



Centre of African Studies
University of Copenhagen



DISPLACEMENT, HOME-MAKING AND LIFE TRAJECTORIES

HOMe WAVes project internal seminar
Friday November 10th 2023

Background

HOWA is a European Union funded interdisciplinary research project grounded in Critical African Studies, examining how home-making is reshaped under flood risk exposure in Central Mozambique. The project is premised on the conception of *home-making* as a symbolic, self-authored act of positioning within society where the self and the social are mutually constituting, and of *house-building* as a self-authored and symbolic (non-spoken) language and, therefore, a fertile analytical field. The project draws on the notion of homes as speaking objects that tell us about the interconnections between individual journeys, kinship, the environment and the wider socio-political context.

In conditions of enforced material, social and symbolic disruption, as is the case with repeated experiences of flooding, home-making and house building together reveal the complex life paths enacted within (and without) them. Approximately one third of Mozambique's population live with permanent risk of flooding, and the resettlement practices that are the main response to this kind of vulnerability are increasingly structured and politicised.

Flood exposure is a particular circumstance of rupture of both physical and existential life and displacement is a condition of enforced spatial, material, symbolic and social disruption in which the restructuring of kinship relations inevitably alter the home-house-place node.

HOWA investigates how home-making is reshaped in (i) materiality, (ii) sociality and (iii) temporality under flood exposure and displacement, and in relation to which life trajectories are enacted by- and entangled with- the act of home-making pre- and post-flood experiences, through the following research objectives:

RO.1) (Materiality) To identify how material and spatial manifestations in home-making and reconstruction processes under flood risk generate a shift in meaning in the concept and use of home.

RO.2) (Sociality) To explore how home-making practices and social and familial relationships are reshaped in unpredictable and protracted conditions of flood exposure and displacement.

RO.3) (Temporality) To comprehend how life-trajectories are affected by home-making under flood risk conditions.

The project is grounded analytically within relational and interdisciplinary approaches applied to the multiple dimensions of displacement. Different types of setting (urban areas, resettlements and transitional sites) are explored, making use of clusters of methods guided by the house biographical approach.





Objective of the seminar

The seminar marks an important milestone in the project process, by opening an interdisciplinary space of conversation and discussion after the conclusion of the first period of fieldwork, with the aim of better structuring the project findings and orienting the subsequent phase of analysis of the collected material and narratives.

By bringing together the Project Advisory Board and other experienced scholars on matters related to the three research objectives, the purpose of this seminar is to spark an interdisciplinary discussion around the entanglements between the condition of displacement, the process of home-making and the shaping of life trajectories, applied to the exposed fieldwork cases.

Format and themes

After the presentation of the project fieldwork methodology, preliminary findings and main cases, the seminar will be structured in three different spaces of conversation, namely: materiality, temporality and sociality. The three spaces will initially be oriented by the researcher (Anna Mazzolini) and the project supervisor (Amanda Hammar) through pre-processed key questions. The responsible scholars will then give their contributions in order to help re-orient, deepen and support the research with both methodological and theoretical feedback, views and insights.

Participants

The seminar brings together experienced scholars in various fields such as anthropology, political economy, architecture and urban studies, and migration and displacement studies, many with long-time ethnographic research experience in Mozambique and other countries in the southern Africa region including Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

HOWA researcher: Dr Anna Mazzolini

Project Supervisor: Prof. Amanda Hammar

Project Advisory Board:

Prof. Morten Nielsen, National Museum of Denmark

Prof. Julia Pauli, University of Hamburg

Prof. Jorgen Eskemose Andersen, Royal Danish Academy

Additional participants:

Dr Flora Botelho, University of Copenhagen

Prof. Jon Schubert, University of Basel





PROGRAMME

The seminar starts at 10:00 in Room **8B-1-33**

10:00 - 10:15	Welcome	Amanda Hammar
10:15 - 11:00	Project and Fieldwork Presentation	Anna Mazzolini
11:00 - 11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15 - 12:15	Materiality	Morten Nielsen, Jorgen Eskemose Andersen
12:15 - 13:45	Lunch break	
13:45 - 14:45	Temporality	Jon Schubert, Amanda Hammar
14:45 - 15:45	Sociality	Julia Pauli, Flora Botelho
15:45 - 16:15	Coffee Break	
16:15 - 16:45	Plenary discussion	
	Closing	

