

✧ Introduction ✧

Greater Khartoum through the Prism of In-Betweenness

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In a global setting, Khartoum may evoke various different images: the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, or perhaps an arid – and perhaps even stark – city; or it might also call to mind images of violence. Images like these are undoubtedly reinforced by the information about the conflicts that have been taking place incessantly since the country's independence in 1956, and by the city's rapid population explosion caused by the forced migration inflows, which have resulted in the settlement of displaced populations from crisis-ridden areas of Sudan. It is also possible that in the western popular imagination would be the historical fall of Khartoum at the hands of the Mahdi and his loyal followers (*Ansar*), which led to the death of Gordon Pasha, or the Hollywood film named after the city and starring Charlton Heston that immortalized the event. The film is an example of Orientalism *par excellence* (Said 1978), nurturing problematic representations of the Sudanese as unruly natives and mad dervishes, and thus consolidating the way Sudan was already viewed through the eyes of biased outsiders, through abstract studies, images and representations and travellers' documents (Slatin 1897, for example). But representations of Khartoum, particularly contemporary ones, of the city life that has developed there, of its different neighbourhoods, of the various spaces that make it up and of the landscapes it offers are still rare compared with other large cities in Africa and elsewhere. This volume emphasizes the importance of empirical research that might make Khartoum more tangible and less of a product of its previous representations.

The Greater Khartoum conurbation has long been described as a mirror of Sudan as a whole. The Sudanese capital is made up of three

towns that symbolize three major historical periods: the city of Khartoum is the original site on which the city was founded during the Turkiyya era (1820–85), although few traces remain of this period; Omdurman symbolizes the Mahdiyya period (1885–98); and Khartoum North represents the period of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium era (1898–1956) (Dubois 1991). The morphology of Greater Khartoum also embodies the power relations that since colonization have been rooted, and developed, between a centre (the Nile Valley) and peripheral regions, and between riverain elites and marginalized populations. Those power relations have been imported and (re)written within the urban fabric and translated into urban spaces with extremely strict centre-periphery gradients (Denis 2005). However, this reflection of Sudan at an urban level should not be allowed to obscure the fact that dynamics transcend barriers and that people and city dwellers cross borders. By choosing the notion of ‘in-betweenness’¹ as the core idea and shared lens of this book, this project seeks to focus on processes rather than borders and to destabilize the classic dichotomies that are widely used to describe Sudanese society and its state and capital city: Arab/African, Christian/Muslim, Northerners/Southerners,² centre/periphery, urban/rural, city dwellers/migrants and traditional/modern, among others. The notion of in-betweenness should be understood both as an academic plea to overcome, or at least discuss, these binary representations, and as a useful tool for various situations of liminality and understanding the multiple in-between spaces within the agglomeration of Greater Khartoum.

The common perspective that gives this book its consistency is the result of a collective cross-disciplinary research programme,³ which provided an opportunity to conduct extensive fieldwork in the Sudanese capital at a time of major reconfigurations: after the independence of South Sudan in 2011, which had multiple implications for Khartoum, with the departure of the Southern Sudanese population and the rise of inflation and poverty linked to the loss of most oil revenues; after the start of the civil conflict in the new state of South Sudan in 2013 and the continuation or resurgence of conflicts in peripheral regions (Darfur, Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Eastern region), which once again drove displaced persons towards Khartoum; and before the revolutionary movement, which started in December 2018 and led to the fall of Omar al-Bashir in 2019, after thirty years in power.

Despite the fact that an abundance of research on Sudan has been carried out in Khartoum – for reasons that have to do with both accessibility in a country plagued by numerous conflicts in peripheral areas and with an authoritarian regime that controls the movements of researchers – the city itself has rarely been the primary subject of a monograph

(El-Bushra 1976; Pons 1980; Gertel 1993; Simone 1994; D’Errico 2016), with the exception of the contributions by urban planning scholars, who have recommended a variety of road maps in an attempt to control and channel the city’s demographic growth more efficiently or to address the ‘developing’ city’s dysfunctions and challenges (Doxiadis 1959; MEFIT 1974, 2009; Bannaga 1996, 2000; Pantuliano et al. 2011). One of the ambitions of this book is to fill in this gap by portraying the city of Greater Khartoum, which is both singular and ‘ordinary’, in line with Jennifer Robinson’s concern for examining all cities – and not just global or Western ones – so as to avoid making assumptions about how they are configured, the models that shape them and the individual and collective urban initiatives that contribute to the production of the city (Robinson 2006).

The initial aim of the research programme that lies as the origin of this collective work was to investigate the Greater Khartoum conurbation and its diverse places and spaces, its rapid transformation over the past decade, with a specific focus on ‘in-between spaces’. In our view, working on hard-to-understand spaces ‘structured by paradoxes, . . . where it seems that everything can be found, or at least everything that can challenge the understanding of contemporary urban evolutions’ (Dumont and Bossé 2006) can open up new perspectives on the Sudanese capital, which is often described as dual, fragmented and segregated, and as a reflection of the political dynamics between the country’s centre and periphery. Our research, in contrast, explores intermediary spaces and forms, the porosity of spatial and social borders; the relations among different neighbourhoods and between the various populations, groups and individuals that make up the largest Sahelian city (with its more than six million inhabitants (CBS 2018)). By examining in-betweenness, we capture multiple dynamics that operate beyond the visible and invisible boundaries of this city and the diversity of urban experiences and ultimately shed light on the complex and distinct political, social and economic transformations that have transpired within Greater Khartoum.

