

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

**Unfinished journeys: an exploration of agency within Somali
women's lives and livelihoods in Johannesburg**

Zaheera JINNAH

2013

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lives and livelihoods in Johannesburg**

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Anthropology, University of KwaZulu Natal.

Supervisors: Professors Anand Singh and Kalpana Hiralal

By: Zaheera JINNAH

Department of Anthropology, Gender, and Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu Natal

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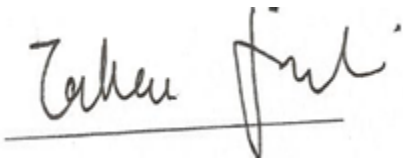
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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, **Zaheera Jinnah**, declare that

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Signed, 1 February 2013



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Zaheera JINNAH

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Wherever one looked, people were pouring out of opened doors. The streets were alive with activity: women chatting volubly with neighbours; groups of uniformed children on their way to school; infants, too small to carry their satchels, being led to kindergarten. Here and there someone was busy siphoning petrol from one vehicle into another. Most cars had an abandoned look, their bonnets up, engines cold. Occasionally one was driven past and everyone would stare, first at the vehicle as if seeing a miracle, then at the person at the wheel, perhaps hoping for a lift. The one time a taxi stopped, crowds converged on it and there was a scuffle, whereupon the driver sped off, safe in his securely locked car:

To know how I am and how I have fared, you must understand why I resist all kinds of domination, including that of being given something. As my epitaph I would like to have the following written; here lies Duniya, who distrusted givers.

From the novel, 'Gifts' by Nuruddin Farah 1999.

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Chapter 1: Host and Home: situating this study empirically and theoretically

1.1. Introduction

Although the feminisation of migration has been receiving increasing attention amongst scholars (Piper, 2003, 2005, 2008; Marinucci, 2010; Zlotnik, 1995; Adepojou, 2006; Hugo, 2005; Castells, 2002), policy makers (Dodson, 2001; Lim and Oishi, 1996; Nyberg-Sørensen, 2003; Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003), and humanitarian actors (Sadiqi, 2007; Harris, 2002; UNDP, 2009; INSTRAW, 2007), there has been limited enquiry and analysis on how female migration has challenged and shaped theoretical frameworks of migration and gender relations (Truong, 1996). This dissertation attempts to do precisely that by drawing on an extensive mixed methods empirical study of Somalis in Johannesburg with a particular emphasis on Somali women as a research population. This group presents an interesting opportunity to investigate the role and nature of social networks; the (re)making of religious, gendered and national identity; and the configuration and meaning of social norms and economic activities. The central aim of this study is to examine, through original empirical evidence, if women, as migratory and economic actors, challenge the common perceptions and understanding of women as passive actors in migratory literature and amongst Somali society, and to extend theoretical frameworks that enable a better understanding of the remaking of gender identity within migration processes. In order to undertake this I rely on: ethnographic fieldwork with a core group of 60 Somali migrants in Johannesburg, the majority of whom were women; participant observation over a 20 month period; and analysis of secondary survey level data of migrants in Johannesburg. Through these methods I explore the nature of women's migration, settlement and livelihoods in the city, and the meanings that it brings to their transnational lives.

A secondary aim of this dissertation is to argue for the use of a flexible mixed methods approach in conducting research with fluid, difficult to access, urban populations. I used ethnographic methodology - primarily, repeat in-depth interviews, networks of key informants, and participant observation, and complemented these with a field journal and debriefing sessions with research assistants to demonstrate that it is possible to conduct ethnographic research with difficult to reach populations, such as urban self-settled, close-knit refugees. I make this argument in chapter 2.

While this dissertation departs from and contributes to a particular theoretical debate, at the same time, it is also located within a unique empirical context. In South Africa, the violent and deadly xenophobic attacks on foreigners in 2008 have been a culmination of a decade of anti-foreigner sentiment (Misago, 2009); the attacks have also turned the lens on how South Africa

treats migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Whilst there is a strong public perception that non-nationals further strain access to resources in an already highly unequal country (Crush, 2001, 2011; McDonald & Jacobs, 2005; Murray, 2003), studies have found that migrants are net contributors to the country's economy in terms of their skills, capital and experience (Peberdy & Rogerson, 2000, 2003; Crush & William, 2005; Landau & Segatti, 2009). Within such a contested context, the experiences and responses of female non-nationals remain unexplored (Ulicki & Crush, 2000; Buijs, 1993; CSV, 2010). In particular, the ways in which women have negotiated social norms within their own ethnic, national, and cultural practices, as well as within the broader host country, warrant further enquiry. In this study I examine the practices and processes through which Somali women, of different class, social and ethnic backgrounds, engage, transform and negotiate social and economic spaces within and between diasporic and host communities in Johannesburg and whether these explain, extend or challenge theoretical frameworks on gender and migration.

1.2. Research questions

This dissertation therefore aims to critically reflect on, and theoretically construct the conceptualisation and articulation of agency and gender relations within the context of migration by focusing empirically on a specific case study: Somali women in Johannesburg. The main research questions of this dissertation centre on three areas of the migration project: the process of migrating; settlement and livelihoods strategies; and meanings and outcomes of migration.

- i. Process of migration:
 - Who migrates? What led to the decision to migrate for these women?
 - How do they migrate? What channels of information and support are available and used to facilitate migration?
 - How is migration for a woman different to that for a man? Does gender pose challenges to migration? If so, what are these?
- ii. Livelihoods strategies
 - What economic activity are migrants engaged in? What is the nature of the work or business activity and in which sector is it located? How is this determined?
 - What role have social networks played in establishing and maintaining economic integration?
 - How does gender shape these activities? Are there obstacles to entry because of gender? How are these negotiated?
- iii. Meanings
 - What tangible and subtle meanings have migration yielded for the sample group?

1.3. Structure of dissertation

This dissertation is structured as follows: chapter 2 provides a description and rationale of the methodology used in undertaking this study and makes the previously stated argument on research methods. Chapter 3 provides a critical review of the literature relating to migration and settlement and its implications for gender norms and relations with a specific focus on South Africa as a receiving country and on Somalis elsewhere in the Diaspora; in this chapter I argue that agency has largely been overlooked in the literature on migration, and more so if one considers gender and migration. Chapters 4 to 7 contain the bulk of the ethnographic findings of this research. In chapter 4, I discuss the routes of and rationale for migration from Somalia to South Africa and argue that migratory routes are not linear journeys but rather are drawn out processes that include important nodes of interaction and meaning making, production of resources, and the remaking or reinforcing of norms. In chapter 5, I examine Somali household patterns in Johannesburg, and provide both an analysis of how Somalis have shaped space in the city and the implications this has for their socio-economic lives and mental health. In chapter 6, I turn to livelihood strategies and meanings amongst the respondents. I argue that Somali livelihoods in the Diaspora are multiple, diverse and fluid and that these characteristics are at once a response to the particular economic and political environment in which they find themselves as well as an articulation of the agency and self-determination of migrants. Finally, in chapter 7, which acts as a conclusion to the dissertation, I analyse the outcomes and meanings that Somali women have derived from the entire migratory project, broadly conceptualised as movement and settlement, and examine the public and private implications of transnational, fluid lives.

The rest of this chapter has two main objectives. First, I provide a brief background on Somalia and South Africa, which situates this study in terms of geographical, historical, and political context and shows how Somali women, much like other women in migration history, have been overlooked as actors in their own right. I also summarise the legal framework relating to non-nationals in South Africa, which helps to contextualize migrants' actions and non-actions. Second, I detail the migratory history of Mayfair, the research site for this study, and argue that many of the present day characteristics of this space formed and remade by Somalis are very much an extension of its early history.

1.4. Somalia: a feminist history and geography

Mobility and migration are characteristics of Somali life dating from nomadic practices to modern day realities. As pastoralists and herdsman, Somalis historically moved in search of greener pastures to cultivate, or for their stock to feed on. Other Somalis, who were traders, were drawn to fluid caravan routes and far away destinations to source and sell their wares. As part of the Arabian trade networks, Somalis adopted a hospitable view of outsiders who they

regarded as their link to commercial and spiritual resources (Lewis, 2008). Following the civil unrest and conflict that has plagued Somalia for most of the latter part of the 20th century, mobility took on a new meaning: a means to escape war and the political and economic uncertainty that it brought. Today, Somalia has a population of eight million people, of which roughly a quarter is believed to be living in the Diaspora (Lewis, 2008). More specific data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) shows that in January 2012 there were 1 077 048 Somali refugees, 30 831 asylum seekers and 1 356 845 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Somalia (UNHCR 2012).

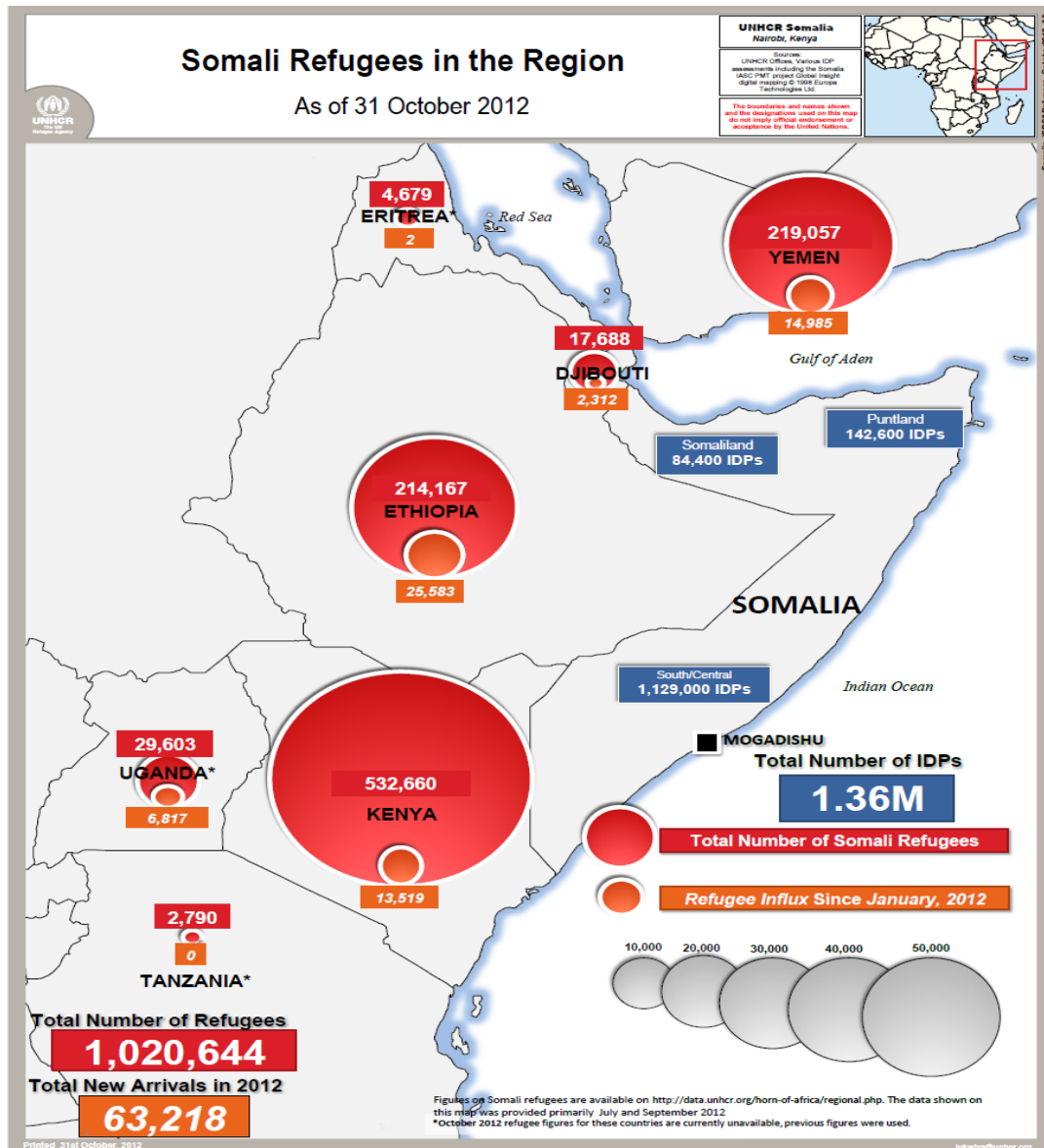
Historically, Somalis had close associations with the southern and northern regions in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, due to trade networks. It was through these that in the 7th and 8th centuries, Islam was brought to Somalia. This has resulted in most Somalis being overwhelmingly Muslim. Theologically, most are Sunnis with many following the *shaff'i* or *suffi* school, both of which fall within Sunni Islam. The religious aspect of Somali life is important for two reasons: it has historically shaped migratory and mobility routes through trade with Arab Muslims; and, in contemporary times, has been suggested to play either an instrumental role in facilitating integration with host communities, including South Africa (Sadouni, 2009) or, in contrast, serve as a factor for exclusion in secular societies (Kleist, 2008; Tiilikainen, 2003; Fangen, 2006). Although most Muslims in Johannesburg follow the *hanafi* (as opposed to *shaff'i*) school, with a minority *suffi* base, Sunni Islam is predominant in South Africa and this is sufficient to create a shared religious base.

Contemporary mobility amongst Somalis is largely driven by the war in the early 1990s and the subsequent collapse of governance in the country (Gundel, 2003). Although this movement is diverse and fluid, there are three distinct patterns: internally displaced people (IDPs); movement within the region; and migration beyond the region. Other layers such as regular and irregular migration, and temporary and permanent migration, can also be added.

Movement within the Horn of Africa has largely been driven by shared ethnicity and language, dating from the pre-colonial period. This is most prominent in northern Kenya, which has a common ethnic background to some Somali tribes¹. After the war in the early 1990s, many Somalis fled to Kenya and Tanzania. In October 2012, UNHCR estimates show that more than a million Somali refugees were living in Tanzania and a further 532 660 in Kenya, as is displayed on **Map 1**. Recently, as many as 100 000 Somalis have also moved to the Gulf in search of protection and employment (Menkhaus, 2008).

¹ A tribe is defined as a “social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader” (Oxford Online Dictionary).

Outside the Horn of Africa, Somalis have moved to Europe and North America, often settling in dense numbers in key urban nodes; for example, there are an estimated 33 000 Somalis in London and 20 000 in Bristol (UK), 75 000 in Columbus and 70 000 in Minneapolis (USA) and 40 000 in Toronto (Canada). New studies suggest that Somalis are also beginning to settle in other places such as South Africa, Malaysia and Australia (Shiekh & Healy, 2009). Given this rapid and dense mobility, issues of religion and gender have come to the fore in different contexts, yet a systematic understanding of these issues from the perspective of migrants themselves is still emerging.



Map 1: Map of Somali mobility in the Horn of Africa

Source: UNHCR, 2012d

Family and kinship ties are the backbone of Somali social structures. In line with Islamic law and Somali traditions, polygamy is accepted in Somali society and a man is permitted to take up to four wives at one time, provided that he meets a number of conditions such as equal treatment and adequate lodgings for each. At the same time, divorce is commonplace amongst Somalis at home and in the Diaspora (Engebriksen, 2007), resulting in men and women contracting multiple marriages during their lifetimes, with women in particular entering into a first marriage at a young age. As such, family ties are often entwined within a large group of people and tribes transnationally, and are rather complex in nature.

Marriage differs from region to region: marriage within the clan is more common in the south than it is in the north where cross-clan marriages are valued for their political benefits. Nevertheless, marriage is often more than just a testament of love between two individuals: its purpose goes beyond that, to establishing or cementing ties amongst or between tribes and clans. Given the central role played by the family, marriage and reproduction are important acts in Somali life. In particular, childbearing is highly valued in Somali society, as it is seen as a means through which family and clan lineage can be extended, entrenched and sustained (Lewis, 1994).

A key component of Somali identity is gender relations. Most of the literature describes these as complimentary, as Lewis puts it “each individual has an exact place in society” (1994, p. 19) with men and women having very different, but complementary roles. Thus, there are fairly overt and specific gendered roles amongst Somalis, with women primarily seen as mothers or wives, adopting personal and private roles related to domestic and economic tasks at the household level (including agricultural roles in rural households or petty trading in urban ones), whilst men have more political and public roles. Therefore, the ‘ideal’ Somali woman in the literature is someone who is economically active, intelligent, and physically strong, yet obedient. On the other hand, the ‘ideal’ Somali man is a confident, physically strong, and socially prominent man, who has a particular position and status in society (Warsame, 2002; Kleist, 2009). Yet this categorisation is essentially simplistic, ignoring the particular clan, geographic and personal ideals that have shaped gender relations and the ways in which new places influence perceptions of gender. In the Diaspora the changing nature of gender relations are more pronounced as Somalis have engaged with different social, economic and political orders, and where the underlying ideals of complementarity have been tested and reshaped.

Although some of the more recent literature suggests that these gendered social norms have extended into the Diaspora (Horst, 2008; Hansen, 2009), it has also marked the tensions that have arisen as Somalis have engaged with a new political context, new social expectations, and varied political interest from humanitarian agencies. Nevertheless, a gendered Somali identity remains relevant in the Diaspora, and Johannesburg is not an exception. Although this

gendered difference might be most apparent in outward expressions- through dress and public behaviour for example- it is equally significant and articulated in more subtle ways. Some of these include the norms governing marital life and reproduction, and political and community affairs. Furthermore, the very real difference amongst Somalis at clan, geographical, and class, level, which have been shaped by war, conflict, religion, and political independence, are often overlooked (Kleist, 2009). Yet Somali gender relations are more complex than a simplistic complementary model would suggest, as women have throughout time taken an active economic role, and have found and articulated the personal power they exercise within their own families, whilst men eager to have a public front for their skills and status are happy to leave the running of the household and decision making related to it, to women. Thus the roles women have played in Somali society and continue to play in different circumstances in the Diaspora are laced with hidden notions of power, agency, and self-determination.

This study is located in the new literature on women in Diaspora², arguing that migration, even if it is forced, provides opportunities to carve new roles and renegotiate old ones. This is not to suggest that migration is viewed as a positive process, indeed forced migration in particular can be deeply traumatic, demobilising, risky, and even fatal, particularly for women. Rather, what I will show is that within the change that migration offers there are both advantages and disadvantages for women, who use and mobilise these to exert control over and change in their lives.

Governance, clan life, and migration

Following the collapse of the central government in 1990, Somalia became known as a “failed state”, a term, I argue, that is not entirely accurate. In the absence of any formal central authority, local level structures do exist, which Horst describes as “impressive if fragile” (2008, p. 329). At state, regional, clan and local levels, some level of stability and authority is created drawing on historical extra-territorial or state boundaries. The role of the clan in creating stability and social order is relevant in the rural areas, as it has been throughout the years, even while a formal, central state existed.

Although tribalism was outlawed in 1971 by the then president Syed Barre, following a long “history of corruption and nepotism associated with tribal rule and governance” (Lewis, 1989, p. 573), many aspects of everyday life are interwoven with tribal traditions, such as the payment of blood money, lineage genealogies and tribal marriages. In law, tribal and feudal systems of governance and everyday life were banned and replaced by a socialist system. Nevertheless, clan life remained vibrant underground, and unofficially tribal affiliations were still important in negotiating political, economic, and social life in Somalia. This was most

² See for example Hondagneu-Sotelo & Cranford, 2006; Pessar & Mahler, 2006; Kihato, 2007, 2009.

apparent in the power that the commonly known acronym, MOD (the three most important tribes, Maehanm, Oganden and Dulbhante) represented in Somali political and public life. Following the end of Barre's regime in 1990, tribalism regained prominence in Somali life and flourished as the central state collapsed. Today the clan is a central institution of Somali political, economic and social structures and remains relevant in the Diaspora.

Somalis often describe the tribal context as 'four point five'. 'Four' refers to the four major Somali tribes (or ethnic groupings, each with its own subdivisions), which collectively constitute about 75 per cent of the population, and the 'point five' represents the many smaller, minority tribes. The four main tribes referred to are the Dir, Isac, Hawiye and Dirod. In addition, there are the Somali *bantus* and the Somalis from Kenya. Each tribe is further divided into several sub-tribes and clans, each with its own structures of authority. Marriage between tribes is common and is seen as a means to solidify inter-tribal relations (Lewis, 1962, 1999; Eno & Eno, 2011).

In South Africa most of the four main tribes are present, without any overt domination by a single tribe, although the Dirod are the more prominent in political and economic structures in Johannesburg. The Dirod are mainly found in Amal, a private sector Somali owned shopping centre, which is a principle site for fieldwork in this dissertation. The Dirod are prominent traders, although historically they come from a lineage of fishermen. The Hawiye are from southern Somalia, and particularly from Mogadishu. They are commonly associated with political power; indeed, the current Somali president is Hawiye, and in South Africa, one of the Somali community organizations, namely the Somali Community Board, has a prominent Hawiye membership. Most Hawiye in South Africa live in Cape Town. The Dir are from northern Somalia and are known as 'the soldiers' because they were historically famed for their fierce and brave fighting during pre-colonial and colonial periods. In more recent times, many of the Dir were responsible for manning security check points in Somalia. Lastly, the Isac, or Digil Mirifile, are a tribe of farmers. Today, many Isac are linked to Al-Shabab, the Islamist rebel group.

The role of the clan permeates individual and group life and influences womens' personal and public affairs. For instance, a widowed woman is not likely to get inheritance from her late husband's estate, as her in-laws fear that she will remarry and the property will go outside the family. This is one of the motivating factors behind the custom of a widow marrying her late husband's brother. The clan is also a source of social capital and security; it serves as a mechanism for the functioning of political stability and governance, provides a sense of identity, and plays a prominent role in maintaining group and clan relations through consultative and conflict resolution processes such as the payment of *diya*, or blood money, and compensation. Disputes between clans have historically been attributed to differences

arising from ownership of land, property and animals (Horst, 2008, p. 329). Disputes are usually resolved through negotiations, a concept that can be traced to Islamic principles of '*ashura*' or consultation. At times, disputes cannot be resolved through negotiations and armed conflict occurs (Lewis, 1999).

The role of the Diaspora in maintaining transnational tribal relations is not well known. Some literature has shown how clan leaders request their members in the Diaspora to pay dues (Horst, 2008). Remitting is a responsibility that most Somalis cannot avoid; it both provides an impetus to remain involved in clan life and raises significant pressure to send money home regularly. Yet the amount remitted annually is not known, as Somalis rely on formal and informal banking systems (Horst, 2008). Compounding the issue is the increased attention, and strict regulation, paid to transnational flows of capital by states and international bodies who are concerned about stemming aid to terrorism and piracy activities linked to Al Shabab and Al Qaeda. As such, personal and group related activities amongst Somalis have taken on political overtures and for many outsiders, clan life is seen as more than just a social unit.

Gender relations are weaved into the kinship system, which is patriarchal in nature. As discussed earlier, men have powerful and important roles to play within the clan. However, women play a strategically important role in bridging clans through marriage. A woman belongs to her father's clan, but once married, her husband and his clan have "rights over her productive and reproductive labour" (Al-Sharmani, 2010, p. 13). In this sense, there has been a strong instrumentalisation of Somali women in history (Lewis, 1962), which worsened when colonial powers vested authority in mainly male clan leaders, attaching significant political authority on what was initially a social role. Thus, gender relations became entrenched in political public spheres of life at the clan level, rather than the private social level. At the same time, as urbanisation increased during colonial times, women's economic roles in an agricultural based economy became redundant and many women struggled to carve out productive positions in an urban economy (Al-Sharmani, 2010, p. 14). In the post-colonial period conflict and centralisation strategies pursued by the socialist state reduced the ability for women to access resources and consolidate their identity and power, which were vested in traditional clan-based structures. Women became economically and politically marginalised in Somalia (Kapteinjis, 1994; Keynan, 1998). Following the collapse of the central government in 1991, women became tools of war (Mohamed, 1997, 1999), to be used by tribes to fulfil political objectives.

Current political climate and tensions that shape present day mobility

The civil war in Somalia over the last two decades has fundamentally changed the nature and functioning of Somali society, and shifted social norms relating to gender roles and family life. As previously stated, the UNHCR (2012b) estimates that 770 154 Somalis are classified as

refugees originating from that country, and 22 839 are asylum seekers. In January 2012, the UNHCR (2012c) records indicate that there were 21 300 Somali refugees in South Africa. This scale of mobility has created a different social and policy environment in which rights are understood and claimed. For Somali women, this has resulted in them taking on new roles in the home and in society, and re-evaluating their perceptions of gender and femininity.

Women in Somalia assumed more public and prominent roles in society during the 1990s. Confronted by a declining political and economic order on one hand, and a breakdown in families through migration and war on the other, many women took on new roles such as becoming active breadwinners in their families, or being involved in politics (Kapteijst, 1994). In the Diaspora too, women found a social environment that was very different from the one that they had left behind. In Johannesburg during the 1990s and early 2000s, the clan, which previously had been the most important unit in their lives and to whom they paid allegiance in all matters, was fragmented. Without the support and protection of male family members many women found themselves in a paradox: on the one hand they had more freedom to make their own decisions relating to themselves, their bodies, and their families; on the other hand, many women also found themselves feeling more vulnerable, physically and economically. Within this unique space, the reproduction of social norms and the establishment of new patterns of behaviour emerged. Some of these are explored in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Several factors contribute to the economic and social vulnerability that Somali women face in Johannesburg. Unlike many social welfare states in Europe, South Africa extends minimal social security to refugees³ and none to migrants or asylum seekers. Consequently, non-nationals rely on informal systems of support, such as social capital and private savings and loans to alleviate economic risk and vulnerability. Without the safety net of the wider family and clan, Somali women often feel marginalised and destitute. Opportunities to work and trade in the formal sector are minimal and most Somalis end up working or trading informally with low wages and earnings. Women are discouraged from seeking work or business opportunities in the townships where earnings could potentially be higher, but where risks associated with crime and xenophobic violence are greater. Socially too, women face numerous challenges: given the weakening of the wider family structure, divorce in the Diaspora is more commonplace. This often leaves women homeless and unable to support themselves. They are also unlikely to successfully claim an extra legal type of maintenance support from their ex-husband or his family, without having the backing and moral support of their families.

These opposing and entwined factors provide the empirical and theoretical backdrop against which this study is situated and in which aspects of gender and migration are examined.

³ Before 2012, the monthly disability grant was the only source of state support that refugees were entitled to; as of 2012, refugees have access all social security in South Africa.

1.5. South Africa: migration laws and realities

Legal framework

Following the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa adopted a progressive Constitution based on strong human rights principles that entitled all who live in the country, regardless of nationality or legal status, to enjoy basic rights and services. Furthermore, South Africa is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1976 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa. These agreements outline the rights of forced migrants. Like many migrant receiving countries though, it has not signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. Despite South Africa's comprehensive and inclusive legal framework, in practice many refugees receive little state support to socially or economically integrate in the country. Indeed, many lower-skilled migrants, asylum seekers and refugees encounter numerous challenges to regularising their stay in South Africa, protecting themselves from crime and xenophobia, and seeking opportunities for livelihoods (Harris, 2002; Crush, 2008; Polzer, 2007; Hunter & Skinner, 2003). Landau & Jacobsen explain that these rights are restricted in practice due to a "lack of institutional capacity to translate rights into entitlements, and a civil service and host population that lacks attitude to outsiders" (2004, p. 309).

