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The pursuit of self-reliance in the absence of aid

A case study on the survival strategies of Somalis in Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The tide is turning in Ethiopia. The country has traditionally held an open door policy towards refugees, but always kept its encampment policy and its restrictions on movement, employment and education. However, during the Leader's Summit on Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the country has strengthened its commitment to refugees by making nine pledges to strengthen the rights of, and service delivery for refugees, expand the Out-of-Camp Policy, and gradually phase out of encampment towards socio-economic integration. Meanwhile, the number of refugees entering Ethiopia is rising, which makes preventing (onward) migration and hosting refugees at the same time more important and more challenging than ever. This situation requires a new approach for refugee aid organisations, especially regarding their urban refugee programming. One of the approaches is socio-economic integration and supporting self-reliance. This thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the pursuit of self-reliance of the Somali refugees residing in Bole Mikael, a predominantly Somali neighbourhood of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. It is based on data gathered through interviews with Somali entrepreneurs and aid agencies, and observations over a period of eleven weeks in and around Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa.

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This study shows how Somalis in Bole Mikael make use of the age-old Somali clan system that provides the basis for both individual and collective self-reliance. It reveals the truly global character of the Somali people, who have spread to all corners of the world and managed to remain closely connected through a flow of people, remittances and trade. They have shaped Bole Mikael into the Somali hub of Ethiopia, connected to the wider Somali web of people worldwide. The main function of the neighbourhood is the function of the network. The network that provides its members with both financial, as well as social support. While Somalis draw upon their clan values and traditions in their pursuit of self-reliance in order to survive in the urban context of Addis Ababa, this study also shows that the formal aid organisations have not yet determined their position in the urban context in general, or in the Somali situation specifically.

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List of Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
AU	African Union
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EOC-DICAC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EUTF	European Union Emergency Trust Fund
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
NGO	Non-Profit Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCP	Out-of-Camp Policy
OPDO	Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organisation
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
ROV	Refugee Outreach Volunteers
SNM	Somali National Movement
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

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1. Introduction



Horn of Africa (Figure 1)

The Horn of Africa is home to one of the world's largest refugee and migratory flows. The region deals with both protracted conflicts and climatic challenges. Given the limited options for resettlement and the costly nature of irregular onward movement to third countries, the majority of refugees stays in the region for a long time. With over 905.000 registered refugees in the country as of August 2018, Ethiopia, home to over 100 million Ethiopian nationals, is the second largest host of refugees in the Horn of Africa (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018c). Most refugees originate from South Sudan (46,6%), Somalia (28,4%) and Eritrea (19,2%), with the majority residing in camps in the border regions (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018c).

Ethiopia is a country of origin, transit and destination for migration. Since the number of refugees entering Ethiopia is rising, preventing (onward) migration and hosting refugees at the same time has increasingly become more important and more challenging, Clementine Nkweta Salami—the UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia—emphasises during the various donor meetings with the Netherlands embassy in 2017. This growth and changing character of migration requires a new and integrated approach according to the Ethiopian- and refugee authorities (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018a). This approach is also a response to the traditional care and maintenance model that is now criticised as having created protracted refugee situations and the aid dependency of refugees. Phasing out of encampment is an increasingly popular subject. Especially for governments, since gradually moving away from encampment is supposed to alleviate the expensive institutional and humanitarian assistance to refugees that is now provided in the camps. It puts more emphasis on assisting refugees to provide for themselves, thereby giving them a chance/pushing them to (economically) contribute to their host country. Hence, local socio-economic integration in urban areas is one of the solutions that is put forward.

This thesis will shed a light on an aspect of the approach of local socio-economic integration, which seeks to offer development opportunities for both refugees and Ethiopian nationals. By doing so, this approach reframes the humanitarian issue into a developmental one. By reframing a

humanitarian issue into a developmental one, it takes away the urgency of the issue and the necessity of assistance. By emphasising that refugees are resilient people, capable of providing for themselves if the environment is enabling, the Ethiopian government and (inter)national aid community assume and aim to strengthen the case of phasing out of encampment. This assumption takes away refugees' vulnerability by putting them right next to Ethiopian nationals and it takes away the urgency of the aid agencies' and government's responsibility to protect and assist. These underlying assumptions of the local social-economic integration approach hence need to be revisited. This study will shed a light on the perspective and reasoning of the Ethiopian government and international aid community, who dominated and directed this narrative, and fills in the excluded perspective: that of the unregistered urban refugees themselves. This way it aims to turn the attention to the assistance-gap that is created by phasing out of encampment. If there is no transition and no realisation that only development aid is not enough in the case of urban refugee assistance, it abandons refugees in a challenging urban environment.

Bole Mikael, a Somali neighbourhood close to the city centre of Addis Ababa, is such a challenging urban environment where many Somali refugees and migrants live next to the Ethiopian host community. The Somalis living here receive no assistance from aid agencies or government whatsoever, but seem to pursue self-reliance drawing from their own strategies and social organisations. For a period of eleven weeks of fieldwork I studied this pursuit of self-reliance of Somali refugees and migrants and explored how they survive in the context of Bole Mikael. This study provides a local perspective of individual and collective self-reliance and how it is pursued in the absence of urban refugee assistance, in a dynamic environment where global social organisation is established locally in the neighbourhood colloquially referred to as "Little Mogadishu". It will thereby add new observations and a local perspective that challenges the approach and narrative that has been dominated by the Ethiopian government and the international aid community.

1.1 | *Problem statement*

The remainder of this introduction chapter elaborates on the problem statement, the description of the main issue that will be addressed, the target group of the study, and explains the objective and specific research questions.

As part of the solutions to the current challenges of the refugee situation in Ethiopia, the government and refugee authorities suggest local socio-economic integration of refugees. Hence, formal efforts to include opportunities for refugees in job creation are currently being prepared. As part of the nine pledges to strengthen refugee reception and protection, Ethiopia promises to expand the Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP) that currently only applies to Eritrean refugees to all other

nationalities. This OCP provides certain refugees with a permit to leave the (assistance in the) camp, so they can start a self-reliant life in urban areas¹. Also as part of the pledges, Ethiopia explores integrated solutions for refugees and their host communities by building industrial parks, which will provide jobs to Ethiopian nationals (70%) and refugees (30%) under the 'Jobs Compact'. The first OCP was implemented in August 2010 and since then many Eritreans left the camps (Africa Monitors, 2017); Over 16.000 Eritreans live in Addis Ababa under the OCP (Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), 2017).

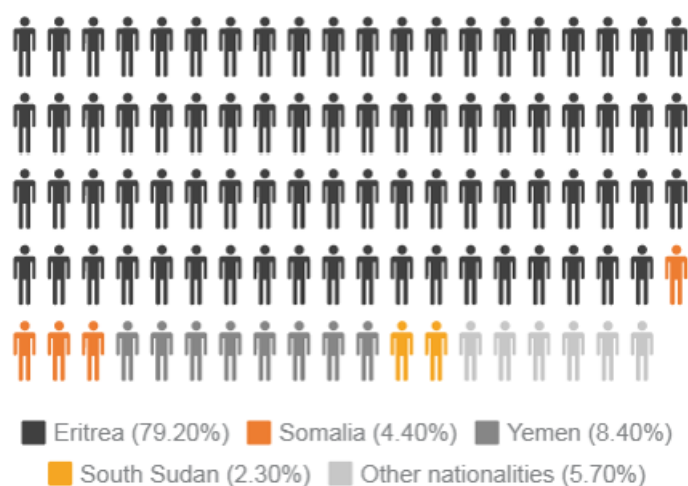
However, for these industrial parks to become operational with refugee employees, and for OCP refugees to be able to be truly self-reliant, Ethiopia should first take steps in the provision of work permits. At this moment, refugees are still not allowed to work in Ethiopia (Brown *et al.*, 2017). As long as refugees are constrained by these regulatory impediments, it will be impossible for them to enter the formal economy via this Jobs Compact construction or in urban areas in general. Hence, formal steps to enable socio-economic integration for refugees depend on the premise that first, the OCP actually expands to include refugees of all nationalities; and second, that the current restricting work permit regulation is amended to include urban refugees as well. As long as these premises are not implemented, formal efforts come to a standstill.

Simultaneously, the encampment policy and restrictions on movement still deny refugees the possibility of choosing life outside the camps without losing their entitlement to any form of assistance. Refugees that choose to live in urban areas are thus not only excluded from the possibility to provide for themselves by making a living in a legal way, they are also excluded from formal assistance that promised "investments in refugees self-reliance", and facilitation of local socio-economic integration (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018b). This makes it interesting to look into how urban refugees make a living under these restricting circumstances.

¹ Chapter 2.1 on the (policy) context of Ethiopia discusses this Out-of-Camp Policy more elaborately.

1.1.1 • Target group

The target group for this study is the Somali refugees in the largely Somali neighbourhood in Addis Ababa, Bole Mikael. Somali refugees take up a big proportion of urban refugees in Addis Ababa, but it remains unclear how big the total group of urban refugees actually is, since most of them prefer to stay unregistered and undocumented. The 16.000 Eritrean OCP refugees are part of a larger



estimated 31.000 refugees in Addis Ababa, together with registered urban refugees—who were allowed to leave the camp due to special medical needs or security concerns—and unassisted unregistered urban refugees, making up for about 21 nationalities (Brown *et al.*, 2017). Even though ARRA and UNHCR try to map all the urban refugees, information on (the status of) urban refugees in Addis Ababa is limited. Most of them are not registered and are

expected to depend on remittances and illegal informal economic activities. When they do register, they are often forced to go to the camps, where fixed and more comprehensive assistance is provided (Forced Migration Online, 2017). Even though there are a few programmes aiming to help urban refugees, they are only accessible for registered urban refugees and a few OCPs². However, they still receive only little support, because they are believed to be self-reliant without these formal economic opportunities (UNHCR, 2017; UNHCR Ethiopia, 2017). Moreover, this research found that the organisations that do have a programme for urban refugees are just now starting up the programmes and have only limited insight in the circumstances and needs of urban refugees in Addis Ababa, which is also merely based on Eritrean refugees (Awino, 2018; Hassen, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018). This leaves refugees with two choices. The first choice is staying in a camp, where they are provided with specialised assistance, but are deprived of their freedom of movement and the opportunity to make a living for themselves. Their second choice is illegally residing outside the camp, where they have the opportunity to informally make a living for themselves, but with the absence of any kind of refugee assistance. Somali refugees in Bole Mikael, chose the latter option and try to make a living in this non-enabling environment. How do they organise themselves and which support mechanisms do they adopt to be self-reliant, without a work-permit and with restrictive laws on informal activity?

² OCPs are refugees who benefit from the Out-of-Camp Policy

1.1.2 • Objective

The aim of this thesis is adding insights into how self-reliance is pursued by (unregistered) urban Somali refugees in Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa. The study explores their urban everyday lives and activities, as well as their coping mechanisms, the (lack of) available government assistance and (inter)national aid, and uncovers their alternative sources of social and financial support.

The study contributes to the current debate on ‘reception in the region’ around the idea that integration of refugees and host communities in the region is *the* solution for the current refugee ‘crisis’ in Europe. While in Europe it is presented as the solution for illegal migration towards the West, in the Horn of Africa it is presented as a durable solution benefitting both refugees and their host communities. With this approach, ‘durable solutions in the region’ is a tool European politicians use to manage their own ‘crisis’: unregulated migration into Europe (Jansen, 2016). This approach does not only try to push this ‘crisis’ back to the region, it also shifts the intention of intervention and assistance more and more towards a strategy of abandonment. The idea of the integration of refugees and host communities and the focus on self-reliance allows the West to take their hands off of the issue without being portrayed as inconsiderate or egocentric. If phasing out of encampment is the future prospect, then informality becomes a social reality and potentially (part of) a durable solution, especially when formal opportunities are restricted by regulatory impediments. It therefore is essential to gain insights into how urban refugees experience and navigate the informal life in the city. Moreover, it is important to criticise the assumed resilience and capability of refugees to provide for themselves. Even though we should acknowledge that refugees are not merely passive and needy people, but also active agents with valuable skills (Collier and Betts, 2017), it should not be over-emphasised. Refugees remain a group of people with specific needs and vulnerabilities (Jacobsen, 2006).

This study argues that urban refugees should not be considered an economic burden on the city they reside in, provided that they are not held back by restrictive rules and regulations and that they are not left to their fate. The burden of hosting refugees in the form of increasing welfare costs, hindering national economic growth and provoking political strains used to be emphasised. However, in the past few years other academics also started contesting this view on hosting refugees, arguing that refugees bring benefits and opportunities as well. They do not only bring skills, they are also active consumers of food and commodities and they are contributors to the local economy (Grabska, 2006; Zetter, 2012; Betts *et al.*, 2014). Even though refugees can bring benefits and opportunities by contributing to the local economy, it does not mean the urban environment always brings benefits and possibilities for them. Urban refugees are often associated with what Dale Buscher calls the “premise of advantage”; it is often assumed that the urban environment, opposed to encampment, offers urban refugees easy access to money and opportunities in general and that they are therefore

less in need of assistance (Buscher, 2003). This assumption contributes to their abandonment and results in little (or inconsistent) support from aid agencies or the government. Apart from lacking assistance, unregistered urban refugees deal with discrimination, xenophobia, and living undocumented, restricting their work opportunities (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Closing this knowledge and attention gap by developing a better understanding the informal socio-economic lives of (unregistered) urban refugees and how/if they receive support from the aid community, might lead to changing views on the refugee assistance approach as a whole (Kobia and Cranfield, 2009; Betts *et al.*, 2014). Also with the eye on the expensive nature of encampment and its dependence on humanitarian assistance, it is insightful to know more about the strategies refugees outside the camps draw from, the possibilities the urban context offers them and the regulatory changes it requires to enable those possibilities. Especially since Ethiopia aims to gradually phase out of encampment and the UN member states in general have committed to a declaration that includes the proposition that refugee camps should form the exception instead of the rule (Collier and Betts, 2017).

1.1.3 • Research Questions

The main question explores the pursuit of self-reliance of Somali refugees in Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa and how the institutional context (including government and international aid organisations) and the informal strategies enable this. It aims to provide a perspective on the routine, strategies and impediments of urban refugees, thereby proving an insight into how they maintain themselves and how/if they are provided with, and seek assistance. It works with the idea that living and working in informality is normal for urban refugees, but pose a new normality for the aid sector, which therefore needs to (re)position itself in this normality.

The main research question this study answers is:

How do Somali refugees survive in Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa, and how does the aid sector position itself in this context?

Two components/sub-questions are identified to help answer the main question:

1. *Which informal alternatives and networks exist and what (perceived) opportunities and limitations do they offer Somali refugees in Bole Mikael?*

After a first exploration on the availability of formal refugee assistance in Addis Ababa, it became clear that the available assistance was solely provided to registered refugees (including OCPs and urban registered refugees who are legally residing outside the camps because of medical or security

reasons). No formal assistance whatsoever is provided to unregistered refugees. Moreover, even among the urban registered refugees, Somalis were least likely to receive formal assistance. This will be discussed in chapter 6 on formal urban refugee assistance.