‘Daring to Explore the In-Between’: Transcending Urban Divisions

The focal point of the research project on Greater Khartoum was the plurality of in-between spaces: spaces that are hard to grasp and delineate, are constantly being re-qualified and that can be looked at on multiple levels.⁴ These areas of interface, of ‘uncertainty’, of transition, of contact between built and non-built environments, between rural

and urban areas and between neighbourhoods with different functions, status (planned area vs squatter settlements or IDP camps, for example) and forms can be understood as spatial discontinuities (Brunet 1968). Since the 2000s, new studies have investigated in-between spaces by looking (again) into the city's production both in the north and in the south in examining the sustainability, dynamics and specific identities of these spaces, particularly in the context of the development of peri-urban areas (Baker 1995; Stadnicki 2008; Legoix 2009). While the latter do indeed lie at the heart of this analysis, the focus on in-between spaces also includes interstitial spaces, enclaves and brownfield sites in city centres, among others, all of which contribute to a theoretical elaboration around the 'third space' (Entrikin 1991; Soja 1996) and its margins at various levels (Rey and Poulot-Moreau 2014). This drives us to interrogate the notion of in-betweenness and to observe the relationships among these spaces and the processes of innovation and hybridization that emerge within them (Sansot 1996; Chaléard and Dubresson 1999; Merle 2011; Le Gall and Rougé 2014).

In the case of the Greater Khartoum conurbation, this particular theoretical orientation means adopting a novel approach to urban peripheries, which have long been considered to be homogeneous and dominated by the city centre (Lavergne 1997; Pérouse de Montclos 2001; Choplin 2006), and paying particular attention to the reconfigurations that have occurred over the last decade (Abusharaf 2009; Abdel Aziz 2013; Crombé and Sauloup 2016). Since the 1980s, the Greater Khartoum conurbation has often been seen as an archetypal example of a 'city in crisis' because of the fact that it has served as a place of refuge for a plethora of internally displaced people and refugees from neighbouring countries. The violent and problematic urban policies that were established to manage these 'newcomers' in the 1990s (De Geoffroy 2009; Denissen 2013; Assal 2015) have reinforced the city's dual image, which harks back to the colonial period and the division of its urban spaces into different classes (Sikainga 1996; Casciari 2016). Hence we are presented with a city that is often described as incoherent and a reflection of unequal power relations in the country and uneven development between its centre and peripheries (Roden 1974; Denis 2007; Assal 2011). As an effect of its explosive growth, peripheral areas and residential spaces on the margins of the city have become the norm. These in-between spaces (between the city and the desert) that have become neighbourhoods have evolved, leading to a process of differentiation, and so this encourages us to be careful not to present an erroneous vision of these peripheral spaces as homogeneous or compartmentalized.

Starting in the 2000s, when the country joined the small circle of oil-producing countries and the neoliberal economy prevailed (Ahmed and Marchal 2010), the Sudanese capital underwent unprecedented transformations that included a reinvestment of central spaces (Bartoli 2006; Sauloup 2011) and the expansion of urban services towards the city's peripheral zones (Beckedorf 2012; Crombé and Sauloup 2016). The petrodollars of the 2000s were thus largely invested in Greater Khartoum's real estate, as this was the sector that provided the safest area of capitalization in Sudan's economic and political context (Denis 2005; Franck 2016a). Construction boomed throughout the city, and colossal Dubai-like urban projects were launched in both the centre (Choplin and Franck 2015) and the urban periphery (Franck 2016a), where luxury residential compounds were built alongside poor neighbourhoods and former IDP camps. This transformation provides a clear illustration of the country's acceptance of globalized forms of economic endeavour, notably through mechanisms of financialization for the production of towns, which then affected the capital city (Swyngedouw et al. 2002; Barthel and Verdeil 2008; Elsheshtawy 2008; Barthel 2010; David and Halbert 2010).

Equally, the focus on in-between spaces also challenges the classic dichotomy between 'urban' and 'rural'. Our hypothesis is that until recently this dichotomy had a broad influence on Sudanese studies, as well as on disciplinary approaches such as anthropology, geography and law, even beyond Sudan. For example, in the case of anthropology, which is a prolific and long-established discipline in Sudan, the implicit assumption that Sudan is fundamentally 'rural' persisted for many years, leading anthropologists to contribute to the rich academic corpus on the country's rural contexts while overlooking urban issues.⁵ This trend has recently seen a reversal, with a greater focus on the urban, and with Khartoum as a primary setting (Abusharaf 2009; El-Hassan 2015; Assal 2011, 2015; Assal and Abdul-Jalil 2015; Bakhit 2016; Abdalla 2018). Notwithstanding this, a gap remains, and Greater Khartoum's recent transformations and accelerated expansion plead for new research that investigates urban environments, with the objective of not just capturing residual traces of rural life in urban spaces but of comprehending the complex interweaving of sociocultural factors in the in-between hybrid spaces where rural meets urban.