As I will demonstrate in this study, the refugee or asylum seeker permit, which most Somalis hold in South Africa, affords them no protection from state- or citizen-led discrimination or violence, does not provide access to any material goods or services and places restrictions on their ability to travel outside the country. All these factors contribute to a sense of uncertainty and stress, which I discuss in the findings of this dissertation.

Political and economic context within which migrants settle

Somalis began arriving in South Africa in the early 1990s, following the collapse of Syed Barre's regime in Somalia and with the prospect of new opportunities in South Africa. Initially they settled in Mayfair, a suburb nestled close to the centre of Johannesburg, which had a significant local Muslim population and was established as a place for trade (Jinnah, 2010). Gradually Somalis began venturing further afield, and over the next two decades created economic opportunities for themselves through small scale retail businesses in cities and in townships (former black areas located on the fringes of major cities and towns) in almost every major and secondary city in South Africa.

Most Somalis in South Africa hold refugee permits (UNHCR, 2005; FMSP, 2006). These permits allow them to live, work, trade, study and move freely within the country. However, despite

such provision to ensure their protection, they face considerable risks from xenophobic related violence from the public and state bodies (Misago, 2009). Partly to counter this threat, and in part to preserve a sense of community, Somalis have established several community organizations in South Africa (Jinnah, 2010; Polzer-Ngwato & Segatti, 2011; Johnson, 2010).

One of the features of South Africa's historical labour migration pattern has been the lack of any policy provision for lower-skilled migrants to enter the country or bring their families with them. As a result many lower-skilled migrants live in single sex hostels provided by their employers, with little or no opportunity for social integration or family life (Crush, 1985, 1986, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2007; Collinson, Kok & Garenne, 2006). For migrants who are in South Africa with their families, the lack of any social security mechanisms and the structural and xenophobic constraints associated with public service delivery impedes their ability to access social services in the public (health, education) or private sphere (housing, employment). This means that most non-nationals rely on social networks for entry and access to markets for social goods and services (CoRMSA, 2008; Greenburg & Polzer, 2008; Hunter & Skinner, 2003). Very little is known about the economic conditions and coping mechanisms of migrants and refugees in South Africa. What is produced and reproduced in the public domain is often based on rhetoric, myths and misconceptions rather than actual data.

Contemporary migration to South Africa

South Africa has attracted different types of migrants and experienced various migration flows in the last fifty years. During apartheid, the country relied on a steady supply of low-skilled migrant labour from neighbouring countries to boost its productivity in key sectors such as mining and agriculture (Crush, 1992). Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has become a destination country for international migrants from the region and further afield, due to its political stability and economic strength. As a result South Africa is home to diverse groups of non-nationals including refugees, asylum seekers, temporary and seasonal migrants and undocumented migrants (Collinson, Kok & Garren, 2006).

Official data from the 2011 Census indicates that 2,3 million (4,4 per cent) Of the population are non-nationals, although disaggregated data for municipal or ward level by country of birth, gender and migration type are not yet available. The 2007 Community Survey estimated the number of foreigners in Johannesburg to be 13,2 per cent of the city's population or 300 000 (Statistics South Africa, 2007). A Livelihoods Study by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE 2008) estimated the number of foreigners in Johannesburg to be 14 per cent of

the city's population, amounting to about 500 000 people.⁴ All of these data sets are unable to provide complete, accurate and updated numbers on the types of migrants in the country. The number of Somalis in South Africa is not released by the Department of Home Affairs. As stated, statistics from the UNHCR show that there were a total of 21 390 Somali refugees and asylums seekers in January 2012. Somali community organizations put the number higher between 45 000- 60 000. The undercount could be attributed to two principle factors: not all Somalis report to the UNHCR; and a small minority are not asylum seekers or refugees but economic migrants.

An additional factor, which is relevant to understanding the South African context, is the issue of lower-skilled Zimbabwean migrants. Prior to the Zimbabwean Dispensation Programme in 2010, many of these individuals found no regular means to enter and remain in South Africa, aside from the asylum seeker system, which resulted in an overburdened and inflated system. In 2009 the Department of Home Affairs reported that it had received 9000 refugees applications and 364 638 applications from asylum seekers (DHA, 2009). In terms of public opinion the lack of knowledge surrounding the Zimbabwean issue and asylum process on the one hand and the inability to recognise that asylum seekers and refugees are legal categories that require protection under international and national law on the other, means that even though most Somalis have refugee permits, it is not a type of documentation that invokes access to either services from the state or a sympathetic reaction amongst the public.

The lack of clear and disaggregated data on the number and types of non-nationals in the country is one of the reasons for the prevailing xenophobic sentiments found in the country. The ways in which migration data is selected and the political context within which migration estimates are made" increases the tension surrounding actual data on non-nationals (Landau & Gindrey, 2008, p. 146).

1.6. Ethnography of a space: detailing the research site

History and evolution

Fordsburg and Mayfair were founded in the 1880s on farmland belonging to Johannes Smit who bought the land in 1859 (Leyds, 1964, p. 4). In 1888 two developers, Lewis Ford and Julius Jeppe, bought two areas of the farm stretching from Fordsburg and Mayfair in the west to Jeppe in the east, and named it after themselves (Brink, 2008, p. 3). Both were prominent men; Ford was an attorney general of Transvaal and Jeppe his assistant. In its early days the area was

⁴ The 2011 Census reported that the number of international migrants in the country was 3,2 per cent of the population, and in the Gauteng province, where the CDE study was located, it is 7,1 per cent, significantly lower than that of popular opinion.

an attractive one with shrubbery and trees planted on it and a vibrant trading atmosphere. This attracted significant interest when several stands in Fordsburg were put on auction in 1893. The proximity to the mining camps in what would be central Johannesburg also added to the real estate value of the area. (Interestingly, about a century later, this would also be a draw factor for new groups of migrants, including Somalis, who were seeking the economic promise of Johannesburg.) Around the same time in 1887, the authorities established an 'Indian location', a distinct area to house people of Indian descent. This model would serve as the blueprint for the Group Areas Act in Apartheid South Africa some 60 years later, and eventually add to the significant religious and cultural footprint of the area. In 1887, though, a six block area to the east of Fordsburg was established to accommodate the large number of Indian traders who had migrated to the newly created mining camp (Brink, 2008). By 1897, there were 96 stands in this location, accommodating 400 Indians (Brink, 2008, p. 5; Bhana & Brain, 1990). The trading potential of Fordsburg was therefore identified and exploited early on by migrants, a pattern that would be repeated in the post-apartheid era.

Fordsburg was founded in 1889, 3 years after the discovery of gold in Johannesburg, making it one of the oldest inhabited areas in the city. Fordsburg was established as the site of the first mining camp in Johannesburg, followed by the formation of Mayfair in 1898. Both areas were established as working class suburbs and typically had property stands of less than 500 m² compared to 1000 m² stands typical of the suburbs north of the Johannesburg ridge. Mayfair and Fordsburg were home to white miners on the Johannesburg gold mines, with pockets of Indian homeowners on the periphery of the suburb (Brink, 2008).

One of the subsequent proprietors of some of the land in Mayfair was JB Robinson, the owner of a gold mine in the south of Fordsburg. In 1892 he put up several stands on his land for auction and named it Mayfair. In unsubstantiated reports it is indicated that he named the area after its trendy namesake in London, which was also located to the west of the city, with the "desire that it would be as fashionable as its British counterpart" (Smith, 1972, p. 326). Thus, by the turn of the century, Mayfair and Fordsburg had been distinguished as a political community in its own right, with demarcated borders, and designated stands, and was home to a mixture of landowners and tenants. Governance of the area was vested in the British authorities of the time. At this early stage the area showed potential for commercial and residential use and had already attracted international migrants who were keen to exploit the economic potential linked to its location.

As Johannesburg grew in size and stature following the discovery of gold, its racial and class distinctions became apparent; areas on the west of the city drew working class whites, Indians, blacks and coloureds, while wealthier and middle class whites settled in the northern and eastern parts of the city, respectively. In Fordsburg, the establishment of a tram line (albeit a

horse–drawn one) along a central artery road linking the area in the west to the mining camps in the heart of the town, made the area a significant commercial node. Today, the railway line that runs through Fordsburg and Mayfair has created a commercial desire of its own, which many Somali migrants exploit in their role as traders. The particular interaction between space and everyday life was marked by the structure of the houses; the semi-detached homes with narrow porches, situated close to the front of each stand were set close to each other, affording little privacy to its inhabitants. This type of structural design, common in the western part of Johannesburg, would lend itself to the vibrant Indian community life that developed in parts of Fordsburg and neighbouring Vrederdorp (Hermer, 1978; Mack, 1977). A hundred years later, Somalis have shaped this space in their own unique way by enclosing the porches and making them into extra living space or converting them into tiny trading places (Jinnah, 2012). The proximity of the houses to each other has also helped create and support the dynamic street life, which characterises the area today.

Fordsburg and Mayfair have been described as “cultural melting pots” (Brink, 2008, p. 10). It is an area where Indian, Black, Malay, Chinese and mixed race (coloured) traders and workers lived alongside poor, working class Afrikaans-speaking whites (Zwi, 1980). The Afrikaners, who had suffered losses and livelihoods as a result of the Anglo Boer War in the period 1899-1902, and experienced the agricultural crises at the turn of the century (Giliomeer, 2003), had come from across the country to Johannesburg and had settled in Mayfair and Fordsburg, probably because of the lower rental costs there. These working class Afrikaners, who settled in urban areas, would become known as the *bywoners* (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994). By 1936, estimates suggest that half the Afrikaner population were living in urban centres (Giliomeer, 2003). During the early twentieth century, following the first World War, many Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Russia settled in the “white working class areas of Johannesburg such as Fordsburg and Mayfair” (Brink, 2008, p. 16). Shortly thereafter, in 1906, the Fordsburg Synagogue was built. The different places of worship found in the area are a further testament to this diverse early history. In addition to the synagogue, there were mosques, churches of various denominations including Anglican, Catholic, and Dutch Reformed, and later a Hindu temple. Not much is known about social relations between these different groups at the time, although evidence of credit systems between Indian traders and Afrikaner customers do exist, pointing to some interaction and trust between the groups (Stals, 1978, 1986).

Over time Fordsburg became an area that attracted individuals seeking refuge or opportunities, in the broadest sense, from within and outside the country’s borders. Thus, its working class character took hold (Brink, 2008, p. 14). However, in the early part of the twentieth century, the number of Afrikaners in the area grew. Not surprisingly, the Nationalist Party (NP) developed a strong presence in Mayfair and parts of Fordsburg, following the Rand Revolt in the 1920s. This political activism resulted in the area becoming an NP constituency after the

1948 general election. The situation in the area, as indeed in the rest of the country, would change significantly after this, as the NP began drafting and implementing its segregationist policies.

The Group Areas Act (No. 41) of 1950, followed by the Group Areas Act of 1957 and the Natives Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1957 (Dyzenhaus, 1991, p. 79), were all inherently designed to officially designate specific areas for certain racial groups. This ultimately made it a criminal offence for a person to live in an area that had been designated for another racial group. The Group Areas Act was abolished in 1991 but racial enclaves persisted in the post-independence era. In order to implement the segregationist policy of the Group Areas Act, the state forcibly removed Indians from Fordsburg and settled them in a newly built area which they called Lenasia, about 30 km southwest of the city, which had been designated for Indians. As a result of mobilisation and protests, the Nationalist government ceded a trading area in the heart of Fordsburg for Indian traders. This would become the Oriental Plaza, a commercial hub for traders and consumers. Later, it would also be an important resource for Somali and other Muslim migrants to the city who could find employment in the Indian owned stores, and some of whom could even open trading stores of their own, thereby finding a foot in the economic and social fabric of Fordsburg. In this way, the purpose of the Plaza has ironically changed in just the last two decades, from its political overtures in the 1970s (Toffah, 2009) to its more organic formation as a social and economic space, with a significant role played by migrants. Although Sadouni (2009) points to the ethnic identity of the Plaza and suggest that Somalis have followed in this line by creating unique ethnic spaces within Fordsburg and Mayfair, I would argue that this comparison ignores the particular political context within which the Plaza was built and the distinct agency of Somalis in developing their own commercial space. The Oriental Plaza was conceived of as an appeasement to the Indian community for their forced removal from Fordsburg and built by the Nationalist government. In contrast, Somali trading centres in Mayfair had a distinct economic objective, and was built through direct investment from Somalis who had transnational networks of capital and power.

Over the last century Fordsburg has established itself as an important urban node that attracts the transfer of money and goods, and has become a space that lures people to its boundaries, due to the economic opportunities it presents (Colquhoun, 1995). Today, Fordsburg is caught within a dichotomy of opportunity and neglect. Official city policy and planning documents describe it as a potential heritage site, worthy of regeneration and protection (Brink, 2008). At the same time, its new residents, many of whom are migrants and refugees, are marginalised politically and socially (Colquhoun, 1995; Friedmann, 2002). The flight of the middle classes from Fordsburg and Mayfair, and of white business from the CBD in the 1990s contribute to the neglect of physical infrastructure in the area. Despite this, many migrants, and most notably

Somalis, have carved opportunities for trade and created parallel nodes of social, economic, and political governance.

Fordsburg is conceptualised in the literature as an Indian enclave, a perception shared by many South Africans. Although it may be considered an enclave due to the vibrant and distinct cultural and ethnic groups that have lived en masse there, I argue that it is not specifically an Indian one. To suggest this means to overlook the historical diversity inherent in Fordsburg and the changing nature of its current populace (Taahir, 2005, p. 4). The literature also points to the dual roles that Fordsburg has served through the ages to the various groups resident in it, a mixture of residential and commercial space co-existing, at times simultaneously and at others, in parallel (Leys, 1967). Nevertheless, these two concepts, enclave and duality of space, are both elements that have been extended and shaped by Somalis. The social networks found in Mayfair and Fordsburg have attracted many Somalis who are entering the country for the first time (Jinnah, 2010), and the presence of Somali owned cafes, restaurants, and shops, often alongside homes, has created a distinct Somali atmosphere in the area (Jinnah, 2012). Likewise, the blurring of space between residential and commercial usage, a characteristic of Somali settlement at home and in the Diaspora (an aspect I delve deeper into later in the dissertation) is at the same time a continuation of settlement patterns in Mayfair and Fordsburg over the last century.

Disorder, state authority, and uncertainty too have been a part of Mayfair and Fordsburg for many years. Carrim's (1990) account of the policing of the Oriental Plaza and the raids and harassment of traders by police under the pretences of the Group Areas Act are not unlike the policing, raids and harassment that occur today in Somali parts of Fordsburg and Mayfair. In these cases, police prey on public fears of tax evasion, counterfeit documents and money laundering to launch violent and, at times, illegal raids on traders in the Somali owned Amal shopping centre.

1.7. Conclusion

This opening chapter has laid the theoretical and empirical groundwork for this dissertation and has placed the study within a relevant historical, geographical and political context that is critical in understanding the research questions from which this dissertation departs and the findings that it later describes.

I have begun demonstrating the complex, fluid role of women in Somali society and suggested that migration as a project or a process needs to be closely examined in order to determine if and how mobility reshapes notions of identity, norms and social relations. I have focused on the paradoxical context of the receiving country, South Africa, which itself is struggling with political, social and economic inequalities and uncertainly following the end of apartheid rule

and almost two decades of high unemployment, crime and lack of service delivery for the poor, all whilst boasting progressive legal frameworks that give forced migrants, such as Somalis, the greatest sense of rights and freedoms in the region, and arguably on the continent. Through this contrasting and composite picture, I show how Somalis, with their own particular tribal, ethnic and religious based sources of identity, are shaping urban centres in post-apartheid South Africa, raising questions about inclusion and diversity in the rainbow nation, and remaking their Diasporic experiences as active agents.

This composite existence is most evident in the research site; to understand and fully appreciate the present day nodes of incorporation, interaction and integration of Somali migrants and refugees in Mayfair and Fordsburg, one needs to turn to the formation and evolution of this space, including its spatial, social and economic aspects over the last hundred years. This allows a better analysis of the contribution of its current residents to the city's historical fabric.

Given this unique and multi-layered milieu, I now begin charting a way into some of the key theoretical, methodological and empirical concepts, debates and observations on which this dissertation rests. In so doing, I examine the ways and meanings of doing ethnographic fieldwork amongst particular groups of people who can be considered 'invisible' and in spaces that are 'sacred' (chapter 2), and disentangle how gender and migration are understood (chapter 3).

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

The purpose of the research, the kind of information that is needed and the resources available to undertake research, determine the way in which data is collected (Patton, 1990, p. 12).

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I set out and justify the research methodology undertaken for the study. Despite its limitations, I argue that ethnographic fieldwork is possible amongst diverse and fluid mobile populations such as Somalis, provided that careful consideration of the physical, emotional, and social places within which it is conducted is understood and negotiated.

This research aimed to understand the nature of Somali women's migration, settlement and livelihoods in Johannesburg. It concentrated on a specific population, Somali women, in two specific suburban settings: Mayfair and Fordsburg in Johannesburg. The research that forms the basis of this study spans twenty months over a three-year period (August 2009 - May 2011) and draws on original empirical fieldwork and analysis of secondary data surveys.

2.2. Research questions and rationale

The overall objective of this dissertation is to understand the nature of Somali women's migration, settlement and livelihood strategies in Johannesburg. Within this framework, the main research questions in this study are as follows:

- i. What is the nature and context of Somali women's migration to South Africa?
- ii. What livelihood strategies do Somali women engage in? How do they choose/find themselves in these activities?
- iii. What are the benefits and risks associated with their livelihood strategies?
- iv. What meanings do the livelihoods that they engage in hold for them? What changes have occurred in the lives of Somali women, their families and their role in society as a result of migration?

The research questions for this study arise from and contribute to the growing debates in South African politics and society on migration to the country and migrant integration into its cities' social and economic spaces. Chapter 3 presents a more in-depth discussion of these questions and their answers, framed within a broader discourse on the livelihoods strategies and life changes of refugee women.

The three main themes of migration, livelihoods and gender, guided the investigation of this study and are reflected in the above main research questions. The first question traces the lives

of the research population before and during migration to South Africa. The second and third questions relate to the nature and impact of livelihood, in a broader sense, for Somali women. The final question sketches the effect of migration and livelihoods strategies on the lives of Somali women, particularly in relation to any change in gender and family roles. These questions are rooted in and extend scholarly debate on gender and migration. In particular, I aimed to bring in agency from the perspective of female refugee and asylum seekers in the global south.

2.3. Conceptualising and contextualising the study

To examine the intersection of two independent concepts, migration and livelihoods, is conceptually difficult, but necessary. I will attempt to do so by first defining each concept individually and then reconstituting a conceptualisation within the context of this study.

Migration is defined in different ways in the literature. For this study I expand on a traditionally geographic (Fellman, Getis & Getis, 1997) definition of migration as a change of life space, to incorporate a more holistic perspective that includes an analysis of the changes to the social, spatial, economic and political spaces that migrants face. An anthropological definition of migration includes aspects of culture and of “how people relate to place in the home and host countries” (Brettell & Holliefield, 2000, p. 98). Thus, the broader understanding adopted for this dissertation is of migration as a transnational process that encompasses many places, and does not have static points, but is constantly evolving. This definition enables me to explore the various points and places of meaning in a migrant’s life and to conceptualise migration as an on-going process rather than a fixed journey.

Livelihoods refer to livelihood strategies and can be defined as:

Planned activities that men and women undertake to build their livelihoods. They usually include a range of activities designed to build asset bases and access to goods and services for consumption. Livelihood strategies include coping strategies, designed to respond to shocks in the short-term, and adaptive strategies, designed to improve circumstances in the long term (Farrington, Ramasut & Walker, 2002, p. 3).

Such a definition acknowledges that livelihoods are multiple, diverse and expected to change over time. It also suggests that the purpose of livelihood strategies is to improve people’s lives over time. Hall & Midgley offer this definition: “livelihoods are concerned with the activities, assets and resources that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or a household” (2004, p. xi).

This study draws on a) the multiplicity of livelihoods found in these definitions, and b) other work (Bastia, 2011) that focuses on the household as the unit of analysis rather than the

individual. Thus, although individuals were interviewed for this study, the nature of the discussions on almost all the themes included refer to the household. Furthermore, 50 out of the 60 respondents were women who headed their households.⁵ They were, therefore, able to comment on the strategies, resources and challenges of the household in addition to their own experiences as women.

The household in this study is conceptualised in two ways: firstly as a geographically split, transnational, household (Fan, 2008; Standing, 1984), which includes people living in South Africa, Somalia and elsewhere; and secondly as a household that is not defined by nuclear family ties. This second type can be divided into i) the extended family household more common in Somalia than South Africa; and ii) the loosely associated household comprising of friends, family acquaintances, and housemates, which is mostly found in South Africa. The other major difference between these types of households is that in the home country the household tends to be male headed whilst the migratory household is more likely to be female headed. The types of households are visually represented in Figure 1 below. The establishment and purpose of the latter type of household is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

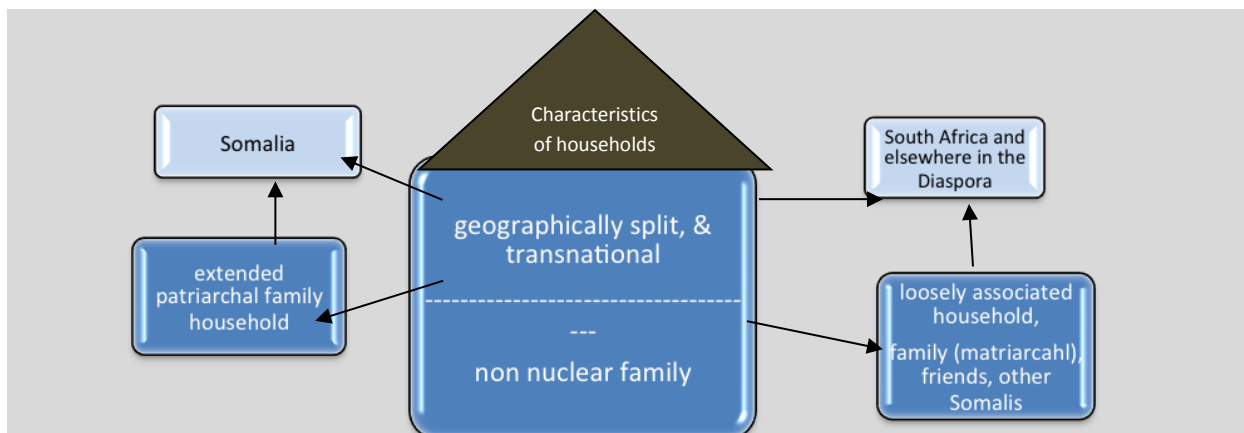


Figure 1: Typology of Somali households

The concept of a Somali identity is not easily defined in the literature, reflecting perhaps the complexity in identity formation that Somalis at home and in the Diaspora face (Hopkins, 2010), and the changes that are encountered during migration and resettlement.⁶ In non-academic literature too, the complexity of Somali identity is also explored. Farah (1986) writing on identity, borders and conflict in the Horn of Africa, identifies Somalis through language rather than place, arguing that colonial-made national boundaries are irrelevant.

⁵ One respondent was the head of the household at the time of the interview, but during the course of the fieldwork she married and joined her husband's house.

⁶ See for example Langellier (2010) and Al-Sharmani's (2010) work on Somali women in Egypt.

For the purposes of this study, an ethnic Somali identity, that is, people from the Horn of Africa who are of Somali ethnic descent and identify the Somali language as their ancestral mother tongue, rather than a national identity based on citizenship, was used to identify the research population. Thus, people born out of Somalia, but who identify themselves ethnically as Somali, were also included as respondents in the study and make up 10% of all respondents. In his ethnographic account of Somalia and its people, Lewis (2002) sketched Somali history and identity based on ethnic and tribal affiliations. The extent to which this is still a defining characteristic of Somali identity is discussed in later chapters of this dissertation.

The settlement and integration of migrants into host communities has been well documented in a range of disciplinary fields.⁷ Over time, the classical assimilation model (Gordon, 1964), which proposes that migrants progressively integrate into the host community, has decreased in favour giving way to a more selective and segmented assimilation approach (Portes & Rumbault, 2006; Zhou, 1997). Most of the literature looks at how migrants settle in countries where the state provides welfare assistance (Valenta, 2009; Gullestad, 2006; Knudsen, 2005) or in camps where international organisations offer assistance to meet basic needs. Migrant settlement has also been linked to three important factors that shape reception in the new country: government policies (Nunez, 2004), the host communities' attitudes, and migrants' own socio-ethnic preferences (Valenta, 2009). This study brings together these approaches to examine migrant settlement by studying the preferences and strategies of migrants within the context of an unsupportive state and a host community wrought with indifference and hostility. Thus, I argue that how migrants settle in a new country is inherent in understanding *any* changes that they experience over time. I also argue that settlement and change must be contextualised in terms of who (socio-ethnic-economic type of group) migrates and where (the broader socio-political conditions under which) they settle.

2.4. Why Somalis? Why Johannesburg?

Somalis are a significant, but poorly researched migrant group in South Africa. They represent, on one hand, refugees who were forced to leave home due to civil war and, on the other, economic actors who are keen to find and exploit opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-reliance. The ways in which Somalis shift between these roles is not readily apparent and the multiplicity of these roles is one of the contributing factors to the misunderstanding of this group in host societies. Although Somalis began arriving in South Africa nearly two decades ago as asylum seekers, there has been no clear policy from local or national government or from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to address the migration and settlement of this group. In part, this is due to the general failure of South Africa's post-independence immigration policies at effectively regulating and managing the flow of people to

⁷ See for example Crow & Allan (1994); Portes & Rumbault (2006); Zhou (1997).

the country. But it also stems from how little is known of this group's desires and strategies, and the misunderstandings and myths that are often associated with Somalis. Some of these include the linkages between the Somali Diaspora and piracy at home and the presence of the Islamist group Al-Shabab in the Diaspora. Somalis have been one of the targets of xenophobic attacks in townships before and after the May 2008 violence in South Africa. Much of the literature materialising from these attacks⁸ has focused on the nature and causes of the violence rather than its effects on continued settlement and integration.

A city built on migrants and entrepreneurship, Johannesburg has been conceptualised in the post-apartheid literature as a growing, diverse, economic hub in Africa, which organically attracts migrants from within and across national boundaries (Landau, 2006; Landau & Freemantle, 2010) and whose governance has sought to restrict and control the flow of people and trade within it (Landau, 2006b; Anderson, 2006; Balbo & Marconi, 2006). This paradox, a city that gleams with apparent opportunity yet has a distinctly unwelcome social and political rhetoric, provides an interesting backdrop to study how a particular group of forced migrants, with its own social and political constraints, navigate and negotiate its way through the city's social and economic fabric.