Session 1 - MATERIALITY: HOMES and HOUSES

Brief Introduction through field cases: Anna Mazzolini

Discussion: Morten Nielsen and Jorgen Eskemose

Topic: Home-making involves a range of domestic, social and economic actions, including care work and material investment, that reflect one's positioning in time and space and define both identity and institutional and cultural belonging. In the act of inhabiting homes, spaces, language and emotions are mutually constituted. Housebuilding - the architectural and material components of making a home, and the relationship between the home and the plot, the home and the neighbourhood/settlement - stands as a language made up of layouts and construction choices, whose evolution is guided by the need to validate different types of legitimation (from the intimate to the social scale). Particularly in low-income contexts, people 'speak' by evoking the biographical resonance of houses. The symbolic meaning attached to house building also coincides with changes in the political-economic context (as in resettlement sites), the evolution of family structure and priorities, and shifts in social values.

In the context of severe flooding and lived displacement, home-making is manifested as a multi-layered condition of impermanence, often in relation to various forms of external state and international intervention. Confronted simultaneously with continuity and immobility, dependence and negotiation, both the metaphorical and material dimensions of home are altered.

Research objective addressed: RO1 To identify which material and spatial manifestations in home-making and reconstruction processes under flood risk, generate a shift in meaning in the concept and use of home.

Suggested discussion: The session will discuss both the material and symbolic meanings of home in a context of disruption, based on two very different cases: a rather segregated and "far from the city" resettlement site with little infrastructure, but where people are waiting for and receiving conventional houses (Mutua), and an old resettlement site integrated into a vibrant and growing rural space (Guara Guara), with huge investments in infrastructure that are gradually transforming the neighbouring zones.

Prof. Nielsen's and Eskemose's expertise in this field will serve to stimulate discussion (and challenge the cases presented both theoretically and methodologically) on issues such as legitimisation through house building and plot layout, social values attached to the process of house building, and the political economy of the choice



and use of building materials. The session could also focus on issues such as proximity to authority, the production of another form of citizenship through resettlement, and rural spatial planning.

Cases suitable for the discussion:

1. Mutua resettlement site:

- 1.1 At the resettlement scale: From an urban life to re-ruralisation through resettlement practices (main methodology: women's walk along, focus groups, visual anthropology, photography).
- 1.2 At the household level: Material choices in re-making houses, material traces and practices of permanence and impermanence.

2. Guara Guara resettlement site:

- 2.1 At the resettlement scale: Tracing the roots of the entanglements between territorial planning, risk perception and state intervention: 20 years of resettlement
- 2.2 At the household level: Elisa's house aesthetics. Attempts of a life redesign (main methodology: close-up photography).

Session 2. TEMPORALITY: DISRUPTION AND LIFE TRAJECTORIES

Brief Introduction through field cases: Anna Mazzolini

Discussion: Jon Schubert and Amanda Hammar

Topic: The urge to build a house and to make a home is recognised as a vital need in the creation and preservation of a legitimate human life path. Life trajectories are made tangible in material forms, such as through material investment or ritual actions. In Mozambique, people's life stories are usually related to the materiality of their houses (their house biography), through processes of (re)location over time and spatial appropriation processes. Disruptions occurring in lived disasters and displacement affect both the everyday and the imaginary of domesticity, and reproduction and production practices attached to a home, thus entwining human, social and material trajectories still further. In disruptive moments, home-making – at the core of the sufferers' recovery – includes not just a reimagined life path but also a recalibration of past understandings of risk. Home-making or remaking in disruptive contexts is also entangled with the changing roles of the actors managing reconstruction processes and their narrative. In Mozambique, the multidimensional, complex nature of flood exposure influences life trajectories profoundly, and is part of the socio-cultural context that requires an interdisciplinary, relational perspective, supplemented by close-up ethnography.

