the people who live on the island are participating in transforming the beautiful green scenery into buildings, driven by their own need for housing, and simultaneously holding on to the land they believe they own, although land regulations challenge this ownership.

What was stated above is a clear example of De Boeck's theory of how neoliberal reforms have a significant impact on urban design. By liberalising all economic sectors, including real estate development, the state opens the door wide for the ogre of investment to erase small-scale farming and exclude people whose livelihoods depend on these farms. However, the people living on the island, as Caldeira (2016) states, are transversally engaging with the implementation of neoliberalism and the ambiguity of land reforms. The people of Tuti Island are not directly confronting these plans but operating within the system by suggesting alternative plans and engaging the different actors in the process of reconfiguring Tuti Island.

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## About the author

Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed holds a PhD from the Bayreuth International Graduate School for African Studies, in the field of Anthropology. Her research examines the impact of urban regeneration master plans on how people experience places and (re) shape the identities of these places. Azza received her B.Sc. in Economic and Social Studies and her M.Sc. in Anthropology from Khartoum University (Sudan). She worked as Research Assistant at the DFG Water Management in Khartoum International Research Project (WAMAKHAIR) (2011-2014) and was a lecturer of Anthropology at al-Gezira University (Sudan) 2010-2012.

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The Middle Class Urbanism Working Papers Series is a project of the *Middle Class Urbanism* research group at the National Museum of Denmark in cooperation with the Centro de Estudos de Desenvolvimento do Habitat of Maputo's Universidade Eduardo Mondlane.

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