Hence, in order to answer the main research question, this component explores the informal alternatives and networks Somali refugees in Bole Mikael draw from. Throughout this study, refugees are considered social agents that actively choose to seek access to aid (or actively choose not to seek aid) and socio-economic opportunities, thereby shaping and sustaining it (Jansen, 2015). This component elaborates on how urban refugees navigate in social networks. It will explore the informal structures and support mechanism between refugees themselves and the importance of social networks and ethnicity in sustaining themselves. Social networks can be considered a source of support that is crucial for refugee settlement in a specific place; prior existence of a certain ethnic group or nationality is a known influence on the choice for a place of (temporary) settlement (Jacobsen, 2006). Social networks and informality will be put in the perspective of social and mixed embeddedness. This theory argues that individuals take part in ethnically specific economic networks that facilitate their business operations. Considering mixed embeddedness includes encompassing the interaction between the social, economic and institutional contexts (Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 2010). This component will furthermore embrace the notion of transnationality in the perspective of the globalising economy, looking into the way in which refugees create and maintain their social relationships that bring together the places they have lived, stayed or are connected to in another way, which embed their livelihoods and economic activities (Campbell, 2005, 2006b).

A second part of this component explores the spatiality of the question: what is the role of spatial determination? The neighbourhood is not just a mere demarcation in the city, Corsín Jiménez argues that “space is no longer a category of fixed and ontological attributes, but a becoming, an emergent property of social relationship. Put somewhat differently, social relationships are inherently spatial, and space an instrument and dimension of space’s sociality” (Corsín Jiménez, 2003).

2. *What challenges do aid actors perceive in supporting urban refugees and what are the alternatives for them?*

This component explores the disconnection between the available aid and the needs of its beneficiaries. It is again divided into two parts: one looking into the available aid and the challenges aid actors perceive in supporting Somali urban refugees; the other part takes one step further and looks into the aspects of alternative initiatives which can serve as examples for the repositioning of formal urban refugee aid sector. We will see that in the absence of appropriate assistance, urban

refugees resort into supporting themselves in the informal sector. Even though this has become a normality for them, it is still new to the aid sector.

1.2 | *Thesis outline*

This first chapter was a brief introduction into the topic of this thesis and its research questions. Before I elaborate on the conceptual framework for this study, I discuss the broader context of Ethiopia and Somalia and their migration-relation in chapter two. This will provide the foundation for a better understanding of the current situation of Somalis in Addis Ababa and the survival strategies they draw upon. Chapter three will cover the conceptual framework, in which I will reflect on the protracted refugee situation which urged an (ideological) shift from the encampment rationale to the support of autonomy through local socio-economic integration; on the concept urban refugee and the introduction of the 'hub'; and finally on the concept self-reliance itself, by discussing the livelihood component, and both individual, as well as collective self-reliance. In chapter four I will discuss the methodology of this study and my reflection on the choices I made during the process. Chapter five explores the streets of Bole Mikael. This chapter will take you to the field where I conducted this study and reflect on the spatiality of the research question. It will show the importance of the network, collective self-reliance and the location itself. In chapter six I elaborate on the availability of formal urban refugee assistance—or rather its unavailability—and on the informal alternatives that have found ground in Bole Mikael. This chapter will show the disconnection between formal assistance and its (intended) beneficiaries and discusses the experiences and survival strategies of various Somalis that arrived in Addis Ababa and managed to support themselves. In the seventh and last chapter I will reflection on my findings overall and answer the main research question.

2. Context

In order to better understand the previously discussed research questions and the conceptual framework of this study that will be discussed in the next chapter, it is necessary to provide some contextual information. Therefore, this chapter introduces the background story and sets the scene for the rest of the study. It firstly discusses the current situation in Ethiopia and its refugee and migration policies, followed by a brief overview of the (recent) history of Somalia and their migration-relation with Ethiopia.

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2.1 | *Ethiopia*

Ethiopia has traditionally held an open door policy towards refugees. Its encampment policy and restrictions on movement, employment and education, confine refugees to reside in camps, with the exception of the few refugees that are allowed to live in urban areas for medical or security reasons (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2016). As laid out in the Ethiopia Refugee Proclamation 409/2004, Ethiopian authorities “may designate places and areas in Ethiopia within which recognised refugees, persons who have applied for recognition as refugees and family members thereof shall live, provided that the areas designated shall be located at reasonable distance from the border of the country of origin or of former habitual residence” (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2004). Besides medical and security reasons, the Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP) permits Eritrean refugees to live outside the camps, provided that they have a ‘sponsor family’ or that they can support themselves (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2016). The main reason put forward by Ethiopian officials on why this OCP is only applicable for Eritrean refugees at the moment lies in the common past of Eritreans and Ethiopians, which still shows in strong cultural relations and existing Eritrean networks that make it easier to sustain themselves and live side by side with Ethiopians (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014). However, similar characteristics can be attributed to Somali refugees. Somali people recognise the border of the territory of their clans, not necessarily national borders, like the border between Somali Regional State in Ethiopia and Somalia itself. Hence culture and tradition go beyond the Somali border and the Somali networks reach as far as Addis Ababa and further. One of the reasons to keep Somalis out of the scheme initially can be related to security risks, given the geopolitical and security context and the history of tension and conflict between the two countries (elaborated on in the later this chapter).

2.1.1 • *Promising changes*

During the Leader's Summit on Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the Government of Ethiopia has strengthened its commitment to refugees by making nine pledges to strengthen the rights of, and service delivery for refugees, expand the OCP to other nationalities and gradually phase out of encampment towards socio-economic integration (Tesfaye, 2017). This strengthened commitment to refugees stands out against the current situation within the country. Although the Ethiopian economy is rapidly growing, it is still one of the poorest countries in the region (World Bank, 2017). The high unemployment rate, the lack of opportunities for Ethiopian youth and ethnic discrimination led to unrest in October 2016 and again to ethnic clashes second half of 2017 and begin this year, resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on February 15, and the declaration of the State of Emergency the following day (TesfaNews, 2018). On April 2nd, Abiy Ahmed from the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), part of the incumbent coalition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), was sworn in as the new prime minister. With an orthodox Christian mother and a Muslim father, a fluency in the main languages of Ethiopia and a master's degree in Transformational Leadership and Change he brings hope for a more united Ethiopia. From the moment he was installed, he has taken radical steps to reform the country and to restore the people's trust in the Ethiopian politics. He lifted bans on the Internet and other media, freed thousands political prisoners, ordered partial privatisation of the hitherto state-owned companies like telecom, reorganised and installed a new cabinet and ended the state of emergency. He even reached out to Eritrea and signed the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship on July 9th to formally end the border conflict between the countries. These are very positive and hopeful steps, but the public is still waiting for a major reform in the currently autocratic nature of decision-making, which does not well enough represent the diversity of the Ethiopian people (Burke, 2018). Even though Abiy Ahmed brought hope to the country and received praise for his reformist agenda from all over the world, communal violence over land issues persist and ethnic clashes between youths from rival ethnic groups continues (Al Jazeera, 2018).

2.1.2 • *The migration-situation and policy responds*

The high unemployment rate and lack of opportunities are not only a cause of the current (ethnic) clashes, but combined with the consequences of climate change—extreme drought and floods—they are a common cause of (onward) migration as well. As stated previously, Ethiopia is a country of origin, transit and destination for migration and since the number of refugees entering Ethiopia is rising, preventing (onward) migration and hosting refugees at the same time has increasingly become more important and more challenging (UNHCR meetings, 2017). This growth and changing

character of migration requires a new and integrated approach according to the Ethiopian- and refugee authorities (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018a).

Phasing out of encampment is an increasingly popular subject. Even though the phenomenon of the urbanisation of refugees is not new, for policy-makers and the aid sector it is a growing concern now more camps become protracted and more refugees seek opportunities in urban areas. It is increasingly recognised that camps are “neither the best option, nor the future of refugee protection and provision” (Sanyal, 2012). However, camps were often posed as the preferred solution by governments, because it distinguishes refugees from the national community, thereby reducing tensions over scarcity (Jacobsen, 2006; Sanyal, 2012). Currently, governments see that gradually phasing out of encampment might have two auspicious side effects: it likely alleviates the expensive institutional and humanitarian assistance to refugees that is now provided in the camps, and it puts more emphasis on assisting refugees to provide for themselves, thereby giving them a chance to (economically) contribute to the country. Local socio-economic integration in urban areas is not the only proposed alternative for the old-fashioned camp. Hybrid settlement is another alternative, which aims to link a refugee site to its surroundings and to empower both refugees and host communities through mainstreamed services and livelihood opportunities (UNHCR, 2009).

There are various ways for the Ethiopian government and the international community to go about tackling the challenges caused by the recent influx of refugees, the protracted situation in some of the camps and the continuing trend of irregular (onward) migration. The three main ways of doing so include (1) integrated basic service delivery, which still has a focus on encampment, but directs the humanitarian and development aid to both the refugees in the camp as well as the host community of that camp. This way the needs of the host community, often living in harsh conditions, are acknowledged and first steps towards easing tension between the two groups are intended; (2) awareness raising of dangers and risks of irregular migration, by anti-human trafficking campaigns that raise awareness of the harsh reality of irregular migration and try to show opportunities and benefits of staying in Ethiopia, but offers no actual ‘practical’ help; and (3) socio-economic integration. As discussed in chapter 1.1 ‘The context of the research question’, this thesis will zoom in on the third option: local socio-economic integration, which seeks to offer development opportunities for both refugees and Ethiopian nationals.

2.2 | *Context Somalia*

This chapter aims to show us that migration of Somalis is not a new phenomenon and that it even is a part of the nomadic identity of the Somali people. It also aims to remind us that we neither should

forget that this old habit of nomadic migration through the Horn of Africa not always has been voluntary. At times it has been forced by conflict or sometimes natural disasters, as is the case for the Somalis. The chapter starts off with a brief introduction into migratory flows in the Horn of Africa in general, followed by a section that will zoom in specifically on the dynamics within Somalia in the recent history and their migration relation with Ethiopia. This chapter is based on both literature and ethnographic data, which will be used interchangeably.

2.2.1 • *Context migration in Horn of Africa to Ethiopia*

The movement of people across borders is not a new phenomenon. The Horn of Africa has been home to nomadic people for centuries, and it still is. It is host to one of the world's largest migratory flows, both voluntary and forced. Drivers of forced migration vary from ethnic violence and conflict in South Sudan, to economic deprivation and the open-ended and arbitrary duration of military service in Eritrea, to conflict and food insecurity in Somalia, as well as the prolonged droughts and devastating floods throughout the region as a result of climate change (Tadesse Abebe, 2018; UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018d). Given the limited options for resettlement and the costly nature of irregular onward movement to third countries, the majority of refugees stays in the region for a long time. For many refugees and migrants in the region Ethiopia is a popular migration destination. In comparison to its neighbouring countries, Ethiopia is relatively politically stable and it has traditionally held an open door policy towards refugees (Brown *et al.*, 2017). Ethiopia aims to become one of the most progressive countries in Africa in responding to forced migration and has already been praised by both the UN secretary-General Antonio Guterres who described Ethiopia as a "pillar of refugee protection", and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi who said that Ethiopia and its refugee protection regime are a "shining example of African hospitality" (Tadesse Abebe, 2018). If they are implemented properly, the new pledges Ethiopia has made following the Leader's Summit on Refugees and Migrants in 2016 to strengthen its commitment to the reception and protection of refugees, will indeed make for a progressive protection regime.

Within the region there are three key migration dynamics driven by conflict. Apart from the displacement resulting from the conflict in South Sudan and the outmigration of Eritreans as a result of the national service requirements and the prolonged political tensions, there is the displacement of Somalis which has been going on since the 1980s and accelerated after the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991. Even though a large proportion of Somalis is internally displaced, Somalis have also sought refuge in neighbouring countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, to flee violence and humanitarian suffering. Those three migration flows all find their (temporary) destination in Ethiopia, and all close to the border of their place of origin (Tadesse Abebe, 2018; UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018d).

The majority of refugees in Ethiopia are received in three parts of the country. The southwest regions of Ethiopia are host to over 422.000 South Sudanese fleeing from ethnic violence and conflict (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018c). The influx of South Sudanese refugees after the renewed violence in 2016 filled the camps in southwest region Gambella, forcing the Ethiopian government and UNHCR to open new camps and relocate over 3.000 newcomers to the new camps in the Benishangul-Gumuz region in 2017 (IOM, 2017). The northern Tigray region hosts the approximately 197.000 Eritrean refugees (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018c). In July 2018 Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace agreement, but since conditions in Eritrea remain unchanged and the border is reopened in September following that agreement, the number of refugees crossing to Shire region has grown and is likely to continue rising, according to the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and UNHCR Ethiopia (ECHO, 2018). The third migration flow is hosted in Somali Regional State, in the east of Ethiopia. Approximately 257.000 Somali refugees are received in camps both near the border in the north, as well as near the border in the south of the region (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2018c). This chapter will elaborate on the dynamics in Somalia that play an important part in the causing the flow of Somali refugees into Ethiopia.

2.2.2 • *The Somali nomadic lifestyle*

The remainder of this chapter will further zoom in on the dynamics within Somalia. Firstly, by elaborating on their old tradition of movement across regions as a nomadic people, and followed by a brief insight into the internal conflict in Somalia since their independence, and the Ogaden-War with Ethiopia.

Their relation with migration is already in the name of the country and its people itself, as I discovered during one of my conversations with Anwar during the first weeks of observation in the Bole Mikael. Anwar always walked a few blocks with me when I saw him on the street. He is fluent in Somali, Arabic and Amharic, but since I do not speak Arabic or Somali at all and only know a few words and sentences in Amharic, our conversations were limited. He would point at things and tell me the word in one of his languages, and I would tell him the word in one of mine. One day he told the lady that was selling us camel milk what we were doing, on which she points at herself and her jerrycan full of milk, and explains to me the origin of the word Somali: ‘Soo maal’ means ‘people that go (and) milk’. The origin of the word refers to their way of living, to nomadic pastoralism. Somalis traditionally kept camels, cows and goats, and had a nomadic lifestyle throughout the Horn of Africa, which they still do. So also for Somalis the movement across borders is not a new phenomenon. However, past and current regional political insecurity and successive droughts, among other factors, make it difficult for them to continue the nomadic pastoralist lifestyle they used to have and forced

them to diversify and adopt alternative livelihood strategies (Ayuub, 2018). Many Somalis gave up their pastoralist lives, but continue their nomadic lives: they still go from place to place for work and increasingly also for higher education and vocational training (Carruth, 2018).

Their nomadic lifestyle is illustrative for Somalis and is made possible, or at least made easier, by the strong kinship ties among Somalis. Uncles, brothers, cousins and friends help each other out and enable each other in their migrations and trading or other types of business. Somali societies are patriarchally structured and comprised of various autonomous groups: clans and smaller kinship groups/sub-clans. They are known to be very loyal to their clan and family, but relationships and networks are also formed outside clan and kinship groups and outside patriarchal lines (Lewis, 1999). This network forming between clans used to be a survival strategy in for example dry periods, in order to access water or fertile ground, but nowadays this same network is used to pool financial resources, share houses, health insurance, jobs, transport, etcetera. Sub-clans form networks and help each other out financially, and in various other ways; “Kinship among Somalis in Ethiopia is fundamentally and primarily a mechanism by which people cope with inadequate governmental and social services, political disfunction, violence and ensuing humanitarian emergencies” (Carruth, 2018). Even though Somalis in Ethiopia still live in the margins, their livelihoods and nomadic lifestyle subsist thanks to the financial, logistical and social support from their family and their network. The fact that Somalis live spread through the Horn of Africa, enables their mobility. It assures them that wherever they go, there will be a network that can support them both financially and socially, even if they do not know the people personally. During the conversations and interviews conducted for this study it became clear to me that the Somalis I talked to were all very proud of their nomadic subsistence and broad network. It was often emphasised how well business is going for them because of this lifestyle and network.

