THE SEDENTARIZATION OF DWELLING

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE HABITAT OF FULƁE WOƊAAƁE PASTORALISTS AND URBAN MIGRANTS IN NIGER

[Florian Köhler]

TEXT AND PHOTO ESSAYS

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FIELD NOTES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS XV

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(Günther Schlee)

ABOUT THE SERIES

This series of *Field Notes and Research Projects* does not aim to compete with high-impact, peer reviewed books and journal articles, which are the main ambition of scholars seeking to publish their research. Rather, contributions to this series complement such publications. They serve a number of different purposes.

In recent decades, anthropological publications have often been purely discursive – that is, they have consisted only of words. Often, pictures, tables, and maps have not found their way into them. In this series, we want to devote more space to visual aspects of our data.

Data are often referred to in publications without being presented systematically. Here, we want to make the paths we take in proceeding from data to conclusions more transparent by devoting sufficient space to the documentation of data.

In addition to facilitating critical evaluation of our work by members of the scholarly community, stimulating comparative research within the institute and beyond, and providing citable references for books and articles in which only a limited amount of data can be presented, these volumes serve an important function in retaining connections to field sites and in maintaining the involvement of the people living there in the research process. Those who have helped us to collect data and provided us with information can be given these books and booklets as small tokens of our gratitude and as tangible evidence of their cooperation with us. When the results of our research are sown in the field, new discussions and fresh perspectives might sprout.

Especially in their electronic form, these volumes can also be used in the production of power points for teaching; and, as they are open-access and free of charge, they can serve an important public outreach function by arousing interest in our research among members of a wider audience.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

(Florian Köhler)

Although I am an anthropologist by training, when I came to Niger for the first time in 2004, it was not strictly speaking for an anthropological endeavour. However, my work comprised many aspects of anthropological interest. I came to work for the German development organization DED (*Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst*) in a program entitled 'Civil Peace Service' (*Ziviler Friedensdienst*). This was less of a classic development project, but rather a project to support a sustained development with an approach of conflict prevention. The domain of intervention were conflict potentials between different socio-economic groups in relation with the use of communal resources. The land use system in Niger is characterized not by spatially fixed borders, but by a seasonally shifting use of spatial resources for different economic activities – notably agriculture and mobile pastoralism, which dominate the Nigerien economy to our days. This traditional system of sharing land has only recently been reconfirmed by a new pastoral law (*Code Pastoral*) which explicitly states that after the clearing of the fields, for which a date is annually fixed by the regional authorities (*date de libération des champs*), all cultivated areas become *de jure* also pastoral land (République du Niger 2010: art. 30, 34-35).

Today, however, due to an increasing demographic pressure, the competition about the common resources is growing steadily and conflicts are the order of the day. This is further increased by the fact that the once pronounced complementarity in the livelihood patterns of the different socio-economic groups tends to diminish for reason of diversification strategies that lead to an increasing approximation of economic profiles. Farmers increasingly also invest in livestock; many pastoralists, like the Woɗaaɓe, become partly settled in semi-permanent proto-villages (locally called *centres*), and they start farming.

It was against the background of this work experience in the region that I developed a dissertation project[1] at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany, and in October 2010 I embarked for a fifteen month period of fieldwork. My project mainly focussed on a group of Woɗaaɓe pastoralists in the Zinder province (see map 1) and the transformation processes in which they have been involved in recent years. These transformations comprise in particular livelihood diversification and changing mobility patterns: Formerly predominantly nomadic pastoralists, today

[1] This research project resulted in the dissertation thesis *Transhumant pastoralists, translocal migrants: Space, place and identity in a group of Fulɓe Woɗaaɓe in Niger* (Köhler 2016). I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the supporting members of the Max Planck Society, who additionally supported my research with a supplementary grant.

many Woɗaaɓe in the research area engage in work migration to regional urban centres. Others combine pastoralism with agriculture and follow new territorializing strategies in order to secure claims over spatial resources. All this implies considerable transformations in the relations to space and place, and a particular emphasis of my work was put on the question, in how far and in which way these new spatial orientations affect inter-group relations and, closely related, processes of identification and the construction and redefinition of social boundaries. In short, my focus was on questions of space, place and identity.

The choice of a group of Woɗaaɓe as the main focus of my research was the result of circumstance. When I arrived in Niger, I quickly became involved in an intense relationship with an urban-based Woɗaaɓe family. The head of this family had worked as a watchman for the previous tenant of my house. Together with his family he was living on the compound and was now hoping for new employment upon my arrival. In Niger, as in other African countries, it is customary for Western expatriates to employ watchmen at private domiciles. At the time, there was no obvious need to have them, since the security situation even in larger Nigerien cities was relatively relaxed then, but the employment of watchmen was established custom and had become an important sector of local employment. It was also customary for watchmen to be lodged, often with their families, in small houses or shelters provided on the compounds of their employers.

I continued to live together with this Woɗaaɓe family for three years and I was thus already familiar with the situation of urban-based Woɗaaɓe when I set out for my fieldwork. Forms of dwelling were one good entry point for studying questions of continuity and change with regard to spatiality. As nomadic pastoralists, the Woɗaaɓe have developed a materially minimalistic and highly mobile form of habitat that even challenges the very definition of the term ‘house’. Depending on the season and on regional variation, the latter can consist either of a simple tent-like shelter or it can be – as a physical construction – altogether absent. As migrant workers, on the other hand, many Woɗaaɓe in Niger today move to cities and often stay there on a permanent or long-term basis. Given that the pastoral camps are, despite the widely reduced materiality of the ‘houses’, characterized by a very elaborate mental structure and explicit spatial rules with regard to gender and seniority rank, I was interested in how these rules were adapted to new environments, to urbanity with its higher population density and pre-structured spaces, and to a higher spatial stability.

The present volume features a reworking of a chapter of my dissertation thesis that deals with these issues of urban versus pastoral processes of place-making and forms of habitat. It compares principles of social space organization in the urban and pastoral context and proposes a typology of Woɗaaɓe urban migrants’ habitat. Since I disposed of ample photographic material

to document Woɗaaɓe habitat both in the mobile pastoral and in the urban migrant setting, I have chosen to combine these two elements – the text and the photos – in a single volume, thus complementing the analysis with visual material that illustrates many of the aspects dealt with in the text. Although originally a chapter of my dissertation thesis, the text in its present form can nevertheless stand for itself and pursues its own argument independently of the more encompassing scope and research frame of the larger work that it was originally a part of. In my text, I argue that contemporary forms of dwelling in the urban context are characterized by both, the reproduction of traditional spatial patterns and prescriptions, and an adaptation to the given structures in the urban space. While the cultural forms and patterns continue to provide a source of orientation and a feeling of home in the strange environment, the new influences of the urban sphere have their transformative impact.

In a complementary way, the photos show the continuity of traditional ways of life as well as the integration of new elements. The photos visualize first of all the fundamental difference in the interaction with space: In the vast pastoral zones of the Sahel the 'neighbours' are hardly in view. Intimacy and domestic privacy is possible on the basis of an abundance of space. In town, this privacy must be achieved by other means. Walls may enclose the lived space; female and male domains can be separated by straw wind screens instead of simply by distance.

The photos also document the often harshly different conditions under which migrants can live, changing from relatively comfortable housing to squatter camps of precarious status in temporarily unclaimed urban spaces, like construction sites. The discourse that prevails in the literature depicts Woɗaaɓe urban migration as destitution-driven and as a coping strategy in the face of animal loss (Maliki et al. 1984; White 1987; Loftsdóttir 2002). My own data, on the one hand, confirm that the origin of urban migration among the Woɗaaɓe was indeed a reaction to the major Sahel droughts of the 1970s and particularly the 1980s, which had dramatically reduced the stock of many pastoralists. On the other hand, however, it should be pointed out that the urban endeavour, although it might have started out of hardship and neediness for most, also opened up new and attractive resources. The city became, for some migrants, also a space of economic opportunities beyond pastoralism. The example of the group of Woɗaaɓe that I have studied intensively constitutes an excellent example for such a case of urban migration as an economic asset. Over the years, the work as watchmen, particularly at expatriates' homes, has helped them develop relational networks providing them privileged access to this relatively attractive segment of the job-market. The jobs as watchmen also gave these Woɗaaɓe migrants access to more than decent housing. However, these privileged conditions are not characteristic of Woɗaaɓe urban migrants in general. Many others do not have access to

such attractive jobs because they cannot rely on the same networks. They do not have options other than occupying the temporarily unused or interstitial spaces, which gives them a marginal status as merely tolerated dwellers in precarious conditions. The photographic material illustrates these differences that find their expression in the variety of different forms of urban dwellings.

I have chosen to arrange the photos in thematic sets, or photo essays, that are inserted between the chapters of the main text to which they relate. They cover different aspects of dwelling in the pastoral and in the urban context, ranging from household mobility, the making and unmaking of the 'house', urban forms of habitat, and finally one aspect that is not addressed in the main text: that of transformations in the rural sphere in connection with the increasing construction of permanent buildings. This phenomenon is closely related to the current trend towards spatial fixation and sedentarization. Strictly speaking, the transformations in question do not so much concern the aspect of dwelling, since most even of the permanently fixed Woɗaaɓe agro-pastoralists in the study region still live in mobile shelters rather than in permanent houses. The buildings which emerge in the rural areas around pastoral wells, and which constitute the nucleus of proto-villages, or *centres*, are mainly schools or store rooms. However, they add to the creation of more permanent places, thus at the same time making the notion of 'home' less mobile. I deal with these aspects elsewhere in my thesis, but I have chosen to include a final photo essay on this aspect into this publication, in order to round out the presentation of different forms of houses and house construction among the Woɗaaɓe in the research area.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to a number of colleagues who gave me a constructive feedback on earlier versions of the main text of this volume. These are Lucie Buffavand, Solange Guo Chatelard, John Eidson, Martine Guichard, Varsha Patel, Nikolaus Schareika and Günther Schlee. I also wish to thank Thorsten Bär and Patrick Sauter for their kind permission to include a few of their photos (photos 126–128 and photo 167, respectively). And last but not least, I am of course most grateful to all my Woɗaaɓe hosts who received and lodged me in their homes, which figure so prominently in this volume.

Map 1: The research area

Photo 1: Pastoral Woɗaaɓe Camps in the Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 2: Pastoral Woɗaaɓe Camps in the Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 3: The significance of a shelter – The rains fall unsteadily in the northern Sahel but when they do come, it is with force. Often, major rain showers are preceded by huge sandstorms … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 4: … The small, tent-like shelters of the Woɗaaɓe seem vulnerable in the face of a sand storm, but they are well adapted to the mobile lifestyle of pastoralists. Today, covers of plastic tarp protect the shelters fairly well against the rain water. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 5: … Generally, the rain showers pass quickly and the sun dries the things again. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

INTRODUCTION

The Woɗaaɓe, a small group of pastoral Fulɓe, have generally been presented in the literature as a paradigmatic case of highly mobile cattle breeding nomads. Since the 1970s and especially the 1980s, however, as a result of animal loss after recurring droughts in the Sahel region, many Woɗaaɓe have increasingly turned to migrant labour in regional urban centres (Boesen 2004, 2007a; Loftsdóttir 2000, 2002, 2004; Köhler 2016).

In contrast to the relatively abundant descriptions and analyses of pastoral Woɗaaɓe camps in the existing literature (e. g. Stenning 1959: 104ff; Dupire 1962: 156ff,1963: 50ff; Bovin 2001: 63ff; Loftsdóttir 2001a: 286f, 2001b: 6f; Boesen 2007b: 216ff), the habitat of Woɗaaɓe urban migrants has only marginally been the object of examination. The only publications going into some detail on this aspect are by Elisabeth Boesen (2007b, 2010). She has dedicated some attention to urban Woɗaaɓe camps, yet only in a very particular context, i. e. that of – predominantly female – ambulant medicine sellers from central Niger who undertake seasonal trading journeys to cities like Bamako, Dakar or Abidjan, where they collectively make camp in the streets or in open spaces.