As stated, in Johannesburg, Somalis have settled in Mayfair and Fordsburg, two adjacent suburbs close to the western part of the inner city of Johannesburg. During the two decades prior to Somalis arriving in South Africa (1970-1990) Mayfair was a residential suburb with some commercial trading around the high road, Church Street. Fordsburg, located closer to the city centre, was primarily a trading area with some residential facilities nestled between and on top of shops and offices. Although this distinction between residential and commercial has faded in the last two decades and is now fuzzy at best, it still has important considerations in understanding how space is utilised by Somalis and how locals have responded to this use of space, thereby impacting on notions of integration (Jinnah, 2010).

For a city built and developed along segregationist lines, it is ironic that in the post-independence era certain migrant settlements, particularly Somalis in Fordsburg and Mayfair, have followed a similar route. Early Somali migrants to Johannesburg settled in these two areas because of their proximity to the city centre and the presence of a large and economically resourceful Muslim community (Jinnah, 2010; Sadouni, 2009) who provided some degree of assistance based on religious obligations (Kiorkis, 2005). Over the years, new Somali migrants were subsequently drawn to the pockets of existing Somalis in these areas who, in turn, reciprocated by offering housing, employment and material assistance to them. Gradually, Somali settlement in the area became less marginal. Today Somalis dominate the area in terms of physical presence and economic activity.

⁸ See Misago, 2009; a Misago et. al., 2010.

2.5. Research design, sampling and data collection techniques

I adopted a mixed methods approach in this study, drawing on quantitative and qualitative means to gather and analyse data. This dissertation is built upon principal empirical data collected through qualitative, ethnographic methods. Qualitative research rests on three main kinds of data collection: in depth interviews, which are open ended; direct observation; and written documents (Patton, 1990, p. 10). These methods allow the researcher to “gain insight into the field of enquiry through first hand and relayed experiences” (Patton, 1990, p. 25). To complement and contextualise this data, I analysed the 2006 African Cities Survey, an existing quantitative data survey undertaken in 2006 by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand in collaboration with Tufts University and the French Institute of South Africa. I provide details on the data collected in the following section.

2.5.1. Qualitative ethnographic data

Ethnography is defined as a “set of methods, in which the ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 1). Ethnographic work rests on an “open-ended”, hands-on approach whereby the researcher “gains access to the field of study and observes, speaks to and participates in the range of activities in everyday normal situations in order to understand and make sense of what is going on” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997, p. 3). Ethnography as a research methodology grew out of 19th century anthropological descriptions of non-western contexts and underwent a series of adaptations as its purpose and process came under review by researchers. It is widely accepted as a fundamental methodology in anthropology and provides a means to subjectively realise the everyday world of others.

Drawing on ethnographic methodology, the primary methodology for this dissertation was a total of 60 in-depth interviews with Somalis in Johannesburg, done individually and in small groups, conducted over 20 months in a 3 year period. The gender and location of respondents appear in table 1 and 2. Complementary interviews with representatives of two Somali community organisations, one Somali owned multinational company and one South African organisation providing services to Somalis were also conducted.

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	10	16,7%
Female	50	83,3%

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Location	Number	Percentage
Mayfair	42	70%
Fordsburg	18	30%
Total	60	100%

Table 2: Location of the interview

2.5.1.1. Sampling

As this study did not intend to have representative or generalisable findings about Somali migrants in Johannesburg, a purposive sampling method was applied. Sampling is “a process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in a research project” (Neuman, 1994, p. 96). Purposive sampling is defined as “a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher makes intended decisions about who to include in the sample based on different criteria” (Jupp, 2006, p. 245). In this study, I identified possible respondents purposively through informal Somali networks using two Somali research assistants as key informants and translators. Both women were purposefully chosen and differed in terms of age, tribal affiliation, length of stay in South Africa, economic activity and family composition. The first was a divorced, then widowed mother of 6 who had her own business and had been in South Africa from the mid-1990s. She had lived in Zambia and came from an elite urban family in Somalia. The second research assistant was a single, young woman in her twenties who had arrived in South Africa, via Kenya, in 2009. She came from a less prominent yet politically important tribe from central Somalia and worked part time in media and telecommunications. This diversity enabled me to reach wider and different circles of Somalis in Johannesburg to ensure that a more representative and varied group of respondents were selected for this study.

To select possible respondents, I chose two criteria for inclusion in the study: being Somali and living in Johannesburg. Respondents were drawn from Mayfair and Fordsburg although an equal ratio was not applied or desired; a disaggregation of the respondents’ place of residence was noted and appears in Table 2.

Although the focus of this study is the livelihood strategies and notions of gender roles and identity amongst Somali women, a small number of Somali men were also interviewed. The rationale for this was twofold: to understand how women’s position is understood *in relation to* men’s perception of women, and to differentiate the nature of and challenges associated with Somali women’s livelihood strategies from those of Somali men in both South Africa and Somalia.⁹

Four key informants were identified for this study based on interviews with Somalis and desktop research from internet sites. These included representatives of three community organisations, of which two were Somali and one was South African, and a key Somali business leader. All the Somali leaders were men. The representatives of the South African community organisations included a South African woman and a Somali woman. At least one, and in two instances two interviews each, were held with these key informants. The interviews focused on how these organisations understand Somali migration to and settlement in South Africa, what

⁹ See for example Silvey (2006) on the influence of spatial dynamics on gender relations and Siegmann (2010) on the role of migration for men and women in Pakistan.

type of services they provide to Somalis, what the rationale for this is, what their overall experiences in working with Somalis was and how this might differ from other groups. All these interviews were conducted in English.

2.5.1.2. Interview techniques

A combination of interviewing techniques was used. Individual, at times repeat interviews with Somali men and women were conducted using a combination of life histories, narrative questions and open-ended interviews. In these I would prompt respondents to talk about their lives using several 'trigger statements or questions'. These included:

- i. Tell me about what you did yesterday.
- ii. What brought you to this place?
- iii. What is it like being a woman in Mayfair?
- iv. What does it mean to be Somali? What is it like being Somali in Johannesburg?

For the open ended interviews a questionnaire guide was used, which appears in appendix A. Three focus group discussions with between three and six Somali women were done using the open ended, semi-structured questionnaire guides. These interviews took place in public places such as shops or in people's homes. Interviews with representatives of organisations providing services to Somalis and Somali community leaders were more focused and directed using structured questionnaires.

Most of the interviews, with the exception of those with key informants, were open ended and guided by a series of themes rather than specific questions (appendix A). These included: background information on the age, educational level, and family history of the respondent, work and economic activities, gender, migration and settlement, and networks and resources. Specific questions were asked about their experiences as women and, where appropriate, as Somali women. Roughly a third of the interviews were conducted in women's homes in Mayfair, the remaining two thirds were conducted in commercial and or public spaces in Johannesburg. The majority of the interviews were done in public spaces, often as the women went about their work or in the case of those at home, engaged in household, or child rearing tasks. This method made the interview process lengthy, prone to interruptions and difficult, yet added richness to the data.

2.5.1.3. Observation

Observation and participant observation have been described as modes of research enquiry rather than as a method, as they extend what one naturally does, that is to become aware of ones surroundings and consciously record, retain and interpret them. Atkinson & Hammersley describe participant observation as a "uniquely humanistic, interpretative approach as opposed

to a scientific and positivist positions” (1994, p. 249). The value of this approach is that it enables the researcher to gain subjective knowledge and become aware of opposing and personal meanings, rather than discover an objective rational truth.

I spent 20 months over a three-year period from August 2009 to May 2011 in Fordsburg and Mayfair, being with Somali women as they went about their daily lives. The world of everyday life is defined as the “ordinary, usual, typical, routine or natural environment of human existence” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 15). I observed and noted practices and discussions relating to food, weddings, parties, shopping, household work, businesses, child rearing, socialisation, religion and class. I asked questions and prompted discussions and debates on what I observed. Field notes were taken and documented each day to ensure that my observations and experiences were recorded¹⁰ and these were shared with the same group at a later date or with my research assistants. These debriefing sessions were invaluable in correcting, contextualising and deepening an understanding of what I observed.

An obvious starting point for this research was a Somali shopping centre, Amal, which is the hub of trading in the Somali community and is located in the heart of the Fordsburg and Mayfair area. To reduce the possibility of a bias in the sample by only interviewing Somali women who were engaged in visible economic activities, a maximum of 10 respondents, or 16, 6 per cent of the total number of respondents were drawn from this site.

The main sites for general observation were homes, restaurants, shops and streets. In particular, three sites were selected for more focused observation. The first, a more public space, was a shop in Amal; the second was a female owned street-front shop in Mayfair; and the third was a more private site, a popular meeting place at a temporary lodging. At the first site, the majority of patrons and business owners were Somali women, so I was able to make observations about the interaction patterns between and amongst Somalis and South Africans. The second site had a diverse mix of patrons and customers in terms of gender and nationality. The third site had a male dominated clientele, although a few women worked as cooks, cleaners and traders; this site allowed for observation of the interaction between Somali men and women.

2.5.2. Quantitative data

To supplement this primary data I analysed secondary data from a 2006 African Cities Survey conducted by the then Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP). The 2006 African Cities Survey was part of a collaborative project titled ‘Migration and the New African City: Citizenship, Transit, and Transnationalism’, and coordinated by FMSP at the University of the

¹⁰ See Jorgensen, 1989, p. 22.

Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; Tufts University, Boston; and the French Institute of South Africa. In Johannesburg the survey interviewed respondents from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Somalia, and South Africa. Of the 848 migrant respondents, 22 per cent or 186 were Somali. The survey asked a range of questions on migration, settlement, household, livelihoods, organisational affiliation, remittances and savings. I analysed data from this survey using Stata software to provide contextual information on Somalis in Johannesburg and to compare Somalis with other migrant and non-migrant groups in the city.

2.5.3. Language and translation

In anthropology and the broader social sciences, a significant amount of research relies on translators to access a world that cannot be reached due to language differences. Most accounts on the use of translators focuses on how translation affects the validity and accuracy of the research (Kapborg & Bertero, 2002) or how translators can affect the data that is produced (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). Despite the widespread use of translators, little attention has been paid to how translators and the use of translation in a research process, affect knowledge production (Palmary, 2011, p. 110).

Roughly half of the interviews were conducted in Somali with the help of a translator and half were conducted in English but with a translator present. Although reflections on the use of language and translation in knowledge production (Palmary, 2011) acknowledges that these tools are not just mediums to reflect a social world, but that they also construct it through the ways in which they are used and reused (Foucault, 1980), the ways in which this affects data collection and analysis has largely been overlooked in anthropology and ethnographic research (Cronin, 2002). Using a translator is more than just accessing a language that one is not familiar with as Cronin (2002, p. 386) cited in Palmary (2011, p. 102) explains:

Interpreters are valuable not only because of what they do but because of who they are. They are generally part of the host community and as such are conduits for privileged “inside information” on the society and culture.

Translators are able to bridge worlds and provide meaning to the content that is shared. This role, and the power inherent in it, illuminates the politics of knowledge production and transference. Although both translators in this research were from the Somali community and could be termed ‘insiders’ in Johannesburg itself, they were from different ethnic and social backgrounds as previously explained, and thus brought interesting and different perspectives to the interviews they translated, the meanings of the behaviour we observed, and also the ways they interacted with the respondents. For instance, the younger translator, who was better educated and was in Johannesburg for a year, was more informal in her approach to the interviews, giving rise to more easily flowing conversations. Due to her age and length of time

in South Africa, she was also less constrained by norms and traditions in the Somali community, allowing for more heated discussions on topics. The older translator was more formal in the interview process and cherished her role as a 'research assistant', creating a sense of power imbalance between the respondents and us. Although this resulted in conversations that were less spontaneous, it also meant that people weighed their words more carefully before speaking to me, thereby providing insight into what was said and also what was left unsaid. This was particularly true when the interviews focused on the tensions inherent in tribal and gendered behaviour. As a resident of Johannesburg for 15 years, the older research assistant was also able to reflect on how Somalis in Johannesburg have changed over time and would often draw respondents into discussing this change.

I borrow from Palmary's argument (2011, p. 103) that translators are co-producers of knowledge and thus influence the research process. Furthermore, I emphasise that this is not seen as a detriment to the accuracy and validity of the research but as a reflection of the awareness of the research process and the ways in which I, and those with whom I work, influence it. This, I argue, is a key component of undertaking meaningful ethnographic fieldwork amongst diverse populations.

2.5.4. Reflexivity

A participant methodology requires the researcher to "get directly involved in peoples' daily lives" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 20) as this allows the researcher to see and feel the world that is being studied. Indeed, it is now accepted that the researcher is to some degree or another connected to the research and therefore influences the type of information that is collected. A proper understanding of the role of the researcher within the research process is critical to any ethnographic research study (Davies, 1999, p. 3).

Rather than attempt to control the effect of my presence in the research, I opted to become aware of the content and meanings of my role and how these influenced the respondents in this study without falling into a completely naturalist methodology (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 16-17). Thus, I was less concerned with ensuring objectivity in the study (Davies, 1999, p. 4) than with maintaining a deep sense of self awareness and documenting how this shaped my journey into the research population. To do this, I used a field journal in which I recorded my thoughts and experiences. This enabled me to manage the fluidity and, at times, contradiction that I came across in my fieldwork. By relying on my field journal I was able to schedule repeat interviews, spark robust debates in group interviews and clarify misunderstandings that arose¹¹.

¹¹ A few extracts from the field journal appear in the findings chapters of the dissertation.

Being aware of the meaning of one's role also includes an understanding that the content of one's role shifts in different times and different contexts, ranging from more active "insider roles" to more passive marginal roles (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 21), or from complete observer to complete participant (Gold, 1958; Junker, 1960). I entered the research site as an 'outsider', a non-Somali, with no apparent commonality to the group I wanted to study. Using my position as a researcher at the local university I was able to draw interest and support for my work with community leaders and potential research assistants. We were relating to each other on a formal, professional level at this stage. Interestingly, as I became immersed in the field and more familiar with groups of people in the community, respondents related to me based on religious and gender affiliations, thus there were times when we would speak as young Muslim women concerned with everyday things. Religion and gender served as common, if at times shifting, ground, which helped to strike a rapport with respondents (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 92-93), making interviews and discussions more meaningful and less formal. In so doing, and with the assistance of religious speech with which I and my respondents were both familiar, my positionality as the researcher *vis a vis* the respondents shifted to a more equal level.

In addition to my role as researcher, there was also the issue of my image presentation with which I had to deal¹². Although I wear a headscarf (like the majority of Somali women in Johannesburg), I usually wear pants or jeans, which are socially unacceptable for Somali women to wear. Thus it became necessary for me to wear long skirts and dresses whenever I entered the research site in order to fit into and look more familiar to Somalis, and also to not offend anyone who might see me (Delamont, 1984, p. 25).

As alluded to earlier, though, my relationship with Somalis was a shifting one. People often had trouble relating directly to my role and purpose as a researcher, which seemed very abstract to them. I often felt that for Somalis, spending the day speaking to others about their lives was not considered a proper vocation. Nevertheless, I found Somalis mostly curious about the work I was doing, and their welcoming, hospitable nature almost always kicked-in. I was often welcomed as a long lost family member who had lived away from home for years and was thus unfamiliar with the language, customs and habits of her family, taken into the homes of people and made privy to their memories and hopes with a belief that I would respect them just as they respected my presence.

At times, though, people were suspicious of my presence, and then I was only tolerated as a fellow Muslim who had to be hosted out of religious and customary obligation in the hope that I might bring some unexpected favour or, failing that, just leave quickly.

¹² See Liebow 1967, p. 255; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 86-88; Patrick, 1973, p. 15.

2.6. Analysis

Information can be captured in various forms including note-taking, recording, photographs, diaries, questionnaires, memory¹³ and reviewing available documents¹⁴. In this study I took quick summary notes during each interview and supplemented these immediately after the interview with detailed notes and observations. In most cases, questionnaires or interview guideline documents were also completed. A summary of the interview with notes on the field and context were then made. An interview tracking document summarised the key themes of each interview and coded these to be used later for preliminary analysis.

2.6.1. Thematic analysis

Following the interview and note taking, thematic analysis was then used to identify key themes vertically within an individual interview and horizontally across a series of interviews. Thematic analysis is a “tool to analyse qualitative research using a process of coding” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. iv). Information is translated into data and then into themes. Themes are patterns observed in the data that range from mere observations and descriptions to more intricate explanations and analysis (Boyatzis, 1990, p. 4). Themes can be either directly observable or more hidden in messages and patterns of interaction. According to Boyatzis, the purpose of thematic analysis is to observe something in the field, make sense of it, find relationships and patterns amongst things and people, and convert information into data. It is a method that allows the researcher to systematically code and analyse data in a methodical manner.

In order to apply thematic analysis to my data, I highlighted the keywords that emerged from each interview and then coded each of these into themes within an interview, thereby generating a list of themes and their variations (Boyatzis, 1998). I then created clusters of themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) based on empirical observations (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 136) and in the context of other themes. In this way, I was able to record the variances in each theme across the different interviews and also plotted the relationship between different themes in an interview, which generated patterns and relationships amongst different variables (Boyatzis, 1998).

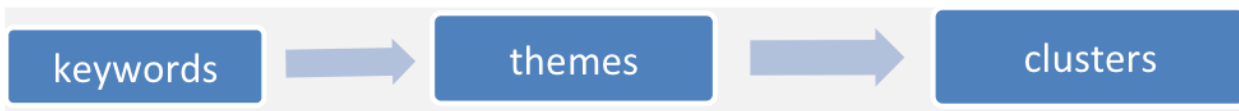


Figure 2 summarises this process within an interview.

¹³ See Hayano, 1982.

¹⁴ See Cooley, 1969; Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918-1919; Jorgensen, 1989.

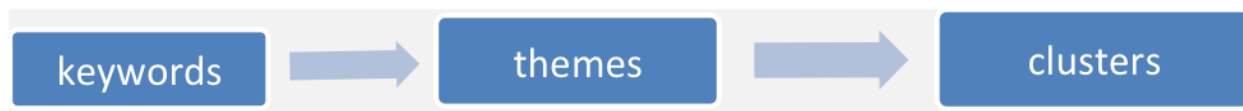


Figure 2: Process of coding using thematic analysis

2.6.2. Social network analysis

Social network analysis was used to plot and analyse the interaction between Somali women and resource holders. Mitchell, a proponent of the technique, described social network analysis “as one way of understanding behaviour in larger scale complex (less structured societies)”. Social network analysis rests on the idea of creating a systemised analysis of patterns and nodes of interaction that are observed in the field (1974, p. 279). Barnes first introduced the idea of social networks to describe the metaphorical “web of relations” and “fabric of interactions” that he came across in his study of social life and relations on a Norwegian island (1954, p. 27).

Anthropologists developed social network theory as a reaction to the structural functional theories that did not allow researchers to explain the unequal, unstructured relations that they found in the field¹⁵. It is precisely this “telling as it is” approach, rather than any normative or prescriptive idea, that makes social network theory relevant for this study. In plotting social relations and (non) power-holders, the landscape of a created, everyday non-equal social fabric emerges, which illuminates the lives and struggles of ordinary people. Ordinary people and places take on new and different meanings when they are viewed in relation to each other and the broader context within which they exist. The relations themselves also come into scrutiny; how and why people relate the way they do with each other depends on underlying values and needs. In Meyer’s (1994) illustration, close-knit social relations amongst migrants ensured that traditional values were preserved. However, I want to postulate a different argument in this dissertation. Close social relations can also be used to diffuse values and create new identities based on changes in the social environment in which people find themselves. This idea of personal and interpersonal changes due to migration is not a new one (Janes, 1990; Jolly, 2005; Langellier, 2010), but the establishment of a collective behavioural change *drawing on*, rather than in *opposition to* strong social relations and tight (recreated) networks is an idea I want to introduce through this research. The transactional nature of social networks has been acknowledged almost from the inception of this theory¹⁶; this study also provides empirical evidence of ways people strategically engage in different networks to fulfil certain goals. In chapter 7, I demonstrate the empirical evidence in support of this argument by explaining the role of new female led and owned social networks and spaces.

¹⁵ See Whitten & Wolfe, 1972.

¹⁶ See Mitchell, 1974, p. 286.

2.6.3. Community mapping

Community mapping was done to identify and document the key people, places and nodes of power in the Somali community in Johannesburg. I drove and then walked through the area several times to identify and plot the key existing Somali and non-Somali religious, community and economic institutions and spaces in the area. During interviews with Somalis, other organisations, key people, places and resources would be mentioned and these, if relevant, would be added to the map. I often used the map with my research assistants who would plot significant events and places on it, thereby giving me a feel for the social fabric of the area, especially when I was away for a few weeks at a time. This gave me a spatial overview of the research site.

To conclude this section I briefly talk about writing up the data. Earlier, I mentioned the politics of knowledge production; now I turn the lens to knowledge reconstruction, particularly to how social research is written up. Given the power of the written word and its ability to influence others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 253-255) many authors have written about how knowledge is documented (Tyler & Van Mannen, 1988) and on how text is (un)gendered (Devault, 1990). Although I am tempted to position this research within postmodern ethnographic writing, where single voice narratives give way to nuanced writing¹⁷, I am not convinced that the text will always reflect this. Thus, I prefer resting on a more cautious middle ground where I remain aware of the reflexivity between my writing and the research I had set out to do (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 255), particularly when bringing forth some of the hidden messages in the interviews and the more subtle nuances of social interaction that I observed. In order to do this, I have preserved my respondents' voices as much as possible, without unnecessary editing for clarity or meaning, and conveyed these voices through direct quotes and narratives. I have also added logs from my fieldwork journal, where appropriate, which help illuminate some of the points I try to make in this dissertation.

2.7. Sacred spaces

A defining feature of this research is a number of distinctive emotional, economic and social spaces, which I became aware of and experienced during the fieldwork. I term these 'sacred spaces,' not because of any overt religious connotations they have, but because of the sense of specialness and almost holiness that they represent for the people who relate to them, and in some cases, the respect and inviolableness that Somalis associate with certain things. The conceptualisation of a non-holy sacred space is an idea that I want to set out and defend in this dissertation, not only because of its relevance to this research group but also to introduce a re-conception of 'sacred spaces'. In the literature Hammersley & Atkinson (1995, p. 267-268) speak about privacy when they discuss some of the issues that I raise in this section, but do so

¹⁷ See Tyler, 1986; Dorst, 1989.

within an ethical framework rather than a conceptual one. Nevertheless, they do raise the complexity and confusion surrounding both what is discussed in social ethnographic research and how it can be done. This is a central methodological argument to this dissertation and in this section I explain how the above conceptualisation and method can allow for better-informed ethnographic fieldwork amongst diverse, mobile, urban populations.

The majority of Somalis are Muslim, and although religion plays an active role in most Somalis' lives, and Islamic principles are evident in everyday speech, actions and thoughts, it is the non-religious holy that reverberates more strongly with Somalis and governs social relations within the group and with outsiders. Non-religious sacred spaces are social, psychological and physical nodes that have significant symbolic importance for people and from which people derive actual meaning and hope, and demand reverence and compliance.

The first sacred space I encountered was the broader Somali community itself. Somalis are a close-knit group who are wary of outsiders. In Johannesburg they are situated in a spatially dense location. This makes it difficult for a non-Somali to penetrate into the inner part of the physical space of Somalis without feeling a sense of 'outsiderness'. The invisible boundaries of the area are closely guarded by local Somalis so that any movement into and around the area is easily noticed and the message spread across the groups who live in it. My presence as an outsider was immediately felt. To counter this, I first had a series of meetings with five Somali community representatives, all male, to inform them of my research and request their permission to be in their midst. These representatives had some degree of power to facilitate or obstruct access to the community and could be termed "gatekeepers" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 64). Although I knew the Somali organisations, reflecting in part some sociological knowledge of the setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 65) I was also aware that their authority might not permeate all sectors of Somali community. However, in the absence of any other social networks in the community, I decided to target these organisations as a way of entering into the community. Once there, I would be able to make new connections and reach out to others.

Thus, after meeting with the Somali community leaders, and once I had explained my proposed research, I was given the green light to 'hang out' in the area. Based on the contacts provided by one Somali leader, I made contact with my first research assistant who paved my way into the area. Gaining access is a common task associated with ethnographic fieldwork and involves more than just physical access to a space (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 54); it constitutes the groundwork to justify the researcher's prolonged presence and active involvement in the midst of others.

Within the Somali group, women are particularly difficult to interview due to multiple reasons: language, traditions and customs. This means that men are more likely to be visible in the

street and in public spaces where an outsider is likely to make first contact. Women are also busier than men, as they are busy with childcare duties, work and their household tasks, which means once they are approached they feel less inclined to commit time to an interview.

A related physical space, which can be classified as both public and private (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 267), and which is sacred, is that associated with religion: mosques, religious organisations and even peoples' homes. These are sacred not because of the presence of the 'holiness' within them but rather because of the almost unbreakable regulations that these institutions create and recreate and the associated notions that these places hold. For example, a home is considered clean and one cannot step into it with shoes. By not respecting this small rite, a person can immediately be excluded from conversation and the 'inner group'. Another example is that it is not possible to talk about drug usage or marital problems in mosques or where elders are sitting.

Another sacred space is the psychological one. During the interview, many of the issues that I wanted to canvass opinions of and discuss were seen as secretive and confidential (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 267) and considered to be things that are not debatable. These issues include things which often occur in the private sphere such as female genital mutilation, domestic violence, family planning, premarital sex, affairs and general issues that are more public in nature such as savings, remittances, police arrest and harassment, racism and xenophobia from locals, and obtaining the necessary documentation to remain legally in South Africa.

The past and future are things that people consider deeply personal and delicate and do not talk about readily. During the interviews, inviolable emotions that are associated with memories of trauma, conflict, war, displacement and violence were raised. These issues are difficult for the respondents to discuss because of the associated trauma experienced. As the past is painful, and the future is uncertain, many Somalis feel talking about things that are yet to happen could jeopardise the likelihood of dreams coming to fruition.

These sacred spaces were important nodes for and of knowledge production and interpretation in this dissertation, and they constitute an important empirical, theoretical and methodological contribution of my work. By being aware of these spaces and how they impact the lives of Somalis I was able to obtain a deeper understanding of the research objectives.

2.8. Limitations

Triangulation is a method to reduce the systematic bias in the data by drawing on multiple types of data collection, using different data sources and adopting different theoretical models

to analyse the data. As a result of this, differences in the data are not seen as a weakness, but rather as a means to gain better insight into the field of study.

This research was not meant to provide comprehensive data of Somalis in South Africa, but instead, to focus on a selected case study to give in-depth information and detail on this particular group. As such, findings cannot be generalised. As Patton says, “By their nature, qualitative findings are highly context and case dependent” (1999, p. 1197).

