

## **Negotiating Change: State-Society interpenetration in Peri-urban Khartoum**

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In the context of urban expansion and population growth in greater Khartoum the capital region of Sudan, transitional and contemporary urban communities have emerged. Often, these emerging communities are comprised of communications and interactions between: 1) indigenous inhabitants with long history, ownership and belonging and 2) newcomers with ambitions for change and seeking modern/urban way of life. Many factors contributed to this social change ranging from rural – urban, urban – urban migration, economic and social factors as well as ‘responsive’ institutional changes in the urban planning system. In this process, social groups with different capacities, diverse backgrounds, distinct priorities and agendas found themselves all together struggling for access to power and everyday life. This paper is presenting a case of Serau village in South Omdurman, where local initiatives and community actors developed strategies to negotiate their needs and interests through state institutions and governmental circles. Like any other social contexts, in the processes of negotiating change, there are victims’ losers as well as winners depending on the distance and remoteness to the state circles. The processes of decentralization and ‘bringing the power closer to people’ through local committees -which started in Sudan in 1990s -new concepts of state-society relationships emerged. Although informal practices and social networks still proved to be more efficient in accessing institutions and bottom up initiatives. For a local actor to be engaged in change and development, a political connection and a series of networks are needed and facilitated by ethnic affiliations and/or ideological loyalties.

In this paper, the local’s struggle and strategies to access services provisioning and state institutions is presented as an entry point to understand social organization, change and state-society relations in contemporary urban societies in Sudan. The paper demonstrates that state in Sudan was able to reach the very last man in the neighborhoods and villages through its flexibility and ability to mobilized change drivers.