Boesen contends that the Woɗaaɓe, both in the pastoral and in the urban context, are characterized by a renunciation of any form of proper dwelling (2007b: 215, 220f). She asks whether the migrants' camps are not representative of a 'specifically nomadic form of locality' (2007b: 215)[2], and she concludes her discussion with the claim that the Woɗaaɓe's specific form of urban interaction, including their street camps, is an expression of their nomadic identity. In their 'resistance to the order of sedentary society and ultimately to the state', Boesen recognizes an 'essential quality of the nomad' (Boesen 2010: 51; see also Boesen 2007b: 223f).

However, since her case example is focussed specifically on migrants engaging in seasonal trade, without any intention of settling down for a longer period, a certain lack of effort to integrate cannot be surprising. Boesen herself refers to the street camps as 'places of transit' (ibid.). On the other hand, 'transient, non-permanent and unordered spaces' have been pointed out to be more generally characteristic of situations of transnational migration and translocality (e. g. Freitag and von Oppen 2010: 7).

Against this background, it seems pertinent to analyse more closely the habitat of Woɗaaɓe migrant workers in urban contexts where they are not travellers in transit but contractual workers staying on a longer term basis,

[2] See also Klute and Hahn, who similarly ask whether there are 'specific spatial representations of migrants from nomadic origin as opposed to those of migrants from sedentary societies' (2007: 17).

as is the case today among many Woɗaaɓe in eastern and east-central Niger, on whom my research has focussed. If any 'essential quality of the nomad' is really at the basis of the specific form of liminal and transitory dwellings described by Boesen, one should expect to find similar patterns among Woɗaaɓe migrants in other urban contexts as well. Based on an analysis of urban placemaking strategies and a typology of Woɗaaɓe migrants' habitat as encountered in two regional urban centres in eastern Niger, Zinder and Diffa, I argue that the form of habitat is rather determined by (1) occupational strategies and (2) questions of marginality and exclusion.

FROM SEASONAL TO LONG-TERM MIGRATION

Most of the literature on migrant work among Woɗaaɓe (e. g. Maliki et al. 1984; White 1987) refers to seasonal migration as the predominant pattern. Although this seems to have been current practice for the first generation of migrant workers – and might still be the case for the context presented by Boesen's example – it is not generally representative of the current situation.

In my research, I principally focussed on Woɗaaɓe from the Gojanko'en clan in the Damergou region in east-central Niger. Here, ambulant medicine trade and other seasonal or short term forms of work migration do play a certain role, but they are of relatively minor importance in comparison with urban employment on a more permanent contractual basis. Short range migration, in particular to the regional capital Zinder and to Kano in northern Nigeria, is a predominant pattern. Social networks being of major importance for finding employment, different professional specializations among migrant workers can be more or less associated with clan groups (Loftsdóttir 2000: 249f; Boesen 2004: 215). Woɗaaɓe Gojanko'en have for several decades been especially well positioned in the job market for watchmen in Zinder. Apart from this specific niche, however, they remain rather marginally integrated into the job market in this Hausa-dominated city due to their specialization in pastoralism and lack of formal education, skills or social capital that would give them access to other jobs.

The urban sojourns of these migrants are thus generally not as ephemeral as those of Boesen's ambulant medicine traders. Some of them have been staying in town for more than twenty years. They might return seasonally to their pastoral home camps, though usually only for short visits. Today, not only young men seek employment in town, as was the case in the 1970s and 1980s. Although individual migrants are still almost exclusively male, many today move to urban centres with their entire nuclear families. Women generally do not migrate on their own, but once they arrive in the city with their husbands, they often pursue their own activities to gain additional income.

Moving to town with entire nuclear families has been interpreted as a strategy to relieve the pastoral economy at home (Boesen 2004: 214). I argue with regard to the situation in Zinder that a further reason that makes mi-

grants inclined to migrate with their families is the perspective of a longer sojourn in town. In fact virtually all Gojanko'en migrants who have stayed in Zinder for an extended period live there with their spouses and children, if they have any. In these cases, migration has led to a relatively permanent relocation of their centre of everyday life. An urban sub-community has emerged; children are born and grow up in the city. The changing status of migrants has had an effect on their urban habitat: Many migrants who have stayed in town for longer periods and who are in stable positions of employment begin to furnish their homes in a more elaborate manner and adopt urban tastes and fashions.

Such modes of transformation and appropriation of the domestic space by migrants can become an indicator of their degree of integration and their interaction with the wider urban society. But despite long periods of staying in town, many habitations nevertheless maintain a recognizable, culture-specific character, despite all differences from the pastoral camps. This character is defined by elements that range from formal and structural aspects of the dwelling itself to aspects of material culture (e. g. furniture) and of social and spatial practices in direct association with the form of the dwelling. A closer comparison between pastoral Woɗaaɓe camps and the habitat of contemporary urban migrants shows both continuity and discontinuities of essential organizational features. Such a comparison is the aim of the main part of this paper.

HOUSE AND HOME

In an analysis of habitat, the concepts of 'house' and 'home' are as central as they are difficult to separate. While the first term is commonly used to refer more precisely to a physically built unit, a shelter, the latter is often reserved for a more complex phenomenon, being 'defined by cultural, socio-demographic, psychological, political, and economic factors' (Lawrence 1987: 155), i. e. 'the setting within which people dwell' (Ingold 1995: 75).[3] One of the psychological factors is often given a special emphasis: 'Home' can imply a feeling or an idea of belonging and identity (Brickell and Datta 2011: 13; Briganti and Mezei 2012: 5). Many authors regard 'house' and 'home' as intrinsically linked: the house is an 'arena for […] complex human practices' (Smyth and Croft 2006: 13, cited in Briganti and Mezei 2012: 5) – practices which constitute the meaning of 'home'.[4]

Although the perspective on habitat followed here is more concerned with its social and relational dimensions, i. e. with the 'home', formal and struc-

[3] See, in this context, also the distinction between 'buildings' and 'dwellings' by Rapoport (1994), and Heideggers distinction between 'Bauten' and 'Wohnungen' (Heidegger 2000 [1951]).

[4] Such an understanding of the relation between 'house' and 'home' is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's (1984: 117) concept of 'space' as 'practiced place'.

Photo 6: Minimal and mobile 'house' of Woɗaaɓe nomads in eastern Niger, characterized by the absence even of the most humble shelter. During the rainy season, mosquito nets are fixed to the wooden poles at night; during rain showers, the people cower on the bed, covering themselves with plastic tarp. Diffa region (F. Köhler, 2006)

tural aspects of the 'house' are often symbolic manifestations of the former and therefore of significance for the analysis as well. If the form of the dwelling is adapted to the demands of social practice, if its organization is defined by and reflects social rules, then this form and this organisational structure themselves have important repercussions on social practice, e. g. by structuring social relations, prescribing a specific behaviour, fostering or preventing communication and interaction, etc. (see Rapoport 1994; Lawrence and Low 1990: 454). The aspects of form ('house') and relations ('home') are thus interdependent and complementary.

TEMPORALITY AND CONTINUITY IN NOMADIC ARCHITECTURE

Although the debates on transnationalism and translocality have led to a wider recognition of mobility as a common reality in most societies, even in more recent writing, the concept of the house is still often assumed to be a physical structure in a fixed location (e. g. Briganti and Mezei 2012: 5). With regard to highly mobile groups as the Woɗaaɓe, such a definition is problematic. It raises an important question: What effects does the absence of a locally defined house have on the aspect of 'home', or on the relation between 'house' and 'home'?

Mary Douglas (1991: 289) has argued that although '[h]ome is located in space […] it is not necessarily a fixed space': 'For a home neither the space nor its appurtenances have to be fixed, but there has to be something regular about the appearance and reappearance of its furnishings'. John C. Wood, writing more specifically on nomadic understandings of space, treats the problem of temporality and continuity of domestic space in a similar way. He remarks that '[e]ach time […] [nomads] pitch their tents anew, they rec-

Photo 7: Among the Woɗaaɓe in eastern Niger, only colourful mosquito nets provide a minimum of privacy and protection. Diffa region (F. Köhler, 2006)

reate the old place […]. They are always moving and in some sense staying put. Their movements constantly domesticate wild space and return domestic space to wilderness' (Wood 2009: 231). In a similar vein, Labelle Prussin, an architect who has studied African nomadic architecture across the continent, argues that temporality in architecture does not necessarily mean transience, nor does mobility necessarily mean temporality (Prussin 1987: 36, 1996: 74). Despite a high degree of mobility, other inherent principles of nomadic architecture assure that a sense of continuity is maintained:

> "[T]he nomad's home is not temporary. The space it contains is permanent, even though, as a moving volume, it is not fixed permanently in space. Its "permanence" is in the minds and behavior of those who build it, from the repetitive reassemblage and reconstruction of the architectural elements into an almost identical assemblage at each new point in space." (Prussin 1995: 42)

The same holds true for the pastoral Woɗaaɓe: Although they are constantly on the move and thus engaged in an ongoing process of placemaking (Prussin 1989), the mobile 'house', incessantly disassembled, loaded on pack-animals and reassembled in a new place, remains, from site to site, a constant point of reference. Its structure exists as a mental pattern and becomes manifest each time the women reproduce it (Boesen 2007b: 224). A sense of 'home' prevails even where – as in the case of certain Woɗaaɓe groups – a house in the sense of a physical structure is completely non-existent, or exists only to such a limited degree that it challenges the definition. By minimal manipulations, a piece of rangeland can be transformed into a 'home', into domestic or cultural space ('espace culturé', Boesen 1998), apt

Photo 8: An old Wodaaße woman rebuilds her shelter after a camp relocation. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2001)

to convey a sense of identity and, by the imperatives that its formal order imposes, to structure social practice.

This continuous process of making a home is reminiscent of Tim Ingold's (1995) 'dwelling perspective' on the question of the built environment. Ingold builds up on Heidegger (2000 [1951]), who, equally concerned with the question of what makes a house a home, starts with a rather orthodox distinction between *Bauten* (buildings) and *Wohnungen* (dwellings) (Heidegger 2000 [1951]: 140), but comes to the conclusion that ultimately not only does all building serve dwelling, but that the act of building is itself part of the more encompassing state of dwelling, which, in fact, is identical with the state of being, of existence (ibid.: 148). Similarly, Ingold understands building as a 'process that is continually going on, for as long as people dwell in their environment' (Ingold 1995: 78).