When research focuses on subjective means of data collection through interviews and observation, as is the case here, the validity of the data depends on how it is collected. When serious allegations or statements were made by respondents these were probed to obtain more information and supporting evidence. If one respondent raised sensitive issues, those issues were further tested by asking other respondents about the same issue in either individual or group discussions. However, even when sensitive statements could not be validated through these means, they were still included in the data. It became apparent to me that rumours and gossip played an important part of Somali life in Johannesburg. I argue that this can explain the ‘camp-like’ atmosphere in the Somali areas of Mayfair and Fordsburg due to the dense concentration of people living together, strong social networks and sharing resources like economic goods and public spaces. Turner (2004) has written extensively about the role and power of gossip in shaping social relations amongst refugees in camps in Tanzania. Thus, even if statements could not be verified, the fact that they existed meant that they were significant in themselves as they still represented an important part of Somali life and had the power to shape peoples’ opinions and thoughts.

As with most qualitative research, three types of limitations are inherent in this study (Patton, 1999, p. 1197):

- 1) Temporal sampling as observations were done at a specific time;
- 2) Situation specific observations were made that cannot be generalised to other cases;
- 3) Sample composition: selection of people chosen for this study was not necessarily random or representative.

To address these concerns, the findings of this study have been kept in context as much as possible and generalisations have mostly been avoided (Patton, 1999, p. 1196).

2.9. Ethical considerations

Barnes (1979, p. 18) cited in Hammersley & Atkinson (1995, p. 267) says:

Social research entails the possibility of destroying the privacy and autonomy of the individual.

Subscribing to ethical codes is one way to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with certain standard norms and values (Davies, 1999, p. 45). In this section I set out the different types of ethical considerations that were followed at different points in the research process.

Considerable time was spent in the beginning of the research to meet with the Somali community leaders and elders in order to establish the safety and credibility of first myself, and then my research assistants, during this fieldwork (Davies, 1999, p. 50). This ensured that the community was aware of our presence in its midst and, to a large extent, cooperated with our requests. It also reduced the levels of suspicion associated with an outsider's presence in a rather closed, tight-knit community; although suspicions did arise, they did not take root and derail the research.

According to Jorgensen (1989, p. 15), human beings behave differently when they know they are being studied. Despite this assumption, I decided to use overt, transparent strategies for engagement with Somalis, rather than any covert tactics, to avoid people feeling their personal privacy was compromised (Davies, 1999, p. 51). I also felt that identifying myself and my purpose would pave the way for a long term relationship based on trust with Somalis (Davies, 1999, p. 5) and that this would be more meaningful and useful for my research than any short term gains made by covert observations and discussions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 275).

I did not offer any payment to participants to be included in this study and therefore eliminated the possibility of enticing individuals to participate in the research for personal gain (Davies, 1999, p. 51). All respondents voluntarily chose to take part in the study without any compensation or reward.

Before commencing with any discussion or interview I explained the purpose and nature of my research and asked for each individual to verbally consent to participating. The issue of confidentiality was a tricky one. Although I followed the norms of adopting pseudonyms and altering some personal identifying details of the respondents (Davies, 1999, p. 51), I still felt that complete privacy and confidentiality could not be ensured, especially if I relied heavily on narratives and case studies as the basis of my analysis. I tried to address this in two ways: firstly, by fusing two or more narratives to illustrate a point, thereby making it difficult to identify one voice behind a story; and secondly, by using detailed case studies only when consent to make this information public was given – and at times desired - by the respondent (Cassell & Jacobs, 1987, p. 24-7; Davies, 1995, p. 54).

2.10. Conclusion

The data for this dissertation draws primarily from ethnographic fieldwork of Somalis conducted in their area of settlement in Johannesburg. The decisions I took regarding the ways in which the data was collected, for example using translators and approaching Somali community representatives, as well as my role as a researcher, informed the data that was generated from this fieldwork.

To begin understanding Somali women's experiences of migration, settlement and change, I had to: build relationships with parts of the Somali community in Johannesburg that are close-knit and weary of outsiders; establish regular briefing session with research assistants; keep a fieldwork journal; and conduct repeat interviews. I argue that these mixed methods are fundamental in undertaking ethnographic fieldwork with fluid, diverse and difficult-to-reach, mobile populations, such as the Somalis. A deeper understanding of the ways people speak about their lives, and of what is sacred to them emerged during this study's data collection.

One primary assertion of this dissertation is that important non-religious sacred spaces are present in any ethnographic fieldwork. It is important to recognise and acknowledge these sacred moments when they emerged and to document how they affected the research process. These nuances gave rise to new insights into Somali migration and settlement, which are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

The next chapter places this study within the global literature on gender, migration, livelihoods and change.

Chapter 3: A synopsis of Somali migrants and migration: globally, in South Africa, and in theory

3.1. Introduction

This chapter has three aims: to position this study theoretically within the global discourse of migration, livelihoods, and gender; to contextualise the migration of Somali women, globally and nationally; and finally to reflect on the ways in which this dissertation extends and contributes to relevant theoretical paradigms.

The chapter starts with a critical reflection of the empirical and academic literature relating to gender and migration in contemporary times and the effects of migration for women. My primary assertion is that the literature has relatively ignored the agency of women migrants in general, and within South-South migration patterns in particular; I argue that this agency is fundamental to understanding the reasons for and effects of mobility for women. To further illustrate this, I examine the interconnection of gender and migration, with a specific focus on South Africa, and show how women have been either absent or marginalised in migration scholarship in that country.

Thereafter, I define and discuss three key conceptual and practical aspects of contemporary Somali migration. These are: *buufis*, or a state of depression, stress or mental illness; remittances; and livelihoods. Through these conceptual lenses, I argue that Somali migrants' lives are transnational and fluid in nature, and that this challenges some of the dominant discourses on migration as a stable linear process that is place-specific. I point to examples of Somalis in the Diaspora to elucidate this point. I then provide a global and national, overview of recent Somali migratory and settlement patterns in: selected European countries; the United States; two key African countries that receive Somalis, Egypt and Kenya; and finally, in South Africa, where the current study is located. I discuss the impact of, and on, *buufis*, remittances, and livelihoods within different policy and social contexts, and draw out the similarities and differences of these. Finally, I end with some reflections on the theoretical position and original contributions of this research, which are: restating the agency of Somali women in migration studies; drawing out the ethnic and gender considerations in social network theory; and reflecting on ethnic entrepreneurship theory as a way of understanding Somali settlement in the Diaspora.

3.2. Gender and migration

Setting the scene and finding puzzles

The latest data indicates that there are an estimated 214 million international migrants in the world today, of whom 49 per cent are women¹⁸. The increase in female migration has sparked what many authors¹⁹ refer to as the feminisation of migration. But what does the feminisation of migration really mean and what implications does it have for research and for how women themselves think about mobility?

Firstly, although women account for half of the world's migration stock, there is still limited data on this trend (Gugler & Ludwar-Ene, 1995), which in turn is linked to two interrelated issues: a) the invisibility of female migration in policy and legal frameworks; and b) the marginalisation of female migrants in public discourses, historically (SAMP, 2007, p. 1). It is not surprising that the migration literature, globally, has been dominated by males, given the focus on neoclassical approaches to migration (Massey et al., 1993) in which productive (male) labour roles within the global economy were seen as the driving force of mobility. Within this approach women received scant attention (Kihato, 2007) and even then only in passive roles (Adepoju, 1995; Gugler & Ludwar-Ene, 1995).

The feminisation of migration, which this dissertation embarks from, refers less to the actual growth in *number* of women who migrate than to the increasing *importance* of the roles that they assume during and as a result of migration (SAMP, 2007, p. 4). Female migration is rarely discussed in relation to men's migration and often conceptualised in frameworks of vulnerability, marginalisation and discrimination. Empirically, women's migration is often constructed in economic terms, particularly in studies of female migrant labour. Although there has been an increasing look at the feminisation of migration (Adepoju, 2004; Zlotnik, 2003; Sander & Maimbo, 2003; Abusharaf, 2001) and on female migrants in Africa (Walker, 1990; White, 1990; Nkotsoe, 1991), the role of migration in changing social structures and decision making processes (Colsen, 1971; Hellman, 1948), rather than as a "consequence of migration," has not been fully realised (Kihato, 2007, p. 90). Indeed, as researchers paid attention to female migration, a trend of casting female migrants as passive, vulnerable victims emerged (Kihato, 2007). However, as Agustin (2003) and Kihato (2007) point out, there are emerging works that speaks to another narrative of female migration - a narrative of agency and strategy (Bozzoli, 1991). It is within this growing body of literature that my research is situated and to which I aim to make a contribution empirically and theoretically.

¹⁸ In 2008, women made up 49 per cent of international migrants, up from 42 per cent in 1960, although in some regions like North America, Europe and Oceania, women constitute a slight majority of migrants (IOM).

¹⁹ See Piper, 2007, 2008;; Marinucci, 2007; Yinger, 2007; Adepoju, 2006.

3.2.1. Women migrants in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid eras

In South Africa, whether as international or internal migrants, women were neither desired, nor foregrounded, or seen as significant active agents in themselves. During the 19th and 20th centuries in South Africa there were three broad categories of international migrants, all of which marginalised the migration and importance of women (SAMP, 2007, p. 1). The first, of a primarily economic nature, was largely male-dominated labour migration from neighbouring countries under respective bilateral agreements to supply a workforce to South Africa's mining, and to a lesser extent, agricultural industries (Crush, 1997; Crush & Williams, 2010). The second type of migration, until the 1980's, was of a largely political nature in which white migrants from Europe and elsewhere were allowed entry into the Republic to inflate the country's white population. In this scheme women were rarely seen in roles other than as accompanying men. The third type of migration, from 1860 to 1965, consisted of Indian women who came to South Africa to join their husbands and families here. Each of these three types of migration, while distinct in many ways, shared the same purpose in serving the broader economic and political objectives of the state and were therefore both desired and managed by the state through specific agreements and policies which facilitated the movement of particular types of groups into the Union or Republic. In all migration flows, women did not play a significant public, political, or economical role.

Although internal migration in South Africa has always had a strong gendered nature (Fakier, 2008; Possel, 2010; Posel & Casale, 2003) the significance of large numbers of women moving within the country as domestic, factory and farm workers tended to be neglected in research, underscoring the important decision-making and economic choices that these women made and had to deal with.

3.2.2. Early migration to South Africa in the post-apartheid period

South Africa's immigration policy after 1994 is characterised by a distinct lack of desire by the state to enable the flow of migrants into the country and to manage its growing migrant population effectively (Landau, 2004; Crush, 2007). Yet, despite this policy narrowing, non-nationals continue to enter, work and seek refuge in South Africa. Amongst them are a growing number of women, yet few studies in the last two decades have focused exclusively on the active role and meanings of female migration into the country and how this shapes theoretical paradigms on gender migration.

Since 1990, there has been a growing academic and policy interest in migration to South Africa, some of which focused on women in their roles as cross border traders and entrepreneurs (Ojong, 1999), whilst other work investigated the causes and effects of migrant women as victims of domestic and sexual abuse and human trafficking (Richter, 2008). Although women became more visible in the flows to the country, most of the research done on women as

economic actors suggests that they are less likely to be independent economic migrants and, when they are, they are more likely to be involved in the informal economy or be excluded from social networks. Studies have found that female migrants are more likely to be married, older and better educated than men, yet are less likely to migrate independently or without the support and permission of a male partner (Dodson, 1998). Female migrants in South Africa in the early 1990s did not personally make their own decision to migrate, and if they did, it was done without the support and/or agreement of their families (SAMP, 2007). Another study found that migrant women face “patriarchal oppression and economic marginalization in Johannesburg” (Kihato, 2007, p. 98) where they are forced to survive economically in the informal sector or forced to work in extra-legal industries where male dominated power relations at home are replaced with similar power relations in the workplace (Kihato, 2007).

Therefore, in empirical research and in conceptual terms women’s migration to South Africa was either ignored or played down. It was seen as part of a male dominated trend or from within a vulnerable and passive framework. This research departs from that understanding of female migration on a number of fronts. Conceptually Somali women’s migration is seen as not only an assertion of the feminisation of migration, in that it relates to the number and importance of Somali women migrants, but also a part of the wider discourse on the intersectionality of gender, class and ethnicity (Piper, 2008). It also seeks to construct a more positive agency of women migrants within the literature on the feminisation of migration, based on empirical research of Somali women’s migration to, and settlement and livelihoods in South Africa. Finally, it offers different insights into the ways in which women manage migration in changing policy and social contexts, and the changes they encounter at a personal and public level.

3.2.2.1. Migrants in South Africa

How are Somalis different or similar to other migrants and South Africans in Johannesburg? A Livelihoods Study report of 1409 households (CSD, 2008) had some interesting findings, which can serve as a broad background to Somali settlement and livelihoods in the city. I will focus on only two areas here for the sake of relevance *vis-a-vis* employment and savings.

- a) Employment: The majority of those surveyed who were working, were employed by someone else (85 per cent) rather than being self employed (15 per cent). In contrast, most Somalis are self employed or employed by other Somalis (Jinnah, 2010; FMSP, 2006). Thirty-nine per cent of households in that survey were in receipt of one or more of the seven types of social grants (CSD, 2008, p. 16-17), which most Somalis cannot claim because non-nationals are not entitled to most social security grants²⁰.

²⁰ This changed in 2012 and refugees are entitled to all forms of social security in South Africa.

- b) Savings: “Savings among the respondents was not regarded in the traditional sense of making provision for a later stage in one’s life such as retirement, rather it was seen as a way of surviving during a particular month. Savings were therefore mostly utilised to cover transport, school fees and food” (CSD, 2008, p. 18). In contrast most Somalis save money daily, weekly and monthly, and use their savings differently: to remit, or to start a small business of their own (Jinnah, 2010).

A final point to note in this section is that there are different categories of migration and migrants in South Africa emanating from the post-1994 policy framework and literature. Firstly, as discussed in chapter 1, the legal and policy structure within South Africa classifies non-nationals into different groups including economic migrants, skilled workers, refugees and undocumented migrants. Each category offers different rights and benefits. Secondly, in academic and policy literature over the last decade and a half, two categories of non-nationals are also identified: short and long term migrants²¹. Women from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) who constitute the majority of female migrants in South Africa are both short and long term migrants (SAMP, 2007, p. 11-13). Somalis are generally longer-term refugees or asylum seekers. The processes involved in arriving at these categories and the implication of each are discussed in detail elsewhere (chapter 1). What is relevant to note here is that in both the legal categories and conceptual definitions of non-nationals in South Africa, and in the sets of rights and implications that these create, an emphasis on the agency, mobilisation, and strategic decision-making within female migration is missing. Equally important is the need for a theoretical framework that places such a segment into an appropriate socio-political context.

3.3. Migration effects and outcomes: discussing the challenges and opportunities linked to livelihoods and change for female migrants

In this research, as discussed in chapter 2, I conceptualise migration as a process of mobility, a decision taken at the level of and affecting the (transnational) household. Authors disagree on whether migration is construed as an empowering process or whether it is disadvantageous by reinforcing norms at home. Rather than adopting a dichotomous approach, this study departs from an understanding that the outcomes of migration are dependent on a) other individual factors such as class, race, and money; and b) the broader political, social, economic and policy environments, and therefore the effects of migration on gender roles are more likely to be case-specific than generalised. At the same time, I am interested in the social and economic changes that mobility brings about, including its role in shaping spaces and reconfiguring gender and family roles. These include changes to livelihoods, reconfiguring households with a focus on gender and family roles and shaping social spaces.

²¹ Long-term migrants are defined as those who seek to establish themselves in the country (Crush, 2002).

3.3.1. Livelihoods within, against, and as a result of policy frameworks and structural discrimination

Although migration is in itself a process and much has been written about mobility and the ways in which it is negotiated, this study is also concerned with the socio-economic issues arising out of migration. One of these is livelihoods. Although I have discussed the definitions of livelihoods in chapter 2, I want to dwell on certain aspects of this concept in as much as it relates to what has been written about it and in how it shapes this study and the findings that will be discussed later.

As mentioned in chapter 2, a broader definition of livelihoods²² is adopted for this study. Arising from this definition of livelihoods as “encompassing not only the households’ income generating activities, but also the social institutions, intra-household relations, and mechanisms of access to resources through the life cycle” (De Haas, 2008, p. 36), significance is also placed on the context within which livelihoods are negotiated, adopted and fought for in general, and for migrants in particular as a group that faces its own policy and social conditions. Migrants’ access to livelihoods is often fraught with barriers, such as marginalisation, policy restrictions and discrimination.

3.3.2. The (transnational) household as a unit of analysis

Earlier, I alluded to the role of the broader family in decision making around migration. Now, I look into this aspect in more detail to understand how migration and livelihoods are entwined within familial structures and strategies. There are an increasing number of studies that regard the household as a unit of analysis in migration studies (Fan & Wang, 2008). Decisions made about moving or staying behind emanate from social and economic reasons affecting the family or household.

Wallace (2002) identifies certain conditions when household level studies become more useful than individual ones. These are situations when: households are at risk; women enter the labour force; and the informality of labour increases. Given the two decades of conflict in Somalia, the collapse of the economy in that country and the catapult of women into public roles as a result on one hand, and on the other, the xenophobic attacks and atmosphere in South Africa, and the growth of the informal economy since 1994, this lens can aptly be applied to Somali migrants in South Africa.

²² Chapter 2, part 2.3 reads, “Livelihoods refer to livelihood strategies and can be defined as the ‘planned activities that men and women undertake to build their livelihoods. They usually include a range of activities designed to build asset bases and access to goods and services for consumption. Livelihood strategies include coping strategies, designed to respond to shocks in the short-term, and adaptive strategies, designed to improve circumstances in the long term’ (Farrington, Ramasut & Walker, 2002, p. 3). Such a definition acknowledges that livelihoods are multiple, diverse and expected to change over time. It also suggests that the purpose of livelihood strategies is to improve people’s lives over time.

Drawing on work in rural China, Fan & Wang (2008, p. 223) identify two strategies that households make when faced with risk. These are division of labour and circularity. The division of labour is not a new concept in economic and social studies and had been a common trend globally until the mid-twentieth century. It has historically divided along gender lines with men taking on public, profit-seeking roles, and women shouldering more private, housebound tasks of child rearing and domestic chores. The two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century catapulted women into more economic roles outside the house, which gradually led to advances in women's roles and rights in mostly Western societies. However, patriarchal systems and traditions continued to be entrenched in more rural societies and in developing nations, which reinforced a division of labour along gender lines.

Somalia, until 1990, was no exception. Somali society is traditionally a patriarchal one which vests decision making in and outside the house in men and confines women to more private roles within the household. Economically, women have long been maintainers of agriculture in rural Somalia and some sectors of more middle and upper class society do have female entrepreneurs and professionals. However, even when women were economically active and took on more public roles, they did not necessarily gain political power in their households or societies as long as the male head existed and the division of labour and roles continued. However, through this research I am pointing to new types of households (in terms of composition and operational function and dynamics) which have been created as a result of the war and migration; these new households are often female headed, transnational (Al-Sharmani, 2010), and have women taking increased responsibility for decision-making (Jinnah, 2010). Migration has disrupted the traditional family-based household, both nuclear and extended, in which the family is relatively stable and committed to the same goals; it has created new types of households in which women are carving new sorts of roles.

Other types of division of labour within the household can be along generational and location lines (Fan & Wang, 2008). This model can be extended to the Somali case, which, like the rural Chinese family, regards children as assets who are investments for future work and care. The spatial distribution of the household is another strategy through which families aim to meet their needs. This too is a common practice amongst households in South Africa with its history of internal migration (Posel, 2001, 2011), where one member of the family (often male) moves to find work and the rest stay behind to maintain the soil and spirit of home. This type of traditional practice is being challenged by recent trends in parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia, though, where women are alongside men migrating as low-skilled labourers. These women often migrate without their children, creating new household and family dynamics. Somalis are different in that they often move with their children and maintain ties with other families around the world (Al-Sharmani, 2010). Although the form of mobility (who moves,

where and for how long) may be changing, migration as a household strategy continues to play an important role in how families try to meet their needs.

The second strategy, circularity, refers to the process whereby people engage in a regular repeated process of migrating for work and returning home to meet their social needs (Fan & Wang, 2008); circulatory migration is less relevant to this study. As mentioned in chapter 2, the Somali household has undergone significant changes in its composition and role as a result of the conflict in Somalia and the ensuing forced migration. The ways in which these changes affect gender relations and family ties will be discussed in chapter 5.

3.3.3. Does migration change things for women?

For many female migrants from the SADC region, the decision to migrate to South Africa is no different from that of all migrants: motivated by push factors of poverty and conflict at home, mobility is seen as a process to change life's circumstances. The prospect of employment, better living conditions and greater economic opportunities draws many men and women to South Africa (SAMP, 2007, p. 14). In addition to these general contributing drivers of migration, Somalis are further encouraged by the presence of social networks within the country (Jinnah, 2010).

Most women in a SAMP (2007, p. 33-34) study feel that their economic situation "improved because of migration and that they were able to contribute to their families household at home through remittances and investment"²³. The overwhelming feeling from respondents was that although identity and culture might have been lost during migration, the ensuing gains of freedom outweighed issues of loss of identity and culture.

Although the reasons for leaving home and for coming to South Africa may not be dissimilar for men and women, the ways in which women migrate and their experiences in entering the country are markedly different. As discussed earlier, women may be marginalised by their families, as the decision to migrate might not have been supported back home. Irregular²⁴ (clandestine) migration into South Africa for women increases the chances of gender-based violence, rape and harassment by both the border police and the gangs that lurk along the country's borders. Once in South Africa, women often find it more difficult than men to find work in the formal sector and to break into social networks (SAMP, 2007, p. 67-69). All of this occurs within a deeply xenophobic and discriminatory country, which, through its institutions and the attitudes of its citizens, makes life difficult for non-nationals. As one migrant woman said in the SAMP (2007, p. 40-42) study, "people call us *mkwerekwere*". Another respondent in that study stated, "if we go to the police for any issue its like apartheid in the police station, we

²³ This study interviewed 59 migrant women from across the SADC region.

²⁴ In this research, 'irregular' migration includes all types of entry and stay outside the legal process.

are the outsiders” (SAMP, 2007, p. 48). Such sentiments have been a repeated theme of migration studies for the last two decades in South Africa.²⁵ The lack of proper documentation, difficulty in obtaining a visa and a lack of capital are all factors that exacerbate women’s vulnerability (SAMP, 2007, p. 70). Although there has not been any study focusing exclusively or comparatively on Somali women in relation to vulnerability, anecdotal evidence suggests that Somalis, singled-out by their particular dress, are frequently targeted for xenophobic comments in public places (CSVR, 2010).

However, being female has certain advantages as well for migrants; women report that they arouse less suspicion from immigration officials and the police at borders and on the streets and are less likely to be identified as “criminals’ in public discussions on migration and xenophobia in the domestic domain (SAMP, 2007, p. 67-69). Historically, women (migrant, and forced migrant, in particular) have been portrayed in the media and in research as ‘vulnerable’²⁶ thereby evoking sentiment designed to assist and protect women, rather than recognise and support their potential.

3.4. Defining key concepts and practices relating to Somali migration

3.4.1. *Buufis*

A dominant concept in discourse and research on Somali migration is the term *buufis*. *Buufis* is a concept of resettlement borne out of a desire for an imagined life in the camp and at home in Somalia. It means different things at different times and different places. It is at once a goal and a process, and reflects the constant dream of living in the West, a dream which is also imagined to make the imagined a reality. As Al-Sharmani (1998, p. 57) states, “the West is far (physically) but present in the lives of Somalis in Cairo (through *buufis*)”.

In Somalia *buufis* relates to the desire to leave home; if this dream is frustrated it can also lead to a form of depression or mental illness, which can also be called *buufis*. *Buufis* literally means a “longing and desire blown into someone’s mind”, from the Somali “to blow or inflate” (Zorc & Osman, 1993, cited in Horst, 2006). *Buufis* is written about as a dream for success at both a collective and individual level (Rousseau, 1998, p. 388; Horst, 2006, p. 146). The content of that dream differs: whilst Somalis in Somalia dream of life outside (Horst, 2006), those in the Diaspora yearn for an imagined life at home or a better life elsewhere. Thus I argue that *buufis* also relates to a sense of inflating the memories of the home country once people have left Somalia.

²⁵ See for example Landau (2010); Vigneswaran et al. (2010).

²⁶ For a thorough critique of this conceptualisation, see Palmary (2006); Kihato (2008).

Conceptually, *buufis* can be analysed in two ways; on one hand it is a dream for mobility and travel (Horst, 2006). Seen in this broader sense, it naturally can also occur in the Diaspora. In chapter 7 I explore the question of whether South Africa, with its restricted opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to travel outside its borders, exacerbates this yearning for movement, or whether other triggers for *buufis* exist, given the particular conditions in Johannesburg. A subsequent question explores whether the frustration of this type of *buufis* (as a result of the inability to satisfy the need to travel) causes the other type of *buufis*, mental illness. In addition to its connection with home, *buufis*, as reflected in this study in Johannesburg, is a state of mental ill health. Although *buufis* is conceptually defined and empirically discussed in the Somali migration literature (Horst, 2006; Kleist, 2007, 2008), I am proposing two new approaches to this concept: firstly by applying its relevance to a self-settled urban context in Sub-Saharan Africa, and secondly by expanding its scope as an evolving process that is never realised completely. As one respondent stated:

I was born with *buufis*. I was born 2 years before the collapse of my country and all I have ever known is the longing to have a better life. For me that is *buufis*. (respondent S, interview, June, 2011)

On the other hand, *buufis* can also be understood broadly as the desire to live a full life by having access to work, educational opportunities and protection. I argue that *buufis* is a) a product of a failed state emerging from the throes of the socio-political and economic collapse of Somalia; and b) a modern day version of a centuries-old Somali tradition of mobility in search of greener pastures. *Buufis* must therefore be understood as a state of mind that emerges within a country that is in turmoil and has no effective political order. The effect of *buufis* is not properly understood; some of the respondents in this study talk about how those in *buufis* suspend their lives waiting to reach a state of 'otherness'²⁷ to the extent that they do not fulfil basic functions like eating, socializing and working, or they prolong life decisions like studying or getting married until they have crossed *buufis*. Others live in *buufis* as if it has already been realized; living in a mental state removed from their physical surroundings, they thus feed their imagination with a distorted sense of reality from television and the internet (this is the form of mental illness referred to earlier). Although *buufis* appears to be the result of a nation's life suspended due to the conflict that has raged in its land, it is also a way for people to deal with their trauma through escapism that often comes with having disconnected lives. This is partly due to the contrast in the lives that are lived and those that are imagined.

²⁷ 'Otherness' is conceptualised broadly here as another physical space or mental state.