For the first time, the capital's in-between spaces appear to be sites under tension: coveted and disregarded in equal measure, they have been subjected to further changes since South Sudan's independence in July 2011, which exposed a period of uncertainty. The economic difficulties caused by the loss of the majority of oil revenues have had

serious ramifications, even in the capital. This fraught context makes studies of the capital's in-between spaces all the more relevant, in order to observe whether the previous decade's transformations in the real estate sector have continued and to analyse the strategies adopted by the populations that have become South Sudanese (citizens of a new country) rather than Southerners, *Janubiyyn* (Sudanese citizens from the Southern region of a united Sudan), within the city. The southbound migration of South Sudanese populations after their country's independence, followed by a forced northbound migration towards Khartoum, in particular after the onset of the 2013 civil war in South Sudan, raises a plethora of questions on the dynamics affecting poor (and mainly peripheral) neighbourhoods, whose populations appear to have shrunk after 2011. It is also pertinent to examine the fate of the neighbourhoods that are currently hosting these populations and to question whether they are in fact the same ones they inhabited previously or if new places have emerged out of these patterns of mobility. To quote the words of a geographer who worked in Khartoum in the 2010s: 'These changes shed new light on diverse situations of relegation, and on the forms of mobility and contact between two urban worlds that are too often presented as irreconcilable. The complexity of socio-spatial divisions can be seized by comparing urban representations and practices, which produce both relegation mechanisms and strategies aimed at combating them' (Saulouf, unpublished).

A study of in-between spaces provides an entry point for revealing the complex processes at work in Sudan's capital while also converging with the approaches taken by studies on 'the production of cities' and research that investigates the urban phenomena arising out of marginal spaces (Navez-Bouchanine 2002; Dorier-Aprill and Gervais Lambony 2005). This approach focuses specifically on the fluidity of these phenomena, on forms of hybridization, on the actors' multiple belongings, on the diverse forms of urban resistance to change and on the regulatory models that emerge from and within these spaces (Berry-Chikhaoui and Deboulet 2000). Starting from in-between spaces, our project moved on to an examination of how they create and reveal new spaces of negotiation, new places, new practices, and new borders through urbanisation processes over time, and how margins are experienced in different ways. The project's initial spatial and geographic approach was therefore complemented by a sociocultural perspective on the 'in-between', so as to decipher other borders and other processes of marginalization or inclusion, and more broadly to highlight certain identity-related reconfigurations in post-2011 Greater Khartoum.

From Marginal Spaces to Overlapping Alterities: The Porosity of Sociocultural Boundaries

The value of expanding the in-between perspective away from its dominant spatial approach towards a sociocultural dimension became increasingly apparent during our back-and-forth field trips to Greater Khartoum and through sharing our reflections over the course of the research project. Although it is referred to by different concepts (such as ‘liminality’ or ‘hybridity’), the same focus on in-betweenness may be found at the core of a long-standing anthropological debate: a retrospective insight, from classic works to recent post-modern ones, shows that anthropologists have envisaged the complexity and heuristic value of the notion of in-between when applied to immaterial spaces and sociocultural orders. The following overview,⁶ which traces the contribution of four seminal anthropological approaches, helps us enrich the wider debate on this notion, which was initially launched and framed by geographers.

First, we owe the reprisal and development of Van Gennep’s analysis of ‘rites of passage’ (1909) to Victor Turner (1969): in this work, the notion of liminality was seen as a moving situation between two stable conditions marked by transition, an absence of clear-cut frontiers, uncertainty and even danger (Fourny 2014). More precisely, for Turner, notably in ritual contexts, liminality becomes a powerful indicator of the construction of the self, the production of symbolic values and community cohesion, which is not subject to the rigidity of ordinary structural classification or to what he defines as a ‘status system’. Georges Balandier (1967), who ‘decolonized’ the predominant academic thinking of the 1950s and 1960s by championing ‘dynamic anthropology’, can also be considered a pioneer of a vision built around the notion of in-between. His critique of the binary opposition between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ looks at syncretic and shifting spaces as the crucial object of an innovative perspective on social processes in African societies while also pointing out the role of colonial ideologies in reducing the complexity of dominated peoples thanks to dichotomic and hierarchical categorizations. A third contribution that approaches sociocultural dynamics from a similar perspective is provided by Fredrik Barth: his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) marked the decline of essentialist approaches to ethnicity-related phenomena, and more generally to identity issues. After this epistemological renewal, these objects were no longer regarded as monolithic reified entities but rather as osmotic spaces undergoing processes of constant negotiation: the fluid borders

between ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’ allow anthropologists to capture the plasticity of cultural practices when shifting from their content to an analysis of such unstable borders. Finally, a fourth approach in this evolution towards acknowledgement of the sociocultural in-between as an analytical tool is associated with the spread of interpretative anthropology. Regardless of one’s personal appreciation of this ‘postmodern’ or ‘postcolonial’ turn, the success of categories of hybridity (and therefore of processes of hybridization) has driven researchers’ focus towards moments and spaces of circulation and reconfiguration as the core keys for comprehending fluidity, interdependence and complexity in contemporary social worlds. The emergence of the notion of hybridization in anthropological debates, which occurred at the same time as the decline of ‘Great Theories’, and whose corollary was the dismissal of binary oppositions, triggered a methodological and epistemological turn whose influence has been growing ever since, whether through the theoretical approaches of authors like Clifford Geertz (1973, 1988), Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Homi Bhabha (1994) or the development of field methods such as ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (Marcus 1995). In spite of the criticism that has been directed at its ideological biases (Friedman 1997), the notion of hybridity has thus become an emblem of ‘global cultural dynamics’ (Kraidy 2005). Aside from the place taken by postmodern scholars within this intellectual reshaping, other less mainstream authors have also nurtured the debate: for example, James Scott (1998) added a political concern to the revaluation of fluid spaces as he focused on the role of ‘high modernist’ states and capitalist economies – driven by purposes of ‘legibility and simplification’ aimed at the control and exploitation of the dominated – in rigidifying, dichotomizing and quantifying more complex local realities.

These references, which were borrowed from a mostly anthropological tradition whose reflections have become a platform for cross-disciplinary debate, helped us with our analysis of Greater Khartoum’s reconfigurations through the paradigm of in-between spaces. In fact, the spaces whose mobility and fast-paced multidimensional transformations we have referred to above play host to social groups that in the process of defining themselves as communities (homogeneous, torn by contradictions, in conflict and in opposition with other groups or with the state) are shaped by this spatial dimension while in turn reshaping spaces and places themselves (De Certeau et al. 1994). In this context, identity issues emerge as being crucial to the reconfigurations we observed in Greater Khartoum over the period of our research. Ethnic and tribal affiliations, another traditional object of study for social sciences (particularly anthropology) in Sudan, have once again been revived to serve

the needs of the moment. This contradicts the assumptions that relegated expressions of ethnicity or ‘tribalism’ to rural areas, and reveals the plasticity and constant renegotiation of these categories (Bonte, Conte and Dresch 2001; Abdul-Jabar and Dawod 2003; Bonte and Ben Hounet 2009). Far from being confined to the universe of local representations, this reconfiguration of the map of the capital’s inhabitants’ ethno-tribal belongings – whether real or claimed – has also been a major lever in influencing state policies. For instance, the regime made ambivalent use of native leaders (*sultan* or sheikh) to tackle public order issues as part of a revisited Native Administration (Abdul-Jalil 2015) and drew from customary law and community institutions for the management of legal affairs where Islamic standards were not considered to be as efficient as they needed to be (Casciarri and Babiker 2018).

During this same period of booming urbanization, which went hand in hand with the development of a growing sense of ‘legal insecurity’ (F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann 2006) for the majority of Greater Khartoum’s population, the question of belonging and otherness also emerged from the issue of access to land in an urban context. This had an impact on the margins and interfaces between urban and rural areas, such as the former villages that had been integrated into the capital (Assal 2015) or spaces that had previously been controlled by pastoral groups (Casciarri 2018). These spaces represent both a spatial and sociocultural in-between due to a reconfiguration of ethno-tribal solidarity that aimed to consolidate the land-based anchoring of local groups while also integrating the discourses and categories of a ‘modern’ state institution. Similar processes can also be observed in terms of access to economic resources, as was the case, for example, with access to water, an issue that became crucial as a result of the capital’s recent urbanization. Local practices indicate the end of the alleged dualism between state-led and private sector management: the Sudanese State’s *de facto* privatization and its disengagement in favour of private interests (Beckedorf 2012) has led to the re-emergence of a third pole in urban (Arango 2015), peri-urban (Zug 2013) and recently integrated rural areas (Casciarri 2015): this was the ‘commons’, a sort of in-between socio-economic sector that came to be of strategic importance for the survival of those citizens who were neglected by the neoliberal metropolis. Finally, the period surveyed also reveals socio-cultural negotiation spaces at the smaller family or household level: this appears, for instance, in the reformulation of social gender relations (Ali 2015) and marriage strategies, or in the understanding and practice of kinship systems and networks (Schlee and Watson 2009). The context of post-2011 Sudan pleads for an extensive study of the multiple processes

through which belonging is defined and negotiated in terms of ethnicity, tribal affiliation, nationalism, religion, kinship or gender, (Casciari et al. 2020) in all cases in relation to spatial anchoring. Without overstating the importance of the milestone date, it appears that the broader context produced by the event generated a number of revealing examples of what we refer to here as a ‘sociocultural in-between’, leading us to consider these reconfigurations by means of a detailed examination of the role played by the temporal dimension in this context.