PHOTO ESSAY: MOVING CAMP

Photo 9: Wodaaɓe family on the move. Damergou region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 10: Collective camp site on the occasion of a lineage meeting (*worso*) in the process of its unmaking. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 11: Packing up. Nowadays, an occasional motorbike might assume some of the duties of transporting household goods, but the bulk of the work is still assured by donkeys. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 12: The household goods are loaded onto donkeys. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 13: … The work of packing up camp is a female task, although young men will occasionally be seen as they help loading a donkey. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 14: The heavy wooden poles and traverses of the bed constitute a considerable part of the load. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 15: The tent poles are carried along if they are in good shape. Otherwise they can be replaced from local material. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 16: The household goods are loaded onto donkeys. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 17: Symmetry and Balance are both aesthetical principles and a necessity in the process of loading pack animals. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 18: Calabashes and other household items are held together in bundles with the help of custom-made nets of rope. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 19: Bundles of calabashes. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 20: The items of female pride, *kaakol* and *eletel,* are symbols of the social status of married women and mothers. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 21: … They are carefully tied on top of the load and adorn the treck of pack animals while moving (on the significance of these items of female wealth and prestige, see Köhler 2013). Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 22: The joint household group is ready to move to a new camp site. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 23: A young girl rides on top of a load on a donkey. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 24: Small children are carried on donkey back. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 25 – 27: The household group on the move. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 28–30: The household group on the move. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 31: Girl and small child on donkey back. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 32: An occasional modern chair belonging to a family head may be part of the household goods. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 33: Big calabashes are nested in containers woven by the women from leaves of the doum palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*) and tied together with nets of rope. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 34: The household group on the move. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 35: The household group on the move. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 36: The household group on the move. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 37: Small children are carried on donkey back … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 38: … and so are new-born or sick animals. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 39: Twin brothers riding on top of a donkey load. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 40: Child riding on top of a donkey load. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 41: Water supplies are carried in water bags that are nowadays often made from the tubes of lorry tyres. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 43: Arrived at the new camp site, … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 44: … the unpacking of the household goods at the new camp site is again a female task. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 42: The destination has been reached. The household head, who had moved ahead with his motorbike before the women and children set off with the household loads, left a mark in a tree to indicate where the new camp should be pitched. The treck of pack animals with the women and children followed the traces of the motorbike. The herds had also moved ahead early in the morning, led by the young men. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF WOƊAAƁE PASTORAL CAMPS

Mary Douglas (1991) has maintained that 'the minimum home has orientation even if it lacks any inside-outside boundary; usually it has both, so that the cardinal points are not mere coordinates for plotting position but "directions of existence"' (ibid.: 290). Consequently, she calls the home a 'realization of ideas' (ibid.). In his description of the Kabyle house, Pierre Bourdieu (1979 [1970]) has given a remarkable example of how a home – and in fact the physical structure of the house itself – can become such a symbolic expression of mental, even metaphysical, concepts: a microcosm governed by, and reflecting, the principles of order that on a larger scale govern the society, and eventually the universe. Hence, the formal structure of habitat expresses – either more or less explicitly – cultural values and conventions.

Edmund Leach, with reference to Mongolian nomads, suggests that the tendency to a rigid spatial ordering of the home might be especially pronounced in mobile societies: Where 'the natural terrain fails to provide an obvious focus to which the whole can be anchored, culture can readily produce a substitute' (Leach 1997 [1976]: 53, see also Boesen 1998: 224). The rigid spatial structure and social order that characterize the nomadic home give a 'sense of security which comes from knowing where you are. But "knowing where you are" is a matter of social as well as territorial position' (ibid. 54; see also Prussin 1989: 155f; Boesen 2007b: 224).

Similarly, in the pastoral Woɗaaɓe camp, the principles of spatial organization and the symbolic meaning attached to the different components of the house are highly elaborate. They express the organization of the society with

Photo 45: A look over the calf rope into the domestic sphere (*suudu*) of the camp. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

its hierarchies and its gender roles. This rigid order and orientational structure of the home contributes in an important way to a feeling of continuity despite mobility. On the other hand, the formal aspects, though expressions of social rules and values, have themselves important repercussions on behaviour and social relations: the structure imposes and perpetuates rules.

In both, classic studies on the Woɗaaɓe (Dupire 1962: 156ff; Stenning 1959: 104ff) and some recent writing (e. g. Boesen 2007b), the principles of organization of pastoral camps have been the object of detailed descriptions and interpretations. However, in order to have a basis for the comparison with the urban dwellings, I will here take up the central points of these analyses by relating them to my own data from the Woɗaaɓe Gojanko'en.

DOMESTICATING AND GENDERING SPACE

The first and essential act in the process of camp-construction is the staking of the calf rope (*daangol*), a rope to which calves are tethered to separate them from their mother cows when these are driven to the pasture. Fastened to stakes that are driven into the ground on a north-south axis, the calf rope visibly divides the camp into a female (east) and a male sphere (west). The eastern part of the gendered rangeland becomes the domestic sphere in the narrower sense, i. e. the site of female activities; the western half is related to men and to the cattle.

The calf rope's symbolic content as a gender divide is based on the fact that male and female domestic activities, which are largely separated, converge in the milking activities which are performed around it, generally by the women, yet with occasional assistance by a man if it is necessary to subdue a stubborn cow (Stenning 1959: 123). Since it is in direct connection with herd management, which is the principal male domain, the initial act of choosing a campsite and fixing the calf rope is the only male contribution to the activities of construction, maintenance, moving and reconstruction of the camp, which are otherwise strictly female tasks among the Woɗaaɓe, as in many African nomadic societies (Prussin 1989, 1995, 1996).[5] The domestic sphere (*suudu*), which contains all functional and symbolic household goods, is under the rule and responsibility of the woman, while the man is regarded as responsible of the overall camp (*wuro*).

[5] According to Stenning (1959: 123), referring to the Woɗaaɓe of Borno, in northern Nigeria, even the staking and recovering of the calf rope is a female task. Among the Gojanko'en I have occasionally seen women perform this activity, but more generally it is done by men. To be precise, another male contribution is, if we are to subsume it in the category of domestic placemaking activities, the installation of the cattle fire (*duɗal*) in the western part of the camp. Basically, this activity is a male task as it concerns the herd, but since the herd is part of the community of the camp and resides in it just as the humans, one might argue that this activity is also part of the organization of the 'house'. The female tasks, however, concern the construction of the domestic space in the narrower sense.

Hence, the first placemaking activity defines and at the same time genders the domestic space. The hypothetic circle of the camp is divided by the symbolic but quite concrete line of the calf rope. Its central position in the plan of the camp expresses the central role of the cattle for the community as a whole, of which they are an integral part. Individual movement and social relations are, for the duration of the stay at the camp site, articulated in relation to this line. It prescribes a specific spatial behaviour that significantly

Photo 46: The calf rope separates the male from the female sphere. … (F. Köhler, 2010)

Photo 47: … At the same time the calf rope marks a space in which the domestic activities of the two sexes converge. Diffa region (F. Köhler, 2010)

influences the communication between household members according to age and sex, in terms of interaction, cooperation and avoidance.

The calf rope is a central marker or cue for spatial behaviour in the camp (Rapoport 1994: 466), but it is not the only one, and other elements have a visually more effective signalling function. These are the basic items that furnish the domestic half of the camp, which are essential female belongings: the bed-stead (*leeso*), the calabash shelf (*saga*) on which the female household utensils and representational objects are stored and presented, and an open hearth. The domestic water reservoir, stored either in plastic jugs or in water bags made from goatskin or from the tubes of lorry tyres, is placed nearby. The bed itself can be dismantled and reassembled. It consists of four wooden stands over which a frame is built by two traverses and a number of long wooden poles, covered with mats and blankets and occasionally a light mattress.

Apart from these basic elements, the material objects which could be regarded as furniture are scarce. The high degree of mobility characteristic of the pastoral Woɗaaɓe has led to an extreme reduction of material belongings (Bovin 2001: 65; Boesen 2007b), including those pertaining to the dwelling itself: Life being centred mainly around the wellbeing of the herd, the efforts taken to elaborate and furnish the home are kept to a functional minimum, as is the case also among other pastoral Fulɓe (see Tonah 2011). Women might have a small wooden stool to sit on while performing the daily domestic duties of cooking, cleaning pots or making butter, while belongings of greater value are stored in bags either on the bed or on the calabash shelf. Mats are

Photo 48: The bedstead is the property only of married women. Diffa region (F. Köhler, 2005)

Photo 49: The furniture of the pastoral camps is scarce. If available, things may be stored in the branches of trees. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

used for sitting and eating. A half-circle of dry branches forms a windscreen and symbolically delimits the camp to the east.

In terms of construction, these minimal interventions suffice to define the 'house'. Whether or not a tent or hut will be erected depends on seasonal parameters and on the time envisaged for the sojourn at the site. The optional tent-like shelter (*tukuru*), which is erected only after the basic furnishing of the house has been completed, is built around the bed-stead, thus providing additional protection and privacy within the centre of the domestic sphere. It consists of a construction of branches that are anchored in the ground, tied together with short strips of cloth or rope and finally covered with an assemblage of woven mats, old rags of cloth, sacks or, preferably during the rainy season, with plastic tarp. The shelter generally opens to the west, as does the camp itself. It is remarkable that the shelter, generally regarded as the basic aspect of the house, is secondary and in fact optional in the case of the Wodaaɓe. More important is a reduced set of basic material objects furnishing the structural layout of the camp. In principle these elements alone, without any shelter, are sufficient for defining the house and for conveying a sense of home.

Photo 50: The domestic unit (*suudu*) within the pastoral camp is the domain of the woman. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 51: Calf tied to the calf rope. The cohabitation of humans and animals is very close. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 52: Water is stored either in plastic jugs or in water bags made from goatskin or from the tubes of lorry tyres. Mats and blankets are stored away in trees or bushes when not needed, in order to avoid damages from termites. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 53: Only the small, tent-like shelter in the heart of the *suudu* provides some privacy. Outside the rainy season, its structure is often only loosely covered with mats and blankets which provide shade while at the same time allowing for the circulation of air. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 54 – 55: The interior of the shelter, which covers the bedstead – the heart of the private sphere of the camp. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 56 – 57: Homestead with symbolic enclosure of branches, bedstead and calabash shelf. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE

As Angelo Bonfiglioli (1988: 150) has pointed out, the term *suudu*, like many nouns belonging to the Fulfulde nominal class *-ndu*, linguistically expresses the notion of a receptacle or a container. Derived from the verb *suuɗa*, meaning 'to hide' or 'to conceal', *suudu* refers to an intimate space of privacy from which strangers are excluded (ibid.).

A construction without walls, the *suudu* does not protect its inhabitants against the eyes of passing strangers. At first sight, only the *tukuru* shelter constitutes a minimal domain of privacy.[6] As part of the female domain, it is generally reserved to women and children during daytime. Access of a man to his wife's *suudu* during daytime is not restricted, but to spend longer periods there would be considered inappropriate. Generally, he will spend his leisure hours in the afternoon communally with other men, either in a semi-public space to the west, the *daɗɗo*, or completely outside the camp, only to return home at nightfall.[7] Hence, time becomes another central variable in defining the rules of spatial organization in the camp (see also Rapoport 1994: 465).

Although clear markers of the boundaries between inside and outside, between public and private space, are widely absent, these boundaries are nevertheless known. They exist as mental concepts (see Rapoport 1994: 472), and the private, domestic space is protected by a cultural code of interaction governing the ways of approaching somebody else's camp. An arriving male stranger will approach the camp from the west and keep at a certain distance until invited by the landlord to come closer, generally by exclamations of '*Jaɓaama, marhaaba*!' ('welcome!').

Where exactly the visitor is received by the landlord largely depends on their social relationship. Certain relatives and close friends might be received in close proximity to, or even inside the *suudu*, while others, whose relationship with the landlord is rather characterized by respectful distance or avoidance (e. g. certain affinal relatives), will be received in some more distance. Yet other visitors will be received with some nuances in distancing depending on their ethnic or clan identity. As to female visitors, they may approach the camp from the south-east and they may be received within the *suudu* by the female members of the household, yet the exact place of their reception also depends much on their social relationship with the hosts or on how this relationship is perceived by the latter.

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[6] Following Rapoport (1994: 472), I understand 'privacy' as 'the control of unwanted interaction […] and information flows'.

[7] In practice, however, there are ways of avoiding these rules. I have witnessed several cases where a man who was ill spent the better part of the day not in his wife's, but in his mother's *suudu*, which was part of the same camp. This did not seem to pose particular problems.