3.4.2. Transnational engagements: Remittances.

Remittances are a fundamental part of Somali life and are seen within the broader function of transnationalism, which is present amongst Somalis. Other parts of transnationalism include links of people, goods and information (Horst, 2008). Somalis in refugee camps in Kenya face limited livelihood opportunities and diminishing international aid. In the face of these restrictions, they often rely on remittances to meet their daily needs. Much has been written about the impact of remittances on sending countries, particularly within the World Bank development agenda. There has been less focus on those who remit, and the impact that the pressure to remit has on the lives of those that send money home. Some of these changes include adjustments to livelihood and remittances strategies such as sending less money home, investing money at home rather than remitting cash, or sending money to be used for developmental projects at home which are aimed at enhancing the self-sufficiency of the family rather than maintaining continued dependency (Hammond, 2007).

Remittances are an important contribution to livelihoods for Somali households at home and in the Diaspora, with an estimated 1,6 billion dollars remitted to Somalia a year. One study in the United States found that 40 per cent of urban Somali households receive remittances (Medani 2010 cited in Hammond, 2011). At the same time, many Somalis in the Diaspora are under great pressure from family at home to send money back (Horst, 2006; 2008; Hammond, 2011). At times, this obligation is met at the cost of personal sacrifices such as delaying getting married or studying (Horst, 2008; Hammond, 2011). Somalis manage to send and receive money in a country without an effective central government or banking system by relying on an informal, centuries-old Islamic based system²⁸ reliant on the principle of honour and the use of social networks called *hawala*. *Hawala* is a word with Arabic roots, which literally means 'over'. It is broadly run along the same lines as an established money transfer agency. This system works as follows: money is paid to a *hawala* broker in the area closest to where the sender stays; the sender then communicates with the *hawala* broker in the area closest to the intended recipient with the details of the amount transferred and some identifying details of the recipient. Next, the recipient is informed of the transfer by the sender and picks up the money from the agent closest to him or her. The system is used by Somalis for a number of reasons: it is informal and does not require any account, documentation, or proof of address²⁹; it facilitates the transfer of money without actually moving the money; it is reasonably quick; the money is transferred instantly, easily, and relatively cheaply with the commission around 0,25-

²⁸ The earliest written record of this system, then known as settling debt in the context of trade and migration, appears in the Saracshi's legal work '*Al-mabsut*' in the 11th century. This work also appears in Udovitch's 1970 publication '*Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam*'.

²⁹ All of these are also requirements for using official banking or money transfer facilities.

1,25 per cent³⁰; and it does not rely on actual foreign currency rates (generally around 2 per cent) as money is paid and received in the local currency (Ballard, 2003).

In South Africa remittances have not generated the levels of visible mobilisation that is seen in Europe, partly because members are diverse in terms of clan associations (as opposed to Somalis in Oslo, for example, who are predominantly from Mogadishu (Horst, 2008)), but mainly due to the difficulty in obtaining reliable data on remittances (Horst, 2009, p. 328).

Remittances are used for a range of activities from clan-based things, like armed conflict, to education and peace-building initiatives. Privately, remittances are also used as daily income for the family (Jagd, 2004). The role and nature of remittances have mostly been written about in a two dimensional context between either Europe or North America and the country of origin; not much is known about how the chain of remittances impact across the developed, developing and home countries despite the large flows of people within Africa (Lessault & Beauchemin, 2009). The findings of this study seek to make a contribution to the arena of remittances and more broadly, mobility, which will be discussed in later chapters.

The role of remittances in changing gender roles is also an under researched area. Hammond (2007, p. 11) discusses how women are able to take part in clan duties like *diya* (dispute resolution) because of their new social status gained from remitting, although this role is still at a private, clan level and not a public, political level.

3.5. Framing Somali migration and settlement dynamics globally, regionally and nationally

In North America, studies on Somali migration have focused on the role and motivations for remittances (Hammond, 2007), community organising (Hopkins, 2006), and integration (Kusow, 1998; Mohamed, 1999). Somali migration to Europe is dominated by four broad and interlinked themes: a) the interplay between migration and the welfare state (Geddes, 2003); b) integration, including the role and function of social networks in facilitating social and economic integration (Jagd, 2004), and ethno-religious discrimination that Somalis face in this regard (Togeby & Møller, 1999); c) the effects of migration on identity (Kleist, 2004) and changing gender roles (Kleist, 2009); and d) transnational engagement (Kleist, 2007). Research on Somalis in Africa has largely been embedded within research on: discourses on life in refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda (Horst, 2006); diverse settlement in Egypt (Al-Sharmani, 2010); and the role of religion (Islam) in facilitating integration and access to resources in South Africa (Sadouni, 2009). This section explores each of these contexts in more detail. I focus specifically on countries or cities which have a significant Somali population and in which previous studies

³⁰ Commissions can also increase depending on the nature of the transfer (Ballard, 2003).

have been conducted. Thus, although there are many Somalis in Yemen and other Gulf countries, the absence of available work excludes its discussion here.

3.5.1. Somali migration to the United States

Although official figures of Somalis in the United States are contested, ranging from 35 000 to 150 000, there are distinct pools of Somalis including settlements in Ohio, Minnesota, Washington state and California (U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2004).

Settlement in Minneapolis, Minnesota followed a gradual, linear process. Somalis were first attracted to the city due to the lower cost of living in a smaller town, the healthy economy and the image of migrant friendliness. This message spread through networks within the Somali community and this, together with the presence of a growing Somali group in the city, led to a surge in migration and eventually to the development of a parallel Somali community in Minneapolis (Horst, 2008). This snowball effect can also be identified in South Africa (Jinnah, 2010). In Lewiston, Maine too, Somalis were first attracted to the small town atmosphere, and a low unemployment rate in the city (Hammond, 2007). Despite an initial hostile attitude by the mayor, the general population and businesses have welcomed Somalis and they have integrated reasonably well in the town. Together, Somali migrants, some Somali shops, and an NGO that offers social services, built a new mosque in town. The city also offers English language classes for migrants.

A distinguishing feature of Somali livelihoods is their multiplicity and diversity (Horst, 2008; Hammond, 2007). Horst's study in Minneapolis found that most Somalis both have multiple streams of income and straddle different socio-economic strata, ranging from low-skilled migrants who find work in factories where they can work overtime, to middle class, skilled professions like social workers and teachers, and more affluent groups who are businessmen and better paid professionals. An interesting feature of that study related to integration and social networks. Factories entered into an agreement with the Somali community whereby Somalis who did not speak English fluently could work under a team leader who acted as an intermediary between management and non-English speaking Somali workers.

Amongst Somalis, livelihoods are intricately linked with mobility. Somalis are a highly mobile group within the Diaspora and therefore obtaining travel documents is a key to the sustainability of their livelihoods; Horst (2008) demonstrates this in her study of Somali movement across the Canadian-American border in response to economic conditions. In contrast, getting a travel document in South Africa as a refugee or asylum seeker is time consuming; I will explore this aspect further in chapter 5.

3.5.2. Somali migration to Europe

There is a large Somali Diaspora of about 1 million people spread across Europe. There are significant numbers of Somalis in Scandinavian countries: in 2007 Norway had about 20 000 Somalis; Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Britain have smaller numbers; and France and Switzerland have between 1 000-10 000 Somalis (Horst, 2009, p. 327).

One of the challenges that Somalis face in Europe is discrimination, particularly the effect of labour market discrimination on social integration. This has received particular public and academic attention in Denmark (Jagd, 2004). Broader social discrimination and barriers to accessing opportunities or livelihoods (Necef, 1999), and linking livelihoods to the welfare state (Jagd, 2004; Mogensen & Matthiessen, 2000) are also recurring themes in the literature on Somali migration and livelihoods in northern Europe. As a result many Somalis in this region rely on state grants to support themselves and, in turn, use these to remit to their families in Somalia and Kenya.

In contrast, South Africa does not extend comprehensive social security to non-nationals, offering only minimal and selected grants to refugees³¹. Without the support of a state security net, and in a constrained, competitive labour market many migrants work in the informal economy (Perbedy, 2000). Somalis, though, tend to draw on their social networks for jobs or turn to their entrepreneurial tradition (Jinnah, 2010; Kleist, 2007) of being self-employed. This study found that social networks are likely to be the most useful factor in determining integration into Johannesburg.

The demographics of Somalis in Norway show that most Somalis are young, male, recently arrived in the country³² and unemployed (Jagd, 2004). If they are working they are likely to receive the lowest wages. A profile of Somali women reveals that many are single parent families. Despite these limited conditions, 74 per cent of respondents in Jagd's study (2004, p. 328) still remit monthly, pointing to the strong transnational household ties.

In Denmark, Somalis are generally drawing welfare grants from the state (although a small number are self-employed), an observation that is fuelling the rhetoric of anti-immigration sentiments. Jagd (2004), though, warns against isolating economic activities of migrants from the broader social environment which impacts on migrant integration; this broader social environment suggests that the motivation to find work is linked to social networks and ties with the host country. In particular, that study draws attention to learned norms in relation to finding work. Jagd (2004) argues that Somalis are used to finding work through social networks

³¹ In terms of the Social Development Act, refugees are eligible for the disability grant of R1 000 following court-action led by SCALABRINI Refugee Services in Cape Town which successfully argued that the exclusion of refugees is unconstitutional. See www.lhr.org.za for more on this case.

³² More than half of Somalis living in Norway have been there for less than 5 years.

and connections at home and are therefore not adequately prepared to compete for work in an open market.

What is missing from much of the literature on Somali migration in Europe, or indeed on forced migration anywhere, is an exploration of refugee agency (Essed, 2004). According to Essed (2004, p. 144) agency refers to the ability of refugees to make decisions about their lives and livelihoods, and to give knowledge and meaning to it. Framing migration within a context of a welfare state rather than as an expression of agency exacerbates rhetoric of the 'anti-immigrant problem'. Through this research I will argue that one way of understanding Somali migration to South Africa is through an agency framework. Thus the ability of Somalis to self-settle and make decisions about their livelihoods with a very weak state presence can be seen as a means of stimulating migrants' agency. This is particularly evident in migration from Somalia to South Africa, a South-South migration route that is often overlooked in the discourse on South-North migration.

Another characteristic of agency is the extent of the Diaspora's political engagement and influence back home. Most notably this is examined through the role of remittances. Remittances are a "significant part of the Somali economy not just for their economic value but also because of their ability to shape local political, economic, and military power" (Wayland, 2004, cited in Horst, 2008, p. 320). Aside from the problem in quantifying remittances discussed before, other questions that are raised include the role of the Diaspora in political activities, and conflict at home.

In conclusion, the migration of Somalis is framed as a constant feature of that nation. Historically it was a means of allowing people to cope with change and insecurity (Horst, 2006, p. 153; Lewis, 1994, p. 113). In this sense, diversified livelihoods that are fluid and transnational in nature are also seen as a coping mechanism. Historically migration in the region was linked to trade and investment through its caravan routes (Rosseau, 1998, p. 390, cited in Horst, 2006, p. 154). However, migration has more than just an economic function. In religious terms too, mobility and the process of migration or *hijra*³³ feature prominently in the discourse of Somalis. More specifically, travel as a form of learning and gaining support is also considered an important function of mobility (Horst, 2006, p. 153).

Somali Migration and Gender in Denmark

There has been considerable academic interest on Somali migration and gender in Denmark, and I therefore chose this context to analyse and compare aspects of Somali migration and settlement.

³³ *Hijra* is the Arabic term for migration, which, in Islamic history, is most commonly associated to the movement of an early Islamic community from Mecca to Medina to flee persecution and seek secure livelihoods.

Migration to Denmark began in the mid 1990s, yet through a steady increase in flows, Somalis have become the largest African group of migrants in that country. This group of migrants is very poorly understood and often misunderstood; many religious stereotypes are associated with Somalis, particularly in relation to the role of women in Islam, which further heighten this problem. There are high levels of unemployed in the group; in 2003, only 16 per cent of Somali men and 6 per cent of Somali women were employed (Integration Ministry, 2007, p. 57, cited in Kleist, 2009). These factors contribute to a general public and policy discourse that categorises Somalis as difficult to integrate (Kelsit, 2007). This is partly due to the institutionalism of the welfare state, underpinned by ideals of identity, insiders, belonging and membership (Geddes, 2004, p. 3); such an observation raises the question of whether Somalis are so different that they threaten these values.

Again, less has been written about migration to welfare countries from the migrants' perspective. For example, life in Denmark is linked to identity where living on social security undermines a person's sense of self, and more so for men who have traditionally been the breadwinners and decision makers of the family (Kleist, 2009). A drop in social status is aggravated by a person's social class before migrating (McSpadden, 1999; Goldring, 1998; Jansen, 2008). Thus, migrant Somali men, who traditionally had a higher standing than women, have to cope with the loss of identity by engaging in community organisations where they can re-negotiate their social, economic, and political roles (Kleist, 2009). I will argue in the subsequent chapters that in South Africa, many men turn to *kat*³⁴ and to religion³⁵ in an attempt to redefine themselves. In this sense, there is a notion that women adapt better to life in developed countries, as they have less to lose socially by engaging in the opportunities on offer.

The effect of migration on women also includes a broader examination of gender roles. In Somalia, the extended family has a prominent role to play in child-rearing, marriage arrangements, family disputes and broader family relationships (Kallehave, 2001). Migration threatens this structure, and the resources and support that it brings to women, and replaces it with a more active involvement of the state in family affairs. Thus institutionalised practices of language training and child care can threaten traditional family roles, which women do not necessarily want to abandon.

There is also the gendered nature of return migration (Hansen, 2004). Men talk about a female homeland. Thus Somali women's assertion must be understood within the context of the loss of men's identity and masculinity through the civil war and displacement. I argue that while men

³⁴ *Kat* or *meera* is a herb with narcotic properties. It is legal in some countries and illegal in others.

³⁵ In particular I refer to the presence of Al Shabab in the Diaspora here, but other forms of non-extremist religious affiliations are also acknowledged.

look to return home to recreate their identity (Hansen, 2004) women look at the absence of men as a way to assert their own power in the Diaspora.

Historically, Somali gender-relations were seen as complimentary (Kleist, 2009), although there is an assumed superiority of men (Warsame, 2002; Gardner & Bushra, 2004). There has historically been a division of roles and responsibilities for men and women, with men assuming more public, political duties and authority, and women assuming more domestic ones (Lewis, 1994; Kleist, 2009). However, gender is a co-construct with class and age; differences from urban to rural areas and amongst ethnicities do exist in Somalia, which are invariably reproduced in the Diaspora, although most of the literature on Somalis in South Africa has neglected this nuance (Sadouni, 2006, 2008; Kriakis, 2005).

3.5.3. Somali migration in Africa

The broad profile of Somalis in Cairo is very similar to that of Somalis in Johannesburg (Jinnah, 2010), as there are two main groups of Somalis present in both cities: firstly, the refugees, and secondly, a group of resettled Somalis from the West. There does, however, appear to be more integration and junctures between the two groups in Egypt than is evident in South Africa. The socio-legal and political context of Cairo also echoes similar trends in Johannesburg, with a largely restricted immigrant policy environment, a hostile local population and limited economic opportunities in the formal sector for livelihoods (Al-Sharmani, 2010; Landau, 2007). I argue that these conditions inform the strategies of Somalis in their responses, as they adopt a greater tendency toward transnationalism, articulate a stronger ethnic identity and less desire for assimilation and integration, create enclaves of closed communities, and produce an increased informality of labour and social and economic arrangements.

Like South Africa, Egypt is a signatory to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and other international laws, yet in practice the state does not offer any assistance to refugees or promote their protection. This, coupled with a crowded labour market, pushes many newcomers in Cairo into the informal economy where women tend to do better than men, as there is more demand for lesser-skilled workers. In Cairo many Somalis work as domestic and child-care workers for Egyptians and other Somalis. This allows them to both earn money and make decisions regarding their families (Al-Sharmani, 2006).

The second group of Somalis, the resettled, enjoy a higher social and economic position in society. They use their much-prized Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) passports to travel frequently on multi-functional visits, which combine family, business, religious and leisure purposes. Interestingly this group comprises of mainly women who are heads of their households. They are generally empowered and independent with little evidence of gender-based oppression. Their status as breadwinners also translates into

increased decision-making roles in what have become transnational extended households (Al-Sharmani, 2006). This group of women have exerted notions of empowerment by construing power into their traditional roles of reproduction and care. This is done through a process of investing in the education of their children who are seen as their future social and economic capital (Al-Sharmani, 2006, p. 8).

Yet challenges, mainly economic, associated with child rearing, and others linked to renewing permits and getting housing do exist, and result in a general sense of “stress” (Al-Sharmani, 2006, p. 8). Multiple family households, and multiple income streams (as seen in South Africa) are one way of saving money, improving their chances of survival and possibly investing in business, thereby alleviating the economic burden they face. I discuss the effect of life as self-settled urban refugees and asylums seekers for my respondents in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Somalis in Kenya

There are an estimated 970 300 Somalis in Kenya (UNHCR, 2011), making it a country with the largest Somali Diaspora. There has been extensive research on Somalis in Kenya. Broadly this work has documented the restrictive, dehumanising effect of the refugee camps on the lives and livelihoods of Somali refugees (Horst, 2006; Beckerlag, 2005), and the role of social networks as a livelihood strategy (Horst, 2002, 2004). Somali movement and settlement in Kenya must be understood in the broader geo-political context. Many Kenyans and Somalis share the same ethnicity and language which colonial borders divided (Lewis, 2008). Therefore, there has been a long pattern of connection between the two countries, and many Somalis have relatives who live in Kenya and whom they can rely on for temporary support when they first leave Somalia. Furthermore, there is a significant number of Somalis who are Kenyan citizens and who have political and economic power, which has also created tensions in the political debates in that country Yet for most Somalis who leave their country, Kenya is the first and easiest option for refuge. Somalis either live in refugee camps or opt for an undocumented life in urban cities. Regardless of which they choose, they face numerous physical, economic and psychological challenges in their attempt to live a normal, full and productive life, and many spend their time and money in Kenya planning their journey onward.

3.5.4. (Somali) migration to Johannesburg

The transnational activities of migrants in Africa and their role in globalisation processes and trade has become an emerging field over the last decade (Peberdy, 2000). For instance, Peberdy (2000, p. 22) shows that African entrepreneurs (mainly men) are engaged in “strong formal and informal transnational networks of trade, migration, and entrepreneurship”. There are, however, serious legal and administrative restrictions on entering and remaining in South Africa as a documented trader or entrepreneur. As a result, many migrants come as refugees or

visitors and stay on (Peberdy, 2000, p. 23). I will argue, based on the empirical evidence of this research, that the presence of Somali women in entrepreneurship highlights and questions the gendered notion of migrant entrepreneurship in South Africa.

Since 1994, Johannesburg has enforced strict regulation of urban space (The Star, 1998, cited in Peberdy, 2000, p. 25), which has left many migrants competing with each other, and with poor South Africans for monetarily and symbolically valuable economic trading space on the street. Somalis have relatively remained outside this competition for contested space in the inner city, concentrating rather on what turned out to be another tense –and at times deadly– location, the informal townships in the city. In addition, Somalis have filled the gap left by the flight of Indian businesses and homes from other city periphery areas and smaller towns by relying on a relatively organised and united group that established business premises through private investment.

The establishment of a number of Somali businesses, particularly in the former black townships, has led to significant and long-standing xenophobic violence against Somalis. As early as August 1997, there were protests against non-national traders, and in September 1998, three traders were killed in Pretoria by a group said to be representing the unemployed (The Star Newspaper, 4 September, 1998, cited in Peberdy, 2000, p. 25). Thus the risk of violence is a real threat to Somalis' (and other migrants') livelihoods in South Africa.

Somalis in the Diaspora are not a homogenous group; the distinct differences in age, social standing and clans are a dynamic that has been overlooked in previous studies in South Africa (Sadouni, 2008; Kriakes, 2008). Although there has been some academic interest in Somalis in Johannesburg, it has been limited to conceptual notions of religious identity (Sadouni, 2009; Kiroikis, 2005), which I argue is used more as a strategic resource (pointing again to the agency of Somalis) than as a means of hope and assimilation. Other studies show that access to social services is dependent on social integration into communities and negotiation with respective markets and resource holders (Landau, 2006). A 2000 study on the Somali refugee community in Johannesburg, for example, found that 70 per cent of school-age Somali refugee children were not going to school (Peberdy & Majodina, 2000) and that access to housing was also a problem. These issues have been neglected in subsequent studies that tended to overplay the role of religion (see Kiroikis, 2005; Sadouni, 2009).

3.6. What is the effect of migration for Somali women?

For Somalis in Denmark there have been some changes in gender relations as a result of forced migration and the loss of income and social positions that men have experienced (Kleist, 2009), although I argue that the role of the broader socio-political context must be taken into account here. In the Scandinavian case, the rise of female empowerment is seen as a result of the

decline of male authority directly caused by policies of the welfare state.³⁶ Thus women are asserting themselves based on the economic power that the state in the host country provides. I argue that to some extent in South Africa, in the absence of such state provision, welfare benefits (from NGOs) create this change in gender and family relations. Furthermore, the political power that the state in South Africa confers through its fairly progressive law and mechanisms also enables women to assume new roles and authority in their families, which is discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 7.

I wish to extend the concept of transferring authority from patriarchal power to women via the welfare state (Hansen, 2008; Kleist, 2009) by arguing that in South Africa this is done through the political process, and the NGO structure that echoes the “the 911” option about which Hansen (2008), Harris (2004), Pasura (2008) and Kelist (2008) write.

In view of these factors, I argue that Somali women challenge many of the assumptions underpinning female migration in conceptual and empirical terms. Somali women are different from other female migrants in South Africa in many ways. They tend to migrate without a male partner and with or without monetary or emotional support from the family. Once they enter South Africa they are emerging themselves in, and creating, new social networks that enable better leverage of resources. Drawing on historical mobile and entrepreneurial traditions (Kleist, 2007; Horst, 2006), the collapse of Somalia, and the parallel political process of independence in South Africa, has enabled new and increasing waves of female migrants to raise and reinforce the idea of female migrant agency, and change female migratory patterns in the region.

One explicit example of this is the transformation of the migrant household. The transnational household in some cases strengthens marital and family relations, and in some cases strains them. Men see geographically split households as either an opportunity to shirk their duties or to take more responsibility (Al-Sharmani, 2006). Women, on the other hand, find new opportunities to access services and to take-on decision-making roles in male-absent households by being engaged in trade or continuing their studies (Al-Sharmani, 2006, p. 500). The new configuration of the household also permits new types of networks. In Cairo, Egypt, for example, a family-based network led by female members is the main support system used by Somalis (Al-Sharmani, 2006, p. 513).

Given this contested picture, are there additional motives for families to encourage women to leave Somalia? Al-Sharmani (2006, p. 513) points to three main reasons for migration: as a means of protection from sexual violence; to fuel the mythical notion that women will be

³⁶ Women are more likely to apply for and receive social benefits and therefore take on the role of ‘breadwinners’. There is evidence that this occurs in camps too where humanitarian agencies assist women more than they do men (Kleist, 2009).

granted asylum more likely than men; and due to women being able to find work in the informal economy, particularly in the global recession. In light of the above, we can begin to see a shift in Somali society where women are not just producers and reproducers of care but also active economic agents and holders of power themselves.

3.7. Theoretical construction

This section discusses three key theoretical paradigms to which this study contributes. These are: migration theory; network theory; and ethnic entrepreneurship theory. In all instances, I will attempt to situate these theories in relation to gender and, specifically, re-position female agency within these paradigms. This will provide a basis to understand the findings of my research later in the dissertation.

3.7.1. Migration Theory

I find it particularly useful to use the threshold approach (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011) to frame this study for two reasons: it centrally situates agency within an understanding of mobility; and it considers migration as a continual process that never really ends. I argue that both of these factors are critical in understanding Somali migration to South Africa.

To understand agency is to recognise its forms including irrationality. The threshold approach considers that the choices and non-choices of migrants is rooted in personal decision making processes derived from the ability to mobilise information and resources at hand, rather than as an objective exercise taken by a rational individual who relies on formal complete knowledge (Smith & Jinnah, forthcoming 2014, p. 15-16).

Migration is conceived as a journey toward personal self-improvement, an option to overcome personal difficulties, or a way to meet personal goals, rather than as a response to general environmental conditions. This approach argues that migrants need to overcome certain barriers or thresholds in order to migrate. These thresholds are: the indifference threshold; the trajectory threshold; and the locational threshold. Each, in turn, helps in understanding how migrants themselves consider and undertake the migration project. The indifference threshold considers how migration becomes an option, for whom and why. It regards the transition from the idea of migration, from a non-attitude to an active option, as key in understanding the point at which people make decisions around mobility. The trajectory threshold considers to what extent the cost, length and form of the migration journey is an important factor in decision-making. Lastly, the locational threshold examines what role a migrant's destination has in determining where and if a person will move (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011).

Migration as a livelihoods strategy at the household level

Theoretically this study is positioned within the literature on migration and livelihoods in the developing world (De Haas, 2008, p. 34), and is animated in part by some of the thinking in the new economic labour approach that places greater emphasis on agency and collective (household) reasoning³⁷ rather than on passive individuals in the decision-making process (Castel & Miller, 2009, p. 24).

Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly becoming more diverse with 50 per cent of rural households relying on non-farming income modes; in South Africa this number is between 80-90 per cent (Worku, 2007). Whilst migration as a livelihood strategy is often associated with (male-headed) rural households when household are recipients of remittances, I want to adopt this approach to a transnational population that has elements of rural and urban, where one household can both receive and send remittances, and in which females are playing a more active role. In the first instance diversified livelihoods are usually a response to shocks and restrictions in the rural household, mostly resulting from farming related issues. As I will show in this dissertation, Somalis adopt diversified and multiple livelihoods in the Diaspora as a strategy to meet the needs of the immediate family in the host country and that of the extended family, and at times, even the clan in Somalia and elsewhere. Thus I argue that mobility is the fundamental resource and a critical livelihoods strategy for Somalis at home, and that women are beginning to play a more active role in this process.

3.7.2. Social network theory

Social network theory, as postulated by Masset (1993, p. 448) is defined as:

A set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants with former migrants to the host country and would-be migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origins.

Essentially, networks serve as points of information, and physical, financial, and emotional support throughout the migratory process. Appleyard (1992) found that a first group of migrants settling in an area, the so called 'pioneer migrants', serve as the first link in a community of support for subsequent waves of migrants, enabling them to settle down, find work, remit, and obtain work and residency papers. Some of the benefits of social networks include access to capital, goods and services (Shaw, 2000).

³⁷ "The fundamental assumption is that people, households and families act not only to maximize income but also to minimize and spread risks" (De Haas, 2008, p. 35).

Networks do exist amongst Somali migrant communities and serve as important conduits of information, capital and support.³⁸ I rely on the network theory to analyse the roles that networks play in the migratory process for Somali women. These include the decision to migrate, the migratory journey, arrival, settlement, finding work and onward mobility. The network theory is particularly relevant for this study given the largely restrictive political and legislative framework that governs migration in South Africa. For example, in the absence of social grants for migrants, without clear information on immigration laws and procedures, or considering the difficulty that foreigners face in opening a bank account, migrant networks become invaluable in facilitating the flow of information for migrants and meeting their daily needs.

