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### POWER OF PLACE-MAKING IN THE CREATION OF RESILIENT PLACES IN SUDAN

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## Executive summary

Al-Widay is an informal village which has been incorporated into Omdurman, one of three cities forming Greater Khartoum. It has undefined open spaces, irregular streets, and a creek that originates in Kordofan, passes through several localities then through Al-Widay before its final destination in the Nile.

Al-Widay is home for thousands of people, and a place where public spaces are overlooked, ignoring people needs. The creek floods annually causing havoc due to waste disposed by residents in it; stagnant water causes malaria and other diseases. It also causes collapse of houses, lack of safety and miscommunication between neighbors.

The project analyzed in this paper aims to involve the community in upgrading their neighborhood through place-making, which is a bottom-up approach known locally as *Nafeer* – a common *tradition* in Sudan. The project focuses on exploring the potentials of making human settlements in Sudan *safe, resilient and sustainable* so as to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

The paper was based on fieldwork and its data was collected through observation, interviews with community leaders, and a household questionnaire. It concludes by proposing place-making as a strategy for developing cities that suits Sudanese's culture to make such areas livable, sustainable and resilient.

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## 1. Introduction

Place-making happens in public places that are accessible to everyone in a community, including streets, markets, squares, parks, and publicly-owned or accessible lots. Place-making is recognized as a bottom up approach that could be used to create places which are wealthy, livable, healthy, and green.

There is no single consistent definition for place-making, its objectives and processes share several common characteristics such as:

- According to Yuzhe Bao (200, Place-making is the process of building and developing a relationship between people and their environment through a broad focus on creating quality places, Place-making builds shared values, community capacity, and cross-sector collaboration that is the bedrock of resilient cities and successful communities.
- Place-making helps fulfil local community needs and visions for a place, which means that local residents are meaningfully engaged throughout the process of conceiving, planning, and implementing improvements of their place.
- Place-making can create resilient communities by the creation of new investments, that build and support local economy, improved accessibility, respect for space standards, promote good health and comfort, foster social interaction and responsibility, involving a diverse population: woman, children, youth, elderly etc.
- Place-making projects highlight local assets or talent, whether through art, programming, volunteerism, entrepreneurship opportunities, food or other offerings, or the showcasing of historic or natural features.

### **1.1. Participatory and Placemaking**

Community participation has become a common theme to most place-making processes. Usually, people in their place have local knowledge of their own lives and their own places, and in Sudan community participation has been defined by a number of Sudanese scholars as a voluntary involvement of people in decision-making, planning, implementation, and all other activities undertaken to improve living situation in human settlements (Nimir, 1995, In Arabic).

Al-Sayed agrees with this definition but adds that for this voluntary work to succeed there must be a local community organization or group, which could either be formed by community members or by their local government (Al-Sayed, 1995, In Arabic). Which come to what has been suggested by “Place-makers that all participants in any development process should come together with their respective knowledge, and collaborative assets, participation should not be something that is addressed only if time permits, but it should be an integral part

of making design and planning efficiently, as well as creating a livable and resilient place that satisfy the needs of its users.

## **1.2. Who are the Partners in Place-making?**

Place-making is a complex process that requires multidisciplinary efforts and cooperative work to achieve the best result when all work together towards a common goal that is centered on the place and its people and that is understood by:

- Community members, their vision for the place so that they become connected to it; which will be at the very heart of resilience. In fact, resilience on its own has limited value if residents feel little attachment to, or investment in a place.
- Officials and relevant government agencies.
- Professionals: planners, urban designers, engineers, etc.
- NGOs: local, national and international.
- Private sector and developers.

Place partners facilitate the process, shaping the vision for desired character through clear principles and strategies that respond to the local economy, community needs, culture, and environment. Through community engagement each place will have its own character and value and stakeholders will develop their own approach for the place that can best reflect and develop their specific needs them create a livable resilient place.