Photo 58: The male meeting place (*daɗɗo*) in the west of the camp. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Prescriptions are not strictly defined nor absolute, and the interaction is spatially structured rather by a socially learned feeling of what is appropriate and what is not (see also Rapoport 1994: 483f). A short example might illustrate how such socialization functions: During my fieldwork in Ganatcha, a small boy of about eight years, upon invitation to the home of an age mate from a neighbouring community of the Yaamanko'en clan, committed a *faux-pas*. Not only did he empty a calabash of milk that was offered to him by his friend's mother, but he also returned it by walking straight to the calabash shelf and posing it thereupon. The boy's disregard for the private sphere of his hosts was not the only aspect of inappropriate behaviour in the situation, but an important part of it. The story was retold for several days to family members and neighbours and the boy was mercilessly mocked. Since a failure of meeting the expectations concerning the spatial norms of interaction can be extremely shameful, in case of a more formal reception, a household head might also seek advice on matters of spatial conduct with others, generally a strategy of reassuring oneself and sharing responsibility with others.

All this suggests that spheres of privacy are not absolute. The spatiality of social interaction in the camp depends largely on specific kinship structures, social relations and gender.

Photo 59: In a compound camp, the individual households are pitched in a linear order, following seniority hierarchies.
Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

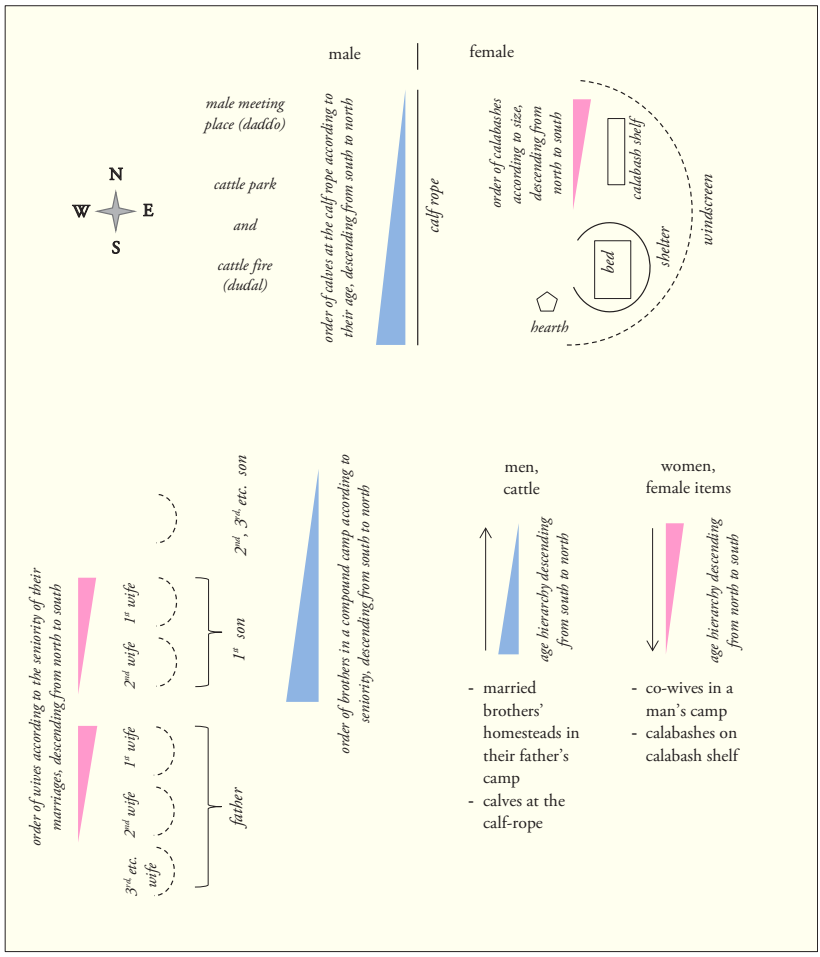

Figure 1: Spatial principles in the pastoral camp

THE SPATIAL EXPRESSION OF HIERARCHIES

A second important spatial principle concerns the hierarchical order among different domestic units within a compound pastoral camp and among different camps in agglomeration. Here, the seniority principle generally demands that the senior individual or the senior segment of a lineage makes camp in the south, while all younger ones align theirs to the north in descending order. A typical pattern which can serve as an example to illustrate this principle is that of a man living together with his married adult sons: While the father's camp is in the southernmost position, his eldest son will situate his camp to his north and his brothers again to the north of him, and so forth, according to their decreasing seniority. Hence, the built environment becomes a direct expression of social structure, as described by Lawrence and Low in a chapter on symbolic approaches to the study of built environments: '[S]ite plans [can] act as communicative or mnemonic devices expressing or reaf-

firming through symbolic associations relations between groups, or positions held by individuals within a culture's framework' (Lawrence and Low 1990: 466).[8] The relative spatial position of Woɗaaɓe household units reflects the internal hierarchies of the social group, whether on the level of a nuclear family or in larger agglomerations (Dupire 1962: 151ff; Bonfiglioli 1988: 49; Paris 1997).

According to the same hierarchical principle, the calves are attached to the calf rope in an order of seniority, with the oldest in the south and the youngest in the north. However, a second, inverse principle interferes with this pattern: If a man has more than one wife[9], each has her own domestic unit; yet the principle of their alignment follows the inverse logic, with the first wife putting up her *suudu* in the north and the co-wives aligning theirs to the south in order of the decreasing seniority of the marriage. Since this hierarchical principle is equally valid for the alignment of female material items such as the calabashes that are arranged by size on the calabash shelf, one can speak of a male south-north and a female north-south hierarchy governing the spatio-hierarchical orientation of pastoral Woɗaaɓe camps (see Dupire 1962: 156ff).

Concerning these spatial rules, however, one should note that, in everyday practice, pragmatism generally reigns. Environmental factors, such as the availability of shady trees in the vicinity of the camp and, above all, considerations concerning the well-being of the herd (e. g. the quality of the ground as a resting place for the cattle) are used to justify frequent transgressions of these norms.

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Rapoport (1994: 488) has argued that 'the organisation of space cognitively precedes its material expression; settings and built environments are thought before they are built'. Although the 'house' of the pastoral Woɗaaɓe is not elaborate in its physical manifestation, it is without a doubt a highly elaborate mental architecture.

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[8] Similar principles can be found in other geographical and cultural contexts. See, e. g., Dafinger (2004, 2011) who shows that in the architecture of the Bisa in Burkina Faso ‚the built environment serves as an external memory of social relations, which is laid open and is perceivable by all members of the group' (ibid. 2011: 101). His approach of an analysis of the syntax of spatial orders as expressive of social rules and relations is based on the syntax theory developed by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson (1984; see also Dafinger 2004: 20ff).

[9] While in the Islamic context of Niger, men can generally have up to four wives, among the Woɗaaɓe, polygynous households with more than two wives are rare.

PHOTO ESSAY: MAKING AND UNMAKING THE MOBILE HOUSE

Photo 60: The tent poles are fixed in holes that are dug into the sandy ground. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 61: Again a female task, the digging of holes in order to fix the tent poles in the ground is hard work. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 62: Digging of the holes for fixing the tent poles. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 63: Women constructing a shelter. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 64: Women constructing a shelter. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 65–66: The branches that serve as tent poles are tied together with strings made of old rugs. …
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 67: … Babies are carried on the back during the work process, if necessary. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 68 – 70: A woman is reassembling her mobile house. The branches that serve as tent poles are tied together with strings made of old rugs. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 71: Young women disassembling a shelter before a camp relocation. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 72–73: Young women disassembling a shelter before a camp relocation. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 74: The reorganization of the camp in the new camp site. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 75–76: … The pack animals are unloaded; the bed and the calabash shelf (*saga*) are reassembled. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 77: The typical tent-like shelter (*tukuru*) is constructed around the bed. In preparation, a circle of holes is dug into the ground to fix the tent poles. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 78: Reconstruction of the *tukuru* shelter after a camp relocation. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 79: Reconstruction of the *tukuru* shelter after a camp relocation. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 80: Reconstruction of the *tukuru* shelter after a camp relocation. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 81: Woman reassembling her mobile house after a camp relocation … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 82: … The *tukuru* shelter is covered with matting … Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 83: … that must be tightly fixed with strings to resist the often strong winds …
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 84: … During the rainy season, an additional layer of plastic tarp protects the shelter against the rain. Koutous region
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 85: Woman reassembling her mobile house after a camp relocation. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 86: … The branches that make up the structure of the shelter are tied together. … Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 87: … The structure of branches is covered differently according to the season and to the duration of the stay in a site… (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 88: … During the hot dry season, only a light cover of cloth is preferred, which allows for the circulation of air. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 89: Young girls in a half-constructed shelter. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

A TYPOLOGY OF THE DWELLINGS OF WOƊAAƁE URBAN MIGRANTS

After having examined the organisational principles of Woɗaaɓe camps in the context of pastoral mobility, in this section I will elaborate on the question of the form the dwellings take when people move to urban centres as migrant workers. With the following typology, I give an overview of the variations in the form of habitat encountered among Woɗaaɓe migrant workers in the urban contexts of Zinder and of Diffa, a provincial capital in the extreme east of Niger, where I carried out comparative research and collected complementary data. The dominant populations in Diffa are ethnically Kanuri, in Zinder Kanuri and Hausa.

A) INSTALLATION IN A CONSTRUCTION SITE OR A PARTLY CONSTRUCTED HOUSE

Over the past decade, Zinder has – like other urban centres in Niger – experienced a significant population growth. In terms of inhabitants, the city has more than doubled since 2000 and the population today is about 350.000, making it the second largest city in Niger (République du Niger 2013). Due to this growth, the constructed surfaces have also considerably increased. Real estate has become a popular object of investment and speculation, and in the urban outskirts, construction sites are virtually mushrooming. The municipality urges the owner of a plot in the urban space to construct on his property. For many individual small investors, however, the purchase of a plot already constitutes a considerable burden, and they often do not have the money necessary to construct at once.

Photo 90: Woɗaaɓe migrants have installed their shelter in an urban construction site where they are temporarily tolerated by the owner as their presence might help to avoid the theft of construction material. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 91: Urban dwelling and small stock husbandry in a construction site. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Often, the process of construction is a gradual one. Typically, in a first step, a wall is constructed along the borders of the plot to secure the property. In a second step, a small building might be erected which is not meant to become the principal house but will eventually be transformed either into a separate room in annex or into an external kitchen. In the case of upper class residences, it might also become a shelter for a watchman. Such a watchman's shelter – a typical feature of this category of contemporary urban houses in Niger – is generally situated near the main entrance of the compound. At an early stage of construction, these small, generally one-room buildings can already serve as dwellings. Some house builders might at this point already move into the provisory building, but many have their home elsewhere and envisage moving into their new domicile only much later, once the construction work is completed. Or, as is the case for many wealthier house owners, the building is a mere object of investment, meant to be hired out for rent. For these reasons, many construction sites remain temporarily unoccupied spaces with a potential to serve as dwellings.

A typical strategy of newly arrived migrants[10] who come to Zinder is to seek access to such construction sites, where already erected outside walls or even partially constructed buildings provide a minimum of shelter. However, competition about such sites can be pronounced and usually, without an already established local kinship network, access remains difficult. The owners often tolerate temporary establishment, and in the case of families, they might even be happy to permit it, since the permanent presence of a trusted party reduces the risk of having construction materials stolen. Sometimes this logic leads to symbiotic patron-client relations and to informal agreements in which the migrants can eventually gain an ambiguous status

[10] Although my typology specifically concerns Wodaaɓe migrants, many aspects can be generalized and apply to urban migrants from other ethnic backgrounds, as well.