However, network theory also has certain negative elements, including restrictive characteristics that exclude prospective migrants based on who they are or where they come from. It has also been suggested that networks weaken over time, although how and why this happens is not clear. The gendered focus of this study will be particularly useful in unpacking how women position themselves within such networks *vis a vis* men or if they face exclusion due to their gender. This will provide a better understanding of some of the disadvantages of networks, which are often mentioned in the literature but rarely elaborated upon.

This study focuses on women as the main actors in the migratory process rather than as companions to men. Morokvasic (1984, p. 899) states that female migration cannot be understood within a paradigm that focuses on young males moving to find work or a better life. To highlight the gendered focus of this study, Lutz's (2004) contributory approach will be used. This approach suggests that the contribution of women to the migratory process and their specific roles and experiences are studied within the context of their lives and against the broader migratory movement. Within network theory, the work of women can be seen as a means to develop social and economic capital, which can over time lead to a sense of empowerment. To fully understand the role of migration in women's lives, it is necessary as Boyd (2003, p. 3) suggests: to examine the entire migratory process. She argues that the role of women in society before migrating determines the extent to which migratory opportunities exist or are created for women. Secondly, migration itself can either reinforce such inequalities or break them.

Granovetter (1973) identifies dominant and secondary actors in social networks. In migration studies these categories are conceptualised as "older" and "newer" migrants (Anwar, 1995; Shaw, 2000). Yet these categories ignore other factors such as class and gender, which influence positioning within the networks. Finally, I also explore to what extent social networks

³⁸ See for example Nielsen's (2004) study of social networks amongst Somali communities in Denmark.

serve as a major reason for subsequent waves of migration to a particular place (McDowell, 1997; Crush, 2002).

3.7.3 Ethnic entrepreneurial theory

In this section I reflect on whether ethnic entrepreneurship theory is a valid body of theory and whether it can explain Somalis modes of incorporation and economic choices and activities in the Diaspora or whether external issues such as policies and social conditions drive their activities.

To understand this question, a deeper discussion of the content and validity of the theory is required. At its core, this theory asks whether some ethnic groups are more likely to be entrepreneurs (as opposed to waged workers) than other groups (Light & Rosentein, 1995; Light & Bonaich, 1988; Waldinger, 1990) and conversely, what determines who will be an entrepreneur. The literature identifies certain conditions which are associated with migrant entrepreneurship, such as gender³⁹ (Portes & Jensen, 1989); human capital; the number of years one is a resident in a place, the level of education, and the size and scope of social networks (Light & Gold, 2000); “conditions of exit and reception”, and the density and intensity of settlement (Ballard, 2000, p. 21-22). At its core the theory emphasises that the economic integration of migrants is not based entirely on the conditions in the host country but also on the mobilisation of cross border networks. Thus its consideration of subjective factors is an appealing one for this dissertation.

The tendency or trend of certain migrant groups to situate themselves in self-employment, rather than waged work, is an emerging development, which the discourse on migration and livelihoods is grappling with. In parallel, there is an ongoing debate about whether or not this trend⁴⁰ requires new terminology, and on whether or not the correct concept and theory for this is “transnational ethnic entrepreneurship” (Portes, Haller & Guarnizo, 2001, p. 6). Firstly, as Portes et al (2001, p. 6) point out, transnationalism⁴¹ is not a new concept since it was used in literature on European migration to the United States over a century ago⁴² (Portes et al, 2001, p. 3). What is new, according to Portes et al (2001), are three features of transnationalism: technological advancement, which makes communication easier and faster; “intense level of contact” between members of networks; and the “role of sending governments’ involvement in Diasporas” (p. 3-4). In order for the economic activities of migrant groups to be termed

³⁹ In particular, married men appear to be the most likely to be entrepreneurs in one study (Ballard, 2000, p. 23).

⁴⁰ There is another parallel debate about whether it is a trend at all, as the research to date only looked at those who are involved in transnational activities, and therefore has a selection bias (Portes et al, 2001).

⁴¹ Transnationalism is defined as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, 1994, p. 6).

⁴²See also Foner, 1997; Peiore, 1979.

transnational ethnic enterprises, Portes et al (2001) state that a basic requirement must be met. This is that a business must rely on “regular contact (not just occasional trips abroad) across national borders for its operation” (p.110). It is less clear whether or not this concept is a valid one and, if so, whether or not it can be extended to explain the case of Somalis’ activities today.

Regardless of its validity as a body of theory, its descriptive value in identifying migrants’ activities is useful. There are four types of transnational activities according to Portes (2001): a) circuit firms which are “involved in the transfer of goods and remittances across countries and range from small to large in size” (2001, p. 1); b) ethnic enterprises which are “small retail firms catering to the immigrant community and depend on the small supply of imported goods from country of origin” (2000, p. 9); c) cultural enterprises which have “daily contact with the home country and import clothing and cultural goods from home”; and d) return micro migrant enterprises which are “firms established by return migrants at home” (2001, p.1). Somalis in the Diaspora are more likely to be associated in A and C above (Jinnah, 2010; Al-Sharmani, 2010).

Although elements of transnationalism amongst Somalis have been well established⁴³ it is less clear whether Somalis engage in ethnic transitional entrepreneurship and how women are situated within this dynamic. In the following chapters, I will discuss how Somalis confirm and depart from the characteristics of the ethnic entrepreneurship theory, particularly in relation to women.

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out the theoretical and scholarly groundwork for this dissertation by positioning this study on Somali women in Johannesburg in the global discourse on migration, gender and change.

Migration is a changing process and holds opportunities for change, both negative and positive. For forced migrants in particular, migration can be a life changing and traumatic event. Yet the ways in which migration is perceived, undertaken and experienced, and the decisions relating to it by migrants themselves, is often overlooked in the literature. This is more pronounced when one considers the mobility of female refugees within the South. To this end, the utilisation of new theoretical frameworks such as the threshold approach or the contributory paradigm of Lutz provide scholarly lenses through which females migrants’ agency can be studied and understood. In part the following chapters will begin to provide the empirical results for these new approaches, building on the methodology provided in chapter 2.

⁴³ Nielsen, 2000; Kleist, 2007 are two examples.

Empirically, Somali migration to Europe, Africa and North America has been characterised by certain features: transnationalism; extended households; *buufis*; multiple and diverse livelihoods; and the obligation to and reliance on remittances. By positioning this research within comparative work in selected countries, I have explained a few key concepts related to Somali migration and shown that Somalis present an interesting academic study for the interplay between migration, gender, livelihoods and change because of particular political, cultural and gendered issues which they face and to which they respond.

Theoretically, contemporary Somali migration and settlement, and the effects on and experiences of women can best be framed within theories of gender and migration, social networks, and ethnic entrepreneurship. The interconnection of these bodies of knowledge and theories is complex and not always comprehensive. I have shown that the agency of female migrants remains an under-researched and conceptualised notion. I will return to these theoretical and conceptual frameworks later in this dissertation when I discuss how the findings of my research challenge or extend these discourses.

Chapter 4: Reasons, routes, and rationale: Understanding contemporary Somali migration patterns and dynamics to South Africa

The next three chapters present and discuss the empirical findings of my research. I have toyed with categorising my findings in various ways: according to the type of respondents I had, for example, married and single women; or by economic activity, for example, traders, self-employed or waged workers. In the end I opted to categorise these findings as points of the migration journey, recognising that these are superficial distinctions, but also understanding that they are important points of success and meaning-making within the respondents' life projects as a whole. Therefore chapter 4 begins with a discussion of why and how the respondents came to South Africa; chapter 5 examines settlement and integration in Johannesburg in the broadest sense; chapter 6 looks specifically at livelihoods; and finally chapter 7 explores the outcome of migration and settlement. Through this categorisation I aim to present the migratory project as a process with distinct yet fluid points, and try to explore the meanings that this process holds for the respondents. I develop and maintain the key argument of this dissertation, migrant agency, throughout the chapter and introduce other arguments where relevant. As much as possible I try to integrate the voices of the respondents, allowing them to tell their journeys, and through discussion I bring forth main themes and points of analysis.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is about why and how the respondents left Somalia and settled in South Africa. It looks at the migration patterns, behaviour, and dynamics of a particular group, and seeks to understand the gender, ethnic and class differentiations within it. Secondary data from the African Cities Survey data set (FMSP, p. 2006)⁴⁴ (which included 186 Somalis - 142 men and 44 women) in Johannesburg provides more detail on the extent of these patterns, and serves as a tool to compare Somali migrants' experiences in Johannesburg with those of other international migrants and local groups in the city. My main argument is that the respondents exercised personal choices, regardless of how constrained and varied these may have been, regarding mobility within broader political contexts and personal pressures from extended families.

This chapter is divided into two sections: Section I examines the migratory routes that the respondents followed, and the risks that they encountered on their journeys to South Africa. It also discusses the role of migration agents or traffickers. Section II looks at migration from Somalia outlining the migrants' main reasons for leaving and their rationale for relocating to

⁴⁴ Respondents are from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Somalia and the DRC.

South Africa. Although the two decade civil war in Somali serves as the main impetus for out-migration, respondents' experiences of the war differ, ranging from minor to major involvement and effects. The economic decline in Somalia, as a result of the collapse of a central government, later became a driving force for Somalis seeking a better life elsewhere. Within this particular political and economic climate, I also juxtapose the real, personal motivations for migration. Some of these include searching for a better life, escaping cultural norms, or realising a dream of living abroad.

Phase 1: Migratory routes and patterns to South Africa

4.2. Migratory patterns to South Africa

Although South Africa has not had a long and entrenched history of Somali migration, it has received steady flows of refugees and migrants from that country since the early 1990's. The perceived new opportunities for work, trade, settlement and resettlement, and the political stability that it posed in the post-apartheid era drew many migrants from across the continent, including Somalis. When South Africa confirmed a non-encampment policy for asylums seekers and refugees in 1998, the move was widely applauded by forced migrants. However, in time, many Somalis have found that self-settlement in competitive and hostile urban centres has resulted in a great deal of economic and physical vulnerability and risk (WRC, 2011; Landau & Gindrey, 2008).

In the last two decades, there have been three main waves of Somali migration to South Africa (Jinnah, 2010). To this, I add a fourth flow, beginning in late 2010 following the drought and later the famine in southern Somalia. The first wave refers to what migration scholars often call the pioneer stage (Massey, 2008) where a small group of Somalis (mainly single men and small-size families) came to South Africa in the early 1990s, fleeing the political conflict in their home country. At the time South Africa was still under apartheid rule, and rights for (non-white) foreigners were not existent. In South Africa, Somalis settled in Mayfair, Johannesburg, where a number of Islamic non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Africa Muslims Agency, were based. These NGOs provided shelter and material support to early Somali migrants who slowly established themselves by working for, and or trading with local Muslim owned businesses. In time Mayfair also proved to be a strategic base for the economic and social settlement of Somalis. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, Mayfair was situated close to the bus and railway services linking Johannesburg to the rest of the country and the region. Secondly, it was close to key economic hubs in the city such as the central business district (CBD), and other wholesale and trading areas where Somalis could find work or buy goods for trading (such as the Chinese malls). Finally, Mayfair was home to a large Indian origin Muslim community who provided shelter and assistance to Somali refugees at a personal, private level,

and at a public level through religious and charitable institutions. In some cases the latter were already working directly in Somalia or were raising money to send to Somalis. Therefore there was some knowledge amongst locals of the political situation in Somalia and empathy for Somalis entering the city.

The second stage of Somali migration to South Africa, from the mid 1990s to 2000, occurred as a result of the effects of social networks. Somalis at home had begun hearing of the possibilities of work, business and self-settlement in South Africa and decided to join the small community there. The groups largely consisted of men who were related to or knew someone who had travelled to South Africa. Around this time a few factors spurred an increase in those seeking to come to South Africa. Firstly, a few Somalis in South Africa were resettled to the United States, or Scandinavia, sparking a desire to come to South Africa as a means to travel onward to Western countries. Secondly, around this time the first group of Somalis (who had saved money from petty trading and working) slowly started opening small businesses in Mayfair. They, in turn, employed other Somalis, creating the impression that business could be possible in South Africa. Later businesses were also opened in smaller towns in Gauteng and other provinces and in the townships in Western and Eastern Cape and Gauteng, which became the targets of xenophobic related violence and intimidation. I discuss this separately later in the dissertation. Shifa's story illustrates the role of social networks in making the decision to move to South Africa:

I came to South Africa in 1997. I left Somalia in 1991 and went to Kenya. I stayed with relatives in Nairobi and life was beautiful. I got married and we have two sons. Then in 1997 I heard that my husband had married another woman. I could not take it. I could not see them together, the jealousy was killing me and I could do nothing about it. So I heard that in South Africa, there are some Somalis and that they can go to the West, from there. Some of my family were also here. So I took my two sons, and I was pregnant again, as well, and left. It took us 22 days by bus to come from Kenya. We stopped along the way many times. When we got here I stayed in a Somali hostel for five days until I found my child's uncle [*she is referring to her ex-brother-in-law*] he helped me, took me to (the) North West [*a province in South Africa*] and I stayed there, and gave birth. His family looked after me well (Shifa, interview, February 15, 2011).

The third phase of out-migration to South Africa occurred as a result of the Ethiopian incursion into Somalia in 2000. This movement was more diverse and intense than the previous two waves. Younger men and women of all tribes joined the mainly older and predominantly Ogaden Somalis who were in South Africa at the time. This changed the profile of Somalis in South Africa and also created tensions amongst Somalis due to tribal, gendered and generational differences. Whereas the first groups of Somalis were seen as hardworking and

honest people who respected cultural and religious norms, newer migrants became known amongst the established Somalis as young and reckless people who would rather stand on the streets and chew *kat*⁴⁵ than work or trade for a minimal income. Between 2000-2005, as a result of the ongoing war of more than a decade in Somalia, and the breakdown of families and livelihoods through migration, economic restrictions and conflict, social norms at home began to shift. This resulted in many more women starting to leave Somalia in their own right, with their children (as divorced or widowed mothers) or as single women looking for work to support their extended family at home (elderly parents and younger siblings and children). This added to the diversity of Somalis in South Africa and would later shape social and gender norms in the host country, as these women began working and trading and asserting their independence.

The fourth phase of migration, like the second, was an intense movement of a large number of people due to the drought and famine in Somalia in late 2010-2011. The international media coverage of the famine in 2011 renewed NGOs' support for and public interest in the Somali issue, which raised significant funds for Somalis at home and also created a more sympathetic public discourse about Somalis in South Africa.

This systematic and continuous movement of Somalis to Johannesburg resulted in a gradual domination by Somalis of certain parts of Mayfair, entrenching a kind of Somali presence in the area, which afforded them some protection from xenophobic attitudes and violence. However, within this space another layer of uncertainty became apparent, relating to private space. This was particularly relevant to women, who had to negotiate social structures in which customs relating to gender norms were entrenched in their everyday lives. Men, in contrast, found that they could reassert and at times, even strength, their masculinity within the various community structures that were established. In this way South Africa presented an enabling environment for the articulation of a public masculine identity for Somalis that was lacking elsewhere (Kleist, 2010; Hammond, 2007). As the Somali community grew in Mayfair, social norms were negotiated, produced, reproduced and shaped. Many women, who had left behind societies that were influenced by tribal rule and customs, found a new social order in South Africa, in which the weakened tribal governance afforded them the opportunity to renegotiate their places as women in Somali society, as heads of households, for example. At the same time they found that this different social context also had its drawbacks: many Somali women who were not married or living on their own found that without being closely associated to a man or a larger clan resulted in being marginalized and prone to vulnerability. This was manifested in overt harassment on the street from Somali men, and in instances of divorce in which the

⁴⁵ *Kat* or *meera* is a herbal substance with narcotic properties commonly used in Eastern Africa and parts of the Gulf. Its legal status differs from country to country. It is illegal in South Africa but legal in Somalia, Yemen and the United Kingdom.

women were unable to negotiate an acceptable arrangement in terms of maintenance or custody (Jinnah, 2012).

Statistics and Trends

The exact numbers of Somalis in South Africa is not updated and reliable, and it is therefore difficult to quantify the movement of people and the trends in mobility. To address this, I relied on official figures from the UNHCR in Somalia and South Africa, press reports based on advocacy groups who monitor the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and information from Somali community leaders to estimate that there are between 40 000 and 55 000 Somalis in South Africa, of which roughly half are in Johannesburg.

Between 2000 and 2009, UNHCR cites an average annual increase of 615 people amongst the total number of Somali refugees in South Africa. This excludes 2008 when there was a decrease in the number of Somali refugees. The reason for the 2008 anomaly is unknown, although the xenophobic attacks in the country, which left more than 60 foreigners and South Africans dead and 100 000 displaced, could be one possible cause for low reporting or out migration. In 2003 and 2004 there appears to be a significant increase in the number of applications, although whether this reflects an increase in the actual number of applicants (due to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia), or an improved bureaucracy on record keeping is unclear. The UNHCR (2012b) stated that there were 21 300 Somali refugees in South Africa in January 2012. The Somali Community Board of South Africa (SCoB) estimates that this is an undercount and estimate that there between 45 000 and 60 000 Somalis in South Africa including about 2 971 Somali owned businesses. The latter figure is based on the number of SCoB members. There are a small number of Somali students registered at tertiary education facilities (less than 1000 in total at four major universities in South Africa)⁴⁶.

4.3. Routes to South Africa

The main themes of the migratory routes to South Africa for the respondents (with the exception of the voluntary economic migrants) are as follows:

- Only a few Somalis came directly to South Africa, and in all instances people travelled via a second, third, or fourth country. However the conditions under which people travelled differed, depending on their documentation and the resources they had available.
- Most respondents had saved some money, which they used to pay for their journey and to bribe officials to enter the country. At the same time, many respondents stayed en

⁴⁶ The four major universities in South Africa are: the University of South Africa (UNISA), University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of Cape Town.

route, usually in Kenya, to raise additional money either through working, doing petty trade or relying on relatives. Respondents surveyed in the African Cities Survey also indicated that they were likely to work or stay in countries laying en route to South Africa.

- In almost all instances the journey was long and outside the bounds of the legal system, which placed respondents in the risk of drowning, facing robbery, rape, arrest, detention and deportation.
- Most respondents did not have a visa to enter (and indeed did not need to) as they were refugees fleeing a war and were seeking asylum in a safe country. However they did not know the procedure of applying for asylum and therefore resorted to irregular, expensive and risky means to enter South Africa.

Approximately half of all Somalis (50,5 per cent) surveyed in the African Cities Survey stayed elsewhere en route to South Africa. This is significantly higher than migrants from the DRC (32,1 per cent), largely because Somalia is further from South Africa, making the journey longer and more expensive to complete in one direct trip.

With the exception of the voluntary economic migrants, two main routes to South Africa can be identified from this study, confirming the findings of the AC survey in which only 8,4 per cent of respondents stated that they had come to South Africa by air. The majority (79,6 per cent) travelled by land (on foot, 21 per cent, or by bus) or by a combination of land and sea (22,6 per cent). In order to understand the migratory routes to South Africa, it is necessary to first contextualise the journey. In most instances, the respondents are not talking about a single trip from place A (Somalia) to place B (South Africa) but rather are referring to a journey across several countries. A small number of respondents in the AC study cited that they worked while en route to South Africa (N=13). Of these, 53,8 per cent, stated that they had worked in Kenya. A smaller percentage (15,4 per cent) cited that they had worked in Zambia or Mozambique. These countries lay on the common land routes to South Africa from Somalia.

In the African Cities Survey, the majority of Somali respondents, 61,8 per cent, stated that they had entered South Africa through the Mozambican border crossing of Komatipoort. A further 17 per cent entered from Swaziland, which suggests that they also used the Mozambican passageway. Only a minority entered South Africa through its sea or air ports, 3,2 per cent and 4,8 per cent, respectively.

To begin, respondents would leave home and make their way to the Somali port city of Kismayo⁴⁷ or Mombasa, Kenya, to board a 'boat', most likely a make shift vessel, headed to either Beira or another port town in northern Mozambique. There, they would disembark and

⁴⁷ See the map in the appendices.

head south by land, toward the border between Mozambique and South Africa. They would then irregularly cross the border, entering South Africa to seek asylum. This journey generally takes between one to six months, although the average time is three months, provided that adequate money is available; the trip costs about 2 000 USD but the actual amount depends on the status of the various borders and the political climate at the time. The motivation for this method of entering South Africa is its minimal number of international borders that must be crossed in order to enter the country.

It is, though, a very risky and dangerous journey. Firstly, Mozambican authorities regularly patrol coastal areas for suspected undocumented immigrants and even raid boats. Those detained face arrest, detention, and, at times deportation. UNHCR also reports that some Somalis are held by Mozambican or Tanzanian authorities in inhumane conditions, which has led to the death of several Somalis. Secondly, the 'boat' is a makeshift structure with little or no safety equipment, designed this way to stay under the radar of naval authorities; the crew are not professionally trained; and the passenger limit on board is far in excess of the carrying capacity of the structure. There is little food, water or protection on board and passengers are overcrowded. As one respondent said, *"people die every day, we know this but it's the only way out"* (Reem, interview, September 2011).

Most respondents were reluctant to discuss the conditions on board the boat in more detail, saying only that it was a means to an end. Once in South Africa, they would make their way to Johannesburg, where they knew many Somalis lived. Despite the harrowing nature of the journey, many Somalis consider themselves lucky to have reached their destination. Although there has been no scholarship on the sea passage from Somalia to Southern Africa, news reports, UNHCR reports, and statements by advocacy groups document some of the conditions onboard boats that carry Somali immigrants across the Red or Mediterranean seas to the Gulf or Europe. Recently some reports also pointed to the risk of deportation, detention and death which many migrants face in their quest to reach South Africa via Mozambique (UNHCR, 2012c). The following news article excerpt illustrates this point:

From IRIN: Near the coastal town of Mtwara, Tanzania's border with Mozambique is marked only by the River Ruvuma which is wide and relatively shallow at this point just before it drains into the Indian Ocean. Young men loiter in small, wooden boats checking their cell phones and waiting for passengers to ferry across to the other side, but business has been slow in the last two months since groups of migrants desperate to complete a journey that began thousands of kilometres to the north stopped arriving at the river's banks.

“For the last two or three months we haven’t had big movements like we had between February and April,” said Henry Chacha, an immigration officer from the nearby Kilambo border post. “For the last two or three weeks, we haven’t had any migrants.”

At the height of the activity around Mtwara in early 2011, the migrants-most of them from Ethiopia and Somalia-typically arrived in groups of 100 or more on boats operated by smugglers, usually from the Kenyan port city of Mombasa.

According to one Somali migrant who made the trip, the groups were dropped off near Mtwara, and then found their way to the river delta where they paid the waiting fishermen in money or goods for passage to the other side. From there, they trekked through thick forest for several days before crossing into Mozambique and arriving at Palma, a small coastal town where the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the government’s National Institute for Refugee Assistance (INAR) had set up an informal camp behind the local police station to cater for the migrants’ basic needs before transporting them to Maratane refugee camp in Nampula Province.

For most, Maratane was merely a place to rest, regroup and make contact with their smugglers’ agents who would help them reach their final destination: South Africa-the only country in the region where asylum-seekers and refugees have freedom of movement and the right to work and run businesses rather than being confined to camps.

Most of those interviewed at Mtwara prison told similar stories of weeks at sea on overloaded boats that either dropped them off in Mtwara or took them all the way to the north coast of Mozambique. From there they were picked up by police but instead of being transferred to Maratane, they were robbed of their possessions, beaten and then dumped next to (or in) the River Ruvuma.

One young Somali woman recounted a harrowing month-long journey from Mombasa to Mozambique on rough seas. At one point the crew of the boat she was travelling on forced three of her fellow passengers off the over-loaded vessel and into the sea where they were left to drown. When they finally reached Mozambique, the migrants were greeted by locals who “took all they had”.

“A white man came and put us in a mini-bus and took us to another place near a police station,” she continued. “He told the police to take us to the refugee camp but after he left, they beat us and fired bullets over our heads,” she said, crying and showing a badly swollen leg that had not healed two months after one of the policemen struck it with the barrel of his gun. (IRIN, September 19, 2011)

A second and more common route to South Africa is by land only. In this instance, the respondents would leave Somalia and often go to Kenya, where they would stay with relatives for a while. Some used this time to earn money through petty trading, which helped them pay for their journey onward. From Kenya, many moved onto Tanzania or Uganda, Zambia and then either Mozambique or Zimbabwe before arriving in South Africa. In all instances the journey is paid for through an agent or smuggler. A common way of travelling is in groups via a Kenyan or Somali based agent who will facilitate the trip to and entry into South Africa. This type of journey can cost between 2 000 to 4 000 USD. One of the advantages of this method is that a person does not have to travel across unknown territory alone. This is particularly beneficial for women who are at greater risk of gender based persecution and violence, as it offers a safe and convenient way for women to travel. Although probably not intended as such, the formation of this group travel represents a new type of network and resource for women to travel without family. Some respondents mentioned that they forged friendships with other women on these journeys, which, in some cases, resulted in them helping each other in South Africa through sharing accommodation.

My younger sister and I left Somalia and went to Tanzania, we stayed there for a while and then came in a group to South Africa, at the Mozambican border we paid money to a smuggler to help us cross the border. The smuggler gave the money to a South African woman. Once we crossed she took us to a house and locked us in. She took all our money and jewellery. Somehow we got to Johannesburg, first we arrived in Hillbrow and then to Jeppe⁴⁸, we met some Ethiopians who took us to Mayfair. It was 2002 and I was 20 years old but my life was starting again. I heard that in South Africa there are no camps that you can live free and safe (Hawriya, interview, March 4, 2011).

Many respondents stated they had obtained assistance along the way in the form of food, shelter, or cash from strangers. At times going to a local mosque in transit facilitated this assistance, adding to the often unknown role of religious networks and resources in migrants' journeys.

Most of the respondents of this study (n=53) left home alone or with their children. Very few (n=7), travelled with family or friends from home. This echoes the pattern emerging from the African Cities Survey (see table below) in which more than two thirds of Somalis left home without a household member. There appears to be no significant gendered difference in this response.

⁴⁸ Jeppe is a suburb on the eastern fringes of the Johannesburg CBD, with a large Ethiopian and Eritrean presence.

Left with Household member	Respondents sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	41	17	58
No	101	27	128
Total	142	44	186

Table 3: Left with household member

Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

4.4. Trafficking

Aside from those Somalis who came to South Africa in the first wave of migration, and a few who hold passports from third countries, the majority of Somalis used traffickers to help facilitate their journey to, and at times entry into South Africa.