2.2.3 • *Dynamics in Somalia and the Barre regime*

Even though their mobility characterises them because of their nomadic lifestyle, it does not mean that their migrations were—and are—always voluntary. As briefly described above, Somalia is a focal point of crises and displacement. Many Somalis are spread out throughout the Horn of Africa and beyond to escape conflict and war. Somalia’s crisis of the state collapse has been profound and protracted. Almost a decade after their independence from England and Italy, Mohammed Siyad Barre became the president of Somalia by taking over power in a coup on 21 October 1969. Barre installed a dictatorship and suspended customary laws by replacing them with his own state laws, actively promoting regional and clan rivalry; oppression and corruption took over (Murunga, 2009). Since the formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) in the 1980s, a rebel group fighting

against Barre's authoritarian and corrupt regime, Somalia has been an epicentre of violent conflict, humanitarian suffering and displacement (Lewis, 1989; Murunga, 2009). Terrorism along clan lines surfaced excessively; the SNM's rebel resistance inspired more rebel groups to stand up and fight against Barre, resulting into open rebellion that eventually ended his rule in 1991 (Research and Evidence Facility for the EUTF, 2017). Characteristic for the period following the end of Barre's dictatorship was the continuing militarisation of the people and the availability of guns, which started during his rule. The then secretary general of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali emphasised the vulnerability of the situation and the state of crisis in Somalia: "There are more arms than food in Somalia. [...] These arms were not fabricated by Somalis. They were given by the outside world, to serve outside interests. Those who provide arms are partners in the crime" (Murunga, 2009). This provision of 'aid' started during Barre's rule. His military budget exceeded every budget in Africa and largely depended on external aid. First the US suspended its military and economic aid when the rebel situation got out of hand and rivalry terrorised the country. The Soviet Union took over, but abandoned Somalia for communist Ethiopia during the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia, which pushed Somalia to again seek support from the US and later from Italy as well. However, aid came at a steep cost over time, leaving Somalia not only weak, but also "poverty-stricken, highly militarised and in general chaos" (Murunga, 2009).

2.2.4 • *The Ogaden War and the aftermath of the Barre regime*

The Somali presence in Ethiopia has a multi-layered past. A large part of Somali Regional State in Ethiopia is taken up by an area called the Ogaden. The Ogaden region is a dry, desert-like area between the Ethiopia-Somali border and the Eastern Ethiopian highlands, almost entirely inhabited by Somalis. This Ethiopia-Somali border has always been porous. Under the emperor Menelik II, towards the end of the 19th century, Ethiopia claimed the Ogaden. Unrest resumed when Somalia gained its independence in 1960 and desired a greater Somalia, including the Ogaden region in Ethiopia. In 1974 Mengistu Haile Mariam, later known as the dictator during the Red Terror period under the Derg, staged a coup and overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. So while Somalia was gaining strength, Ethiopia fell into internal conflict and suffered under the Derg's terror regime (Lewis, 1989). These developments encouraged the Ogadeni to take this opportunity and fight for their independence with the support of the at that time (militarily) stronger Somalia. The Ogaden War (July 1977 – March 1978) started with the invasion of the Ogaden region by Somali forces, led by Barre, to push out the Ethiopians of their "Greater Somalia", but developed into an extension of the Cold War when the Soviet Union and the US became involved. As explained before, the Soviet Union turned its back on Somalia and started to support the communist Derg regime, which enabled them

to regain power over the Ogaden region. The following years were marked by a huge influx of Ogadeni refugees into Somalia (Lewis, 1989; Murunga, 2009).

At the same time, during the late 1980s, Siyad Barre started to face resistance within Somalia (Murunga, 2009). The defeat in the Ogaden War contributed to the downfall of the Barre regime, that was no longer capable of exercising power and control over Somalia. Clan-affiliated resistance increased and grew out into the Somali Civil War between various armed rebel groups, but with countless civilian casualties resulting in the mass displacement of Somalis. The crisis following the collapse of the state has been severe and left Somalia without a well-functioning central government ever since. Instead of a united front, the Barre-era produced fragmented militia groups, all organised along clan lines, who turned against each other as soon as Barre was defeated. This left the country without a ruling entity that provided security or laws and it left the population to fend for themselves (Lewis, 1989; Hesse, 2013).

In response to this lawlessness a system of courts came together and formed the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU slowly gained support and eventually even engaged in negotiations on power-sharing with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (Stanford University, 2016). The TFG was established and internationally recognised as the interim government of Somalia in 2004. However, both parties remained divided over key issues which increased the tensions between them. Moreover, the ICU revived the idea of a “Greater Somalia”, an idea that temporarily took a backseat during the Civil War, but was never really faded. The Greater Somalia is the idea of a united country inhabited by all Somalis, including the 5 regions of Somalia: British- and Italian Somalia (current Somalia), eastern Djibouti, north-eastern Kenya, and the Ogaden region in west Ethiopia. Even though they did not reveal how they would pursue this idea, the leader of the ICU assured that they would “leave no stone unturned to integrate our Somali brothers in Kenya and Ethiopia and restore their freedom to live with their ancestors in Somalia” (Hassan Dahir Aweys, 2006, quoted in: Hesse, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the ICU did not enjoy much international support, whereas the support for the TFG grew. As their disagreements remained, both parties continued their military preparations, which eventually led to a fighting near the end of 2006. The TFG was militarily supported by Ethiopia and together they expelled the ICU from Mogadishu. This had important repercussions for the country: the military wing of the ICU parted with the resigned ICU leaders and became an independent militant group, known as Al-Shabaab. Up until today, attempts to help bring together a functional national administration have failed, including attempts of the UN and the AU. Somalia remains unstable and rebels are still in control of many regions in the south and north-east of the country, although the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), with the support of AMISOM, succeeded in pushing back Al-Shabaab from major cities. Nevertheless, violent surprise attacks still often happen directed at public figures or buildings in the cities. Hence, mass displacement

continues. For a large part internally, but many cross the border to Ethiopia and other countries as well (Barnes and Hassan, 2007; Hesse, 2013).

2.3 | *Conclusion*

This chapter discussed the current situation in Ethiopia and its refugee and migration policies, to provide a better understanding of the (changing) environment in which Somali refugees ended up. It also provided a brief overview of the (recent) history of Somalia and their migration-relation with Ethiopia, to elucidate the complex reasoning behind fleeing conflict in Somalia, while considering their troubled history with Ethiopia.

3. Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the following interconnected concepts: the protracted refugee situation, urban refugee, and self-reliance. Starting with the *protracted refugee situation*. This concept is important to consider in the context of this study, because it partly urged the paradigm shift from the prevailing rationale of encampment (back) to supporting autonomy and local (socio-economic) integration. The already significant number of *urban refugees* worldwide and in Ethiopia specifically, will arguably continue to grow with the current intention to phase out of encampment. The concept of the urban refugee will not only be discussed as a whole, but its two components—*refugee* and *urban*—will also individually be considered. It will discuss both the physical and social importance of space, in this case Bole Mikael, the physical location of this study, in a sub-chapter on introducing the ‘hub’. Lastly, this study argues that the current refugee assistance system (in Ethiopia) is still mainly tailored and directed to encamped refugees, urban refugees are expected to be more self-reliant, without the help of institutional or humanitarian aid. *Self-reliance* is hence an important concept to tackle in this conceptual framework, it will be discussed by touching upon the concept of livelihood, and the individual and collective component of self-reliance. In this chapter all the above concepts are explained and linked to each other.

3.1 | *Protracted refugee situation*

In regions with enduring conflict, like the Horn of Africa, protractedness is a reality. A protracted refugee situation is defined by UNHCR to be “one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance” (UNHCR, 2004). Refugee assistance has long been approached solely on the humanitarian aspect, which used to be based on the idea that the refugee situation was temporary and that this situation of ‘crisis’ was exceptional and therefore incompatible with a ‘normal’ situation. International aid organisations could operate in isolation from the rest of the host country, as Hilhorst explains: “a strong symbol of this image was the camp where people came for refuge, disconnected from their networks, livelihoods and societies and completely dependent on the goodwill of international care” (Hilhorst, 2016). However, as refugee situations became more protracted, the dominant notion of humanitarian relief in refugee situations began to change. Humanitarian assistance may still be considered a relevant response to receiving refugees from war-torn or disaster inflicted countries as a first emergency response; and organisations like UNHCR, together with many refugee assistance

NGOs, are indeed very well equipped to help in those emergency situations. However in protracted situations, the needs of the refugees change and so should the response to it (Collier and Betts, 2017). That dominant classical narrative has shifted the last decade to a narrative that acknowledges the continuing normality in crisis situations and recognises local people and institutions as first responders to crises as well (Hilhorst, 2018). This paradigm shift pushes the idea that the gap between humanitarian aid and development aid has to be closed.

3.1.1 • *A shift from encampment to integration*

Currently, a new approach has been adopted to bring humanitarian aid and development closer together (European Commission, 2017). The reality of protractedness partly encouraged the paradigm shift from the prevailing rationale of encampment (back) to supporting autonomy and local integration. Heretofore, countries hosting refugees, but also refugee authorities such as UNHCR, had little attention for the possibilities of local socio-economic integration (Crisp, 2003). There were not yet convincing results contradicting the prevailing traditional idea that refugees are a burden on the host country and a possible threat to national security. However, prolonged humanitarian assistance is simply too expensive, and at the same time development aid will have no basis in reality if emergency care has not yet been provided.

This new approach does not only bring humanitarian and development aid together, it also aims to close the gap between refugee and host-community assistance, which is crucial considering the fact that refugees are often hosted in the poorer parts of the world, in the disadvantaged areas of the host countries. Taking into account the fact that many refugees are born in the camps, it becomes understandable that the needs of the protracted refugees start to resemble the needs of the host community. It is important to understand that a protracted situation is not merely the result of ongoing conflict or political impasse in the country of origin, it is also a result of the host country's response to the continuing influx, which typically involves "restriction on refugee movement and employment possibilities, and confinement to camps" (Loescher and Milner, 2009). This reinforces that outdated idea of refugees as a burden to the host country. An recent example of an attempt to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development assistance by addressing the needs of both the refugees as well as the host community can be found in the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP). The RDPP is a programme focusing on integrated durable solutions in a refugee-producing region that has been launched by the EU in various regions in the world, including the Horn of Africa.

A consequence of not matching assistance to the needs of the refugees, is that they find their own strategies to survive, which in some cases mean (illegally) moving out of the camp, into

urban areas. Hence, it is not always the refugee that is protracted, sometimes it is the camp that has become protracted, with refugees moving in and out when it suits them (Jansen, 2015). If the needs of refugees in a country are changing, so should the assistance. If local integration is pushed forward as a (durable) solution, it may be necessary to simultaneously implement alternative durable solutions concerning economic self-reliance for urban refugees, such as regulations around refugee work permits (Jacobsen, 2001; Crisp, 2004; Campbell, 2006b).

It is important to understand the concept of the protracted refugee situation in this study, because it has been one of the driving factors behind this paradigm shift and, more importantly, behind the nine pledges the Ethiopian government has made regarding their strengthened commitment to the reception and protection of refugees (discussed in chapter 2.1.1 on promising changes in Ethiopia) and it thereby contributes to the future implications for the refugee assistance in the urban areas of Ethiopia.

3.2 | *Urban refugee*

3.2.1 • *Refugee versus migrant*

Before elaborating on the concept of *urban* refugee, I start with briefly introducing the second component itself: *refugee*. Although its meaning now seems straightforward, it has not always been that clear. Before the 1950s refugees would fall under the nominator migrant. This is a much broader concept than the concept refugee currently is. A migrant is “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is” (IOM, 2018).

Treating refugees as migrants fails to ensure the necessary protection. In the 1950s this protection gap was addressed by the separate category for refugees, which allowed them to cross borders, claim asylum and receive tailored humanitarian assistance. Now, following the definition provided by UNHCR, a refugee is “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries” (UNHCR, 2018). However, as Long argues, deliberately setting apart refugees from migrants does not only protect refugees from harm and persecution, it also in a way prevents them from finding durable solutions in the form of being able to secure their own economic livelihood, instead of being restricted to depend on receiving humanitarian assistance

(Long, 2013). Moreover, the distinction between 'refugee' and 'migrant' also ignores the possibility that in reality these categories are rather blurred.

This consideration turned out to be more important in this study than I expected it to be. I noticed that the distinction between those categories becomes more complicated when the people behind those concepts sometimes shift between identifying as a refugee and identifying as a migrant. You might have noticed already that in this thesis the word migrant and refugee have been used interchangeably for the target group of this study: Somalis living in Bole Mikael. In the methodology I will discuss the struggle with terminology more elaborately. For now I continue to use the distinction made by IOM and UNHCR. Before moving on to the urban component of this paragraph, I would like to emphasise that the simultaneous existence of mobility and immobility is an essential part of the definition and understand of the concept refugee. Refugees are defined by their forced movement from one place to another, and upon arrival in the host country they are often stripped of their freedom of mobility and put in camps, unable to legally move on without documents. Apart from the physical movement, the actual change of scenery, human mobility also involves a level of social change (Cunningham and Heyman, 2004). Living conditions and daily habits are interrupted and replaced and gender roles and social roles in general are ascribed a new meaning. Being a refugee hence involves mobility, immobility and social change.

Contradicting the image of the urban refugee as an exception, this research views refugees as active human agents that seek access to livelihoods and economies in absence of viable provided solutions. But by relying on their own—often ethnic—networks to support themselves, refugees often adopt strategies that articulate their state of exclusion (Grabska, 2006); this visibly groups together ethnicities, which emphasises the differences between them and the national community. This results in struggles with not only the restricting legal environment of the city, but moreover the regular struggles with xenophobia and discrimination from the host community (Campbell, 2006b; UNHCR, 2017). They are often rejected and treated as the outcast, as the wasted or bare lives of the modern society (Agamben, 1998; Bauman, 2004). This marginalisation has yet another consequence. Even though urban refugees are often socially excluded and/or discriminated, that does not prevent them from illegally (or at least unofficially) being used as cheap labour; the hosting community often takes advantage of the fact that urban refugees have to take on informal work, which frequently leads to exploitation and using them in dangerous work environments (Campbell, 2005; Kobia and Cranfield, 2009; Agier, 2011).

3.2.2 • *The urban environment*

Moving on to the *urban* component of the concept *urban refugee*. Despite the common idea that most refugees reside in camps, surrounded by humanitarian assistance, millions of urban refugees are settled into the economic life of their host country in the capital city or urban area, and the number is growing (International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2012). Unlike camps, the urban context of a city presumably allows refugees to live more anonymously and self-reliant. Limited security, education, medical services and livelihood opportunities are push factors in the camps that are considered by refugees that take the decision to settle outside the camps. These factors start to weigh heavier when the situation in the camps is protracted (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010). However, with limited assistance of NGOs and a highly competitive and often hostile environment it is difficult to sustain oneself in urban areas. Studies in Cairo, Nairobi and other major African cities show that urban refugees are also often vulnerable to exploitation, systemic discrimination, arrest and detention (Campbell, 2005; Horst, 2006; Jacobsen, 2006; Crisp *et al.*, 2009). Choosing to live in urban areas means having to live with limited access to assistance or legal protection from the government or UNHCR (Grabska, 2006; Sanyal, 2012).