Photo 92: Woɗaaɓe migrants living in a construction site. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

of quasi-watchmen, although they are generally not paid in cash, but rather in kind (e. g. food, clothing), and on an irregular, non-contractual basis.[11]

B) FREE ACCOMMODATION IN THE COMPOUND OF AN UNINHABITED HOUSE

On the same basis of mutual interest, migrants can gain access to the compounds of houses which are temporarily not inhabited, e. g. because the owner is presently looking for a new tenant. In such cases, typically, the migrants will not have access to the main building, but only to a shelter or to the above mentioned, typical annex for the watchman. If these are lacking, they might use a roofed terrace or else install their own tents or huts in the courtyard, modelled after the *tukuru* shelter of the pastoral camp. The interest in such accommodation as compared to a construction site is that generally, basic infrastructure like a water tab on the compound and sometimes electricity are more likely to be available. To assure security at night, house owners might hesitate to cut off electricity; water is generally not cut either since water is (paradoxically, in a country such as Niger) not expensive and the owner might have an interest in maintaining the garden, if there is one, or at least in watering the trees. Therefore, migrants living in this type of dwelling often enjoy the advantage of free access to basic infrastructure. Another interest in this type of accommodation is the hope that once a new tenant arrives he will agree to give contractual employment to a thus already established watchman. However, the tenant might just as well choose to replace him.

[11] Since their tasks are not defined either, their service towards the house-owner basically consists of the very fact of dwelling on his compound. This challenges Heidegger's (2000 [1951]) distinction between dwelling place and work-place: not only do the two coincide here, but what is more, the very act of dwelling, according to Heidegger almost inactivity ('beinahe Untätigkeit', ibid.: 149), becomes itself a paid activity and thus quasi-identical with 'work'.

C) FREE ACCOMMODATION IN RELATION WITH A JOB

As briefly noted in the introduction, many Gojanko'en migrants in Zinder work as watchmen either for individual house owners or for organizations and development projects. In both cases, the employers often provide accommodation in which the watchman, and in many cases his nuclear family, can permanently reside. The form of such dwellings can range from rudimentary shelters made from straw and clay or corrugated iron to rather elaborate cement houses, sometimes with electricity and generally with access to a water tab on the compound.

Apart from the aspect of decent accommodation, the interest in this type of habitation is that it can potentially facilitate access to employment on a more permanent basis. Even if the tenant of a house changes, the watchman has a fair chance to get newly employed by the new tenant. In some cases, this is actively supported by the owner of the house, for whom such continuity stands for stability and security, and who might make it a requirement for a new tenant to keep the watchman. Provided that the owner develops a good relation with the watchman, the latter might also be able to transfer the dwelling (and potential position) to a relative in case he has other options and does not want to stay, for example, if he wants to return to the pastoral economy or if he finds a better paid job elsewhere.

Here again, the importance of kinship networks becomes obvious. As a basic principle, an effort will be made to keep access to the job and associated accommodation within the circle of genealogically close kin. From this perspective, the watchman's shelter itself is an important capital which is not owned, but on which certain, however inofficial, 'use rights' can be obtained and in some cases even transferred to others.

This urban strategy of securing the access to a resource resembles strategies in the pastoral context of legally claiming home ranges (*terroirs d'attache*). Here, local stabilization around a pastoral well is aimed at securing claims

Photo 93: Wodaaɓe shelters in the urban space. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2012)

for priority use rights over an area with good pastoral resources, based on recent Nigerien land laws (*Code Rural*) (see Hammel 2001; Boesen 2009: 78). In order to do so, assuring a permanent presence in this area is essential. In the city, just as in the pastoral context, a permanent presence is an important condition for securing claims: One migrant told me that while residing in an empty house in Zinder on a basis of an inofficial agreement with the owner, he once left for just a few days to accompany his family on a visit back home to the Damergou region. On his return, the house had been occupied by somebody else and it was lost to him for good.

D) INSTALLATION IN AN UNCLAIMED SITE

This type of dwelling differs from all the three aforementioned ones in that it does not consist of the occupation of pre-established architectural forms, but rather transfers the typical form of the *tukuru* shelter into the urban space. The migrants make camp on an unoccupied and open plot of land, with or without enclosure, or in a public space, generally rather at the city's periphery. Whereas in types A–C generally only a single nuclear family, sometimes extended by some additional relatives, resides individually, in type D there are sometimes more important agglomerations of individual households from the same clan, as is the case, for example, of a group of Woɗaaɓe Ɓii Ute'en in Diffa.

Among the Gojanko'en migrants in Zinder, the types A, B, and C are by far the most important forms of urban dwelling. Whereas type D can also be found in Zinder, it is rather common among Woɗaaɓe from other clans, notably Suudu Suka'el and Jiijiiru. One reason for this differentiation according to clan origin is that the form of urban habitat closely depends on the activities that the Woɗaaɓe migrants pursue in the city: Watchmen at private residences are often provided with a dwelling for themselves and sometimes for their entire families.

As noted in the introduction, the Gojanko'en have acquired a strong standing in the job market for watchmen since the 1980s. As a result, their situation is also relatively comfortable as far as housing is concerned, which is often of type C. However, since not all employers provide a dwelling and since they sometimes do not allow the (often quite large) families of their watchmen to permanently reside on the compound, the alternatives of type A and B are also frequent among the Gojanko'en migrants.

E) COHABITATION WITH A RELATIVE

Another form of dwelling is typical of young men, who have just arrived in town in order to find work: At first, they will often try to stay with an already established relative as cohabitants where they will simply spend their nights sleeping on a mat in the courtyard. Inversely, if a migrant has already found work as a watchman, but no independent accommodation so far, he might

come back from work in the morning to stay with his relatives during day time, wash himself and his clothes, and share meals with them, to which he might or might not contribute, depending on his means and on his kinship relationship to the principal inhabitant(s).

This form of cohabitation is generally only practiced temporally (yet for sometimes quite extended periods), and only by single individuals. If such a migrant has his own family, he will generally leave it behind in the custody of relatives, and bring it to the city only once he has found decent accommodation for himself.

F) RENTED HOUSE

All the types of accommodation described so far are free of charge for the Woɗaaɓe migrants. The alternative of a rented house is a rather exceptional case for the few who can afford it. In Zinder, I encountered one single case of a migrant who lived in a rented house. For this reason, although I include it in my typology, it should be said that this type of habitat is not quite representative. The principal reasons which explain the exceptional case are that (1) the person had a relatively well paid job as a driver for a development project, and (2) that the project paid a monthly contribution to the rent on top of his salary.

PHOTO ESSAY:
THE URBAN CONDITION

Photo 94: Wodaaße girl at her urban home. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 95: Wodaaɓe children at their urban home. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 96: The urban camps that Wodaaße migrants install in open places within the city show a structural resemblance with the pastoral camps. The shelter opens to the west. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 97: … The calabash shelf is aligned to the north. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 98: The thorny branches that delimit the domestic unit are more relevant in town than in the pastoral camps as a protection of the private space against passers-by. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 99: Woɗaaɓe woman at her urban home. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 100: Woɗaaɓe camps in an open space in Diffa town. (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 101: Woɗaaɓe camps in an open space in Diffa town. (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 102: If the spatial conditions permit, the composite camps in the urban space reproduce the typical linear arrangement of the pastoral camps. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 103: Wodaaɓe woman at her urban home. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 104: Even as urban migrants, many Wodaaße remain highly mobile. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 105: … Here, the household goods of some families are secured against wind and rain and left in the custody of the remaining community during their absence. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 106–107: The combined home and workplace of a Wodaaɓe watchman. Practices such as storing things away in trees are kept up in the urban environment as well. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2004)

Photo 108: Watchmen often live in small houses or shelters in the entrance area of the compounds of their employers. Straw fences provide some privacy and protect from looks. However, they might also be meant to protect the landlord's privacy. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2004)

Photo 109: A typical transportable bed in an urban Wodaaɓe homestead. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 110: Children in the courtyard of an urban Wodaaɓe homestead. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2004)

Photo 111: A typical transportable bed in an urban Wodaaɓe homestead. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2004)

Photos 112–113: Woɗaaɓe watchman and family members in the court yard of the employer's compound. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2010)

Photo 114: An occasional TV-set in the household of Woɗaaɓe migrants might be the gift of a former expatriate employer. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 115: Woɗaaɓe watchman with his family at his combined home and work place. …
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 116: … During the planting season, he is allowed to use the courtyard of the spacious compound for planting groundnuts and *niébé* beans. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2011)

THE TRANSFORMATION OF HABITAT IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

As I have shown above, the form and structure of the pastoral Woɗaaɓe camp is expressive of basic organisational principles and rules of society, i. e., of hierarchical principles, of gender relations and gender roles. By further analysing both the changes in habitat that occur in the urban context, and the continuity of important principles that can be observed, I will now examine the impact that the urban setting has on the social dimensions of dwelling, and the adaptive mechanisms that migrants develop to maintain a sense of continuity in the changed environment.

CHANGING GENDER ROLES IN THE PLACEMAKING PROCESS

Prussin (1996: 98) has pointed out that sedentarization has a significant impact on nomadic habitat and the aesthetic, orientational, social and emotional aspects that it encompasses. An important point in this regard concerns the construction process: Urban migrants often no longer build their houses themselves but rather, they occupy pre-existing architectural environments. The process of constant disassembling and reassembling of the house – often a domain of exclusively female activity – gets lost in the urban setting. Prussin has emphasized the impact of such gender shifts that also go along more generally with sedentarization: 'No longer in control over the creation of her domicile, the woman gradually loses jural rights over her house although she may continue to exercise control over its furnishings' (Prussin 1996: 98).

In the case of the Woɗaaɓe migrants, where the men are generally not exercising jural rights over their houses either, the difference is less pronounced. It is true that domestic space in the urban context must be negotiated and that this task is generally a male domain, but this varies only in degree from (or adds a dimension to) the male task of deciding about the emplacement of the pastoral camp. After this initial act, the domestic environment with its specific tasks remains the woman's domain. In dwellings of type D, where shelters are still actively constructed, women also remain the privileged actors in the building process. The gender balance thus gets principally maintained and the only difference of kind seems to be the loss of the processual building and rebuilding of the house by the woman as an effect of the local stabilization.

It should also be pointed out that the aspect of local stability as such, the fact of living in a permanent house, is generally not perceived as a loss, but rather as a relief by most women. Complaints about the female burden, which the constant deconstructions and reconstructions of the house constitute in the pastoral nomadic context, are frequent, and in this regard, sedentarity is often perceived as an advantage.

THE CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OF URBAN DWELLINGS AND THE ROLE OF FEMALE MATERIAL CULTURE FOR CONTINUITY AND BELONGING

By transferring the reflections of Prussin (1995) into the Woɗaaɓe context, I have argued above that in the absence of a spatially fixed house, a structurally prescribed arrangement of objects (the 'furniture') can convey a sense of continuity and belonging. If the environment is less important for the feeling of 'home' than a limited set of objects of material culture, then the appropriation and domestication of the urban space might not differ much from that of a strip of rangeland.

In fact, in the urban context the inhabited space is culturally appropriated by the Woɗaaɓe women by a process of furnishing, which in many ways follows the principles described above for the pastoral camp. To begin with, furniture, which is not very elaborate in the pastoral context, generally does not play an important role in the urban dwellings either. Clothes and valuables are mostly kept in bags rather than in cupboards and these are often hung on the wall with simple nails. People sit and eat on mats. Tables are appreciated, but used for storing things rather than for sitting and eating, thus assuming the role of the calabash shelf. Although partially a result of a lack of means, the scarceness of furniture is not perceived *per se* as a deficiency, where the possession of elaborate furniture is not known from the pastoral setting either.