## **2. Case study**

### **2.1. Approach and Methodology**

Data collection for this research include a combination of research methods employing variety of data collection tools that include: qualitative, descriptive method, also information will be generated through face-to-face interviews with residents and official staff, and a narrative method that will be used to help assess the current situation in the area especially that most of the data collected will rely on people's story-telling. Researcher found that their stories could become an object of study, Observation will be used to focus on how stakeholders or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives because it is important that the researchers will examine the social, physical, economic and environmental characteristics of the area for providing integrated urban solutions that lead to a more resilient place, with resident's participation, that can be replicated throughout the country.

All so through reviewing some international case studies, observing the researchers considered the use of place-making which has been a commonly used world in all circumstances regarding housing, building, living and first of all stakeholders participation, through which the creek could be a festival place during rainy seasons and an active place throughout the year.

### **2.2. Aim of the study**

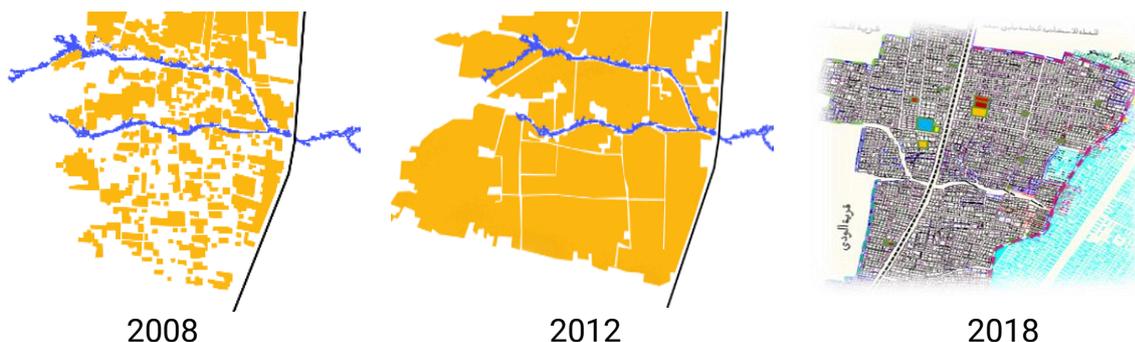
- The project aims to involve the community in the building and upgrading process using the *Nafeer* concept (building together) which is a *tradition* in Sudan. The community come together to build public buildings or protections against water.
- Help improve the quality of life and safety through the revitalization of public spaces in Sudanese cities, thereby promoting healthy living.
- Link urban development with social development; promote community organization and participation; increase community safety and help strengthen the sense of community belonging, social organization, to create resilient communities through place-making.
- Others, such as Disaster recovery, business continuity, infrastructure protection, resilient places. Social Integration:
- The project aims to involve the community in the building and upgrading process using the *Nafeer* concept (building together) which is a *tradition* in Sudan. The community come together to build public buildings or protections against water.

### 2.3. Where It Is: Al-Widay Creek, Africa, Sudan, Omdurman.

Al-Widay is one of the old informal villages in Omdurman, one of the three cities forming Greater Khartoum. It has been classified by the Ministry of Planning as an illegal settlement that has been incorporated into the city, it is located along the road that leads to the new airport. This location encouraged speculators to sell and buy land in the area illegally Maps i-iii.

Al-Widay is characterized by the existence of a natural Creek, a filthy place with some bushes scattered here and there throughout the year, and a dangerous place during rainy seasons.

Original residents of the area, were mostly from Al-Gomoeia tribe, with the existence of some other tribal groups.



Maps i-iii Al-Widay population increase throughout 2008-2018

Source Ministry of Planning

#### 2.3.1. Neighborhood Urban Pattern

The village lacks sufficient roads and open spaces, with no planning regulations, and while strolling along the neighborhood observing and interviewing people one can notice the following:

##### 2.3.1.1. Buildings

Most of the buildings are single story, built with mud, red bricks, cement blocks with corrugated iron sheet roofs; and, in rare cases, concrete roofs (photos i-iii); people mentioned that they do not feel secure to spend on their houses because of lack of land ownership and planning issues.



Photos i-iii. Buildings and building materials in the area  
Source: the researcher

### 2.3.1.2. Streets and Open spaces

Streets do not have any hierarchy, unpaved with no sidewalks and do not allow for public transportation to pass through, which precludes connection with the city's main streets and markets; on the other hand open spaces do not follow any planning regulations; this gives some residents the privilege of having a nearby open space while others do not (Photos iv-vi).