Research objective addressed: RO3 To explore how life-trajectories are affected by home and life remaking under repeated flood risk conditions, with attention to the influences of post-disaster political and social responses.

Suggested discussion: This session will focus on both the lived experiences of displacement and the complex web of projects, actors and practices that shape and influence them, as well as the perceived sense of future in the disrupted post-disaster scenario. Thanks to the ongoing research project of Prof. Schubert's ongoing research project, a city-level lens on the Beira context could open the discussion by portraying the actors involved in the political machine of material and rhetorical post-cyclone reconstruction. Prof. Hammar could complement this broader and contextual scenario by reflecting on and questioning the politicisation of displacement practices and its paradoxes, and in a second moment orient the discussion towards the relational and partly invisible dimensions of home-making under conditions of displacement that are rarely explored in post-disaster scenarios.



Cases suitable for the discussion:

1. **Munhava neighbourhood, Beira city.**
 - 1.1 At the neighbourhood level: “Cyclones don’t choose. Disaster language as political language”.
 - 1.2 At the household level: Bia’s house: “Televisions, walls and nipa. A businesswoman's choices and life after the disaster”.
2. **Mutua resettlement site.**
 - 2.1 The waiting life. Family portraits in Mutua (main methodology: house biographies)

Session 3. SOCIALITY: DISPLACEMENT, RESETTLEMENT AND GENDERED SPACES.

Brief Introduction through field cases: Anna Mazzolini

Discussion: Julia Pauli and Flora Botelho

Topic: Flood exposure is a particular circumstance of rupture of both physical and existential life. Displacement is a condition of enforced spatial, material, symbolic and social disruption, yet also embedded with continuities and imagined futures. In liminal settings, such as resettlement sites, a material and imaginary ‘otherwise’ is enacted in suspended time and a more mobile conception of home emerges. In this particularly uncertain time-flow, the life path of everyone is reframed by house-building, access to resources, and establishment of new entitlements among families, neighbours, and authorities. For those recurrently displaced or under threat, the reverberation of losses, forced change and restructuring of kinship relations inevitably alter the home-house-place node.

Home-making is clearly gendered, as homes are places of primary care but also sites of power relations and domestic inequities. The permanence of frailty in post-flood scenarios has profound effects on the performance of spatial and symbolic activities within homes that can only be fully understood if spaces are considered in their gendered functions. The everyday routines of social and spatial ordering within the home are deeply related to gender identities that inevitably change in disrupted contexts. Reading spaces in their gendered dimensions is a crucial tool to explore how displacement enforces the remaking of a home.

Research objective addressed: RO2 To examine how home-making practices and social and familial relationships are reshaped in unpredictable and protracted conditions of flood exposure and displacement.

Suggested discussion: This session will examine the micro-scale of families, taking a gendered perspective on houses as 'hierarchically structured' spaces of material and moral possibility. Reflecting on houses as spaces of symbolic embodiment of femininity and its role, and on house-building as a way of thinking about the future, the scholars will steer the discussion towards understanding changing conditions in a context of displacement. Investing in house building (or even waiting for a house) alters family roles and rights; decisions about house building are entangled with duties, rights and opportunities that are agreed upon or neglected. Changing the zone of residence and 're-ruralising' lives means significant social and intimate - sometimes violent - changes in the acquired rights of one or more women. The two scholars would guide the dialogue by highlighting, theoretically and methodologically, aspects of displacement that are linked to disruptions and/or discontinuities in the role of family members and women within society, both in physical and symbolic spaces.

Cases suitable for the discussion:

1. **Mutua resettlement site.**
 - 1.1 Intimacy, protection and marriage in resettlement: altered family roles and changing emotions.
 - 1.2 Homes’ gendered spaces: what’s home in displacement (main methodology: visual anthropology, group photography)
2. **Guara Guara resettlement.**
 - 2.1 Redefining femininity. Two cases.