While furniture is generally rather rudimentary, both in the pastoral and in the urban context, the bed is a remarkable exception. The often elaborately adorned, wheel-like wooden heads of its traverses are cherished for their often rather extravagant dimensions. They can have a diameter of up to 50 cm – the larger, the more prestigious. Although their sheer size and weight seem to mock the nomadic principle of minimizing the material belongings to facilitate a maximum of mobility, a woman would hardly ever complain about the burden of having to transport her heavy bed poles from one campsite to the other. It is also remarkable that the bed, which is the pride of the married woman and plays a central role among her material belongings, is a cultural borrowing from the Tuareg with whom the Woɗaaɓe live in close neighbourhood in the pastoral zone of the Damergou region as in other parts of western and central Niger. Like other wooden household items, such as bowls and spoons, the beds are bought from Tuareg craftsmen. This fact is principally not ignored but completely put aside when the bed is referred to as a *leeso Woɗaaɓe*, i. e., as a typical Woɗaaɓe bed. The object has become such a central feature and in fact a cultural marker that one could call it, if not an invented tradition, at least an appropriated or an adopted one. The importance of the bed as a symbol of identity is closely linked to the fact that it represents a woman's status as a wife and mother (Dupire 1962; Stenning 1959). Generally, the woman receives it as a gift from her mother when she moves to her husband after the time of seclusion following the birth of her

first child. The same applies to a woman's collection of calabashes, which are of similar symbolic importance, as well as other decorative objects that typically adorn her calabash shelf (Boesen 2008; Köhler 2013).

It is remarkable that it is predominantly female material possessions which are often transferred from the pastoral camps to the urban dwellings. On the other hand, this is hardly surprising because the 'house', in the sense of the domestic sphere (*suudu*), is the female sphere *par excellence* and what might be called furniture or household items are basically objects of female possession.[12] If urban migrants' households include women, the female belongings continue to play their central role as markers of female status and social identity and wherever they stay in the city for longer periods, women will be concerned about transferring their most essential belongings, and in particular their beds. The importance that urban migrant women continue to attach to their beds is impressively demonstrated by the example of a Gojanko'en woman who moved with her family as far as to Diffa. Without knowing how long their sojourn in the town would last, she insisted on taking her bed along on a journey of more than 400 km with bush taxis instead of replacing it with a locally bought one. It should be added that the prestige of this item is also expressed in its price, which can be of up to 100.000 or 150.000 FCFA (ca. 150–225 €), while simple, locally built beds that are popular in towns can be bought from about 10.000 FCFA (ca. 15 €).

In addition to their function as symbols of social status, the female objects assume, in the urban context, a role as supports of cultural identity and as surrogates of the mobile pastoral life (Köhler 2013: 22; see also Benfoughal and Boulay 2006: 20). Ayona Datta (2011: 50), discussing the role of material objects for a feeling of belonging among migrants, notes that 'nostalgic memories are often physically contained in material things.' She defines nostalgia as 'an attachment to the past which helps us make sense of our present lives' (ibid.). In the Woɗaaɓe context, the nostalgia does not as much concern a distant past as a distant locality, i. e., the pastoral home community. Here, 'material expressions of place provide the medium for the reproduction of the local' (ibid.). The furnishing of the dwelling with cultural objects facilitates identification and helps to create a feeling of belonging, a sense of 'home', where the architectural surroundings rather fail to provide this.

While these cultural objects are often the first to furnish the urban migrants' homes, after a more extended sojourn in the city, a certain desire for more elaborate and 'modern' items after the example of sedentary urban popula-

[12] The male material culture is generally much less pronounced and it basically consists of utensils needed for the pastoral life in the bush (herding stick, knife, sword, etc.), as well as the equipment for preparing tea (one of the few predominantly male household activities). It goes without saying that the range of male (and female) material possessions widens today to encompass modern consumer items such as radios, torches, wrist-watches or mobile phones.

tions might get stronger. New objects, representative of the urban sphere and urban culture, can be integrated: sofas, wall hangings, or, in the case of more successful migrants, even TV-sets and refrigerators, which are representative of a different, an urban identity. Their integration into the households leads to competing narratives of identification (Brickell and Datta 2011: 15): cultural belonging, economic success, modernity and global connectedness. If '[t]he home serves as a means of communication with oneself, between members of the same household, friends, and strangers' (Lawrence 1987: 161), the adoption of urban style furniture and decorative household items can be regarded as an indicator of the degree of interaction with other social groups in the urban context, because their communicative function is primarily addressed to the outside.

It is striking to observe which spatial principles Woɗaaɓe women follow when they furnish their rooms in town. The bed is generally placed against the wall facing the main entrance door, often with a table used for storing bags placed to its left – as would be, in the pastoral camp, the relative spatial position of the calabash shelf to which it corresponds. Of course, since rooms in modern urban houses do not generally follow the orientational principles of the Woɗaaɓe camps (i. e. their doors do not as a rule face west) the spatial orientation of the whole room does not automatically correspond to the traditional pattern. This aspect introduces the following section, which deals with the question of how people adapt the principles of spatial orientation to the givens in the urban setting.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE SPATIAL ORIENTATION OF THE HOME

It should be pointed out that the principles of the spatial orientation of Fulɓe houses, although they always seem to play an important role, partly vary from region to region. DeLancey (2005: 8) notes that 'spatial concepts, architecture, and indeed Fulbe culture in general appear to vary in different locales'. Probably they have been subject to change and adaptation according to different local settings into which the different groups have spread. To give an example, the entrances of Fulɓe Waalwaalɓe houses in the Ferlo region of northern Senegal generally face south and the gender-specific attribution of the inner space relates the west to women and the east to men (ibid.: 7f; Bourdier and Minh-Ha 1996: 43). As I have shown above, among the Woɗaaɓe the opposite is the case, just as well as for other Fulɓe groups in Niger.

Although cultural factors are often pointed out as reasons for these differences[13] (Bourdier and Minh-Ha 1996: 44), the orientation seems to be to an

[13] Dupire (1962: 157) contends that, among the Woɗaaɓe in Niger, the spatial orientation of the house is sometimes explained with an alleged recommendation

important degree dictated by environmental conditions like the major direction of prevailing winds, which in Senegal predominantly come from northwest whereas in more eastern regions of the Sahel, like in Niger, they come from a north-eastern direction (DeLancey 2005: 8f, 19; Prussin 1995: 22f). Such an environmental interpretation is also supported by the fact that the general orientation of houses among most sedentary groups in Niger more or less responds to the same principles as among the Fulɓe: The entrance is generally facing west (for the Hausa context see Nicolas 1966: 78; DeLancey 2005:12).

Hence, *a priori* there would not be a problem of cultural compatibility for Woɗaaɓe in adapting to sedentary architecture. In cities, however, these principles of spatial orientation of the architecture are often not maintained because other considerations, such as the orientation of streets and, as a consequence, of plots, interfere with them. Therefore, in all the above described types of urban dwellings, with the only exception of type D, Woɗaaɓe migrants cannot automatically maintain the spatial orientation of their homes along cardinal directions, although in some cases the environment might per chance provide the corresponding conditions. All the more is it interesting that the principle of organizing interior rooms with the basic elements of furniture often reproduces the culturally prescribed relational order that these items would have in the pastoral camps, albeit detached from their orientation according to cardinal directions. In cases of type D dwellings, on the other hand, no pre-established architectural structures interfere with the cultural rules. Here, both, the spatial orientation of the *tukuru* shelters and, in the case of more complex agglomerations of dwellings, the linear structure of the camp with its spatial expression of hierarchies by relative placement of the individual households, are principally maintained.

However, not only pre-established architectural structures interfere with the traditional spatial principles, but other imperatives as well, as the case of a young man from the Woɗaaɓe Suudu Suka'el in Diffa shows. He was employed as a watchman for a company and lived, together with his family and with his elderly father, on the company's compound. The main entrance gate of the compound faced south and according to the logic of his work he was expected to occupy, together with his family, the shelter next to the gate. He did so and thus occupied a position south of his father, who installed an improvised shelter at the northern side of the compound. This is the inverse of the relative positioning that the cultural spatial principles would prescribe.

Concerning polygynous households, the pre-established architectural structures of urban migrants' dwellings often poses a particular problem. Since most of the A–C type dwellings comprise only a single room, lodging

by Usman Ɗan Fodio (1754–1817), the Islamic Reformer and founder of the Fulɓe Emirate of Sokoto, who is an important identification figure for the Woɗaaɓe.

Photo 117: The children of a Woɗaaɓe watchman playing in the courtyard of the expatriate employer's house. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2009)

two wives is often difficult. One solution consists of finding two separate dwelling places. For example, one migrant in Zinder managed to occupy two dwellings of type A within immediate vicinity to lodge his two wives. This is remarkable insofar as it mirrors the form of double household structures encountered in the pastoral camps. The hierarchical north-south principle could not be observed in this case. Instead, the hierarchy between the co-wives was expressed by allotting the bigger and more representative house to the senior wife. However, maintaining a double household structure in the urban context is not always feasible for migrants. An alternative solution practiced by some polygynous migrants who are especially mobile between the city and their pastoral home area is to bring only one wife to the city, while the other one is taken care for by a brother.

As a general rule it can be stated that the more the spaces occupied in the city are pre-structured, the less the cultural principles of spatial organization can be respected. Attempts to accommodate the found structures to traditional spatial principles can be observed. If this is not possible, however, this does not seem to constitute a particular problem. After all, in the pastoral context, the principles are not followed slavishly either but rather pragmatically, according to the circumstances. Still, the changes have their effect on social interaction, which, in the setting of the pastoral camp is significantly determined by spatial rules. Where the cultural spatial structure ceases to function as a framework for orienting behaviour, new solutions for structuring social space must be found (see Lawrence and Low 1990: 460).

THE CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OF URBAN SPACE

In Boesen's example there is a strong emphasis on the significant difference between the pastoral and the urban context in terms of how social relations are characterized by an extreme restraint in the former, while being widely free from it in the latter (Boesen 2007b: 224f; 2010: 50f). In the city, the seasonal migrants she studied, especially the women, were to a high extent discharged from the strict gender-induced restrictions that in the context of the pastoral camps prescribe a behaviour of reserve as well as a relative avoidance of public interaction between the sexes. The situation described by Boesen has the character of liminality (Turner 2008[1969]) and is presented as being closely linked to the absence, in the urban street camps, of the usual spatial order. However, such an anti-structure, both in terms of spatial orientation and the social relations that are associated with it, seems only possible in the both temporally limited and spatially removed context of this form of short time migration.

A similar scenario cannot be observed among migrants in Zinder and would indeed be unimaginable. Two facts seem to be central in explaining this: (1) the typical form of migration is a much more stable one, generally involving, as described above, sojourns of a longer duration which have entailed the formation of an equally stable migrant community; (2) Zinder is relatively close to the migrant workers' home area and visits from lineage members occur frequently.