The concept 'urban refugee' thus inextricably links refugees to urban areas, which makes the location in which they are studied essential. Over the past decade it has been extensively discussed how (protracted) camps increasingly resemble urban areas – labelled “naked cities” (Agier, 2002) or “accidental cities” (Jansen, 2011) – and the lives within these camps hence increasingly resemble the urban lives in cities. Meanwhile, this study will do the exact opposite and focus on the urban context of the city, and how the neighbourhoods inhabited by refugees might start to resemble these ‘modern’ camps, and in a way intertwine with the camp-life. Jansen describes how camps see waves of people coming and going—refugees moving in and out of the camp (Jansen, 2015). Similar waves can be found in refugee neighbourhoods in the city. There is a circulation of people in those neighbourhoods, businessmen making their rounds between countries and cities, and also people that maintain their ties to camp-regions. Research into refugee camp economies show that even though the camp is (supposed to be) a confined place, goods, capital and people find their way in and out of the camp and are connected to national and international markets (Werker, 2007). Refugee neighbourhoods are eminently places that are able to connect those camp economies to (inter)national markets, by making use of the strong ethnic/community ties between refugees in camps, urban refugees and their wider global diaspora community. These refugee neighbourhoods should thus be understood through their linkages to these other places: their country of origin, the camps, and other resettlement countries of the diaspora.

As discussed, refugees in urban areas often rely heavily on their own social/ethnic network, creating places that have a relatively high concentration of one particular nationality or ethnicity

amidst an environment with another dominant nationality or ethnicity. These places are characterised by migrants moving in and out, always on the move. Similarly, camps that are compared to cities, or that are ascribed urban features are considered places of ‘temporary permanence’ or ‘permanent temporariness’ (Jansen, 2016). Protracted urbanising camps have transformed from deserted spaces with anonymous tents into vibrant marketplaces, households and cultural and social hubs (Dalal, 2015). Refugee neighbourhoods have undergone a similar process from empty, deserted spaces in the fringes of major established cities, into social hubs with vibrant marketplaces and ethnically concentrated households. Both the urbanised camp and the refugee neighbourhoods rely on their transnational networks which connects them to their surrounding areas as well as globally to the places connected through the diaspora community. and as discussed above, even the inhabitants of the two places are often the same or connected to each other; refugees move in and out of the camp for business or family reasons and temporarily spend time in urban areas (Jansen, 2015)—their social hubs—in the host country or their country of origin and at some point return to the camp, to repeat the cycle at a later stage.

The conventional terminology for such neighbourhoods includes language like “immigrant gateways” (Singer, 2004), this however misrepresents their often dynamic and transitory character and their specific set of functions. The most important function being that of the network, which reflects a web of communication, money transfers and traditional relationships which provide protection and security (Kloosterman, Van der Leun and Rath, 2010; Saunders, 2010). These networks are a place in which people rely on their social capital. Yiftachel and Agier recognise urban refugees, or ‘border dwellers’, as corresponding to contradicting border situations, with both illegality and tolerance being the reality (Yiftachel, 2009; Agier, 2016). He argues that borders are temporal, social and spatial; subject to change. The transitory and dynamic character of those neighbourhoods inhabited by refugees should not be mistaken as inconsiderable, these are the neighbourhoods “where the transition from poverty occurs, where the next middle class is forged, where the next generation’s dreams, movements, and governments are created” (Saunders, 2010). For urban refugees sometimes the most obvious step to deal with those borders and to generate income and a self-reliant life, is the step to informal employment and informal residence.

3.2.3 • *The introduction of the ‘hub’*

Urban informality pushes refugees to create their own normality and space suitable for their own needs, without humanitarian assistance or government interference. The neighbourhood Bole Mikael is a place in which such normality and space is created by the Somali community living there. It is predominantly inhabited by Somalis and forms a vibrant, colourful and dynamic bubble full of

business activity, a contrast to the grey concrete jungle of Ethiopia's capital city Addis Ababa. Chapter 5 'the streets of Little Mogadishu' will provide you with an elaborate illustration of neighbourhood, but there is a reason why Bole Mikael, or "Little Mogadishu", as it is colloquially called, is already mentioned here. Addis Ababa is not the only city in the world that has a "Little Mogadishu", Nairobi, Kampala and Minnesota are but three examples of major cities with a neighbourhood like this and there are many others. Similar to Bole Mikael they are all places characterised by its big Somali population, business activity and by its vibrant, colourful and dynamic identity. Somalis live all over the world and they are therefore oftentimes referred to as a 'truly globalised nation' (Menkhaus, 2009 in: Sheikh and Healy, 2009). Somalis have generally remained very closely connected to their homeland and their community residing in other places outside Somalia.

This close connection to land and community is something that became more and more clear to me throughout the process of data gathering and analysing. By making use of their transnational networks Somalis trigger the movement of people, products and capital. Places like the Little Mogadishus (and Somali neighbourhoods around the world alike) are the centres of this constant flow and are intimately connected. The Somali community seems to have spun a global web that facilitates the flow in cash (remittances, investments), goods (Somali products including specific fabrics, make-up and perfumes, and khat) and people (Somalis migrating from one Somali neighbourhood to another in search of education, employment, family unification or any other reason). This global web is held together by the places where the concentration of Somalis reaches a peak, a Somali 'hub'. This thesis approaches Bole Mikael, the Little Mogadishu of Addis Ababa as such a hub, connecting Somali diaspora communities around the world.

In many ways this Somali hub resembles the 'arrival city' Saunders uses to describe neighbourhoods at the outskirts of major cities around the world that are inhabited by people who have left their agricultural lives for an urban life in the city (Saunders, 2010). Both are transitory and dynamic neighbourhoods inhabited by people pursuing a different life from the one they had before. And both inhabitants are often pushed into the informal economy and rely heavily on their community, especially upon arrival. The 'arrival city' is also a place where informal economies rise, often along ethnic connections, at the fringes of established cities. What distinguishes the Somali neighbourhood from the 'arrival city', is that the people Saunders describes as the inhabitants or creators of arrival cities actively try to entirely integrate themselves both socially and economically into the 'fabric of the existing city' (Saunders, 2010). Instead of aiming to fully integrate and merge into the city that they are part of, the Somali neighbourhood seems to rather aim to become a place that is connected to the wider web of Somali hubs around the world by ethnicity, and moreover by diaspora investments and trading. Being part of this network enables them to access remittances

and goods from the Somali diaspora community, which helps them start-up businesses and purchase goods to sell in their shops.

The Somalis in Addis Ababa created the Somali hub Bole Mikael, which has since become part of the global Somali web through their transnational diaspora network. They created a place in the society in which they are never fully included, nor fully excluded by the city and the people of Addis Ababa. To illustrate, even though the Ethiopian authorities generally turn a blind eye to the informal work of urban refugees, they are frequently targeted by the police, which makes them more and more marginalised (Brown *et al.*, 2017). This disconnection between being tolerated by the authorities, while legal structures remain restraining and the environment remains hostile, creates a process of “grey-spacing”. This is explained by Yiftachel as a process “during which the boundaries between ‘accepted’ and ‘rejected’ constantly shift, trapping whole populations in a range of unplanned urban zones, lacking certainty, stability and hence development” (Yiftachel, 2009). Grey-spacing discusses people like the Somalis in Bole Mikael as capable of breaking with power from bottom up, finding the ‘cracks’ in this power and creating livelihoods that fit their own circumstances (Yiftachel, 2009; Sanyal, 2012). This balance of being included and excluded is not a static one, as “the outsider is not only the subject to exclusion, but also [...] a key actor in reshaping, contesting and redefining the border of citizenship” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2012 in: Neto, 2018).

The kind of identity and (global) citizenship inhabitants of a Somali hub like Bole Mikael have, is produced in and by Bole Mikael and other Somali hubs alike. It is shaped by their capacity to make use of traditional resources and to adapt to new environments, and by the complex relationship between its inhabitants and the city they are located in, as well as their relationship with the global Somali web. Urban refugees often take a certain distance from their ‘original’ identity and replace or merge that with a comprehension of the ‘global’, by engaging in cultural and social aspects of the place that they now live in. By re-identifying themselves, and by engaging in activities and social encounters that used to be alien to them, urban refugees create an identity that resonates in what Agier describes as ‘banal cosmopolitanism’. At the same time that they discover and shape their ‘new’ identity and (global) citizenship, the national community views them as people without rights, often socially undesired, yet economically useful (Agier, 2016).

3.3 | *Self-reliance*

The paradigm shift from the era of protracted humanitarian assistance in camps towards a development approach of supporting autonomy and integration in urban areas no longer views refugees as passive and vulnerable people, but rather as active agents with talents, skills and capacities who can be first responders to crises as well (Collier and Betts, 2017; Hilhorst, 2018). It

rests on the assumption that refugees (or refugee communities) are resilient and can spring back from traumatic events. There are two perspectives that are important to consider in order to keep a nuanced and realistic perspective on this shift. Firstly, recognising that refugees are more than traumatised victims is a welcome change of thinking that allows aid organisations to adapt their strategy and provide assistance that fits refugees that are able to support themselves to some extent. It is however also important to consider the second perspective that rightfully questions to what extent refugees are resilient and to what extent that also means that they can truly make use of their skills in order to survive without or with limited assistance. It should not mean that being a refugee is not enough to claim the right for protection and assistance, that refugees are only entitled to assistance if they also fit in yet another category of vulnerability (being a child, part of the LGBT community, having a disability, etc.) (Hilhorst, 2016, 2018). However, in the reality of Ethiopia, refugees can only claim assistance when they are registered, which in most cases means: when they reside in one of the refugee camps. Urban refugees are left to survive by their own means, “but they can rarely do so in a legal way” (Hilhorst, 2016).

Since urban refugees in Ethiopia at this moment in time still have limited access to assistance from the government or aid organisations, they ought to be self-reliant; an attempt from the Ethiopian government to make them largely responsible for their own protection. While the government makes it an individual responsibility to achieve self-reliance, it fails to acknowledge that self-reliance can only be reached in interaction with its surroundings; that it should be facilitated by creating opportunities for people to provide for themselves. By doing so, the government, as well as the refugee authorities, resort in a sort of “escapist policy to reduce financial burdens” (Dalal, 2015). Self-reliance is often broadly defined as “the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs in a sustainable manner” (Omata, 2017). This implies that refugees are able to sustain themselves without external aid. The idea behind this, is that when refugees have access to resources and are able to be economically active and support themselves, they become less dependent on aid and are better equipped to overcome hardship and tension in their host community (Jacobsen, 2002). However, typically, refugees are not allowed to work or their right to work is considerably constrained because of regulatory impediments (including a lack of work permits and restrictions on their right to freedom of movement) (Omata, 2017). Circumstances like these question whether it is possible at all for refugees to be self-reliant and able to sustain themselves economically.

3.3.1 • *Livelihoods*

If self-reliance is the end-goal, then what is the means to achieve that end-goal, apart from an enabling environment, where the current restrictions on movement and the availability of work-permits for refugees are lifted? Programmes promoting livelihood opportunities are often suggested as a means to self-reliance. “Refugees’ pursuit of livelihoods can increase human security because economic activities help to recreate social and economic interdependence within and between communities, and can restore social networks based on the exchange of labour, assets and food” (Jacobsen, 2002). Entrepreneurship is often pushed forth as the most essential way to promote livelihood opportunities, but it should be emphasised that solely focusing on an economic pursuit of self-reliance for refugees is not comprehensive and can even be considered problematic, as “it does not capture the diversity of personal circumstances or the multifarious ways that refugees live without international assistance” (Easton-Calabria, 2017).

This study understands livelihoods as “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers & Conway, 1991 in: UNDP, 2014). Hence, it is not sufficient to understand it purely from the perspective of the financial capital—drawing upon savings, income from employment or remittances—but moreover to include the human and social capital. Livelihoods and securing self-reliance are namely also understood through assets such as skills, knowledge, health and ability to work (human capital), and through social resources, including informal networks, membership of formalised groups and relationships of trust that facilitate cooperation and economic opportunities (social capital) (UNDP, 2014).

3.3.2 • *Individual versus collective self-reliance*

Being self-reliant as an unregistered urban refugee in Bole Mikael means seeking access to the informal economy, while at the same time being more dependent on your own social network (Werker, 2007; Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 2010; Koizumi and Hoffstaedter, 2015). In order to be self-reliant, it is necessary to draw from multiple strategies. It is therefore also important to note that self-reliance is not something each person can pursue purely individually, but rather something that can also be pursued collectively as a community. This does not just count for unregistered refugees. Even though registered refugees are eligible for government or NGO support, the allowance is not enough to cover all basic expenses, especially not in a city like Addis Ababa (EOC-DICAC, 2018). To make it to the end of the month, refugees often individually engage in different

kinds of income generating activities. McMichael explains that the informal economy is bound to grow if new forms of livelihood strategies—like urban refugee strategies to become self-reliant—emerge: “with an enlarging mass of people existing on the fringes of the formal economy, informalisation will rise” (McMichael, 2000 in: Campbell, 2006).

Collective self-reliance can be pursued by relying on a community’s own resources and traditions (Galtung, O’Brien and Preiswerk, 1980). For Somalis in Addis Ababa this means drawing from their own cultural values and traditions by making use of the benefits and obligations of being part of a clan system. This clan system functions as a safety-net in times of need, but also expects from all its members to contribute and give back to the community when circumstances are better (interviews). The Somalis I managed to interview about their self-reliance in Addis Ababa would refer to it as continuing life, but in new circumstances. These new circumstances push them to make decisions they would otherwise not have had to make, but it also provides them with (livelihood) opportunities they would otherwise perhaps not have been provided with. “It is not life as we knew it”, Khadra explains when I asked her about how she pursues self-reliance and what was different now she lives in Ethiopia. She did not own a small business back home and neither did her parents. Her situation pushed her to make use of the opportunity to open a small fabric shop in Addis, but if she had gotten the same opportunity back home, she would have probably done it as well. The biggest difference, according to her, is that back home, relying on the clan system was something that happened more naturally, whereas in Addis Ababa it is something each person has to actively pursue. The same goes for their individual (informal) economic activities, back home they could often more easily follow in the footsteps of their parents or relatives, whereas now, they have to actively seek possible opportunities to make a living and be able to financially contribute to the family (Khadra, 2018).

3.4 | Conclusion

With this chapter I have set out the conceptual framework of this study. All the important concepts that form the theoretical basis of understanding for this thesis are grouped under the three main interrelated concepts of the *protracted refugee situation*, being the context and the motive for the current changing environment, the *urban refugee*, discussing both the phenomenon and its location, and *self-reliance*, which is discussed as both a personal as well as a collective pursuit for urban refugees. I use the discussed concepts and theories to explore and make sense of the survival strategies of Somali urban refugees in Bole Mikael, Addis Ababa.