The traffickers are based in Kenya, Somalia and other countries that lay on the land passage between Somalia and South Africa. One respondent described this as follows:

If you want to go somewhere, you need money. If you have a lot of money, like more than 10 000 USD, then you can go anywhere *[by this she means the US or Europe]*, but if you have small money like less than 5 000 USD than you can come to South Africa. You pay the money to these guys *[the agents]* and they will fix everything to get you to South Africa. You will hear when you are travelling, you have just to keep waiting everyday. At any time they can tell you “we are going tomorrow” so you have to keep your suitcases packed and you can’t leave Nairobi. Then once they are ready you take your things and you meet at the bus station. There you see the agent and you see other people who are also going to travel. No one wants to speak then because everyone is afraid that something will go wrong or that there is a spy *[from the police or immigration]*. You just look down and do as you are told. You don’t ask questions. When we leave Nairobi we go south, down to the border and cross into Tanzania, but I know some people come through the DRC. It all depends on how the borders are. We keep changing buses and taxis. Sometimes we sleep in the bus sometimes we stop by the side of the road and people sleep outside. We don’t even take the main roads, we follow the dust, we go through the mountains. If you were to ask me how I came, I will say I don’t know *[the route]*. Once you are here in South Africa, you are on your own. *[By this she means that the trafficker does not provide a means to enter into and regularise ones*

stay in South Africa, they merely facilitate the passageway to the country's border or to just inside the South African border.]

A lot can go wrong though. The success of the traffickers depends on the corruptibility of border officials, the safety of questionable transport means, and the absence of criminal gangs preying on borders. The traffickers do not accompany the groups themselves; instead a series of middlemen are encountered who are responsible for various small tasks, which together create a passageway snaking south from Somalia. The middlemen are often Somali (although a few instances of locals are also reported) and their tasks include securing private or public transport, bribing border and police officials to let the group pass by or not to search the group for documentation. However, if something goes wrong, the middlemen step aside and the individuals face the risk themselves.

The role of trafficking must be understood within the context of the prevailing immigration policies in South Africa and its neighbouring countries, and the expectations and knowledge base of people who want to leave Somalia. On the one hand, the protection offered by, and the progressive nature of South Africa's Refugee Act and its Constitution, is not matched by its actual immigration practices on the ground at the national border. At the same time, Somalis' expectations and experiences of gaining official entry into South Africa as asylum seekers are not positive. Drawing on two decades of irregular, informal systems of law, order, and information at home, there is a tendency to expect better outcomes of successful entry into South Africa by using informal systems based on personal experience and knowledge rather than through formal legal or policy frameworks. On the other hand, when Somalis have tried to use formal processes to enter South Africa, they have faced detention, deportation, and instances of corruption.

Section II: (Forced) Migration from Somalia

4.5. Why leave?

There are three often overlooked facts of the war and displacement in Somalia: firstly, the majority of Somalis have not left the country but rather have been internally displaced, as the following table shows. Secondly, the northern part of Somalia, or Somaliland as it is called, has remained largely unaffected by the conflict and is relatively peaceful. All the respondents of this study and indeed much of the global Somali Diaspora originate from the south. Here too though, there are important gender, ethnic, class and legal status differences, which

cumulatively influence if, where, and how a person migrates. The diversification of Somali migrants in South Africa has often been overlooked in academic and public discourses.⁴⁹

Type	Number	Percentage
Internally Displaced	1,463,780	65
Refugees	770 154	34
Asylum Seekers	22 839	1
Total	2 256 773	100

Table 4: Originating from Somalia

Source: UNHCR

The war in Southern Somalia has been relentless since 1990⁵⁰ and has resulted in: many homes and lives being destroyed; widespread violence; and a breakdown in law and order, which has generally forced people to flee their homes⁵¹ and has affected their lives and livelihoods⁵².

The figure below illustrates the main reasons why the respondents of this study (total n=60) left Somalia and shows that the majority (33) were forced to flee after a member of their immediate family were killed in, or as a result of, the conflict.

⁵⁰ See chapter 1 for more detail on the conditions in Somalia.

⁵¹ UNHCR estimates that 1 463 780 people have been internally displaced in Somalia by the conflict since 1990. A further 770 154 are classified as refugees originating from that country and 22 839 are asylum seekers.

⁵² Syed Barre, the leader of Somalia for over two decades was overthrown in 1990. Following the collapse of his regime, the country plunged into ethnic turmoil with warlords competing for power. In the last 20 years Somalia has become what is referred to as “a failed State” with no central authority, governance or law structures, and little economic development. The general state of living for ordinary people has deteriorated (Lewis, 1996).

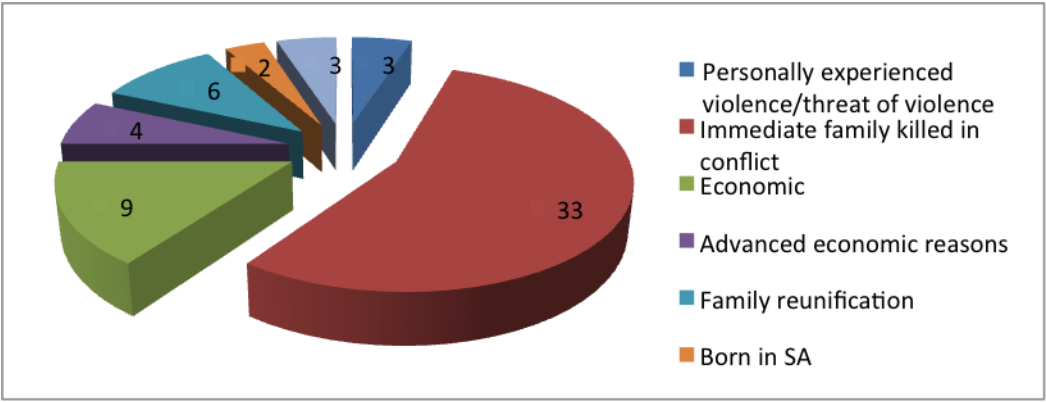


Figure 3: Respondents’ main reason for leaving (N=60)

Reflections on gender during times of war

Generally, war and the politics and players of war have been constructed in masculine terms and frameworks, which place men at the centre of play in war and women at the periphery of the state of war where they are largely impacted by it but do not play an active role in it. This is one of the reasons that women are conceptualised as ‘vulnerable’ in studies of conflict and violence and even media reports on war. Although feminist writers challenge this assumption theoretically, there remain a limited number of empirical studies that position women in a post-modern feminist framework. The figure below shows that there is no apparent marked difference in why men and women left Somalia. This is not to suggest that there is no gendered difference in peoples’ experiences and outcomes of war. Rather, that is precisely the case, and I will illustrate these differences in detail later in the chapter and elsewhere in this dissertation. At this stage I merely want to point out that findings from this study suggests that women are likely to play an active role in war situations and be directly affected as persons in their own rights, rather than be partners to men only.

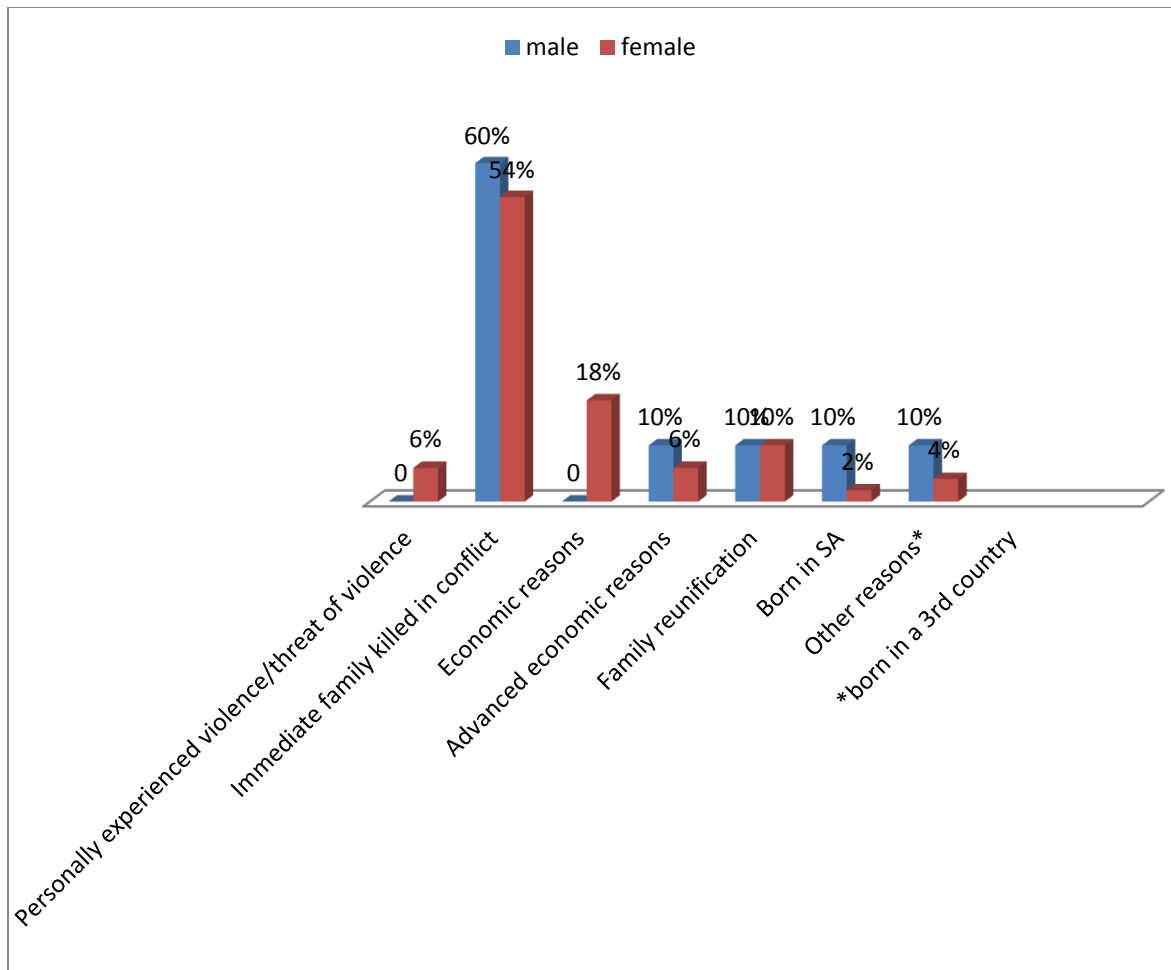


Figure 4: Main reason for leaving by gender

In this study there is no apparent gendered difference in terms of why men and women left home.⁵³ In the African Cities Survey (displayed in **Table 5** hereunder), men are listed as more likely to leave for both economic reasons and to flee war, while the majority of women cite war as the primary reason for leaving home. This highlights the key aspect of women’s political lives and identity and is often neglected in displacement literature, which casts men as actors of war and women as victims. The following excerpt from an interview with a woman emphasises this, “It was not safe anymore, there were killings every day. Often I had to hide in the bush to avoid being killed” (Somali woman in Mayfair, interview, February 2, 2011).

In my study, a few women identified themselves as political actors, whether as a result of their work, their families’ work, or their tribal or political affiliations. Interestingly, more men than women came to Johannesburg to join their families, as illustrated in the table below. This

⁵³ Although it appears that more women left because of economic reasons, the sample size is only an indication of Somali women’s experiences.

cautions against the tendency to see female migration in one-dimensional terms where women are more likely to be companions of men.

Respondent's gender	Male	Female	Total
Economic reasons	37	8	45
To be resettled or to get to a 3rd country	7	8	15
Political freedom	3	3	6
Religious freedom	1	0	1
Escape tribal/ethnic persecution	2	4	6
Escape war/conflict	81	13	94
Educational opportunities	5	0	5
Reunite with family	3	0	3
Other	0	2	2
Total	139	38	7

Table 5: Main reason for leaving, by gender

Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

Left home with other household member	Per cent
Yes	31,20%
No	68,80%
Total Count=N	186

Table 6: Left home with other household member

Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

As can be seen from the aforementioned tables and figures, Somalis in South Africa have left home in the last two decades due to the war, to find economic opportunities and, to a lesser extent, to seek resettlement in a third country or be reunited with family.

However, the degree to which the political and economic situation in Somalia affected the lives of the respondents and influenced their decision to leave varies. In the next section I discuss these differences in more detail, ranging from minor, average, and major reasons as push

factors to economic reasons and family reunification as motivation to come to South Africa. First though I briefly turn to a profile of Somali life before migration.

4.5.1. Pre-migration household

The majority of the respondents of this study come from southern Somalia, from the capital city of Mogadishu or other southern and central towns. A few are from Kenya and two were born in other Southern African countries, although they are Somali in origin.

The table below illustrates that the majority of Somali respondents in the African Cities Survey (ACS), originate from a town or city, with less than 9 per cent of respondents stating that they are from a rural base. Congolese migrants show a similar trend. Mozambicans have the highest percentage of rural origin migrants in that survey. This finding is significant when considered alongside previous analysis of vulnerability studies in Johannesburg, which showed that people from cities are less vulnerable than those from rural areas, and that those living in the inner city in Johannesburg are better off than those living in townships (FMSP, 2008). The table below shows that the majority of Somalis (more than 90 per cent) are from a city or town in Somalia, rather than from a rural area. The ACS also shows that an overwhelming majority of Somalis live in a suburb close to Johannesburg (Mayfair or Fordsburg) rather than in an outlying township.

Upbringing Settlement Type		Country of Birth		
		DRC	Mozambique	Somalia
Did not know	Per	0,40%		
City	Per	69,00%	74,10%	41,90%
Town	Per	25,00%	9,00%	49,50%
Rural Area	Per	5,60%	16,90%	8,60%
Total=N	CT	252	201	186

Table 7: Place of origin in home country

Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

The respondents of this study, and those in the African Cities Survey (illustrated below), indicate that the Somali household before migration is a relatively large one. On average more than half the households comprise between six and ten people. My respondents stated that members would include three or more generations, and aunts, uncles and cousins.

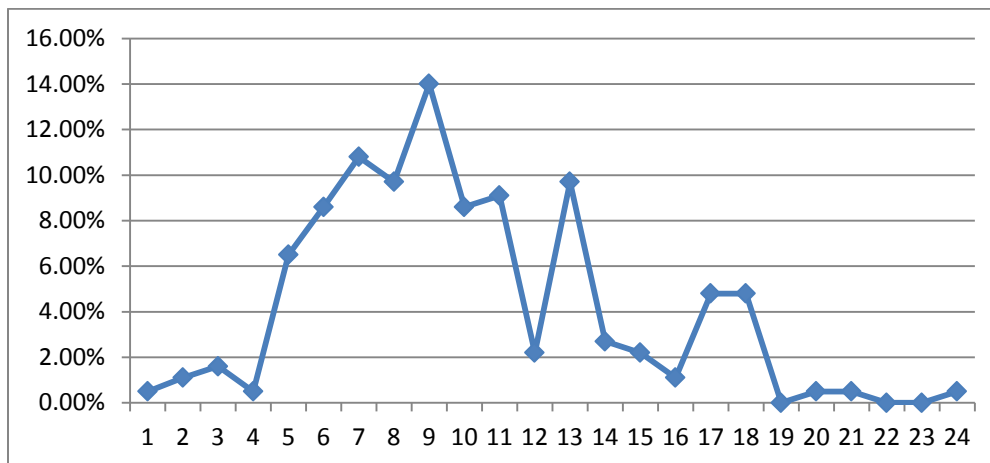


Figure 5: Number of people in pre-migration households

Source: African Cities Survey

The size of the average household in Somalia is quite large, as shown in Figure 5 above. Fourteen per cent of respondents stated that there were eight members in the household at home while more than two thirds of respondents said that the household comprises seven or more members. This survey used a traditional definition of household⁵⁴.

The qualitative data from the respondents of my study sheds more light on the size and composition of the household. Firstly, as introduced in chapter 2 many respondents identified a transnational, geographically split, extended family household, consisting of siblings, offspring (both young and adult), parents, and even spouses. The main criterion for inclusion in a household is emotional and financial obligation and ties to the household members rather than any physical presence in a certain house, or indeed close kin relationships. This departs from the traditional definition of household used in the African Cities Survey, due to the self-identification of geographically-split households identified by respondents in the qualitative study. Thus, a brother who has his own family and is living in Norway, for example, will still be considered a household member if he remits regularly and remains in contact with the household of origin. Indeed he will have more claim to the household and its decision-making than, for example, a husband who has left the household and maintains no financial or emotional ties to it, even if the couple remains married or estranged.

The following notes from interviews illustrate this point:

Leila is married to her third husband who lives with her. She has adult children, from another marriage who stay in America with her mother. At all our interviews Leila tells

⁵⁴ This counts the number of people who actually live in the house for most of the time.

me about these members of her family, she speaks about her children's work, her mother's health, their day to day lives and is more connected to these members of her family than to her husband who, although he lives with her, does not contribute to the finances of the household and is at times physically abusive to her. In her mind Leila is part of the household and family which are in America.

Secondly, tribal affiliations create ties of membership, and therefore obligations for financial support to households that remain in place if couples separate or get divorced. Nasrin's story is a good illustration of this:

After getting divorced, her husband refused to pay any maintenance to her and their child. Members of her clan though intervened and approached members of her ex-husbands clan who then stepped in and offered her financial support and found her work with another Somali businessman. She now has regular contact with them, and Nasrin thus considers certain members of her ex-husband's family as part of her household, even though she has no kinship ties to them and does not live with any of them. In her case economic ties are sufficient to warrant inclusion in a household.

Lastly, new types of 'households' are being built in the Diaspora that transcend kin and tribal lines, and are both based on practical arrangements, such as sharing resources, and also borne out of a need to provide a sense of support and belonging for, particularly, single, female migrants.

Widad is a single young woman who rents a room in a house in Mayfair. There are between 4-6 other Somalis who also live in the house and they share a bathroom and kitchen. She is very close to one woman, Mariam, who is from a different clan. Mariam is a single working mother, and they share food, and watch movies together at night. During the day, Widad often looks after Mariam's young child if she has the time.

Later though, Widad is forced to move out of her room and finds a place in another Somali house. Here she is clearly disconnected to the members of the house she lives with. She knows only their names and has a vague idea of who they are and what they do. They rarely feature in any of our conversations over the next few months. Although she has strong emotional and financial ties to her family in Somalia who naturally she considers part of her household, she also has strong social, and at times financial ties to other Somalis in Mayfair, like Mariam. She often eats with them, stays long into the night in their company, and even borrows money from them when needed.

These ties are not based on kin or even tribal relationships but are instead formed through a growing sense of friendship and belonging forged by single women across tribal lines in a

patriarchal, and tribe-centric society in Mayfair. These cases are examples of Lutz’s theory and are similar to the female led and owned spaces amongst Somalis existing in Egypt.

Economic status in pre-migration household

The table below shows that roughly half of the Somalis surveyed in the African Cities Survey were either professionals or self-employed at home, a finding shared with Congolese migrants. A further 22,9 per cent were not employed in Somalia; this is the highest figure amongst all migrants’ surveyed, although internal migrants reported the highest unemployment before migrating.

Type of income generating activity	Country of Birth						Total
	DRC	Mozambique	Somalia	Other Non-South Africans	South Africa	Non-South Africans Total	
DK/RA	2,10%	16,40%	0,60%	7,10%	4,90%	6,30%	5,90%
Agricultural Labour		6,30%	1,10%		1,20%	2,30%	2,10%
Construction		1,60%	0,60%		3,10%	0,70%	1,20%
Doctor (Medical)	0,9,0%	2,10%				1,00%	0,80%
Domestic Worker/ Caretaker		0,50%		7,10%	6,80%	0,20%	1,70%
Driver	2,10%	0,50%	5,70%			2,60%	2,10%
Factory/ Sweat Shop Worker	1,70%	2,10%			6,20%	1,30%	2,30%
Hawker (no fixed location)		0,50%	1,10%		1,90%	0,50%	0,80%
Housewife/ Homemaker		6,90%	2,30%	7,10%	0,60%	2,80%	2,50%
Journalist/ Media Professional	1,30%					0,50%	0,40%
Lawyer	2,60%	1,10%				1,30%	1,00%
Mechanic	3,90%	10,10%	2,30%	14,30%	1,90%	5,30%	4,80%
Missionary/ Religious Work	2,10%	0,50%	0,60%			1,20%	0,90%
NGO	0,40%		1,10%			0,50%	0,40%
Other Professional	30,50%	21,70%	17,60%	35,70%	16,70 %	24,10%	22,60 %

Own Business/ Business Person	22,30%	3,20%	23,90%	14,30%	3,10%	16,70%	13,80 %
Petty Trading (fixed location)	5,60%	2,60%	0,60%		1,20%	3,10%	2,70%
Primary/ Secondary School Student	0,40%	9,00%				3,00%	2,30%
Shoe Repair	0,40%		0,60%			0,30%	0,30%
Security Guard	0,40%		1,70%		1,90%	0,70%	0,90%
Small Scale Farmer		0,50%	1,70%			0,70%	0,50%
Restaurant Employee	1,30%	2,10%			1,20%	1,20%	1,20%
Teacher	2,10%	3,20%	9,70%		0,60%	4,60%	3,70%
Tertiary Student	6,90%	7,90%			0,60%	5,10%	4,10%
Didn't work			0,60%		0,60%	0,20%	0,30%
Does Not Work	12,40%	1,10%	22,70%	14,30%	45,10 %	12,10%	18,90 %
Other	0,40%		5,70%		2,50%	1,80%	1,90%
Total=N	233	189	176	14	162	605	774

Table 8: Income generating activity before migrating to RSA/Johannesburg

Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

4.5.1.1. Minor reasons- decided to move to avoid the potential for conflict or find a better life elsewhere

The majority of the respondents in this study were either personally affected by the conflict in Somalia or left for economic reasons, demonstrating the subjective reality of the indifference threshold approach. However, a few respondents spoke about how they, or others they knew, considered leaving Somalia to avoid the deteriorating political and economic situation. In particular, this type of condition creates the sense of *buufis*, discussed in chapter 3, which refers to a desire to experience a better life abroad. This is echoed in the following statement by a key community leader: “South Africa had economic potential. We saw that and it made sense to come here when the civil war started at home, to continue living a decent life” SCOB representative, interview, February 24, 2010).

Initially very few Somalis left home for minor reasons. However, in the third and fourth waves of migration, as the war in Somali protracted and became a normal part of life, people started looking for opportunities to improve their lives. Initially, most people fled to Kenya and were housed either in the numerous refugee camps in that country or with relatives. As these camps swelled in size, conditions deteriorated, and people began looking at alternate destinations as a way to both avoid the war at home and find opportunities for work and study abroad. One

respondent laughed when I asked her about the camps in Kenya, “Nobody goes there, there is no life”, she said, finding it strange that I would even think that this was a possibility. Yet the refugee camps remain full, and provide the only opportunity for many Somalis who are desperate and forced to leave home.

According to UNHCR roughly half (385 000) of the total number (770 154) of refugees originating from Somalia are in Kenya. A significant amount has been written about life for Somalis in the refugee camps (Horst, 2006) although less is known about life outside the camps in Kenya. To live outside the camps means to live undocumented, without access to any humanitarian aid, or educational or work opportunities. It is this condition of being stuck, invisible and helpless, which many respondents refer to when discussing both life in Kenya and reasons for coming to South Africa. Because of the risks and restraints of living without documentation, most Somalis who escape or avoid the camps live with relatives in Kenya. Conditions are dire and overcrowding is often reported. “To live with relatives is not nice, you stay the whole day, in a small room doing nothing, just waiting for news from family in the West to hear that you can go there” (interview, April 15, 2011), said one respondent. For other respondents it was a time save money by to working, although irregularly, with the risk of arrest and detention lurking constantly. Many respondents did petty trade, worked with family, or found odd jobs while in Kenya which allowed them to pay for their journey onward. This was often supplemented by remittances received from family who were resettled in Europe or North America. Later, once they were in South Africa these respondents would send money to other relatives who arrived in Kenya seeking to make the same journey as they had. This cycle of reciprocal obligation allows for successive waves of migration to occur, even when revenue and official means to leave are constrained.

Thus the conditions in Kenya provide context for understanding why Somalis moved out of their traditional migratory routes, and made the journey to South Africa. It is an important finding within the paradigm of the trajectory and locational approach; as a destination, South Africa offered promise despite the trying and costly journey to get there and in light of the limitations of Kenya as an alternative.

4.5.1.2. Average reasons-indirect conflict or threat of conflict

A few respondents experienced some threat to their lives or livelihood or to the safety of their families and decided to leave Somalia. In most instances this was coupled with another push factor such as the loss of livelihoods, desire to study or work, or to have a better quality of life.

It is not possible to simplify the decision to leave home to a specific incident. Here, migration is seen as a gradual process whose idea was always present but grew over time as circumstances

within Somalia deteriorated; this approach is a lens to better understand the indifference threshold approach, which examines how and when a person decides to move.

4.5.1.3. Major reasons – direct conflict experienced

The majority of respondents left Somalia as a result of direct violence, intimidation, or threats to their lives or livelihoods and/or their immediate family. In particular, many widowed women left home after their husbands were killed either as a way to avoid being married to someone else in the clan⁵⁵ or to keep their children and assets that would otherwise form part of their late husband's family's estate. As one woman says, "In Somalia, life was acceptable, my family had their own house and car, and we were well-off. In the war, my husband and 5 of my children were killed. I left Somalia by boat arriving in Mozambique before crossing to South Africa" (respondent interview, January 9, 2010). Another woman explains, "My father was killed in front of me, in December 1997, so in January 1998, I left Kismayo and took a boat to come here. I had to leave the war" (Mona, interview in Mayfair, March 1, 2011).

Another respondent recounts her story as follows:

I am from Mogadishu and life was good there, I was living with my brothers in our own house. We built it ourselves with our own hands. I never thought of being homeless. In Somalia there is no threat of eviction, as we found here [*in Johannesburg*]⁵⁶. In Somalia even if there is no food, you still feel ok, because it is your own country. Then the war started, there was fighting and killing every day. My mother was killed, 2 of my brothers was killed. I left Mogadishu with my 2 daughters and we went to Kismayo. From there we took a boat to Mozambique (respondents, interviews, March 10, 11, 13, 2011).

Another respondent also talked about the loss of a comfortable life in Somalia due to the war:

We had our own house, our own car. We had a good life. Then my husband was killed and we lost everything. I had 5 children and I took them with me to Kismayo. We took a boat to Mozambique. People I didn't even know helped me to come here. We came to South Africa because we thought she was our friend. Our president Barre visited Mandela (respondent, interview, January 9, 2010).

Another woman, talked about the violence being rooted in ethnic differences, "I am in South Africa for 14 years, I left because the ethnic differences of the different communities, that were

⁵⁵ This is a common practice in parts of Somalia, where a widowed woman is married to her late husband's brother, or other close family, in order to maintain the lineage and assets of the children. Although women appear to be most disadvantaged, men also feel coerced into these types of marriages. I discuss the impact of such a practice for a male respondent of this study in chapter 6.