As mentioned above, in the pastoral campsites unmarked or only scarcely materialized boundaries constitute the demarcations between gender-specific spaces, as well as between public and private spheres. Although invisible for an outsider, they are clearly functional in the sense that they impose a specific behaviour and guarantee that even where the 'house' is immaterial, the private sphere of the home is respected and carefully avoided by outsiders, especially males. In the urban setting, these boundaries change their character. Some might become more pronounced (e. g. walls replace the windscreen of branches and the matting and tarp skin of the *tukuru* shelter), while others get lost. Especially striking is the absence of the calf rope in the urban dwellings, which, in the pastoral camp, is a central element around which the spatial structure of a household is constituted and social interaction articulated. A fundamental difference in town is indeed the fact that animals, notably cattle, whose well-being is the main determinant for any decisions concerning the movements and emplacement of the domestic units, are generally not part of the household. Although some degree of urban animal husbandry is common, small stock and poultry clearly dominate and even if a single cow might sometimes be found in an urban household, the phenomenon of the *duɗal* as an integrated community of humans and bovines (Bonfiglioli 1988) is absent in town. Since the calf rope has a central significance for structuring the spatial interaction between the sexes, its absence can be expected to have con-

crete consequences. In fact, the boundaries between male and female spheres within the domestic space are newly drawn in the urban context, just as the definitions of public and private spheres are redefined.

The house, or shelter, remains a predominantly female domain and male Woɗaaɓe visitors generally avoid to enter it. It is the most private part of the home, corresponding to the shelter or the bedstead in the heart of the pastoral camp's *suudu*. Concerning the principles for receiving strangers, the rules detailed above for the pastoral setting are respected to the extent that the changed environment permits. If necessary, they are adapted to it by juggling the two principal factors, which are (1) the social or kinship relations between guest and host as well as their respective sex, and (2) the spatial conditions of the dwelling environment.

Depending on how much space there is available, a stranger may be received on the compound but in due distance to the core domestic space. Sometimes, simple straw fences that may be bought as ready-made elements on the local market are used to improvise blinds. If such spatial separators seem insufficient to match the expectations of mutual respect, the visitor may be received under a shady tree outside the compound.[14] Such matters are often explicitly discussed, i. e., literally negotiated between guest and host, and the visitor himself will in many cases refuse the invitation to enter even the compound and insist on staying outside, urging his host to provide him with a mat in the street in front of the main entrance. Hence, the above described rules of distance, avoidance and respect principally remain valid and are respected. In a discursive process they are harmonized with the environmental conditions. Thus, a male meeting place (*daɗɗo*) can be improvised, or might potentially exist, under an acacia tree in an empty space near the compound, and it will *ad hoc* be materialized if the occasion demands it. If matters of general concern for the community are to be discussed among the mature men, this will often be done here rather than inside the house. This corresponds to the practice in the pastoral context where the *daɗɗo* is situated in some distance to the *suudu*, in the west of the camp, constituting a sphere of male communication. However, for non-Woɗaaɓe visitors the rules are often adapted by making certain concessions: While, in the pastoral context, strangers from different ethnic groups were to be received rather in some distance to the camp, in town they might be invited, albeit sometimes grudgingly, into the compound, or even into the house, since not to be asked inside might be considered impolite by them. Hence a certain adaptation to urban rules of conduct is clearly recognizable here.

Concerning gender divisions, the dichotomy of inside–female and outside–male changes in a double and oppositional sense: As guarding houses

[14] Such a reception external to the compound might also quite bluntly be imposed by the landlord, notably in case of type C accommodation.

principally demands the presence of the watchman, the man, at least in those cases in which workplace and home coincide, spends much more time at home than would be considered as an adequate male spatial behaviour in the pastoral camp. As a matter of fact, the male presence in the female domain (the inside, the core domestic space) gets often much more pronounced in the urban context. This urban male domesticity is, however, not regarded as humiliating, just as the occupation of the watchman does not generally have any negative connotations or is even regarded as shameful, as has been reported by some authors to be the case for any activity outside pastoralism (Maliki et al. 1984: 492[15]).

At the same time, the association inside-female tends to get gradually more pronounced in the urban context. In the pastoral realm, the association of women with the domestic sphere mainly implies a restriction of male movement inside this female domain. It does not, however, imply that women are restricted to the domestic space. On the contrary, Woɗaaɓe women enjoy an autonomy of movement that is in stark contrast to that of the women in most of the sedentary groups in the region. In fact, they are characterized by a high mobility, independent of their husbands (see Walker 1980; Boesen 2010). In town, however, where houses have walls, these can be used by men to seclude their women behind them.[16] In fact, the tendency of male Hausa of restricting the movements of their wives outside the house, although it is less pronounced in Zinder than, e. g., in northern Nigeria, can be observed to be gradually adopted by Woɗaaɓe men in town – albeit with rather limited success. Men often complain that their women go out too much, but generally they take few serious measures to prevent them from doing so. A tendency of male and female geographical and experiential worlds diverging significantly in the city context, as has been found by Walker (1980: 62) in the context of Fulɓe in northern Cameroon, cannot generally be confirmed for the Woɗaaɓe migrants in Niger. Although there are occasional cases of men even doing the shopping on the market in order to keep their wives at home, this is by far not typical. In those cases where the tendency of secluding women can be confirmed, it is generally linked to a stricter observance of Islamic practice in the urban context. But in fact, both, the stricter religious observance and the tendency to restrict female mobility outside the house, must predominantly be seen as a concession to social expectations in the city context. As such, they point again towards a certain formal adaptation to the urban host society.

[15] See also Loftsdóttir (2002: 13), who argues that this feeling of shame has changed in more recent times and has given place to an attitude that defends migrant work as 'a form of diversification strategy during times of difficulty'.

[16] On the 'Architecture of Female Seclusion in West-Africa', see Pellow (2003). On this aspect of change in habitat between mobile pastoralist and sedentary Fulɓe in Cameroon, see Walker (1980), Mahmoudou (2008: 92).

PHOTO ESSAY: FEMALE ITEMS OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Photo 118: Calabash shelf of a Woɗaaɓe woman.
Diffa region
(F. Köhler, 2006)

Photo 119: The married women's wooden beds are items of status and prestige. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 120 – 121: … They are cherished for the extravagant size of their often beautifully adorned traverses, the dimensions and weight of which are in stark contrast and some contradiction to the otherwise extremely reduced furniture so well adapted to the mobile lifestyle. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 122: On the calabash shelf (*saga*) the female wealth is displayed. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 123: … Together with her bed, extended sets of decorative calabashes used to be given to a woman upon marriage. They were never used but proudly displayed, especially on festive occasions, on the *saga*. Today, although calabashes are still preferred by most Woɗaaɓe women, they tend to be replaced by modern enamel or plastic bowls. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 124: Calabashes displayed on the calabash shelf (*saga*) at the occasion of a lineage meeting (*worso*). … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 125: … Next to calabashes, all sorts of decorative items are integrated into the *saga*-arrangements. Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 126: Urban-based Woɗaaɓe women posing with *saga*-arrangements displayed at the occasion of a religious holiday. Diffa (T. Bär, 2005)

Photo 127: Woɗaaɓe woman posing with *saga*-arrangements. Diffa (T. Bär, 2005)

Photo 128: Decorative items of an urban-based Woɗaaɓe woman, displayed on a modern table in a concrete house. Diffa (T. Bär, 2006)

Photo 129: Woɗaaɓe woman posing with her calabash shelf in the courtyard of her mud house. Ikadi, Tchintabaraden area (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 130: Items of urban life and modernity are also integrated into traditional calabash decorations. Diffa (F. Köhler, 2004)

Photo 131: A small girl's toy calabash shelf. Gadabeeji, Diffa region (F. Köhler, 2010)

DISCUSSION

I have shown that in the urban context both disruptions from, and continuities with, the pastoral realm can be observed with regard to spatial principles of dwellings and the forms of social interaction linked to them. Woɗaaɓe migrants engage in a vivid interaction with their urban environment and they adapt their cultural rules to the new setting. While neither abandoning their cultural structural patterns, nor refusing to make concessions to local conventions, they are open to compromise. The urban habitat is an expression of new identities that involve both ethnic belonging and aspects of modernity and urbanity.

REASONS FOR THE FORM OF URBAN HABITAT

Based on the above analysis, I argue that the specific form of urban migrants' habitat depends less on the Woɗaaɓe's 'essentially nomadic' identity than on a combination of different factors, the most important of which can be summarized as follows: (1) the opportunities and the architectural forms that a specific urban environment offers; (2) the type of activity which migrants carry out in town; (3) the social networks in the city that often open up possibilities for getting access to housing (and to jobs, for which reason this point has repercussions on the second); (4) the social status of the migrants, i. e. whether they are married and have children, and if so, whether their families join them for their urban sojourn, or not; (5) the duration of the sojourn in town; (6) the material means and (7) the motivation to invest them into housing. The latter aspect closely depends on the fifth, i. e. the expected duration of the urban sojourn, or, more concretely, whether it is conceived as a long term strategy or not. If the intention is to return as soon as possible to the pastoral economy, a certain negligence, or even reluctance to invest more important means into the home can be expected.

Such an intention, whether realistic or not, is indeed often expressed by migrants. A Boɗaaɗo migrant in Niamey quoted by Loftsdóttir (2002: 13) confirms that dwellings are often left deliberately improvised. According to his statement, this neglect expresses the declared intention not to stay long, but to return to pastoral life as soon as the economic situation permits. It seems plausible that such self-perceptions of Woɗaaɓe with regard to the nature of their urban sojourns have contributed to fuelling the myth of nomads refusing the idea of sedentarization even in the urban context. Among the Gojanko'en in Zinder, similar statements are also frequently heard, and sometimes from migrants who have already been staying in the city for several years.

If we were really to look for a specifically 'nomadic' element in the urban habitat of Woɗaaɓe migrants, this could probably be found in the flexibility

to make a home in a wide range of different environmental contexts and with scarce material means. Indeed, the manipulations that Wodaaɓe migrants make on the urban space are comparable to the situation in the mobile pastoralist setting in that they are rather minimal and temporally limited (see Prussin 1989: 155; Wood 2009: 231). If urban migrants invest little in their material habitat, the same applies for the pastoral context (for other Fulɓe contexts, see e. g. Tonah 2011: 142). Rather than a refusal to integrate and a resistance against sedentarization, this tendency thus seems to express a continuation of cultural patterns which however tends to get less pronounced with a longer duration of the urban sojourns and depending on the financial means. The, albeit exceptional, example of one migrant who could afford to rent a house and who promptly did so, makes this quite clear. At the same time, this example indicates that a general lack of financial means plays a key role in determining the predominant forms of habitat. For most migrants, their housing does not cost anything – but to the price of a high uncertainty and an often pronounced intra-urban mobility.

INTRA-URBAN MOBILITY

At first sight, the living conditions of some of the better situated Gojanko'en in Zinder might seem quite comfortable: Free of any charge, those with jobs as watchmen often have access to housing and infrastructure (running water of good quality, electricity) that might seem basic, but easily surpass that which is the standard for a majority of the Nigerien people.[17] This should not obscure the fact, however, that the status of these urban migrants is characterized by conditions of precariousness and informality as they are characteristic of many other contexts of translocal migration as well (Freitag and von Oppen 2010: 16).[18] As merely tolerated dwellers, they depend on the landlords' goodwill.

A dwelling of type C generally depends on a work contract and therefore promises relative stability. However, the fact that the status of many watchmen is rather informal can have direct repercussions on their residential situation. Concerning dwellings of types A and B the precariousness is

[17] In the newly emerging residential quarters of Zinder, water and electricity are put in place by and by as wealthier pioneering house owners pay the companies for being connected. Only then it generally becomes affordable for middle class house owners as well. If there are no initiatives of individuals, electrification of new quarters can take years, and water is generally provided only at public water pumps in central places. Water vendors fill up jerry cans at these points and deliver them to individual households. Even for middle class households this system is very widespread. To have access to a water tab on the own compound thus constitutes a considerable comfort.

