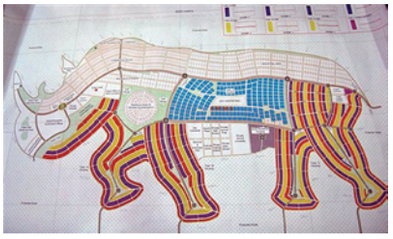
You probably saw the story. It was in the section of the BBC website called *Also in the news*, keeping aloof company with an article entitled 'Trappist Monk escapes Belgian beer fire'.

The title of the story was 'Southern Sudan unveils plan for animal-shaped cities'. The Government of Southern Sudan had apparently announced a '$10bn plan to rebuild the region's cities in the shapes of animals and fruit'. There was little other context, and I can easily predict the reaction of the listeners: they have gone bananas in Southern Sudan; I imagine my mother being indignant – in a country of grinding poverty they are going to spend all that money making towns into pineapples. Many have smugly predicted that Sudan is the first 'failed state' to fail before it has even been formally announced as a state; fruit cities seem par for the course.

Juba, soon to be the world's newest capital city, will be transformed into a rhinoceros; the Presidential Office, the eye. As new clashes break out between the army and rebel forces in the north-east of the country, and at a time when government control of some parts of its territory is strictly nominal, the plan to make animal cities might also seem like a fantasy of power; a zoomorphic panopticon.

The truth is a good deal more interesting.



animal cities

In January, the people of Southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly to secede from the north, and become Africa's newest state. It was a single moment of clarity for an uncertain nation.

CITY FORM
BUILDING A COUNTRY
BY JOSHUA CRAZE

Juba - A woman transports her belonging on her head, heading towards the Juba Temporary Port and crossing a cemetery now used as dumping ground and open-air latrine from the inhabitants of the nearby informal settlement.

Guilio Petrocco

Southern Sudan has never been nation. Across its enormous expanse there are hundreds of languages and tribes. Turkish and British colonial rule was lightly administered, and made little attempt to radically transform traditional forms of order. Before the first civil war broke out just over fifty years ago, Sudan did not have a shared language. Today in urban spaces Arabic holds sway as a language of commerce and exchange, while amongst the ruling elite – the oldest educated in missionary schools, the youngest in American universities – English is the language of government.

There are few roads in the country, and even these tend to become impassable during the rainy season when whole villages shrink back from the rest of the country, closed into their own worlds. Conflicts that the media avidly call 'steps to war' are more often than not clashes between pastoralist peoples, fighting for grazing territory that is growing scarce as large scale agricultural projects, oil installations and environmental degradation squeeze them into smaller and smaller spaces. Loyalty is to tribe and family, not to the state.

If there is a continuity among all the groups in Southern Sudan, it is a shared history of oppression by regimes located on the Central Nile. Sudan has been independent for fifty-five years, and for only fifteen of them has the south had a tenuous peace with the north. It is this history of struggle that might form the basis of a new Southern Sudanese nation. Not a soul is untouched by war, not a soul doesn't feel Southern Sudanese. What that means, for now, is an anti-nationalism – not wanting to be part of the North.

In Juba, the soon-to-be capital of Southern Sudan, the search for a new national identity has begun. Jok Madut Jok, the Assistant Minister for Culture, spoke to me enthusiastically about museums of national identity consecrated to the plurality of cultures you find in Southern Sudan, and of making a new language for the country, just as Indonesia created a new language for itself. Creating new urban forms is part of this challenge.

Just as constant feuding between tribes was a feature of the hundred years before independence, so was inter-marriage and trade. The great Dinka spearmasters and Nuer prophets, spiritual figures capable of bringing together communities, had their particular places – people still speak of Ngungdeng's mound, and of the tree under which Deng Majok used to sit and give counsel. But these forms of co-existence are not urban forms. In predominately rural Southern Sudan, the risk is that the government, sitting in Juba, takes on a form unrecognisable to its people; a form as unrecognisable as Juba urbanism is to most Southern Sudanese.