Post-2011 Greater Khartoum: Tackling the Temporal Dimension of the In-Between, and Understanding Uncertainty and Openness

One of the strengths of this project is that it dedicates particular attention to the processes – that is, the temporal dimension – of current reconfigurations, whether they be spatial or identity-based. In addition, these various transformations are rooted in a specific context and in longer-term developments, and they need to be considered as a part of this process. Because it refers to a phenomenon of transition, the notion of the ‘in-between’ implicitly requires taking the temporal dimension into account. Rey and Poulot-Moreau write that an ‘in-between space’ is not necessarily bound to disappear: it can also acquire greater depth and autonomy through specific forms and experiences (Rey and Poulot-Moreau 2014). In their view, these spaces are directly connected to in-between timelines, according to two time-bound models of spatial organization that need to be revisited today: the model of the densely populated city as we know it and the rural agricultural model (*ibid.*). Along with these spatial transformations, the notion of the ‘in-between’ raises questions about the practices and social experiences of borders and/or margins and leads us to question various situations of liminality and the trajectories that are followed by certain actors, spaces and representations. The process of passing from one situation to another lies at the heart of this reflection on the ‘in-between’. Examples of this might include the passage from the informal to the formal (and vice versa) in the case of certain activities, actors or political and social movements, or the passage from the public to the private sector or to the hybrid forms mentioned above. Studies on migration also often resort to the term ‘in-between’ to refer to migrants’ fragile appropriation of the territories they travel across, or to the transient nature of host and waiting spaces, as well as to migrants’ multiple anchoring points and senses of belonging (Marcus 1995; Cortes 2000). In the latter case, the ‘in-between’ can be

both a strategy for accessing various resources and an interiorized experience ('in-betweenness') that can become part of their identity over the course of time.

The notion of the 'in-between' enables us not only to question the durability and fragility of reconfiguration dynamics but also, more broadly, to analyse uncertainty and openness. The period that began with the partition of Sudan in 2011 brought with it multiple forms of uncertainty at various levels. From a politico-economic standpoint, President Omar al-Bashir's military Islamist government appeared to be threatened on the one hand by the economic difficulties brought about by the loss of the majority of the country's oil revenues (Verhoeven 2015; Chevillon-Guibert 2018), which were now channelled towards South Sudan, and on the other by the political negotiation process that unfolded during the partition, which revived tensions in other marginalized regions around the country as well as within the state apparatus. The previous decade (2000–2010) had expanded economic, and to some extent political, horizons, notably with the signature of the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) with the South in 2005,⁷ but the independence of South Sudan confirmed the failure of national state-building and turned out to be a lost opportunity for the Khartoum regime to project itself into the future. The period that followed South Sudan's independence saw a shrinking of political and social spaces at various levels (Deshayes 2016; Bach et al. 2020).

The partition of the country reactivated the Khartoum regime's fantasy of a homogenous Arab and Muslim Sudan (Franck and Vezzadini 2016; Casciari et al. 2020) and illuminated its inability to combine the 'diversity' of Sudan and redress unequal regional development. It has had a direct impact on the populations of South Sudanese origin, the *Janubiyyn*, who live in the North, and in Greater Khartoum in particular, as their residence and citizenship status has remained more than uncertain in the aftermath of South Sudan's independence (Manby 2012; Vezzadini 2013). Certain categorizations were reactivated, such as ethnicity, which forms the basis for identifying Southerners, whose access to urban services and rights to the city (Lefebvre 1974; Morange and Spire 2015) have so far been left unresolved in Greater Khartoum (Abdel Aziz 2018), thus echoing the other forms of uncertainty mentioned above, such as legal and land insecurity. In the meantime, this population has adopted extremely diverse strategies to tackle this uncertainty,⁸ challenging assumptions as to its homogeneity. The outbreak of the civil war in South Sudan in December 2013 heralded even more uncertainty, making it difficult for the populations affected by the conflict (who were once again forcibly displaced) to take decisions about

where to settle, which imposed a period during which they lived in a liminal situation ('in-between' being defined as lying outside the formal normative structures of society for any extended period of time). As we will see, however, such hybrid configurations of these social and spatial 'in-betweens' are not limited to exemplifying post-2011 uncertainty and insecurity and may constitute a resource for coping with it.

The uncertainty and economic difficulties of daily life have affected not only Southerners but all Sudanese citizens, in particular urban dwellers, who are more dependent on the market economy. Rampant inflation, a lack of liquidity, the cut-off of the development programmes that had been launched in the previous decade and the persistence – and reinforcement – of the regime's practices of authoritarianism and patronage – in a context in which a decade of oil revenues had raised citizens' expectations – gradually and silently increased hostility and resistance towards the regime. Throughout this book, we have deliberately made no assumptions about the break the separation of South Sudan provoked for the different actors in Greater Khartoum; we have preferred to pose questions about the break itself. Was 2011 a watershed, and for whom? Did 2011 herald a new era or a transitional period, or was it a period when time remained suspended? From this perspective, we wanted to explore whether temporal issues have played a role in defining the trajectories of urban populations, in particular those of Southern origin, and how this period makes sense in the context of Sudan's broader history. Ultimately, the goal of our concluding analysis was to evaluate whether it has created new categorizations of populations (both self-categorization and categorization by others), reinforced old dichotomies, underscored a common Sudanese identity or generated new in-between belongings. However, an unanticipated revolutionary movement emerged in the country's cities in December 2018 and unfolded and evolved over several months before manifesting itself in concrete terms in front of the Army HQ in Khartoum, leading to the fall of Omar al-Bashir on 11 April 2019 after thirty years in power. It is therefore now legitimate to see the years between 2011 and 2019, 'from secession to revolution', as an in-between period in which, with hindsight, uncertainty can be seen as openness.