[18] The situation of Wodaaɓe migrants in Zinder is still relatively comfortable in comparison to those involved in transnational migration to Nigeria. The situation of those who work in Kano is even more precarious due to their generally irregular status as non-registered foreigners.

Map 2: Itinerary of intra-urban mobility, example of Nano Buuyo, Zinder, between 2005 and 2007

even more directly evident. Although the situation of mutual interest often develops into personal relations between migrants and house owners, these in no way translate into an increased security concerning their status as tolerated dwellers. If the situation of the landlord changes and he no longer has an interest in keeping an inofficial watchman on his plot, the latter will be forced to move. Most of the longer-term Woɗaaɓe migrants in Zinder look back on a history of frequent relocations from one construction site or empty building to another, living at one time in an old garage or being lucky enough to find employment that could provide them with decent accommodation for some time. For example, one migrant lived in 7 different dwellings between 2005 and 2007, each time making a new home in uninhabited houses and unclaimed sites within the urban space of Zinder (see map 2).

It is interesting to note that Woɗaaɓe begin to develop a stronger consciousness for the problem of their precarious status in the city context. In this regard, the example of an urban-based Woɗaaɓe leader in Diffa deserves a mention. More and more of his followers begin to settle in town where they mostly establish their urban camps of type D in open spaces on the urban periphery.[19] The situation of urban growth being equally dramatic in Diffa as in

[19] In January 2012, increasing violence in north-eastern Nigeria by the militant Islamist movement Boko Haram propelled numbers of urban Woɗaaɓe in Diffa to a hitherto unknown level. Many Woɗaaɓe from the Diffa region who had been staying as migrant workers in the Nigerian regional capital, Maiduguri, fled the region. Without jobs and without sufficient animals to return to the pastoral economy, many migrants were stranded in Diffa and formed a small refugee camp in unoccupied spaces at the outskirts of the town.

Zinder, this leader is aware of the problem that his followers might gradually be pushed more and more to the margins of the town. In early 2012, during one of my visits, he asked me to help him compose a letter to demand the mayor to allot him a plot where his community would be allowed to settle definitively. So far, I have no notice of any positive reaction to this request.

Regarding the question of access to urban land, Woɗaaɓe from the Zinder region frequently recall the situation of the draught of the 1980s with mixed feelings. During that period, the prefect had attributed land for agriculture to the stranded pastoralists just outside of the city. At the time, they did not recognize the benefit of establishing a permanent local presence, but they were rather happy to leave their farming strips behind as soon as their situation permitted. Today, as the exuberantly growing city has long reached that area and the plots are sold at high prices, they often regret this.

INTERSTITIALITY: MARGINAL CITY DWELLERS

Stenning (1966: 389) referred to the pastoral Fulɓe as an 'interstitial population'. More recently, Diallo (2008) took up this concept in his publication *Nomades des espaces interstitiels*. In Diallo's use, the term 'interstitial spaces' refers to areas which are characterized by a weaker presence of the state (ibid.: 7; see also Schlee 2011: 176). On the one hand, interstitiality must be seen in connection with a strategy of state evasion often associated with mobile pastoralists, by increased mobility and by preferentially moving into the less controlled, peripheral areas – into the interstitial frontier regions (Kopytoff 1987) at the margins of the state. On the other hand, however, in contemporary Niger a second, less self-determined and thus more perturbing implication of the term becomes prevalent: Mobile pastoralists today often simply do not have access to other than quite literally interstitial spaces: They have to graze their herds in the spaces in-between, in the narrow enclaves of uncultivated land between the fields of the farming populations. Due to the dramatic population growth, areas which formerly used to be unclaimed rangeland and offered important pasture resources are increasingly transformed into farmland. The sedentary populations often own considerable numbers of cattle themselves, and the pasture resources that used to be of open access to the mobile pastoralists are more and more competed and increasingly tend to become the object of competitive strategies of appropriation. The mobile populations, since they were, in contrast to the farming populations, historically characterized by non-territorial strategies of space appropriation, are generally the losers in this race for the resources and increasingly, it is less in the sense of a strategy that they make use of the interstitial spaces, than for lack of better options and as a result of increasing marginalization and exclusion.

One might be tempted to romanticize the placemaking patterns in the urban setting by arguing that even in town, Woɗaaɓe remain highly mobile in

order to be flexible enough to use the resources of the urban sphere (houses, plots, jobs) to their best advantage. However, as I have shown, the concept of interstitiality applies to Woɗaaɓe urban migrants also in the less strategic and less deliberate sense of the term – in the sense of often undesirable marginality and exclusion: Due to their financial constraints, Woɗaaɓe migrants generally do not have the means to get access to proper housing by either obtaining, constructing or renting it. If they cannot rely upon an already established social network or an employer who provides them with accommodation, the only option they are left with is to occupy the interstitial spaces of the city: construction sites, public spaces at the urban margins, temporarily unclaimed plots or objects of land speculation. Although momentarily not occupied, these spaces generally belong to others who will tolerate the migrants' presence in most cases only for a short time.

PHOTO ESSAY: INTERSTITIAL RESOURCES IN THE CITY

Photo 132: Young urban shepherd. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 133: Young Wodaaɓe boy guarding small stock in an urban compound. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 134 : The spacious plot of the construction site on which the family of this boy lives serves at the same time to keep the small stock at night. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 135: … During day time, the animals are herded on interstitial pastoral resources in the urban periphery. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 136: Herd of small stock in an urban compound. To a certain degree, animal husbandry is common among urban residents of any background, not only migrants from the pastoral milieu. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 137: The limits of urban animal husbandry – plastic bags and other waste pollute the open spaces at the urban margins. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 138: … The waste can be dangerous for the animals – especially for the goats, who eat whatever they find. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 139: If they have access to adequate spatial resources in town, Woɗaaɓe urban migrants also engage in urban agriculture – just as other urbanites do. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 140: … Undeveloped real estate is often used as farm land for planting millet and *niébé* beans during the farming season. After harvest, the crop residues become an important resource for urban livestock keepers. … Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 141: To a certain degree, the principle of sharing spatial resources between agricultural and pastoral land use characteristic of rural Niger applies in town, too. Harvested fields in undeveloped plots might be left with open access to urban livestock keepers. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 142: … Today, however, the situation is characterized by an increasing competition about crop residues, both in the rural and in the urban sphere. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 143: Construction sites mushrooming in the outskirts of Zinder.
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 144: In many cases, construction is a long process. In a first step, a wall is erected to enclose the plot and secure the claim. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 145: … Construction material may be stored on the plot. If migrants occupy these temporarily unused spaces, they are often tolerated because their presence is thought to reduce the risk of theft. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 146: Construction sites mushrooming in the outskirts of Zinder. (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 147: The landscape around Zinder is characterized by rock formations. Here, a plot is dominated by a huge rock, which in a first step has been enclosed by walls. In a second step, the rock will be broken down and the material used for construction. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 148: The pressure on the urban land resources is high and even difficult terrain is sold as construction ground. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 149: … The less well-off secure their land claims with simple mud brick walls, which may be erected directly on the rock, sometimes even without levelling the ground. Zinder (F. Köhler, 2011)

CONCLUSION

Although mobile communities are not bound in space, 'home' for them nevertheless has concrete and stable manifestations. The example of nomadic architecture demonstrates that these manifestations are not tied to specific localized sites, but that they can move through space with their inhabitants. The constant and ongoing process of placemaking constituted by the permanent disassembling and reassembling of the house assures continuity (Prussin 1989: 153) and the nature of this habitat is apt to assure 'situatedness during mobility' (Brickell and Datta 2011: 3). If this is important in the pastoral nomadic context, it certainly is so in the context of contemporary translocal migration, as well. By analysing their urban habitat, I have demonstrated how Woɗaaɓe migrants reproduce the socio-spatial configurations and cultural practices of their society of origin in a constant process of negotiation with local practices and conditions. In particular the fact that the well-being of the cattle is not the main concern in town as it is in the pastoral context, changes the priorities with regard to habitat and thus leads to important divergences.

Like other mobile pastoralists, the Woɗaaɓe do not have a materially elaborate habitat. The furniture is reduced to a functional minimum in order to guarantee a maximum of mobility, which in the arid climate of Niger is an essential element of any pastoral strategy. From this perspective, it is not astonishing that the urban dwellings of Woɗaaɓe migrants are not elaborate. This should not, however, be interpreted in terms of a deficit or of a refusal, but rather as the continuation of a cultural pattern.

The analysis has shown that the few but essential elements of habitat and material culture that in the pastoralist setting provide a feeling of continuity and belonging despite mobility – especially certain items which have an important cultural value and symbolic meaning – are carefully preserved in the urban context as well and contribute to maintaining cultural identity. Similarly, characteristic organisational features of the pastoral camps continue to structure social practice in the urban dwellings, despite considerable differences and adaptations. On the other hand, the analysis has shown that the often ephemeral nature of Woɗaaɓe urban dwellings is due less to an 'essential quality of the nomad' or a resistance against the state and sedentary society, but rather to their often precarious status and their lacking perspectives for staying in the same dwelling for a longer period. The phenomenon of intra-urban mobility of migrants, which is characteristic of the study context, is in fact generally rather forced than self-chosen. The placemaking strategies in the city resemble the non-territorial strategies of resource appropriation in the pastoral context insofar as in both cases, the current situation of increased competition and the marginal position of the Woɗaaɓe limit their possibilities for a sustained access to the resources. In the end, in both cases the only op-

tions they are left with are on marginal, interstitial resources.

PHOTO ESSAY: RURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Photo 150: Pupils of a rural Woɗaaɓe school. Ganatcha, Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 151: Initiatives of introducing schools in rural *centres* are generally started with humble straw shelters as classrooms. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 152: … If the number of children at the age of being put to school is sufficient, a community can be granted a headmaster by the state administration. Ganatcha, Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 153: While the salary of the teacher is paid by the state, the community is generally asked to lodge him. The leaders of localized Wodaaɓe communities therefore have to engage in house construction. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 154: … The first solid buildings that emerge in the centres are generally schools and the dwellings for the teachers. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 155: In some cases, the local Wodaaɓe community is engaged in the construction process. … Ganatcha, Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 156: … In general, however, the bulk of the specialized work is accomplished by paid labourers and carpenters from outside. … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 157: … Generally Hausa or Kanuri specialists must be engaged because most Woɗaaɓe lack the necessary skills. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 158: Building a mud brick house in a rural Woɗaaɓe *centre*. Salaga, Damergou region.
(F. Köhler, 2011)

Photos 159–160: The building material of the local construction initiatives are generally mud bricks and hence ephemeral. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 161: The classrooms, and often a clay house to lodge the teacher, generally constitute the nucleus of a settlement, invariably placed in the vicinity of a pastoral well. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 162: The dwellings of the inhabitants of the *centres* remain predominantly of the mobile type, with the typical *tukuru* shelter. Sedentarization is so far very partial. Only parts of the population get settled, while others continue to follow their animals, and the fluctuation of the population of the *centres* is high. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 163: Some of the more sedentarized camps in the *centres* comprise, in addition to the *tukuru* shelter and calabash shelf, an open shelter … (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 164: … Such an shelter offers protection against the sun and can at the same time be used for storing things away. Salaga, Damergou region (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 165: The sedentarization of pastoralism: Woɗaaɓe calf rope (*daangol*) plucked to the ground in the back of clay houses. Ikadi, Tchintabaraden area (F. Köhler, 2011)

Photo 166: … and the sedentarization of young pastoralists. Pupils in the Woɗaaɓe school in the *centre* of Ganatcha. Koutous region (F. Köhler, 2011)

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Photo 167: Photograph of the author on the calabash shelf of a Woɗaaɓe woman. Diffa (P. Sauter, 2010)

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