4. Research Methodology

This thesis is an anthropological study with an ethnographic and exploratory approach. The research focuses on how refugees shape and are shaped by informality in the urban context of Addis Ababa in order to be self-reliant. A phenomenological take on these different aspects of social reality pushes the research to produce descriptions of my respondents' experiences and narratives, instead of mere explanations and causes. This way I focus on understanding how their (perceived) reality appears to them (Bernard, 2011). It is an actor-oriented study, which assumes that thinking, behaviour and choices are shaped by many different factors and therefore need to be studied within their context. These different factors range from past experience, lifestyle and personal habits to cultural dispositions and the distribution of power. Social meaning is, similar to motivations and strategies, not something static, but generated in a process of negotiation. Taking into account that actions are influenced by their context, but that the context is also shaped by the actors themselves; meanings and actions are therefore always actively created and maintained (Hebinck, Ouden and Verschoor, 2001; Iphofen, 2015). In this chapter I aim to reflect on the choices I have made regarding the methodology, throughout the process of fieldwork and writing. Hence, the purpose is not only to explain which methods I have used, but also to be transparent in the changes I have made during the whole process.

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4.1 | *Ethnographic approach*

An ethnography takes a holistic approach to study the socio-cultural context and meaning of a people and their way of life. The approach is interpretive and reflexive. This allows the researcher to understand the people that are studied from their own system of meanings; studying the social practices and social meaning that drive social interaction (Whitehead, 2005; Iphofen, 2015). In order to get to this level of understanding of the daily lives and decisions of the people that are being studied, respondents should be studied in their own context. For the researcher it is crucial to be reflexive and aware of his or her own effect on the people that they study (Iphofen, 2015). 'Hanging out' is a form of (participant) observation and was a key method of this study. It is a qualitative method that requires the researcher to observe and interact with the people that they study on an informal level in their own environment for an extended period of for long informal sessions (Walmsley, 2018). It uncovered underlying motives or situations that did not come up in the literature study and allowed for a better understanding of behaviour.

This field study was spread over 11 weeks in which I spent approximately 3 to 4 (half) days a week in Bole Mikael. I conducted 3 semi-structured interviews with aid organisations, 8

unstructured/semi-structured interviews in Bole Mikael and approximately 80 informal conversations. The interviews with aid workers all took about half an hour and took place at their office. After the interviews I stayed to chat about their experiences in Ethiopia and their experiences at work a bit longer, which was in some cases also informative for this study. The interviews in Bole Mikael varied from 20 minutes to one hour and a half and took place at my respondents work and once at someone's house. Informal conversations were often more informative and could take up to half a day. The rest of my time I just wandered around the neighbourhood or sat down and drank a coffee. By observing and hanging around in the first stage of the study, I aimed to show my interest in the neighbourhood, lifestyle and routine of the people living there, so that eventually they would trust me enough to help me with my research by opening up to me. It gave me time to reflect on behaviour and irregularities that I observed, in combination with the account I have gotten from doing interviews and having informal conversations. However, since this research was only done over a short period of time, I have to take into account that my informants may not have acted entirely natural. Trust is an essential part of the ethnographic approach and its methods, and a short period of study might not have been enough to entirely feel comfortable with me. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section on access and trust. After that, I will discuss how the interviews were approached, followed by a section on ethics and my position as a researcher. The chapters 5. "Setting the Scene" and 6. "Urban Refugee Assistance in Addis Ababa" are ethnographic accounts based on the observation and hanging out method.

4.2 | *Access and trust*

Given the complexity both of my research subject as well as the complexity of Addis Ababa, no matter how well I prepared myself before starting fieldwork, I believe there will always be obstacles along the way, many of which you will not know before you enter the field. I expected to face difficulties in particular because at the moment being an unregistered refugee in the city is still illegal.

4.2.1 • *Access to NGOs providing urban refugee assistance in Addis Ababa*

Since I worked on the subject of migration and refugees at the Netherlands embassy in Ethiopia for the past year, I knew people that work for organisations that work with refugees in Addis Ababa. I thought this would make it easier for me to contact them in order to get an insight into the availability of formal and institutional assistance for refugees in Addis Ababa. However, even though UNHCR and ZOA indicated on forehand that they were open to do interviews and help me map out formal assistance, it turned out to be more difficult to get in touch with them when I did not work for the embassy anymore. The people I worked with put me in touch with their colleagues responsible for

issues related to urban refugees, but actually getting through to them proved to be more time-consuming than expected. I managed to speak to most of the organisations eventually, which provided me a better understanding of the available formal assistance in general. Unfortunately they could not help me as well as I initially hoped with introducing me to (Somali) urban refugees. Without exception, every organisation emphasised how difficult it is to reach Somali refugees, both registered and unregistered. My assumption was that with the number of urban refugees in Addis Ababa and the pledge to phase out of encampment, aid organisations would be dedicated to help urban refugees and at least have some kind of overview of urban refugees and their specific needs. However, it turned out that the organisations that have a programme for urban refugees are just now starting up the programmes and have limited insight in the circumstances and needs of urban refugees in Addis Ababa. Moreover, everything they know is merely based on Eritrean refugees, because they are the biggest group and the easiest to reach out to. Everyone confirmed that getting an idea of the situation of Somali refugees was especially challenging since it is so difficult to get in touch with them.

4.2.2 • *Access to the field*

The first few weeks of my research period I used to getting familiar with the (partly) new context. Getting to know the environment and the people and vice versa. As I noted before, since the period of study is short, I had to invest a lot of time in the beginning to spend time among my informants, to show them I trust them and that they can trust me. Building trust was essential throughout the whole field research period. As a researcher you can acquire trust in two ways. A formal (cognitive) and more informal (emotional) way (Norman, 2009). This type of trust is earned by (informally) talking to participants, spending time with them and by trusting them, so they will be more inclined to trust you. Having a trusting relationship is not only essential to get interviews, but also to make my respondents feel more comfortable during the interview. It is especially important in this study, since the respondents are refugees that are illegally living outside the camp, so there is a lot at stake for them not to be outed as illegal.

Throughout the time I spent in Bole Mikael I tried to understand the lives of urban Somali refugees as an outsider. I was relieved that the neighbourhood was so unexpectedly vibrant and that here, other than in the rest of Addis Ababa, life is lived on the street. That should make it easier to get to know the neighbourhood and the people, or so I thought. However, it did not take long for me to realise that it was even more difficult to find Somali refugees willing to participate in my research than I initially thought. Mainly because “there are no refugees here. Do you see a camp?” (Desta,

19-04-2018): everybody in Bole Mikael was (or rather posed as) Ethiopian. Yes, some of them were from Somali Regional State³ in Ethiopia, but still Ethiopian.

Also the way I am looked at and approached was new. I thought I was used to being harassed, but here the approach feels more hostile; like I clearly do not belong here. Gladly this started to change once I had spent more time in the area and once I knew people I could walk around with. Even though I will forever be the white girl walking around where she does not belong naturally, at some point people seemed to recognise me as someone that walked around with good intentions, which calmed down the initial 'hostile' approaches. It took me quite some time to get the stories behind this first façade and if it was not for the help of my Somali friend Ayaan who introduced me to two of her Somali friends living in Bole Mikael, I wonder if I would have been able to reach that point at all. Thankfully, a few weeks in, she had time to accompany me to Bole Mikael. She explained that there was no way that the Somali people there would open up to me without knowing me. She warned me that even after being introduced by her, I should not expect them to tell me their whole story at once and that I should be very sensitive and cautious about recording people and walking around writing down everything I saw and heard. After having said that, she assured me that I could always ask her help if I needed translation, explanation or company in general, which I gratefully did throughout my field research period.

4.2.3 • *Key informants*

With regards to both access and trust, being introduced to my key informants Ayuub and Najma was a turning point for me. They were the first to take me in, have longer conversations with me and eventually open up and help me out in my research by introducing me to other Somalis so I was able to conduct more interviews.

Ayuub is a 55 year old tailor from Mogadishu, but more than that a business man from the Horn of Africa. He owns his own tailor shop in one of the backstreets of Bole Mikael, in which he works most of the year, but he also does business in Dolo—a city in the South-East of Ethiopia on the border with Somalia and near the border with Kenya—and Hawassa—a industrial hub in central Ethiopia, South of Addis Ababa. He has a family with his Ethiopian wife in Addis Ababa, but commutes a few times a year between Addis and Dolo to visit his kids from his former Somali wife. When he was younger he even took his business from Somalia to Djibouti, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia. I met with Ayuub a few times a week. We drank *bunna*⁴ and chatted about anything and everything. He would never directly

³ Somali Regional State is a province of Ethiopia, bordering Somalia

⁴ Ethiopian coffee

tell me his whole story or answer all my questions, but between the lines and after taking together multiple sessions, I could figure out more and more about his personal story and the Somali network and lifestyle. After we drank our *bunna* he always bought me a one litre bottle of water, because it is important for young girls to stay hydrated and he would not be a good host if he did not give me enough water, and sometimes we walked around to do some shopping. I met his son and a few of his regular customers and got to know the men owning shops next to his.

Najma is a 42 year old Somali businesswoman and owner of a guesthouse right in the centre of Bole Mikael. She started with a small shop in which she sold fabrics, make up and perfumes, which grew so rapidly that she soon opened a second shop with the help of one of her relatives. Najma is a business woman in heart and soul, so when she noticed that her Somali customers were sometimes struggling to find temporary housing, she started to write a plan for a guesthouse. The guesthouse now has become a centre where Somali visitors can stay and where newcomers can start before they find a place with family or for themselves and her two shops are monitored by friends. I could always take a seat in her guesthouse, have tea and read or write. Even though she understood English quite well, she could not speak it. Whenever I wanted to do an interview with her or have a longer conversation, Ayaan would accompany me and translate for us, but for smaller informal conversations Najma's daughter Kameela could help us. The guesthouse is a place where mostly Somali people would stay, but the restaurant area was always mixed with Ethiopians and other nationalities. It is a place where business deals are made and where people socialise and find each other.

The third key person I would like to introduce is Desta. Desta is a 33 year old Christian Orthodox Ethiopian, born and raised in Addis Ababa. A few years ago he moved to Bole Mikael, because of the relatively cheap housing, but mainly because of work. He is the self-proclaimed best DJ of Addis Ababa and works at one of the main hotels just outside Bole Mikael. 'His' hotel is the hotspot for South- and South-West Asian businessmen. Even though it was difficult to get through to him that I was there to do research he turned out to be more helpful than he is perhaps aware of. Many people in the streets of Bole Mikael know him, so he was able to introduce me to a few people who, before I met him, were hesitant to talk to me. He took me to his friends, barber shop and the shops around Bole Mikael where he does his groceries, and showed me how both Somalis and Ethiopians live next to each other and sometimes even in mixed compounds.

4.3 | Interviews

4.3.1 • *Unstructured interviews & informal conversations*

I have gathered most of my data from informal conversations, unstructured and semi-structured interviews and observations, and recorded most of the data through fieldnotes. During the first period unstructured interviews allowed me to let the people and their environment tell the story, taking the form of an informal conversation. These informal interviews and conversations took place on the street or in the small shops around Bole Mikael, and only touched upon one or a few topics relating to my research. Just like narrative interviews, these informal interviews were kept as open as possible. In informal conversations I had to let go of structure and control over the interview. It helped me familiarising with the environment and to get to know a little bit more of the day-to-day lives of the people in Bole Mikael in general. I wrote down everything I remembered at a later point that same day and used the information later to make sense of my observation and research strategy.

In the unstructured interviews I did have a plan and direction in mind, but most of all I tried to give my respondents the chance to open up and express themselves in their own words. This first phase of the fieldwork was at times challenging. In the beginning it was difficult to remind myself it was important to remain open and not focus solely on purely targeting the research questions. Especially since it turned out to be so difficult to find respondents that were willing to open up, I was afraid I would not be able to get the answers to the questions I had in mind during the design of this study. However, at some point—perhaps two or three weeks in—I started to feel the benefit of firstly getting to know the place and the people before diving deeper into the concrete research questions. I had a better understanding of the situation and a better idea of the kind of questions I could focus on during the interviews in later phase.

4.3.2 • *Semi-structured interviews*

Those initial conversations or unstructured interviews were used as a basis for semi-structured interviews at a later stage, in which I could go deeper into a single aspect, an interesting finding or unclarities in order to better understand my respondents. By turning to a semi-structured interview technique, I allowed myself to direct the conversation towards my prepared questions and by doing so limit the amount of irrelevant data. It moreover helped me to compare stories of the different informants afterwards. I also used the semi-structured interview technique when I interviewed NGOs. I always prepared the main questions I wanted to ask, but during the interview I allowed myself to follow a new lead and ask further questions and it allowed the respondent to also direct their own story.

After conducting the first few interviews I learnt that I needed to take a more flexible approach and depending on the person I was talking to, change the style or technique during the conversation or interview if necessary from informal, to unstructured or semi-structured or vice versa. Not everyone was comfortable with me recording the interview or sometimes not even with writing down notes. Sometimes my respondents were more hesitant to answer questions when I asked to record them, but most of the time recording the conversation simply was not the best method because of the background noises.

Doing these types of interviews, hence meant quick processing of information and sometimes meant getting back to my respondents to discuss my interpretation of the interview afterwards. When I felt that my informant was not comfortable enough to talk about the topics I wanted to address, I used the storytelling technique. More than (semi-) structured interviews, storytelling allowed my respondents to describe things in their own words, so that eventually I would better understand how they gave meaning to events or activities. It gave me some insights in their 'individual truths' (Van der Haar, Heijmans and Hilhorst, 2013). In some cases they would tell me a detailed story about what happened to somebody they know, how a relative fled Somalia, or how a neighbour ended up in Addis Ababa; leaving it up to me to make a connection to their story. Whether it was their own story or indeed the story of a relative, this way of telling me about it gave them the chance to have some emotional distance from the story itself, which perhaps made it easier to tell.

4.3.3 • *Language*

Since I do not speak Amharic (the main language in Ethiopia), Somali or Arabic, all my conversations were in English and for a few interviews I was accompanied by a translator. Not being able to speak with my respondents in their own language sometimes felt like a barrier, since I felt that in a few situations we would have been able to have a better informed conversation if the both of us were native speakers. Questions on identity and how they perceive self-reliance were particularly difficult because of these language limitations. I was not always able to ask the question in a way it leaves the answer uninfluenced and their vocabulary was often insufficient to put it into words. Sometimes when an informant did not understand the question or did not have the words to answer, I gave examples of answers to get them started, but in many cases they used my examples in their answer, instead of telling it in their own words. However, at times I felt that the language barrier allowed us both to take more time to understand each other, repeat questions and answers and by doing so rechecking whether we were on the same page. Many of my respondents could speak a basic level of English, and in many cases there was someone else around who would come and help with the translation. I was especially lucky having Ayaan around who could not only translate for me, but also

tell me more about the context and how it differs from the Dutch, since she has lived in the Netherlands for many years before she moved to Ethiopia.

4.3.4 • *Combining methodologies*

These different interview techniques combined with the hanging out observations, helped me to find out what had not been said or was avoided before, but particularly also allowed for methodological triangulation, so I could check whether the data I gathered, was confirmed by other techniques or respondents. The interviews and observations from hanging out throughout the course of the study produced different types of data, one not necessarily more insightful than the other. Besides methodological triangulation, the use of these different types of methodology and data also allowed me to understand the different dimensions and the dynamics of situation in Bole Mikael and the stories of its people.