The Contributions to the Volume

Our excursion through certain intellectual social science debates has confirmed to us that in-betweenness can be a fruitful and pertinent lens through which situated realities of Sudan's recent context may be

observed; however, we should still clarify that this paradigm or notion is in itself charged with diverse ranks of significance. At an initial level, in-betweenness operates mainly as an analytical category to which scholars increasingly turned after theoretical approaches based on binary opposites lost their credibility: in-betweenness would thus refer to more of a conceptual domain, as the production and testing of a tool that best suits targeted social dynamics. At a second level, in-betweenness concerns spaces and people that are exploited, marginalized or denied because of their liminal situation: in this case, dominant actors (primarily the state but potentially other economic or political agents as well) take advantage of this condition and even promote the creation of such spaces because it corresponds to their logic for holding on to power, all the while perpetuating socio-spatial injustices. At a third level, however, the notion is neither a merely academic device nor a tool for domination: here, in-betweenness takes the form of an opportunity for liminal groups in hybrid situations to access greater freedom in order to break free of the constraints of clear-cut binarism and exploit the openness granted by margins and interstices in a creative and emancipatory manner. In the case of binaries, too, whose dichotomic framework persists while contents and borders move, not one of these three meanings of in-betweenness is exclusive or more accurate than the other: the three levels interact, overlap and in some way co-produce themselves in a dialectic relationship. In the approach we followed in our research, we wanted to allow our insights to open up to this multilevel significance of in-betweenness. This overlap is visible throughout this book. The eleven chapters share a unique feature: they are all based on ethnographic surveys that were carried out for the most part after 2011, and they all invite us to think about the relationship between data and how they are interpreted through the general notion of 'in-betweenness'. Some stress one of the three levels we have mentioned above, while others develop an analytical argument more than an empirical one, and others yet seek to stress how all the levels overlap. We have sought to permit this variety within a generalized unity: that is, a cross-cutting perspective that combines empirical data and theoretical reflection, and which stems from the in-betweenness approach in social sciences.

The contributions are structured around three axes and grouped into three sections, each of which develops one specific aspect of in-betweenness: the first focuses on in-between spaces in Greater Khartoum that are the site of disputed claims to the city; the second examines how the in-between mediates a disrupted sociopolitical landscape over time; and the third explores how in-betweenness supports the negotiation of diverse manifestations of alterity. The prologue is a biographically-inspired piece

by the author Stella Gaitano and is emblematically entitled 'Identity'. The author explores her individual and familial experience as a South Sudanese who grew up in Khartoum; she writes in Arabic and is married to a man from North Sudan. Her literary piece is a reminder of the challenges of constantly living with or between these two cultures, in a society that has been divided by history and whose identities are constantly being reactivated, and sometimes instrumentalized. Her prologue embodies most of the dimensions of in-betweenness we have mentioned above, in particular by anchoring the independence of South Sudan to a personal experience. As well as heralding the chapters that follow, it gives them a new perspective.

The first part of the book ('In-Betweenness as a Spatial Dimension') focuses on urbanization dynamics and how actors engage in agropastoral activities and modes of interaction with the different spaces of the city as a consequence of these dynamics. The first chapter by Alice Franck and Barbara Casciarri analyses the transformation of urban/rural relations from a cross-disciplinary (geography and anthropology) and comparative perspective. The authors compare two case studies that examine agricultural spaces in the centre of the city and pastoral land in the far reaches of the Sudanese capital. Because of the farming and pastoral activities that are carried out there, both these productive spaces can be seen as the ultimate in-between spaces. They are changing fast under the effects of urbanization and the land and real estate dynamics of the oil-rich years (2000–11), with the country's economic expansion and neoliberal turn. These case studies provide an insight into the increase in land disputes and the markings of status and identity that unfold in these areas. In Salma Abdalla's chapter, she further explores the theme of urban sprawl and rural fringes in Greater Khartoum by studying the villages that have gradually been absorbed into the Sudanese capital. Abdalla's analysis focuses not so much on a spatial in-between as on an administrative and institutional in-between and the multiplicity of regulatory models in terms of planning and access to services. Through a case study of the village of Siraw, in Omdurman, her chapter describes the process of administrative incorporation the city has undergone and shows how these in-between situations can create both opportunities and constraints for the inhabitants: today, service providers are present in limited numbers in the new neighbourhoods because of the persistence of old village institutions, which can lead to contradictory operations. Hind Mahmoud's chapter investigates another periphery of the city of Khartoum and confirms the great diversity of in-between spaces. El Fath is a residential neighbourhood in the remote western periphery of Greater Khartoum that was planned in the 2000s as a relocation site

to host displaced populations who had been evicted from more central areas and informal neighbourhoods or areas that were being ‘rationalized’: it is an archetypal space of relegation, not only because of its distance from the city centre but also because urbanization of the area is under way. The author analyses access to schools and education in a neighbourhood where the residents’ extreme economic and social vulnerability can hinder access to such services. Hind Mahmoud highlights the differences between girls’ and boys’ educational trajectories from the standpoint of a scholar of gender studies, analysing the ambiguities of an educational system in which it has become increasingly common to pay for education services. In the fourth chapter, Clément Deshayes reviews the period during the run-up to the separation of the South, which was marked by the emergence of protest movements. These movements, which stem from civil society and are not new political parties, form a sort of hybrid social space that disrupts traditional Sudanese order and political space. The chapter elaborates on the in-between paradigm by analysing both the activists’ multiple affiliations and their social mobility trajectories, as well as the way their actions unfold throughout the city to target different population groups. The chapter sheds new light on the revolutionary movement that emerged in late December 2018 and brings a new perspective to it, as it questions the future of these reconfigurations of Sudan’s political space