Photos iv-vi Streets and open spaces in the area  
Source: the researcher

### 2.3.1.3. The Creek

Al-Widay Creek starts from the mountains of north Kordofan and passes through several localities before its final destination, the Nile, passing through Al-Widay area. Flooding of Al-Widay each year has a bad effect on the village and in recent years the devastating effect of these floods has grown due to the increase of inhabitants that settled informally with no consideration to the natural water pathways. The results were disastrous as shown in the floods of 2008, 2012 and 2020 when hundreds of houses were destroyed and many people were left homeless for months

#### a. The Creek Recurrent Problems:

Like all unplanned old villages that have been incorporated into the city, Al-Widay has a number of problems and through observation and interviews a number of points were identified:

- Lack of appropriate road network, open spaces and basic municipal services.
- Environmental pollution: due to waste disposed by residents in the creek.
- Lack of safety: being a place for informal settlements adjacent to a relatively steep creek that brings large amounts of water annually.
- Lack of land titles: which makes residents hesitant to develop their houses and neighborhood.

**b. The Creek Seasonal problems due to floods**

- Health problems: due to stagnant water after the flood season, which causes malaria and other diseases.
- Collapse of houses (or their boundary walls) on the banks of the Creek
- Neighbors find it hard to move around or to communicate during the floods.

All these problems created an un-resilient place that gives residents a feeling of insecurity  
Photos vii-viii.



Photos vii-viii Seasonal problems in the area  
Source: the researcher

**c. Activities around the creek**

- Elderly people: who usually sit and talk under trees *story telling*.
- Women who socialize around the creek.
- Young people often use the creek for *chatting and studying when it is dry*.
- Children: who use the dry Creek for *playing and for swimming* during rainy season(Photos x-xii).?



Photos x-xii. Opportunities for upgrading  
Source: the researcher

**3. Vison**

Through reviewing some of the international case studies, observing and interviewing residents, the researcher considered the use of place-making for making the neighborhood more resilient. Through place-making the creek could be a festival place during rainy seasons and an active place throughout the year. This approach will require examining the

social, physical, economic and environmental characteristics of the area for providing integrated urban solutions, with resident's participation, that can be replicated throughout the settlement.

The approach includes examining the social, economic, physical and environmental characteristics of the area and providing integrated urban solutions that can be replicated throughout the settlement. Researchers observed many opportunities to help in developing the place to make it a resilient one, these opportunities include:

- Culture and tradition: Each place have its own unique culture, tradition, and social norms that must be considered.
- Horse riding as part of residents' cultural activities.
- Story telling: Residents who have different stories to tell about their homeland and about the history of their new settlement place.
- The creek itself could be an asset for different activities swimming and fishing during the rainy season, playing and dancing during dry season, etc.

#### **4. Expected outcomes**

If stockholders managed to develop their urban area through place making the project will:

- Development: New Investments, employment opportunities
- Improved environmental conditions and safety.
- Responsibility and respect for space standards.
- Technical solutions to unique problems.
- Community Integration.
- Aesthetics: Strong visual Impact.
- Character: A place with its own identity and symbolism.

And more or less it will create a place the is resilient protected by its residents.

#### **5. Lessons learned**

- The community can mobilize and decide on its priorities for settlement upgrading with little government and NGO assistance.
- There should be a role played by the government by having sound legal frameworks such as development policies which include different frameworks for solving problems reselting from sesonal problems.
- Site opportunities, cultural background, social interaction, resources available in the area should be part of the proposed upgrading framework.
- Developing the creek can increase residents' earnings by generating more jobs and improving the living environment, thus creating a livable place.

#### **6. Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

- Developing the creek can increase residents' earnings by generating more jobs and improve the living environment, thus creating a livable reselint place.

- Development of old villages with seasonal problems is usually undertaken by the government as a top-down approach which is resisted by some residents. But in this study we are recommending that:
  - Residents should participate in the development process of their neighborhood, through place-making, to decide on their priorities, designing and implementing all development projects in their neighborhood. This will help them to create an attractive resilient place in which the community is the expert.

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