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4.4 | *Ethics and my position as a researcher*

Apart from methodological challenges, I faced ethical challenges. Research involving refugees poses ethical challenges, since it is often undertaken in a politically complex setting and with participants that are likely to be traumatised and vulnerable (Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007). Especially in a situation in which the research subjects are illegally residing at the research location, as is the case in this study. With the intention to not do my respondents any harm, I made sure to inform the people I talked to about who I was and how I intended to use the data I gathered. Some of my respondents preferred to stay entirely anonymous, so to ensure confidentiality I changed the names of all of my respondents in this thesis, except for the respondents from the NGOs.

At all times, I followed Goodhand's "practical precepts" for researchers, which are 'do no harm', and whenever possible—while keeping in mind the extremely limited positive impact beyond the study itself—'do some good'. This included not attracting undesired attention to the people I studied, keeping an eye on security and safety issues by listening to local informants and the advice from friends familiar in the neighbourhood, agreeing on informed consent, flexibility in approach and methodology and understanding the importance of knowing when to stop (Goodhand, 2000). Especially in my conversations with Somalis that did not have legal documentation or a legal work permit, 'doing no harm' proved to be important and challenging, I could clearly feel the hesitation and sometimes reluctance to share information with me regarding their status.

Apart from safeguarding the safety, autonomy and anonymity of my respondents, I tried to be conscious of how my questions and presence could distress others. Gathering ethnological data always means considering the effect of your own presence on your respondents and the data. Not

only during conducting interviews or during informal conversations, but in my case even whenever I walked around the neighbourhood for observations or when I sat down to have a coffee, I would attract quite some attention because of my blonde, white and very European appearance. Around Addis Ababa you would find more 'European'-looking people here and there, but I was a complete contrast walking between the people living in Bole Mikael, also by the way I was dressed and how I walked around in the neighbourhood. In some cases me being the obvious outsider was a good thing, people were curious about who I was and what I was doing there, which at times made it easier to start a conversation. In other cases, especially in the beginning, that curiosity was mixed with distrust and sometimes even hostility. Even though blending in was not an option, the longer I spent time in the neighbourhood, the less distrusting and hostile the interactions became. People saw me walking and talking with their neighbours and friends and understood that I was not a 'threat'. Also, I tried not to write down my observations everywhere in public. The mere fact that I interviewed or studied an individual or a group of people could have given them the idea of being a 'marginalised person' which can have a negative emotional impact on them. After each day I reflected on how I had walked around or conducted an interview that day and what had happened during those encounters. I would evaluate what was said and what was not said, but I would also try to recall body language or reactions to the surroundings by both me and my respondents.

A reflexive attitude has helped me to be more aware of my effect on my surroundings and to be considerate of the impact on the people and the study itself. I learned a lot from the conversations and interviews and changed my approach when necessary. However, reflecting on the data often also confused me. Some things felt contradicting and put me on the wrong track. It taught me that data always allows for more interpretations, but most of all, that contradicting accounts do not necessarily always exclude each other. Stories of migration can have multiple—and sometimes even contradicting—sides. Keeping a reflective diary helped secure my integrity to some degree and it helped me to explain my own perspective on difficult (ethical) situations as well. It remains important to emphasise that my interpretations are reflected in this study, hence, an anthropological study like this is always subjective.

5. The streets of “Little Mogadishu”

Bole Mikael, the “Little Mogadishu” of Addis Ababa, is the centre stage for this study. However, as this study argues, the neighbourhood is not just a location, but also a social construct that is defined and shaped by the meanings people attach to it. Both the social, as well as the physical aspect of the research location are important components of this thesis. Bole Mikael is therefore not approached and understood as a pre-existing location in the wider context of Addis Ababa where Somali urban refugees by chance are stranded, but rather as a social construct, subject to change as an outcome of dynamic social relationships on the ground. Both its streetscape as well as its identity is created and sustained by the Somalis that move in and out of the place while maintaining their transnational social relations. This chapter aims to introduce the neighbourhood, setting the scene for the study and to get a better feeling of how Somali people live here as a basis for understanding their survival strategies.

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5.1 | *Bole Mikael: home away from home*

The spread of Somalis throughout the Horn of Africa and in Ethiopia specifically has a long and complex history. This makes assessing who is Somali and who is Ethiopian-Somali in Bole Mikael difficult in practice. There is a clearer difference on paper: Ethio-Somalis have an Ethiopian nationality, whereas many Somalis from Somalia reside illegally in Addis Ababa and encounter more difficulties in their daily lives to provide for themselves. The reason why I say “on paper” is because this difference in practice is blurred, as some Somalis find their way around this by obtaining false ID cards (Ayuub, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018). Somalis and Ethio-Somalis now live side by side in urban areas and in many cases Ethio-Somalis are able to support Somali newcomers (Najma, 2018). Migration to urban areas is somewhat new for Somalis, who heretofore migrated largely from one rural area to another. Addis Ababa is one of these urban areas and functions as a home-base (away from home) for business and a centre for (irregular) transfer for people and goods to and from other African or Western locations. For the majority of Somalis in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa became their (temporary) destination because of prior existence of family or relatives and because of the successful business stories that flow out of the capital city. They also often chose this place because they already had a network there, even though at times they did not know their network personally. Ayuub is one of the people who left for Addis Ababa because of this promised brighter future, but he is also one of the people that still forms the connection between Addis Ababa and cities in Somali Regional State:

“I had a lot of work in Dolo, but no money. People are more poor, but they also need clothes. So often I made simple clothes for free [...] Customers traveling from Addis to Dolo were my best customers. They sometimes bring fabric and sometimes buy fabric and always pay for my work [...] I am a business man, so I followed the money and came to Addis with one of my cousins. We lived with his friend and I opened this place [his tailor shop]. Now I have a good life in Addis, but I also go back to Dolo to see my family there and I took my son to Addis once as well” (Ayuub, 2018)

Dolo is not the only city Ayuub has ties to, he also travels to Hawassa for business every now and then. Everywhere he goes he has a place to stay, in Dolo with family, in Hawassa with friends, and even on the road he has his people. Oftentimes he would also be the host when family and friends come over to Addis for a while. Addis Ababa is his main base, but by traveling in and out of the city he keeps in touch with his network, both on a business as well as on a social level.

“I must visit Dolo and Hawassa when it is possible. Here I am a tailor, but when I am in Dolo and Hawassa I meet more people and I trade: I am a businessman. I buy and sell fabrics for me and sometimes other things for my friends who cannot come. [...] I buy fabric from Kenya, Somalia and Saudi Arabia, that is what my people in Addis like, love!” (Ayuub, 2018)

Ayuub explains that his fabrics and other goods have passed many hands before it reaches his. There are many intermediates in this cross-country trading and they are all related to each other in some way or another. Bole Mikael remains the most profitable place to use as a home-base, but he emphasises how important it is for him to stay in touch with the people and businesses in the other cities. The traveling is however not easy, especially the last year it has been increasingly dangerous with all the ethnic clashes both in the direction of Dolo, as well as in the direction of Hawassa. But every time it calms down, or whenever he can get a free ride with a “safe and smart” driver, he will try to go anyway (Ayuub, 2018).

The city and the neighbourhood of Bole Mikael have become the place in which Ayuub and other Somalis alike negotiate and define their identity in relation to Ethiopian citizenship: conflict and tensions, traditional pastoralism, nomadism, entrepreneurship, trade and the urban settlement combined shape the Somali identity in Ethiopia and Addis Ababa specifically. It has also become the place which enables them to be an active member of a truly globalised nation, by being a centre within a global ethnically specific economic network. It is a Somali hub that connects the Somalis in Ethiopia to other Somali hubs in the region and around the world. The characteristics of an “arrival city” come to life in Bole Mikael as illustrated by the story of Ayuub: it is a dynamic place that triggers the movement of people, products and capital inhabited by people pursuing a different life from the one they had before, heavily relying on the informal ethnic economy as well as on their ethnic

community. However, contrary to what Saunders describes to be true for inhabitants of those ‘arrival cities’, which is that the creators of those places actively try to integrate themselves in the ‘fabric of the existing city’ (Saunders, 2010); the inhabitants of Bole Mikael refer much more to their relation with the wider Somali diaspora and aim to remain active in this global network, rather than in the domestic Ethiopian economy or network.

They do not only shape their own identity, they also shape the place they live in. The majority of the Somali people living in Addis Ababa, live in Bole Mikael, a neighbourhood that has since their arrival become more and more Somali and less Ethiopian, with Somali people, stalls and products taking over the streetscape. The following section aims to familiarise you with Bole Mikael and its people and set the scene for this study with an ethnographic account from the first weeks of this study.

5.2 | *The streetscape*

As I am walking to Bole Mikael I cross my old neighbourhood “Bole Rwanda”, named after the Rwandan embassy located across the road from my old house. It feels like home, passing by my old bananas and eggs shop, walking up the hill to the rainbow-building, the landmark for my street. I have gotten used to observing my surroundings here. Since the streets of Addis Ababa do not have names, we navigate the city by using landmarks. Bole Rwanda is very much like the rest of Addis Ababa: roads and buildings are under construction, there are a few small shops and the (in)famous blue Lada taxis are everywhere. The further I walk towards Bole Mikael, the quieter it gets. Less and less shops, and the food and drinks sold in the shops I had passed, make place for car parts and mattresses, announcing the end of a city centre. I remember thinking the first time I arrived at this point, how on earth am I going to find people to talk to?

Then, just around the corner, the scene changes. There is an explosion of colours, of people, of all kinds of businesses. I arrived in what is colloquially called “Little Mogadishu”, but officially known as Bole Mikael. It is jokingly called “Little Mogadishu” by both the people that live there as well as outsiders, because the vast majority of Somali people living in Addis Ababa live here and because there is always activity on the streets. Nowhere in Addis Ababa you will see this many colourful veils and in no other place camel milk is sold on the corner of every street. You enter a whole new city when you enter Bole Mikael.

Bole Mikael is a busy place, men and women drink *bunna* (coffee) or *shai* (tea) with camel milk, work or walk around the neighbourhood in large numbers and the main streets are packed with cars. Even though I like the fuss of the main streets, I prefer the smaller backstreets with its many shops selling fabrics in all colours and patterns adding to the lively street view. To me Bole Mikael is

a vibrant and colourful bubble in a grey city under construction. Apart from the huge open air marketplace 'Merkato' and some of the smaller marketplaces around Addis Ababa, the capital city, claiming to be the diplomatic capital of Africa, does not have a city-centre or a neighbourhood where you would go to stroll around, shop and eat for example. This is a welcome change of scene.

Although fabric shops, tailors and fashion shops seem to dominate the streets of Bole Mikael, there is another kind of business that stands out. The *khat* business is flourishing here, whereas in the rest of Addis Ababa, *khat* is also being sold, but at much lower quality and quality, and less out in the open. *Khat* does not only influence the streetscape shop-wise, but it also has an influence on the people on the street. From early in the morning up until around one in the afternoon the streets are busy; many men are hanging around, while women seem to be here with a purpose: either working or shopping. Later in the afternoon you will notice that the women are still there, but that there are less and less men on the streets. They have retreated into their homes or that of one of their friends to chew *khat* with peanuts and beer.

5.3 | *No refugees in Bole Mikael*

Little Mogadishu is not only home to Somali people from Somalia (Somali), it also houses Ethiopian Somali people from Somali Regional State (Ethio-Somali) and Ethiopians from other regions as well. Even though it is called Little Mogadishu and even though there are many Muslims on the street, it should not be called a Muslim neighbourhood, according to Desta, the self-named most famous DJ in Addis Ababa, living in Bole Mikael. "We live next to each other. I am orthodox, my neighbour is Muslim, we both live here. Mixed is normal. They bring camel milk and *khat*. Ethiopians chew *khat*. The best *khat* in town is sold here in Bole Mikael, brought from Somali Region. And they drink our *bunna* with us. See? We live mixed" (Desta, 19-4-2018). They do live mixed, which makes it extremely difficult for an outsider like me, to distinguish Somalis from Ethio-Somalis and sometimes even from other Ethiopians. In the beginning, the only way to find out who is who, was by chatting to everyone that was open to talk to me. That proved to be more challenging than expected. Everyone seemed to be from Somali Regional State. Some showed me identity cards, which I could not read, but according to them it said it was issued in Jijiga, Somali Regional State. The fact that it was handwritten, with the photo stapled to it, did not do under for any other Ethiopian identity card, as long as the right stamp was on it. Others were surprised by the question, or maybe confused by the word refugee:

"There are no refugees here, do you see a camp? [...] They are Ethiopian Somalis, they are from Somali Regional State. Some Somali people just come to Ethiopia, get an Ethiopian ID card in Dire Dawa or Jijiga and then they come here. You never really know" (Desta, 2018)

Even though at first I was discouraged by the fact that it turned out to be so difficult to find Somali refugees for this study, I learned a few other things in the first weeks. First of all, maybe ‘refugee’ is not the word I should go with. Somali refugees are not going to come forward and tell me their story of how they live their life in Bole Mikael. They are cautious because if authorities find out they are illegally residing in Addis Ababa, they have to go to one of the camps in the East of the country. Also, they would rather describe themselves as “forced migrants” instead of refugees. The reason why was never really made specifically clear to me, but it always had to do with their (cl)aim to be more self-reliant. The word refugee implies forced displacement and the dependency on aid from the government and aid organisations, whereas forced migrant implies forced displacement, but shifts away from the needs of refugees (and obligations of the receiving government and aid organisations). I also took into account that some of my respondents identified themselves to me as Ethio-Somalis, to protect their status.

5.4 | *Conclusion*

This chapter discussed Bole Mikael’s characteristics and its social and physical importance to the Somalis living there. It is the vibrant and colourful bubble, predominantly occupied by Somalis and full of business activity, at the outskirts of the centre of Addis Ababa. The main takeaway of this chapter is the characteristic of Bole Mikael that makes it to be the Somali hub, or arrival city for Somalis, of Ethiopia. The chapter showed how Somalis remain closely connected to their (global) community and to previous places they have lived or passed through. By doing so, they tend to focus on maintaining their part in the wider global Somali network, rather than on fully integrating and connecting/adapting to the national Ethiopian community. By making use of their transnational networks they trigger the movement of people, products and capital, which turns Bole Mikael into the centre of this constant flow; it is the vibrant hub, connecting Somali diaspora, goods, and money with other Somali hubs around the world. Being connected to the global community turned out to be important to the identity forming of Somalis in Bole Mikael as well. Rather than being labelled “refugee”, they identify with the label “migrant”, even if they were forced to leave to escape war and persecution.

This chapter, together with the chapter on the context of Ethiopia and Somalia and their migration-relation, form the basis for the understanding of the survival strategies adopted by Somalis living in Bole Mikael, which will be discussed in the following chapter. The history of migration and the history of the clan system that takes care of-, and provides for, its members plays a key role in understanding the disconnection between the providers of aid in Addis Ababa and their (un)intended beneficiaries, the Somali refugees in this case.