The second part (‘In-Betweenness as a Temporal Dimension’) opens with a contribution by the anthropologist Idris Salim El-Hassan, who examines a momentous, unprecedented demonstration of violence in the city based around a divide between Northerners and Southerners as distinct blocks. This episode, which was accompanied by riots, took place prior to South Sudan’s separation, but it is very closely linked to it, as the events occurred in Khartoum after the death of John Garang (SPLM/A leader) on 30 July 2005, three weeks after he was sworn in as Vice President of a still-united Sudan. Garang was the charismatic leader of the Southern rebels and freedom fighters and was supposed to be Vice President of Sudan during the interim period between 2005 and 2011. John Garang represented the pro-unity camp within the SPLM movement, although his leanings were a topic of controversy. His death severely compromised the possibility of national unity. The chapter looks back at this irruption of violence into the capital, which remains one of the rare violent manifestations of the North–South conflict ‘imported’ into Khartoum and reinforced identity-based divisions. The weighty reverberations of this event are brought to light by the fact that it is often alluded to by the South Sudanese interviewed in Khartoum for other chapters in this publication (see the articles by Alice

Franck, Azza Ahmed Abdel Aziz, Katarzyna Grabska and Mohamed Bakhit) and might perhaps be seen as yet another breaking point, on a par with the separation of South Sudan. Following in El-Hassan's footsteps and the focus on temporalities, the second chapter by Alice Franck reviews the housing strategies of South Sudanese populations after 2011, based on a study of land transactions in a peri-central working-class neighbourhood of Greater Khartoum. This case study investigates how the populations directly affected by the separation have negotiated their place in Khartoum since the 1980s, and how they are attempting to retain it in a context of legal uncertainty and in a situation in which the capital's disadvantaged neighbourhoods are no longer immune to land speculation. The temporal dimension plays a key role in the analysis of the families' diverse strategies. The third and final contribution to this second part, by Azza Ahmed Abdel Aziz, exposes the liminality of Sudan's national construction by examining the presence in Khartoum of Southern/South Sudanese people who were forcefully displaced by the North–South conflict. The chapter elaborates on the place occupied and negotiated by this population within the city in the long-term and how – despite their own diversity – they frame themselves in the midst of multiple Sudanese others. The temporal dimension is essential to her argument, in the sense that the lengthy period over which she considers these displaced populations' experience of Khartoum is perceived by them as a series of continuous present moments, indicating that their experience of time is non-linear and is informed by specific events. While their presence in the city remains fragile and uncertain, the ways in which they inhabit the capital over time constitute the means by which they state claims to alternative forms of citizenship. The author uses the notion of the 'in-between' as an important analytical tool for connecting experiences of spatial relegation in the city with the failure of national construction and inclusive citizenship. She provides an insight into identity formations and the complexities of being Sudanese that transcend legalistic notions of citizenship and that have not been resolved by the secession/independence of the South.

The last part of the book ('In-Betweenness as a Belonging Dimension') focuses on how belongings, affiliations or, in broader terms, identities are enacted by the diverse social actors presented in each of these chapters by either avoiding to face differences or striving to overcome the challenges of alterity. The section begins with a chapter by Katarzyna Grabska that addresses a category that has been particularly affected by the events of 2011: in a detailed ethnography, she analyses the attitudes of Southern people (in particular Nuer) towards 'trans-local citizenship', which are the product of years of war, displacements and returns. She

shows that the iconic significance of the Southern groups' 'in-between' experience gives them scope for an active and differentiated negotiation of identity and place – in spite of their imposed marginalization – in both the city and the national community. In the second chapter in this section, Mohamed Bakhit pursues his reflections on the experiences of Southern people in post-2011 Greater Khartoum by presenting a case study of Al-Baraka, a shantytown on the capital's eastern fringes. This population's loss of their IDP status following the secession of South Sudan shows how social actors can implement and elaborate on a form of 'community citizenship' in a socio-spatial and statutory in-between that can make up for the failings of 'legal citizenship'. In Barbara Casciarri's chapter, she revisits a traditional anthropological subject area – kinship structures and marriage strategies – based around the conceptual paradigm of in-betweenness. The author compares three distinct case studies: two pastoral groups from the north and west and a working-class neighbourhood in the capital. She highlights how the plasticity of the boundary between 'us' and 'them' revealed by matrimonial practices provides an arena for negotiation that reaches beyond the familial space, becoming part of a 'political economy of identity' that runs throughout the history of the Sudanese State and its relations with local populations. The theme of marriage strategies is also addressed in the next chapter, in which Peter Miller presents data from a study of the upper-class neighbourhood of Amarat. The author provides original data on an area of the capital that to date has been almost totally ignored by social science literature. Miller also shows that in spite of a common understanding of marriage strategies as an in-between space, Amarat has for historical and social reasons remained locked in a form of class homogamy that manifests itself as endogamy within a patrilineal tribal group – as is the case in rural Sudan. Following these three sections, each of which targets one of the three chosen dimensions of in-betweenness, the final piece is an interview with Stella Gaitano by two of the researchers working on the project who are equally intimately acquainted with the question of cultural and identity-related in-betweenness. The interview opens a fruitful dialogue that illustrates the creativity and relevance of an approach based on in-betweenness and acts as a mirror of the prologue. We decided that it would be the most fitting epilogue, marking an 'open-ended' conclusion to the broader reflections in the book.