Throughout the conflict, Juba was in a state of suspended animation: the government controlled the town, but the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, seasoned guerillas who will form the government of Southern Sudan, had encircled it. A sleepy colonial trading town before independence, during the last part of the war, supplies were at a premium. Residents who remember that period speak darkly of searching for food in the rubbish. The core of the city is still the old town. Brick houses that are today an embattled stockade in the middle of the city, owned by Northern merchants fearing for their future. In 2005, a peace agreement ended the second civil war. Since then, a new form of urbanism has emerged.

Tent cities are being erected along the banks of the Nile, catering to the UN workers and aid agencies that have flooded into the city since the peace agreement. $150 a night will get you a tent with air conditioning and electricity. Then there are the single-storey concrete bungalows built by soldiers and politicians who have come to the capital from all over the country, eager for their rewards after long years of fighting. Just outside town, endless squatter camps are going up – those displaced by war are returning home, and others are looking for opportunities in the capital. Nothing comes together. It is as if three worlds had been made to co-habitate in the same space, and, sullenly, they refuse to talk to each other. Their uncertain co-existence makes for an uneasy peace. Politicians, soldiers, East African immigrant workers, aid workers, and squatters. We all live next to each other in this city which is not quite urban, not quite a city and not yet a capital.

The urban population in Juba is increasing dramatically, and poses the question of an emergent nationalism in terms of city planning. The question of how we make a nation out of disparate communities becomes one of how we make urban forms that people can recognise as part of themselves; forms that simultaneously build urban forms and, precisely, a sense of the people.

Looking around Juba, I am not hopeful. From the aid agencies' Land Cruisers cutting cartographies through the dusty roads, to the Kenyan and Ugandan immigrants doing all the work in the city, everything seems to promise an urbanism designed by others, occupied by those from elsewhere. Southern Sudanese speak angrily of East Africans taking all the money out of the country and look around with incomprehension at the aid agencies' inefficiency and waste. If the the capital is the mirror of the country, then Juba belongs in a fairground.

Juba – youth chill in a church near the Konyo Konyo market. In the background is the Konyo Konyo Mosque

Guilio Petrocco

Konyo Konyo market, mainly run by east african migrants from Uganda and Kenya

Guilio Petrocco

Which brings us to those animal cities. Each of the states that constitutes Southern Sudan has a fruit or an animal as its symbol. Equally, many of the Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA) units were nicknamed after fruits and animals. The struggle against the North, the sole basis for unity as a nation in Southern Sudan, was formed into the image of the objects that the South hopes will transform their cities. It is a struggle for identity and a struggle which the government hopes might translate into an urban form. In *Le Totemisme Aujourdhui*, Levi-Strauss outlines a world in which humans depend on analogy to understand the physical world. Through classifying sensuous experience into categories that are themselves of the physical world, we grow to understand our place in it. So the heraldic totems of North America outlined the areas of the world one should care for, and the tones and colours of existence. The fox totem indicates a place in the world, sets of duties and cares, and a set of relations to be upheld with others in the world. As in the physical world, so in the social.

It is an old story in architecture. I recall the wonderful plans of Alexandre de Maître in the 17th century. He wrote a text called *La Métropolitée*, which sets out a model of the ideal country. In his plan, there is an almost perfect correlation between political hierarchy and architectural form. The capital is the third estate, composed of the sovereign and his associates, while the artisans are in the small towns, and the peasants, the foundations of the whole edifice, are in the countryside. It is a wonderful and horrific dream in which there would not need to be any unexpected encounters or unwanted mixing: a monarchic anticipation of Fordism realised in space instead of time.

De Maître's plan was never built. Such plans rarely are. Daniel Wani's bold plan for the animal cities will also, I suspect, go unfinished. Both, however, articulate a way of bringing together people and space into a form in which people recognise each other. In the lingo of the United States, its called *nation-building*. One can be sceptical that South Sudanese animal cities will work. I certainly am. Juba's new urban forms will emerge outside of government control, in the impromptu settlements at the edge of town. It is there, where different tribes cluster together uprooted from the structures of tribal and clan support, that a new nation will be born, if one is to be born, and it will grow as a new architectural form grows with it. That I am sceptical of the animal cities, however, does not mean that I do not realise their importance, for they answer, for the government, the question of how we live in the world together and recognise each other.

■

Workers clean the Konyo Konyo market's shops after the business day is over

Guilio Petrocco