6. Urban refugee assistance & alternatives in Addis Ababa

Understanding the complex history of Somalis in general and Somalis in Ethiopia specifically, is the foundation for getting a better understanding of how Somalis approach urban refugee assistance. This chapter discusses the available formal urban refugee assistance in Addis Ababa and how this is organised. It aims to show how refugee authorities reach out to refugees and what the underlying snags are in this approach. It criticises the seemingly outdated way of providing assistance and as opposed to a tailored approach for urban refugees as opposed to encamped refugees. This chapter furthermore showcases how Somali migrants bypass formal assistance by relying on their own traditional alternative based on their transnational clan-network. It elaborates on the Somali clan system which was introduced in the previous chapter by examples of the everyday lives of Somali migrants in Bole Mikael; how the clan system is a social and financial backup and how Somali migrants make use of their social embeddedness and transnationality. This chapter uncovers two key challenges noticed in Bole Mikael. Firstly, the challenge for Somali migrants who have to navigate their life between being accepted and rejected at the same time. And secondly, the main challenge for the aid sector. While NGOs develop new urban refugee assistance programs, the programmes reinforce old divisions, between the different refugee nationalities and between the registered and unregistered refugees and are hence not adapted to this 'new' environment/reality.

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6.1 | *Formal assistance*

Urban refugee assistance in Ethiopia is relatively new. Only in 2016 the realisation came that the refugee population in Addis Ababa was much larger than the Ethiopian authorities and UNHCR always expected and even now it remains unclear how many refugees Addis Ababa exactly counts (Awino, 2018). Since the pledges in 2016 NGOs are encouraged to engage more with urban refugees. Still, in Ethiopia's legal framework, refugees are not allowed to live in urban areas. Both the government and the NGOs are aware that it is in fact happening, but according to Tekalegne (Programme Advisor for Addis Ababa at ZOA) they turn a blind eye. Presumably because they do not cause much trouble (Tekalegne, 2018). UNHCR works with an amount of approximately 21.000 registered refugees, 17.000 of which are Eritreans, 1.000 of which are Yemenis and the remainder is made up of Somali, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Congolese refugees. This says however nothing about how the complete refugee community in Addis Ababa is made up. UNHCR categorises refugees and asylum seekers into three groups: the OCPs, the Urban Assisted, and the Unregistered

Urban Refugees. In practice, UNHCR focuses only on the first two categories. They do not work with unregistered refugees. The OCPs receive no assistance, except for legal counselling, human rights advice and guidance, and family reunification and resettlement. Via partners of UNHCR, they can sometimes apply for a skills training. This is however not common; they try to help OCPs as less as possible, since this created dependency in a population that is supposed to be self-reliant (Tekalegne, 2018; Awino, 2018). The Urban Assisted (approximately 4.300 people) are refugees without a designated camp—like Yemenis—and the refugees with a permit to leave the camp on the basis of health and/or protection issues. They are legally authorised to live in Addis Ababa and can apply for the monthly allowance from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC, hereafter referred to as DICAC). All urban refugees are expected to provide their own housing (Awino, 2018).

6.1.1 • *Current formal initiatives in and around Addis Ababa*

UNHCR is the coordinating refugee authority in Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa they work with various partners to support urban refugees: DICAC, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), ZOA and Plan International. Next to the monthly allowance for OCPs DICAC coordinates assistance related to livelihood, education and health. JRS solely focuses on child protection in their community centres. NRC is active in information counselling, access services, communication hubs and coordinates mobile teams outside the capital to for example Adama (100 km southeast of Addis Ababa). ZOA is active in two areas: livelihoods, in which they focus on business skills, market linkage and start-up capital via cash-grants, and psycho-social support, for which they are just now setting up a life-kit for Eritrean girls. Plan International is starting up their urban refugee programme, but has not been able to implement projects since they are undergoing difficulties signing contracts with ARRA and other line ministries. Even though UNHCR is the coordinating refugee authority, it does not always take the lead in action towards urban refugee assistance, according to Tekalegne. They often fail to bring together all partners working in urban areas, and do not have a clear idea of the needs and wants of urban refugees in general (Tekalegne, 2018). None of these activities take place in Bole Mikael and none are specifically directed towards Somali refugees (Awino, 2018; Hassen, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018).

6.1.2 • *Challenges in reaching beneficiaries*

All organisations work with so-called community representatives, which means that every nationality has a representative who functions as a contact person for aid agencies to a broader community and the other way around. This way NGOs are able to announce new opportunities for registered

refugees or spread important information for refugees in general. For example last year they communicated the opportunity to register vital events such as birth, marriage, divorce and death for refugees via these community representatives. Vice versa, generic information and specific requests from refugees in a certain community can be communicated with aid agencies and the Ethiopian authorities through the same community representative (Awino, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018; Hassen, 2018).

These representatives are however appointed by ARRA, the refugee and returnee line ministry of the Ethiopian government. The fact that it is ARRA who appointed the representatives is considered quite biased by both the aid organisations as well as refugees themselves. Not everybody trusts the appointed community representatives and also the majority of the community they represent does not know them. This means that the group that is reached is not a diverse one, and that there is always a significant group that does not know about the available assistance or opportunities and that does not get their message or needs across to the aid agencies. Begin 2017 UNHCR initiated a new group called the Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROV) in the hope that they better represent and reflect the refugees and their needs than the community representatives selected by ARRA (Awino, 2018). This group is however not shared with UNHCR's partners, so organisations like ZOA and NRC still work with ARRA's representatives (Tekalegne, 2018; Hassen, 2018).

Urban refugees themselves also seek assistance. They often find organisations via other refugees that have received for example cash grants or business training and sometimes they are referred to a specific organisation by UNHCR in their urban registration centre. However, the referral mechanisms among refugees is not very strong yet, "very weak, actually" (Tekalegne, 2018). The issue of the community representatives is an important one, firstly because it shows that the needs assessment and the general mapping of refugees in Addis Ababa is weak, secondly because it shows that good coordination between aid agencies among themselves and with the government is lacking. The fact that the referral mechanism among refugees is not strong or even absent most of the time is also telling; does the available assistance not cater to the needs of the refugees?

6.1.3 • *Working together with the Ethiopian government*

The earlier discussed paradigm shift from the encampment rationale towards the idea of local integration requires a shift in assistance approach. Since assistance is no longer directed solely to refugees residing in confined spaces, aid organisations have to initiate new partnerships in order to be able to work in environments that also include local host communities. Whereas ARRA used to be the only governmental partner for refugee authorities, nowadays all relevant line-ministries need to

be involved in decision making (the ministry of water, for water related interventions, ministry of education for training and education related interventions, etcetera).

According to Awino, the attitude of the government in general is good, “They do not just say they have an open door policy, but it is reflected in the way refugees are received and treated. The government can keep people in track without threatening them. There is almost no security issue according to the refugees we have spoken to”. Awino herself also notices big differences with other countries she has worked in. Especially compared to Nairobi, Kenya, Addis Ababa seems to be a safer place for refugees to reside in. “In Nairobi, we [UNHCR] could have up to twenty cases of detention a day, whereas here there have been none since I started [2 years]” (Awino, 2018). Other than in Addis Ababa, UNHCR and its partners in Nairobi have their hands full with the protection against arbitrary arrests and detentions of refugees (Kenya, 2014; Awino, 2018).

However, the attitude of the government also shows in the way they allow NGOs to support refugees throughout the country and in the city specifically, which is less enabling than they promise it to be. Plan International is not the first or the only organisation that has difficulties signing contracts with the government, which limits them in their work and oftentimes even forbids them to execute their work at all. The biggest challenge regarding urban assistance according to all organisations I spoke to during this research, and before that during my time with the embassy, is the cooperation with the line ministries. Working together with line ministries is relatively new for NGOs that work with refugees. As explained before, heretofore they only had to deal with ARRA, but now that assistance will be directed not only to refugees, but also to the host communities, they have to work together with all relevant line ministries. The same goes for refugee assistance in urban areas, since it does not operate in camps but in areas where nationals and refugees are living side by side. Line ministries are not yet used to working together between themselves and not at all together with these NGOs, which means drawing up new contracts and agreements. They are reluctant in working together, which keeps it difficult for NGOs to work out their urban refugee assistance strategy.

6.1.4 • *What about the unregistered urban refugees?*

Most of the discussed above is however related to assistance for *registered* urban refugees. Even more, it is merely focused on registered Eritrean refugees. This is not just because they are the majority of the (registered) refugees, it is also because they are easily accessible compared to other nationalities. Ethiopians consider them “brothers” because of their similar culture and history and they speak Tigrayan, which is the third language of Ethiopia after Amharic and Oromo. Even among the Urban Assisted, Somali refugees are the most difficult to reach out to. According to Tekalegne

even the Urban Assisted Somalis rather go to family than seek assistance with official agencies (Tekalegne, 2018). This still leaves the Unregistered Urban Refugees. UNHCR and NRC confirm that there is no assistance at all to the unregistered. According to Awino, UNHCR and other agencies do not see a need in reaching out to unregistered refugees who, according to her, do not seek assistance themselves. Tekalegne confirms this. For ZOA there are only two categories of refugees in Addis Ababa: OCPs and Urban Assisted, there is no mention of unregistered refugees as a category (Awino, 2018; Hassen, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018). Hence, formal assistance is largely absent for Somalis in general and especially for the unregistered Somalis in Bole Mikael. Even an upcoming pilot program with an industrial training centre in Bole Mikael will be a pilot for Eritreans and not Somalis, because apparently even in a Somali neighbourhood NGOs assume that Eritreans are easier to commit to the program.

There is a clear disconnection in the formal refugee assistance practices. Even though UNHCR and partner NGOs are developing new urban refugee assistance programs, they do not seem to reach Somali refugees. On the one hand, NGOs state that it is difficult to reach Somali refugees because of a dysfunctional referral system and because Somali refugees, according to them, do not seek assistance, nor show up at their project sites. On the other hand, the newly developed programs are mostly directed to other nationalities and exclusively to registered refugees. If aid organisations actually want to include Somali refugees in their programs, they should not exclude them in the design. Even though their programs more and more join the current shift towards resilience humanitarianism, which believes that people (can) have the capacity to adapt or spring back from traumatic and disruptive events (Hilhorst, 2018), they do not seem to know—and hence not to offer—the specific resources the Somali refugees in Addis Ababa need to adapt in this environment.

All NGOs and many Somalis I interviewed for this study indicated the Somalis seek relatively little help. Somali refugees relatively often choose to live outside of camps, because of the safety-net of their clan based system. Other than most other nationalities they have their own source of income and easier access to remittances. Within the clan there is a social obligation to send money, NGOs and the government are aware of this, but they do not know how it plays out exactly (Tekalegne, 2018; Najma, 2018). The issue of distrust is overall also less common (which can keep other refugees from trying out urban areas): if somebody within your clan owns a house in a certain *kebele*⁵, they will add you to their family-list, which is enough for Ethiopian authorities to accept that you are indeed living there and implicitly that you are Ethiopian-Somali, instead of Somali from Somalia (Yusuf, 2018; Tekalegne, 2018). It is understandable that the trust, protection and security of their clan is preferred over trusting refugee authorities that generally seem to favour other

⁵ A kebele is the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia, similar to a neighbourhood.

nationalities and even might force you to go (back) to a refugee camp. The following section of his chapter will elaborate on the Somali side of the story and examines what alternatives they seek to fill the gap left by formal refugee assistance.

6.2 | *Informal alternatives*

Since Somali refugees in Addis Ababa do not generally seem to seek assistance in the formal aid circuit, to whom do they turn for guidance and support when they first arrive? This question stuck with me and was the main drive for this research. Not long after starting the field work, I realised my approach had been off: for the majority of the people finding guidance and support does not necessarily start when they first arrive at their new (temporary) destination, it often starts before they even decide on their destination.

“I was in Harar first, we lived there for some time, me and my wife and son. I owned a small business selling *qaat* (khat). A cousin told me that the market in Addis was big, so he took me here. I live with him here, but I go back to Harar for business and family often” (Cabdi, 2018).

Like Cabdi and Ayuub (chapter 5, p. 39), many Somalis living in Addis Ababa came to the city because of the business opportunities it offers compared to others cities in Ethiopia and because they had a relative that already lived and worked there. Even if they did not have a direct relative they could turn to upon arrival, they could be put in touch with another Somali that could help them settle down. This is all based on the age-old clan system, discussed earlier. Uncles, brothers, cousins and friends help each other out and enable each other in their migrations and trading or other types of business. Somalis are known to be very loyal to their clan and family and help each other out both financially and socially (Lewis, 1999). Even though it seems that there is no official physical place to go to for help in Bole Mikael, both financial and social support are eventually arranged via-via. This often happen in one of the small cafés and it is mostly arranged and discussed by men. Many people I had the chance to talk to have enjoyed help with housing, medical care or start-up support for their business in some way or another, but mostly with start-up capital.

6.2.1 • *Support in finding an accommodation*

Help with finding a place to stay can even have more advantages than ‘just’ a roof above your head, as was the case for Yusuf. Before Yusuf came to Addis Ababa he lived close to Dire Dawa, but without an identity card or direct family living in Addis Ababa, it was difficult to find a place to stay or a place to work. Upon arrival he was put in touch with a relative of one of his friends, who arranged a bed

for him in a house in Bole Mikael. By letting him stay at their place, Yusuf could be registered as a family-member.

“One of the guys works at night in a hotel, they give me his matrass during the night. During the day I am working, so then he can sleep. We share the place [...] [The family] helped other persons before with registration. If you live there, you are family, they write you [on] the family-list. They did that for me” (Yusuf, 2018)

He now not only has a place to stay, but he also has an identity card issued by the Addis Ababa administration and with that card he was able to open a barbershop together with his friend (Yusuf, 2018). Others, that are not as lucky as Yusuf, can be directed to Najma. Najma owns a guesthouse in the centre of Bole Mikael, and houses many Somalis that are there temporarily for business or family visits, but also Somalis that plan to stay for a longer period of time. Besides a place to stay, the guesthouse is also a social get-together and an easy place to be introduced to other Somali and Ethiopian people that live in the neighbourhood.

6.2.2 • *Support in medical care*

Najma herself also benefitted from what Tekalegne referred to as the ‘social contract’ or ‘social obligation’, the sort of informally managed tax-system within the clan by which everyone contributes (financially) in case of extraordinary situations (Tekalegne, 2018). A few years ago, when Najma’s daughter was just born, doctors in the hospital in Addis Ababa discovered that the baby had heart problems.

“Of course there are no cardiologists in Ethiopia, these kind of surgeries are only done by cardiologists from Scandinavia, and they are only flown in if there is enough work for them. One patient was apparently not enough. [...] India was the only option, so I bought a ticket for me and my daughter as soon as possible. [...] I received money from our community here, but also from relatives in India. [...] When we arrived by plane, we were picked up by the family of our relatives there, they took us to their place and we stayed there for three, maybe four weeks, until it was safe to fly back” (Najma, 2018)

6.2.3 • *Support in starting up businesses*

The last example of the Somali network looking out for each other is perhaps the most common example in Bole Mikael. Not only Cabdi, Yusuf and Najma, but also other informants started their first business with the help of the Somali community. First in the form of a physical place to start a

business, a barbershop in Yusuf's case, but more often a small place to start selling fabrics, fashion, make-up or electronics for the Somali community.