At the time of writing this introduction, there are still many remaining questions regarding the changes within the Sudanese political apparatus and the mark the revolutionary movement will leave on the practices and representations of Khartoum's spaces and its inhabitants.

This uncertainty makes it all the more important to study the post-2011 period for the clues it provides for understanding the events of 2018 and 2019. While the revolutionary momentum has highlighted a deep and shared demand for justice and peace and has given rise to inclusive slogans such as ‘Hey (you) arrogant racist, we are all Darfur’ that transcend old ethno-tribal divides and marginalizations (Casciarri and Manfredi 2020), an in-depth understanding of this movement means going beyond an event-driven view, supported by extensive qualitative fieldwork. Rather than reframing our chapters towards teleological explanations, or guiding contributors to update their arguments retrospectively, therefore, we have taken the view that this book, which was written before the revolutionary movement at a time of great difficulty and uncertainty about the future of the country, also reveals the radical changes that were about to take place. The uncertainty that began after the separation of South Sudan eventually led to a new period of instability and unpredictability, and although it is still unclear whether this new phase has brought the previous one to a close, it is possible to look at it in terms of ‘openness’, as another case of a fluid, hybrid and interstitial situation that our reflections on the plurality of in-between spaces may help our readers to understand.

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Barbara Casciarri holds a Ph.D. in Ethnology and Social Anthropology from the EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) in Paris (France). Her fieldwork has focused on economic and political anthropology issues among pastoral Arab-speaking groups of Sudan (1989–2016) and among Berber-speaking pastoralists and Arab-speaking farmers in South-Eastern Morocco (2000–6). She was the coordinator of the CEDEJ (Centre d’Etudes et Documentation Economique et Juridique) in Khartoum between 2006 and 2009. Since 2004, she has been Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University Paris 8 (France). She co-edited two special issues of *Nomadic Peoples* (‘Pastoralists under Pressure in Present-Day Sudan’, 2009, and ‘Water and Pastoralists’, 2013), a special issue of *Journal des anthropologues*, ‘Anthropologie et eau(x)’ (2013) and two collective volumes on Sudan, *Multidimensional Change in Sudan 1989–2011: Reshaping Livelihoods, Conflicts and Identities* (Berghahn Books, 2015, with M.A. Assal and F. Ireton) and *Anthropology of Law in Muslim Sudan* (Brill, 2018, with M.A. Babiker).

Notes

1. The plurality of the notion, which lies at the heart of our project, will be elucidated throughout this book. It will appear from here on without quotation marks.
2. In the Sudanese case that we are dealing with, the expressions North and South, as Northerners (*Shimaliyyin* in Arabic) and Southerners (*Janubiyyin* in Arabic) do not refer only to geographical localizations but fully embody the conflicting history and the political identities within the country, and later (after 2011 and the separation) between two distinct states. Furthermore, the Arabic expressions that designate the two entities (North and South) and their populations did not change after the separation. This is why these terms will be capitalized in this book.
3. This cross-disciplinary research project (2015–2017) was entitled ‘Métropolisation et espaces “d’entre deux”: jeux d’acteurs, dynamiques de pouvoir et reconfigurations identitaires dans l’agglomération du Grand Khartoum’ (‘Metropolization and In-between Spaces: Interactions, Power Dynamics and Identity Reconfigurations in the Greater Khartoum Conurbation), and was funded by CEDEJ-Khartoum and the AUF.
4. This expression ‘Daring to explore the in-Between’ (‘Oser les entre-deux’) is borrowed from Julie Le Gall and Lionel Rouge’s introduction to a special issue dedicated to ‘in-between spaces’ (Le Gall and Rouge 2014).
5. Some older exceptions include Pons (1980), Kameir (1988) and Lobban (1982).

6. We note that first, for the sake of economy in this introduction, the following authors and their works are only presented as general overview without offering more complex reflections, and second, far from being 'schools of thought' in the strict sense, they are viewed as four key approaches that implicitly opened the way to the later formulation of approaches based on the notion of in-betweenness.
7. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005 ended the conflict between the Southern rebels (under the leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its armed branch, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and the Khartoum regime that had been ongoing since 1983. It created a transition period after which the Southerners would decide either in favour of separation or unity. According to the CPA, both parties needed to work to make unity more attractive. Both parties failed, however, and in January 2011, the referendum led to the partition of Sudan, which was officially completed on 9 July 2011.
8. Just in terms of mobility, Southerners followed multiple strategies: some individuals would have returned to the South before or after independence of South Sudan, making use (or not) of the return plan that has been in place since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005, while some others might have remained in Khartoum, or moved between different locations. Some families with multiple places to stay and spatial belongings might have sent some members to the South in order to gauge the situation before relocating the whole family in the South (Grabska 2014; Franck 2016b; De Geoffroy 2009).

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