"When I first arrived here, my brother had already told big stories about me. I am not the only businesswoman, but he is proud of my ideas. He arranged an empty space so I could start my business. It was the first place we visited this morning, remember? Very nice location, next to the hotel, so always many new customers. [...] Now I own two shops and this guesthouse. Most of the time I spend managing the guesthouse, but I go by the shops to keep an eye on the girls." (Najma, 2018)

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The girls Najma is talking about are a daughter of her friend and a relative that arrived in Addis Ababa a few months ago. Business is going well for her, so at a certain point it is time to "pay back what my brother did for me". She is still involved in the two shops, but the girls are going to take over when they are ready (Najma, 2018). This is not an isolated story; there are many stories of people getting help finding a place or even in the form of start-up capital. They also help each other out in other parts of the business, like purchasing and selling goods (overseas). They provide for each other and cater for their own community. Not exclusively however, also Ethiopians know where to find Bole Mikael if they want to purchase quality fabrics or *khat*.

6.2.4 • Challenges

In order to build a life in Addis Ababa Somalis trust on the support from their community. But this support is not always a given and it is created out of necessity. If one aspires to live their life outside of camps, trying to resemble the life they used to live, they give up the assistance they have the right to receive being a refugee or a forced migrant/displaced person. Reaching out to refugee assisting NGOs will increase the risk of being forced to register as a refugee and consequentially being sent (back) to a camp, where they cannot run their business, nor their life, the way they envisioned it. It pushes them to look for informal alternatives, to work illegally, without an identity card or, more often, with a forged identity card. It also pushes them to spread their opportunities, like Ayuub did. He is a tailor in Addis Ababa, but also owns businesses in Dolo and Hawassa and used to take his business across the Ethiopian borders to Somalia, Djibouti and even Saudi Arabia. Ayuub is doing well for himself and is thankful for the opportunities he has gotten, but he also visibly struggles. He arranged his business well and found an Ethiopian neighbour from whom he rents his tailor shop, and who watches over it when he travels to Dolo or Hawassa every now and then. But he was not prepared for his son fleeing the country in search for a better life in Germany, last year when he was in Dolo for two weeks (Ayuub, 2018). This is an everyday struggle for Ayuub and his family. They feel accepted and are able to run a relatively successful business, while at the same time they are facing

discrimination and hardship by the same people/country that let them in. This story also made me realise that I should be aware of the fact that the people I manage to talk to in Bole Mikael, are most probably the people that despite everything, managed to make a living, often supported by the Somali community. This study does not tell me what happens to the people that could, for some reason, not make use of their network or did not receive any support from that same network.

6.2.5 • *The social support of the (global) network*

Being part of a network, a community you can trust and fall back on is crucial. Bole Mikael provides the stage for such a network to function. It is the physical centre of that network, both on social level, as well as on a financial level. It is a place and a network that is constantly dynamic, growing and changing; it is everything but fixed, people come and go every day. Saunders' term "arrival city", introduced earlier in this study, fits this neighbourhood well. It has the characteristics of a transitional space. Even though it is a neighbourhood in the city of Addis Ababa, Bole Mikael also feels like the place "in between", a place where old habits and new surroundings merge, where Somali and Ethiopian culture touch and where the urban lifestyle of Addis Ababa is introduced. As if it prepares its inhabitants for the next step wherever that may be. A place and a network like Bole Mikael offers its people a stage to make use of their social capital and their transnational social embeddedness. It benefits from being a so-called 'ethnic neighbourhood' or Somali enclave, by creating possibilities for Somalis to cater for group-specific needs. The successfulness of the businesses that are set up in Bole Mikael is clearly linked to the fact that Somalis benefit from being embedded in their social networks consisting of either specifically clan affiliation or more generally speaking of co-ethnics or co-religionists, in a country and a city in which they are the minority. As shown before, these networks are the ones that enable them to start a business in the first place, but also generate customers, employees and capital (Kloosterman, Van der Leun and Rath, 2010).

Another characteristic and strength of Bole Mikael is that it offers more than the physical place itself. Its transitory character also makes the impact of the neighbourhood transnational. Somalis living in Bole Mikael bring past networks of places they have lived before and people they have connected with before and merge them with the current network and people they meet when they arrive. When they leave, the network does not end, but rather expands. Somali people in Bole Mikael are transnationally connected in a web of communication and a web of remittances, receiving and sending money from and to other places all over the world every day. As small and as 'unimportant' Bole Mikael may seem to the rest of Addis Ababa, it is part of a greater and vibrant global economy. Sold goods are rarely produced in Ethiopia, they are shipped all the way from Yemen, Saudi Arabia or other parts of Africa. Remittances are coming in from all other parts of the

world and simultaneously sent back to family in Somalia or rural areas in Ethiopia. This is what makes Bole Mikael and the Somalis living there transnational, following Campbells ideas on transnationality (Campbell, 2005, 2006b). Transnationalism can be found in the way in which Somalis create and sustain social relations across the national borders of Somalia, linking people and institutions in the countries of origin, transit and resettlement. Those transnational connections allow refugees to re-establish a life and their livelihood activities, despite discrimination against refugees by the host community (Campbell, 2005, 2006a; Horst, 2006).

This resonates with the idea that the most important borders are no longer the physical ones, but indeed the relational ones that are maintained by these social networks based on a shared sense of identity, situational and strategically chosen identity depending on the context of the situation (Agier, 2016). These relational borders also have their inclusion and exclusion of people, namely in the differences made between 'us' and 'them', between 'refugee' and 'host community', between 'legal' and 'illegal'. Those difference are sometimes enforced by national borders, but they are mostly manifested in the relational border; socially constructed borders that determine whether or not you belong to a group. Hence, it is not just the national border that are crossed by Somali refugees, they also face these less concrete but nevertheless very important relational border. The most 'profitable' identity one can take on in Bole Mikael is the identity based on a Somali Regional State origin. This enables them to profit from being Ethiopian as well as being Somali, blurring the 'borders' between 'us' and 'them'; the tumultuous history of the region will cover the ambiguities, should there be any.

6.3 | *A disconnection in supply and demand*

Even though the safety net and support system of the clan seem to be a well-functioning mechanism for Somalis in Addis Ababa, the story of Ayuub and his son reminds us that there is still a lot to gain in the field of assisting urban refugees in Addis Ababa. The stories of (relative) success are real, but Ayuub's son fleeing the country in search for a better life is not a single story. It is crucial for aid organisations to do a thorough needs assessment before they design a new program, especially if the circumstances are completely different from the ones they have worked in before. The disconnection that is found in the aid sector shows through in their programs. They aim to be innovative, but revert into old habits, and aim to help a new type of refugee (the urban), but rely on outdated needs assessments performed on another type of refugee (the encamped). Hence, it is important to uncover and resolve the disconnection that exists between the 'supply and demand' in the urban refugee assistance sector, otherwise the paradigm shift from the encampment rationale to supporting autonomy and local integration will remain an ideological shift rather than a shift in

practice. Acknowledging that the local informal alternative relying on the clan system is one answer to the needs of Somalis in Addis Ababa is a first step. The question remains if and how the formal aid sector can interlink with such informal alternatives.

6.3.1 • *Challenges*

The challenges that were addressed during my interviews with the aid organisations setting up urban refugee assistance programs in Addis Ababa, can be divided into two categories: accessibility and the interpretation of needs. Accessibility is a challenge that goes both ways. It was difficult for aid organisations to reach out to Somalis, but since most programs were designed for another group or nationality, Somalis are not encouraged to seek assistance from those aid agencies either. Neither accessibility, nor the interpretation of needs seem to be major issues for the local informal initiative that already exists within the Somali community. They have the 'luxury' of a Somali refugee constituency, and the time to shape and develop support to their own community in a natural way. It is however not impossible for aid organisations to take on strategies developed by the support provided by the Somali community clan system. They can look into drawing on kinship-based forms of social organisation to guide their needs assessments. This way they will not only be able to provide tailored assistance and strengthen existing support systems, but they will also be capacitated to identify the people that (for some reason) cannot fall back on that kind of kinship support, and provide them with the necessary assistance as well.

6.4 | *Conclusion*

This chapter discussed the snags of the formal urban refugee assistance setup and the informal alternatives of the Somali community. It uncovered the outdated approach of formal refugee assistance in Addis Ababa and the lack of access to the Somali refugee community and a lack of a thorough needs assessment for (unregistered) urban refugees in general. Apart from difficulties in reaching out to their beneficiaries, aid organisations also face difficulties in the new partnership with line ministries, who are delaying the processes from project design up until implementation. Considering the troubled past with well-functioning governments, it is understandable that the trust, protection and security of the Somali clans is still preferred over trusting the Ethiopian government or refugee authorities that generally seem to favour other nationalities and even might force you to go (back) to a refugee camp.

Like the previous chapter, this chapter shows the dual importance of Bole Mikael: the physical and the social. Somalis living in Bole Mikael bring past networks of places they have lived before and people they have connected with before and merge them with the current network and

people they meet when they arrive. It argues that the most important borders are no longer just the physical ones, but indeed the relational ones that are maintained by these social networks based on a shared sense of identity. While pursuing self-reliance to a certain extent on an individual level, it is this strong connection with the transnational network that enables the Somalis living in Bole Mikael to be self-reliant in a collective way. By maintaining this clan system they can draw from their own cultural values and traditions. They make use of the benefits of such a safety-net when they need it, but they also have to meet the obligations of being part of such a system from the moment their situation allows them to “give back” to the clan.

During my period of fieldwork I have heard more ‘success-stories’ than stories of ‘failed survival’, this does not mean that this is a one-on-one reflection of the stories in and around Bole Mikael. This is important to remember, also already in reflecting on this chapter. If Somalis have such a well-functioning system of supporting their own, why is it still necessary for the formal aid sector to step in or for them to make a connection to the Somali system?—A question any people have asked. First of all, like discussed above, aid organisations can learn from kinship-based forms of social organisation. It will not only help them in their understanding of the actual needs of these people, but they will moreover be able to identify the people that cannot fall back on this system. The people that I failed to find in my field study, the people that are even more invisible than the other unregistered Somali refugees.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I studied how Somali refugees and migrants survive in the neighbourhood Bole Mikael in Addis Ababa over a period of eleven weeks. I was triggered to study their survival strategies when I found out that unregistered Somali urban refugees do not receive or seek substantial formal assistance, and I was interested to find out how they navigate and provide for themselves in a complex and at times hostile environment. Moreover, I was interested in finding out the position of organisations providing urban refugee assistance in this context to better understand why there seems to be a disconnection between them and their beneficiaries.

In order to understand the strategies Somalis in Bole Mikael draw from, it is essential to go back in time and understand their traditional lifestyle, as well as the conditions which forced them to leave their homeland and pursue a life in Ethiopia. Somalis are traditionally nomadic pastoralists and their communities are patriarchally structured and divided into autonomous clans with various smaller kinship groups. Kinship has for ages been used as a mechanism by which Somalis cope with challenges, their network was, and still is, their survival strategy in difficult times. Since Somalia was left without a well-functioning central government after the Somali Civil War, Somalis rely on their age-old clan system. We can conclude that migration has always been a part of a Somali life and that clan structures have always been important in their survival, and especially so after the civil war. This helps to understand why Somalis in Addis Ababa seem to prefer to take care of themselves and their community-members instead of seeking assistance from formal aid organisations or governments.

Their nomadic lifestyle is illustrative for Somalis and is made possible, or at least made easier, by the strong kinship ties among Somalis. Uncles, brothers, cousins and friends help each other out and enable each other in their migrations and trading or other types of business. Somalis are drawn to Bole Mikael because of its high concentration of Somalis living there; it is the Somali hub of Ethiopia. This clan-system provides them with social and financial support upon arrival and throughout their stay in Bole Mikael. It was striking to see how most Somalis I interviewed or talked to for this study had benefitted from this system; and they, on their turn, were surprised by my curiosity. For them it is a given, this is how they have always cared- and provided for each other, no need to seek this kind of support elsewhere. Moreover, seeking support from formal refugee assistance means identifying as refugee, and that has serious consequences in Ethiopia. Even though Ethiopia is making progressive steps to strengthen its commitment to the rights and protection of-, and service delivery for refugees, they still confine refugees to reside in camps with their encampment policy and restrictions on movement, employment and education. Hence, identifying as refugee results in being sent (back) to one of the camps close to the Somali border. Apart from

this practical/real consequence of identifying as refugee, it came across to me as if they also do not identify with the connotations of the word refugee. They viewed refugees as vulnerable people that need to ask for help because they have no support system and no possibilities to provide for themselves. They rather identify as migrants, also if they have been forced to migrate because of the conflict situation in Somalia. With the absence of appropriate formal assistance, the survival strategy Somalis living in Bole Mikael draw from, is relying on their age-old clan values and traditions. They might initially pursue self-reliance on an individual level, but find an outcome in being (to a certain extent) self-reliant on a collective level.

Even though initially I was merely intrigued by the survival techniques of the Somalis living in Bole Mikael, the significance of the neighbourhood itself turned out to be as interesting to study. It is not a neighbourhood like any other neighbourhood in Addis Ababa. First and foremost because of its high concentration of Somali inhabitants, which makes it a vibrant and colourful Somali hub full of life, unlike the rest of the city. Since kinship-ties are strong and clan-obligations remain, even though the Somalis are spread all over the world, the Somali network grew out to be a global one. This transnational or global identity of Somalis has also transmitted to Bole Mikael as a neighbourhood. It is not merely a neighbourhood in Addis Ababa, but rather an arrival city and one of the Somali hubs connected to a global web of Somali hubs all over the world. Connected through the continuous migration of Somalis, through a remittance-cashflow, and through the trading of Somali goods. Similar to the global identity that is no longer determined by physical borders, Bole Mikael, being part of the global Somali hub, also resonates with the idea that the most important borders are no longer the physical ones, but indeed the relational ones that are maintained by these networks based on a shared sense of identity. Similar to other Somali hubs around the world, Bole Mikael also has its challenges. It is located in a legally restricting environment with hostile, xenophobic and discriminatory encounters with the host community, while at the same time they are often tolerated by the authorities. Even though Ethiopian authorities know of the large amount of undocumented refugees in Bole Mikael, and even though (informal) work is prohibited, they often turn a blind eye. Bole Mikael is a 'grey space' that constantly goes back and forth between being accepted and rejected. It is the proximity of the community that is at the same time globally nested, and the trust in the core values of the clan that gives the individual the confidence to take a risk and move to the Somali hub that Bole Mikael is.

This thesis showed how Bole Mikael and its inhabitants mutually reinforce their significance for the survival of Somalis in Addis Ababa. The neighbourhood provides the physical space that brings together Somali migrants, which enables them to draw from their traditional kinship-based social and financial support system. This thesis also showed that formal refugee assistance organisations have not yet determined their position in the urban context in general, and the Somali situation

specifically. Their challenges in contributing to Somali assistance have everything to do with their traditional method of intervention that does not yet take into account the possibility of drawing from kinship-based forms of social organisation as is being organised among Somalis themselves in Bole Mikael. It is crucial that the aid sector finds its way to incorporate this in their urban programming. Not only because they could then strengthen existing support systems, but moreover to identify its shortcomings and develop a tailored response to those.

8. References

8.1 | Literature

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8.2 | Interviews

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