⁵⁶ She is referring to eviction by landlords due to non payment of rent.

destroying us in Somalia” (respondent, interview, January 9, 2010). This points again to personal subjective choices that people made.

Although violence became a norm in parts of Somalia over the last two decades, the threat of Al-Shabab, the Islamist party, contributed immensely to the general feeling of fear and lack of freedom in parts of the country.

As one respondent stated, “My colleagues were assassinated because of the work that we do⁵⁷. I knew that I was next. I had to go” (Nor, interview).

For other respondents, their ties to the regime of Barre placed them in a vulnerable position as their immediate family were attacked or killed by rebel forces. As another respondent recounted, “My husband was killed, he was an ambassador, after Barre went they came for him. I had to take my children and leave.” A third woman said:

I remember when the war started, it was two days after Christmas, 27 December 1990. It was very bad. We heard there was fighting and went to see it, *[laughs, imagining her naivety]* we heard it was a civil war. The next day, everyone had guns. We ran away to another city 90 km away from the capital, where people from our tribe lived. We felt safe there for a while. But my brother was a soldier and had been a driver to the Somali ambassador in a country in the West. So we left in July 1993 to go to Ethiopia (Fatimo, interview, March 15, 2011).

However, some respondents had no political ties to the previous regime and posed no current threat to the competing warlords or their religious political agenda. As one woman said, “my family were farmers. My child and father were killed in Somalia, my mother had already died of malaria, there was no one to work, and I needed to leave the war. We sold the house and I took the money and came here. I wanted a better life” (Nisa, interview, March 15, 2011).

Thus, many of the respondents experienced brutal, direct violence, which affected them deeply as they felt unsafe to continue living in Somalia. The loss of a family member also threatened their physical and economic security, which forced them to flee. Many women were fearful for their children’s lives and, because of the responsibility of motherhood, they left home.

These reasons point to the multiple roles that Somali women have: mother, breadwinner, wife, political actor, daughter, and nurturer, and how these are used and targeted during conflict. It also points to the ways in which women used these roles to make decisions or how these roles forced them into circumstances over which they had little control.

⁵⁷ I cannot identify the nature of the work of this respondent as it may compromise the anonymity of this respondent and place him/her in potential risk.

4.5.1.4. Economic reasons

Although the political and economic situations in Somali are interlinked and cannot be separated, an arbitrary distinction between the two is made here for practical reasons. Thus two groups of respondents who came to South Africa primarily for economic reasons can be identified: a) voluntary economic migrants; and b) forced economic migrants. The first group includes a small number of respondents (0,5 per cent), who came to South Africa for what I call advancing established economic interests. Most of them were settled in a third country (though usually not an OECD country), either another Southern African state or a Gulf country, and were therefore not personally affected by the war or the decline in the economy in Somalia. Generally, this group were better educated and/or economically well-off, and crucially had a passport from a third country which facilitated a direct –usually by air and thereby easier–route into South Africa (Jinnah, 2010). Because of their documentation they could also move in and out of the country easily, which had distinct advantages in terms of their ability to trade because they could more easily and directly access global markets for goods, capital and resources. One respondent (male) who is the director of a multinational Somali company stated, “Our company made the decision to expand our business here. Coming here, getting a business permit and finding premises was easy, our company had the money to invest” (respondent, interview, April 2011).

The second group of forced economic migrants came here as a result of the lack of opportunities for livelihoods at home⁵⁸ as a result of the war in Somalia or in the country they were living in (usually Kenya or Ethiopia) They were less well-off than the first group and adopted more survivalist strategies than transnational business activities. This group generally came to South Africa from Somalia or from Kenya where they faced a bleak existence in refugee camps⁵⁹, or as undocumented migrants living off relatives. The women in this group generally left Somalia as a result of a household decision to migrate in order to expand the household income (see Fan in chapter 3). A distinguishing and significant feature of this group is the family’s recognition of women as potential and actual breadwinners within their families. Thus even in households which consisted of men and women (siblings for example), the family decided to either support or nominate the woman to leave home in search of better livelihood opportunities. This breaks an age-old and global practice, where women generally stay home, and men move (see chapter 3 for more discussion on this). A good example of this trend is Yasmin’s narrative, which appears below.

⁵⁸ Rather than as a result of violence.

⁵⁹ Refugees from Somalia are housed in one of two main refugee camps in Kenya: Dadaab or Alinjugur, where their movement, ability to study and/or work or trade is restricted. Many Somali cite this, in addition to the poor living conditions, as impetuses for leaving Kenya. South Africa with its no camp policy is an accessible and easy choice in the region.

Yasmin

Yasmin is a young, shy woman. When I met her, she was stooped over a pot on a low table in the kitchen. She was the cook in a Somali run temporary lodging establishment and her work involved preparing and serving meals to the (mostly male) sleepovers who frequent the place, and the many day workers around the area who came to eat Somali food for lunch or supper.

It was mid-morning when I came in, and she had already prepared breakfast (kidneys with peppers and onions with home baked bread) and lunch (pasta with meat). In order to do so, she started work early so that the bread dough could prove or rise. The kitchen is well used, and the cupboards are either broken or removed. Although, men walked in and out on their way from the bedrooms in the front to the taps and toilets in the back porch, Yasmin commanded a silent but significant presence in this room, Brushing her burka over her shoulders, she worked quickly and quietly, pausing only to take coffee and food to the “dining room”, an adjoining room set up with plastic tables and chairs. She gestured to a small pantry when we could sit and talk. I asked her about her life and why she left Somalia. She recounted her story:

I am 33 and have 2 daughters who are 9 and 6 years old. They are in Somalia. People are dying in Somalia every day because of the fighting. But our family were also dying, because we had no money. My brother is sickly so in July 2009, my parents had saved some money for me to leave Somalia to find work. It was my family’s decision and although I was scared to go, I am happy that it did. The money got finished at the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. To get to South Africa, the bus driver helped people without papers; he dropped us off at a place and told us to walk that way to avoid the police. There were 10 of us, 5 men and 5 women; we thought we would avoid getting raped like this. We walked through the river, we had no food. People got sick, but we made it. We were sitting by the road until we got a lift to Johannesburg, I knew nobody here. Some people in our group knew of Mayfair and we went there. Somalis helped me, they gave me food, a place to stay and eventually I got this job. I am happy now, *Alhamdulillah* (praise to God) I send money home and my family are able to live. Life is hard but we need to do what we can to survive. (Yasmin, interview, February 17, 2011)

Yasmin’s story is echoed by many other women I came across in Mayfair, all of whose stories raise a few interesting points. Firstly, Yasmin was divorced at home, and rather than getting remarried when the family faced economic problems, they decided that she should migrate to find work to support them. Secondly, she migrated alone without her children, relying on her extended family at home to take care of her kids. Thirdly, she was able to leverage social networks based on nationality to settle and find work in Johannesburg. She managed to break

into and enter male dominated social spaces and roles as a woman whilst maintaining her religious and ethnic identity, which is manifested by her dress, language and behaviour.

4.5.1.5. Family reunification

A small number of respondents (including 1 man)⁶⁰ came to South Africa to join their spouses in this country or to get married to someone here. With respect to the latter, they were told that they were getting married and did not know or meet their future spouse before leaving Somalia. This is a traditional practice in some parts of Somali society, and the women were therefore not particularly concerned about it. In some instances they were happy to leave Somalia, so the passage to South Africa via marriage represented the fulfilment of *buufis* to an extent. Most of these women came to the country by land or sea, travelling with a group of other Somalis whom they did not know. This method of entry is a common one. Once arriving in South Africa, though, their experiences differed considerably, which will be discussed in section II of this chapter. One woman described her experiences as follows:

I was married in 1994 and came to South Africa in 1998 to Cape Town to join my husband. I had 350 USD, and I joined a group of three men and one woman. We took a boat from Kismayo to Beira [*Northern Mozambique*]. From there we drove to Maputo and further [*south*] we crossed the fence to Swaziland. I had a small baby with me. In Swaziland the soldiers stopped us but they were very nice, they took us to a mosque nearby. There people gave us clothes, food and we bathed. We stayed three days there, but we had to go on. We reached the mountains. On the other side was South Africa. We gave money to a guy who showed us the road through the grass. We crossed the road and the police picked us up. We told them we wanted to apply for asylum. They were nice, maybe the money made them nice (she laughs) they gave us fruits and took us to a bus that brought us to Johannesburg. We went to the Somali mosque in Mayfair and they took some of us to apply for asylum. I took the train to Mitchells Plain, Cape Town⁶¹, to join my husband (respondent, interview, February 9-10, 2011).⁶²

Baraka's story further illustrates family reunification as a reason for coming to South Africa:

I came to South Africa to join my husband. In Somalia, I received many offers from my friends and relatives inviting me to join them in Scandinavia. I refused, because I was looking for love. When I found it, I was over the moon. My husband was wonderful, he had a few businesses in Johannesburg, and I came to live with him. He arranged

⁶⁰ See Jamal's case below.

⁶¹ There are an estimated 6-7 000 Somalis in Cape Town; some are in Belville, but many are also dispersed across the city and its townships.

⁶² Interview with Arifa 08-02-2011

everything for me to come. Life was beautiful. We had everything and we were in love. I used to stay at home, but I was happy, my husband gave me everything I needed. (Baraka, interview, September 15-18, 2011)

Jamal: “I always wanted to leave”

Jamal could not imagine a time when he did not want to leave Somalia. The first time I met him in downtown Mayfair in 2010, he was unhappy, sitting forlornly on a kerb outside a Somali coffee shop chewing *kat*. He said matter of factly, “I am in *buufis* and I was always in *buufis*.” It is easy to understand why he was in *buufis* in Somalia he had no job, no education, and no money. “There was nothing to live for,” he said. “People were killing each other around me and I was going mad.” Then an opportunity presented itself to him; his brother, who was living in a small city in South Africa, where he had ran a shop, was killed in a xenophobic related incident, leaving behind a wife and a young child. In line with tribal customs, Jamal was sent by his family to marry his widowed sister-in-law. “I was so happy, I only thought that I am (finally) leaving,” he says. “I didn’t consider what life I was coming to.” During the entire journey by sea from Kismayo to northern Mozambique in a makeshift vessel, and then on foot through the wilderness to enter South Africa, Jamal felt happy, “(I) felt I was in the air, nothing troubled me.” Once in South Africa though, he realised the extent of the fate he had been forced into: married to a woman he did not love, looking after a business he did not care for and that did not excite him, and stuck in a small city miles away from other Somalis. He found life stifling and wanted out. Challenging the wrath of his family, he divorced his wife, left the business and moved to Johannesburg. Now he sits all day chewing *kat*, jobless, almost penniless and still dreaming about a better life abroad.

4.6. Why South Africa?

If the reasons for leaving Somalia are obvious enough,⁶³ the rationale for coming to South Africa is less clear. South Africa has no colonial, political, cultural, or economic historical ties with Somalia,⁶⁴ and is not in close geographic proximity to the East African state. Indeed, most migrants to South Africa have come from the Southern African region, and most Somalis have gone to neighbouring East African countries or the Gulf region where religious ties or economic needs have attracted migrants. Yet it is precisely this idea of a new terrain, which offers hope to a people ravaged by war.

The following excerpts highlight some aspects of why people sought refuge in South Africa:

⁶³ The two-decade civil war, collapse of law and order and economic structure described elsewhere in this dissertation.

⁶⁴ Historically migrants tend to move within and to ex-colonial territories and powers – de Haas 2006, 2008, or to places where there is a shared cultural history or strong economic or political link *ibid*

During apartheid, we used to sing for South Africa [*in solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle*]. I was one of those who welcomed the South Africans in exile in Somalia. We thought South Africa would help us when it was our turn to suffer (respondent, interview, January 9, 2010).

More specifically, it was South Africa's booming, boisterous economy, which many other African countries lack; the new vibrant democracy, which is missing in the Gulf; and crucially the non-encampment policy in this country, which unlike other countries on the continent, does not restrict freedom of movement or trade: together these attract Somalis to South Africa.

As is the case in the United States, subsequent waves of Somalis continue to come to South Africa based on the strength of social networks, even when the aforementioned reasons turn out to be more mythical than practical, in order to join family here (Jinnah, 2010) or to try and use South Africa as a base for resettlement to the US or Europe. As one respondent said, "We heard that people from South Africa got resettled in the West. So many people also tried to come here for that."⁶⁵

Secondly, in the last 15 years the presence of social networks in the country fuelled subsequent waves of migration to South Africa. Social networks, even if they are weak or fragmented, provide initial encouragement and support to new migrants (Massey, 2005). This is evident in the statements of a few respondents, including this one who said, "My uncle helped me a lot, when I came here, I stayed with his family and he helped me to find work" (respondent, interview, June 15, 2011).

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has described the migration of Somalis from home to South Africa, discussing the reasons, routes and responses of their journey and settlement. Although important class differentiations do exist, the dominant reason for men and women to leave Somalia was to escape that country's war and conflict and its effect on the loss of livelihoods. Other reasons include family reunification, resettlement in a western country, and personal reasons to improve one's life. Somali outmigration has changed in its nature over the last five years: there is emerging evidence to suggest that more women are migrating in their own right, without male partners. A large number of the respondents of this study left Somalia without male family members; many of these women came with their young children in the hope of securing a peaceful and profitable existence in South Africa. In trying to do so, they have relied on irregular, long, and risky routes into South Africa. These include using makeshift boats, and traffickers. Once in South Africa, Somalis have opened small businesses and have turned to a

⁶⁵ Interview Mayfair, August 23, 2011.

shared religious identity to find work. This has spurred subsequent waves of Somali migration to South Africa.

The next chapter looks at settlement in Johannesburg by focussing on livelihoods and the opportunities and hazards associated with these; although migrants face considerable challenges in doing so, in Johannesburg they have also articulated niches for themselves where they can access socio-economic resources through the mobilisation of religious membership and social networks. I also examine the concept of 'integration' as a lens to explain the entry, movement and engagement of Somalis with local people and places in a purposeful manner to meet their social and economic needs.

Chapter 5: Trading places, shaping spaces: exploring the nature of Somali settlement and integration in Johannesburg

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the physical and social spaces in Mayfair that Somalis have created and transformed (shaping spaces) as a result of migrating to South Africa (trading physical places). The process of settlement is a long and non-linear one; success is dependent on a range of factors including the policies, attitudes, and opportunities in the host country, and the resources and efforts of migrants themselves. As argued in chapter 3, South Africa's attitudes and policies to non-nationals has not been a very welcoming one. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Somalis have managed to identify and mobilise other means of establishing lives and livelihoods in the country. I argue that by drawing on elements of fluidity, transnationalism, social networks and entrepreneurial spirit, which I conceptualised in chapter 3, Somalis have demonstrated distinct means of settlement in Johannesburg. To make this argument I develop two main premises in this chapter: first, that migrants have different ethnic, class and gendered experiences in the Diaspora, which shape their settlement strategies; and second, that Somalis have demonstrated a sense of agency by relying on formal and informal mechanisms to make and shape social and economic places, which enable them to develop lives and livelihoods in the Diaspora. This chapter is based on qualitative interviews with, and participant observation of Somalis and others in Mayfair, and is complemented by secondary data analysis from the African Cities Survey conducted by the Forced Migration Studies Programme in 2006.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: I begin by emphasising and describing the diversity of Somalis and argue that this influences their settlement arrangements in Mayfair. I then present a profile of Somalis in the city, describing household size and structure; explaining levels of education and skill; and discussing documentation and its outcomes. Finally, I offer and discuss a different conceptualisation of integration for this study: a process whereby Somalis have entered and engaged with local and other migrant groups in fluid but purposeful ways. Particular attention is paid to the differences that men and women experience within these processes, and the different institutional, structural, and cultural processes that affect gendered experiences.

5.2. Coming to Johannesburg

Somalis are comprised of different and diverse ethnic, clan and class backgrounds, and although in this dissertation I attempt to understand the broader Somali experience of migration and settlement to South Africa, I am also mindful of the complexities and differences amongst Somalis. This, I argue, paints an interesting but complex picture of migration, settlement and

meanings. Although this chapter presents findings that are most relevant to understanding Somali migration in a general sense, I try to keep the nuances and differences within this group as visible as possible.

In the African Cities Survey (2006), 63,2 per cent of Somalis' first contact in Johannesburg was with a member of their family or kin or their compatriots, and an overwhelming majority of Somalis (90,9 per cent) stayed in Mayfair or Fordsburg upon arrival in the city. This tendency of ethnic enclave settlement in Johannesburg is a common one amongst newer migrants to the city. The same survey showed that Congolese settle predominantly in Yeoville and Berea whilst South African internal migrants tend to be more scattered across the city. Notably, Somalis of all social backgrounds and legal statuses settle in Mayfair or Fordsburg. Gender and class differences do determine where people trade and temporarily settle, which I address in the next chapter.

5.2.1. Entering Mayfair

Mayfair is a difficult place to describe, as it has very different levels of texture and meaning. At first glance it is a common middle class, urban space marked by high traffic volumes, congestion, and general disarray. Within the context of this research though, I was able to peel off the outer facade of the place and find some of the hidden spaces –physically and metaphorically- within Mayfair.

Mayfair is a busy suburb with a high density of people. As a result, the streets are constantly busy, even at night, which is uncommon in parts of Johannesburg where public life is scant or tucked away inside air-conditioned malls in an ordered manner. In Mayfair, public life is large and seemingly unordered; the streets breathe out a sense of energy, of people living and working outside, in a strange connection with the street. The separation of people and space is hard to imagine: the streets are the heart of living for it is here that everyday life takes place. I was struck by the outward display of public life the first time I saw it (and indeed, whenever I returned): the energy created by the mass of people on the street buzzed off the tarmac. This constantly served as a reminder to me of how this area has been transformed in recent years. I say transformed because I remember this area twenty years ago when it was emerging from another type of ordered life, where race marked space. I remember the South African Indian traders and the slightly stately, detached suburban homes in these streets, which had small gardens (unlike those of Indians in Vredersdorp, another predominantly Indian suburb a few kilometres away where terraced houses stacked narrow streets). In Mayfair, the homes had quaint, pressed ceilings, red roofs, and elegant bay windows, and they were spacious. So much of the physical and social landscape of Mayfair has changed in the last two decades. The houses are neglected now: the pretty windows are cracked and dirty, and the small gardens are overgrown and strewn with garbage.

Mayfair is different things to different people. The Somalis call Mayfair, 'little Mogadishu', whilst South Africans refer to it vaguely as 'the Somalis' area' or 'where the Somalis are'. These descriptions are often uttered with an upturned nose, as if the area has an unpleasant smell. The more intolerant of the locals (those non Somalis still living in Mayfair) usually rush through the area on car or by foot, disturbed by the presence of foreigners in their midst and whom they blame for the decrease in the value of their properties. Other locals, particularly some Muslims, nod in approval when they see Somali women walking in their long *burkas*, or groups of men trotting off to one of the local mosques, muttering in whispered tones, with approving expressions, 'they are very religious'- this being their only concession to the Somalis who now call this part of their city their home. For other local South Africans, and other migrants, the Somali area is characterised by its diverse and cheap supply of goods, which can be consumed or resold.

There are distinct parts of Mayfair, and although these boundaries mostly do not exist physically, there are clear mental and social demarcations of space. To an outsider the area is a sprawl of Somalis: untidy, haphazard, even dirty. But there are different parts of this area, and different people interacting in different ways in these particular spaces. The following sections describes and analyses some of these.

Amal is a multi-national Somali-owned shopping centre, which and is probably a distinguishable landmark, due to its size and clear signage. This centre itself is distinct from other Somali public spaces in the area, which are more obscure. Inside Amal though, the socio-economic and gendered distinctiveness are subtler. A Somali businessman manages the shopping centre and he leases out space on three floors to a host of mainly Somali-owned and run small businesses. These businesses range from clothing retail and wholesale, stores, internet cafes, money exchanges, and a restaurant. On the ground floor in Amal, Somali businessmen hover in the parking lot and around the many entrances, gathering in little groups to discuss social, business, and community news. But it is the women in Amal who have the real sway on this level of the shopping centre. With methodical, clean movements they sweep the little shops they own or manage, stack shelves high with brightly coloured cloths, make mounts of pairs of leather sandals, stand behind glass counters piled with perfume bottles, and painstakingly count change for customers. They own this space, in spite of the men who gather around and peer in from time to time; they have marked this territory as their own, and they guard it fiercely with clear voices, a direct gaze, and a strong, if soft presence. They guard it because it is in here that these women carve out their livelihoods and stake their claims for economic independence.

If the ground floor of Amal is all about women and subtle claims for independence, the first floor is all about the raw power of men. It is here that the Somali Community Board (SCB) has its head offices, here that the larger more profitable wholesale companies are located, which

many of the women on the ground floor depend upon for supplies or jobs, and it is here that the owner of Amal has his office. And in it, is considerable power, for this is where shops are leased and women write down their names on the waiting list hoping to stake a claim for a shop, which they hope will improve their lives. Here, on this floor too, although in a separate wing, is the restaurant Kismayo, which has a strict unspoken 'men only' policy. My research assistant and I broke this policy a few times, and were met by stern glances. At times a more accommodating manager would try to veer us to a hidden corner of the restaurant. Mostly though we ignored the glances and would sit in the main area, although I remained aware of how social interaction is strictly governed in this public space. I was aware too of the irony of the single Somali woman working behind the counter who prepared the drinks to be served to a room full of men.

Surrounding Amal are various internet cafes and international calling booths. Young men own this turf based on a social order of fashion, and material goods. These men do not have the economic muscle of the men at Amal, indeed many of them do not work, but they have social power derived from their material possessions and street suaveness. It is here that men newly arrived from Somalia are drawn. Here they strut about in fake designer clothes and hang out, acting cool and knowledgeable, and passing social commentary on life in Mayfair, Somalia and beyond. After a short walk down the road and you are in Bertha⁶⁶, a small stretch of road where *meera* is sold. In this area, gender, class, ethnicity, race, religion, social and economic wealth all dissolve. This space is all about cravings and addiction and craziness. People come from as far as outside Gauteng to buy *meera*, and interestingly, some of the most popular sellers are women. This observation struck me as odd, especially when I saw that the sellers maintained the traditional Somali dress code for women, long dresses or skirts, no trousers, and covered heads. One seller even wore the face veil. Initially I thought that women were claiming new economic roles for themselves while still maintaining some social norms. Later, though, I learned that what I had seen was more complex than this, as is discussed in chapter 6.

Further on are a few lodgings and home restaurants, where weary men can take a break and rest for a few nights' sojourn in the city. It is here that newly arrived people can spend a few days to get on their feet, or where businessmen from smaller towns or other cities can set-up a base to replenish their merchandise while eating the Somali food that the cooks have made. The lodgings and restaurants constitute an important source of livelihood for the entrepreneurial Somali women who own and run them.

⁶⁶ Bertha is derived from the Somali word meaning 'farm' to indicate where *meera* is grown. *Meera*, also known as *kat*, a mildly narcotic plant

Then there are the religious sites: the Somali mosque and *madressas* (religious schools) where the elders and *shoyook*⁶⁷ reign. They are male dominated, much like other conservative Muslim parts of Mayfair. The religious leaders and elders have considerable social and political power in the community. Many of them serve as advisors on the boards of the various Somali community organisations in South Africa. They serve as intermediaries between Somalis and local religious institutions and community organisations, and act as custodians of the local Somali *madressas*. At times, they are consulted on and make decisions relating to social issues such as divorce, maintenance and custody. In this sense they are important gatekeepers of the area, and their presence is always felt. In many of my interviews some reference was made to the *shoyook*, although usually to express a sentiment that they do not do anything to protect women from absconding or abusive husbands.

In addition to the public spaces described above, there are also private spaces, such as houses and flats, some of which are nestled in the areas mentioned above, whilst others are set apart. Church Street, the busy road snaking through Mayfair from north to south, long served as a boundary between the commercial and residential areas in Mayfair. In the western part of Church Street, the more established residential area in Mayfair, Somalis have gradually settled and transformed the spaces with their large families or groups of individuals moving into the houses. Often, some part of the property is used for commercial purposes, such as welding or electrical repairs, much to the chagrin of the former Indian landowners and other South African residents who fear that this could devalue the property. It is in these private, personal spaces where I heard the multitudes of stories from women that intrigued me: stories of life in Somalia and South Africa, of work, marriage, security and belonging.

5.3. Social Networks

Aside from a few respondents, like Abdul, whose story appears below, the majority of Somalis in this study made their way to Johannesburg by road from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, or Swaziland, as discussed in chapter 4. For this discussion I differentiate between those who had existing social networks in the city and those who did not.

Abdul

Abdul is a smart-looking, well-dressed Somali businessman who came to South Africa from the United Arab Emirates. He obtained a visitor's visa from the South African embassy in Dubai and bought an airline ticket to Johannesburg. He did not know any Somalis prior to arriving, and his first contacts were with non-Somali potential business associates, landowners, and banks. Abdul is different from the other Somalis I met in two fundamental ways: he is a citizen of a

⁶⁷ This is an Arabic term for religious elders.

third country and thus has a more secure legal status; and he is affluent and financially stable, and his wealth and position allow him to obtain information on and secure arrangement relating to migration and on settlement directly from the relevant authorities or officials (Home Affairs or immigration lawyers, estate agents and banks) rather than relying on social networks or irregular channels. For Abdul, and the few skilled or wealthy migrants like him, South Africa represents a land of opportunity, which can be accessed through its formal laws and institutions. Yet social networks still play a part in Abdul's life. He first heard of opportunities in South Africa from Somalis in the UAE and still maintains transnational networks of trade, capital and information flow with businessmen and clan leaders in Kenya, Somalia, the Gulf and Canada.

Connected and networked

About half of the respondents in my study knew a family or clan member who was in South Africa at the time. The ties to this contact ranged from direct and strong (spouse) to indirect and weak (distant cousin or clan member). Strong networks tended to be the most useful in the initial stages of settlement. Aside from the tangible, material benefits that strong networks facilitated access to, such as housing and food, social networks also provided newly arrived Somalis with a sense of comfort and emotional support. Those who came to Johannesburg with social networks in place felt that they settled more easily than those who did not, as they were able to: find housing; know their way around the city using public transport; have a 'feel' for the city, such as which areas to avoid; know how to talk and behave and where to get things that are needed. This is a typical feature of social networks (Mitchell, 1974; Massey, 2008a).

Upon arrival in Johannesburg, the majority of Somalis in the African Cities Survey stayed with other Somalis whom they did not know. This is echoed in the findings of this research as well, as the stories of Hawriya and Yasmin indicated in chapter 4. An illustration of the social, legal, and economic differences I alluded to earlier is seen in the range of responses to this question: although 40,32 per cent indicated that they stayed with Somalis they did not know, 21,5 per cent stayed at a hotel, which would require them to have had money and at least some documentation, and 15,05 per cent stayed with Somali friends. This suggests that Somalis have differentiated economic resources, legal statuses, and reliance on social networks. These results are visually represented in **Figure 6**.

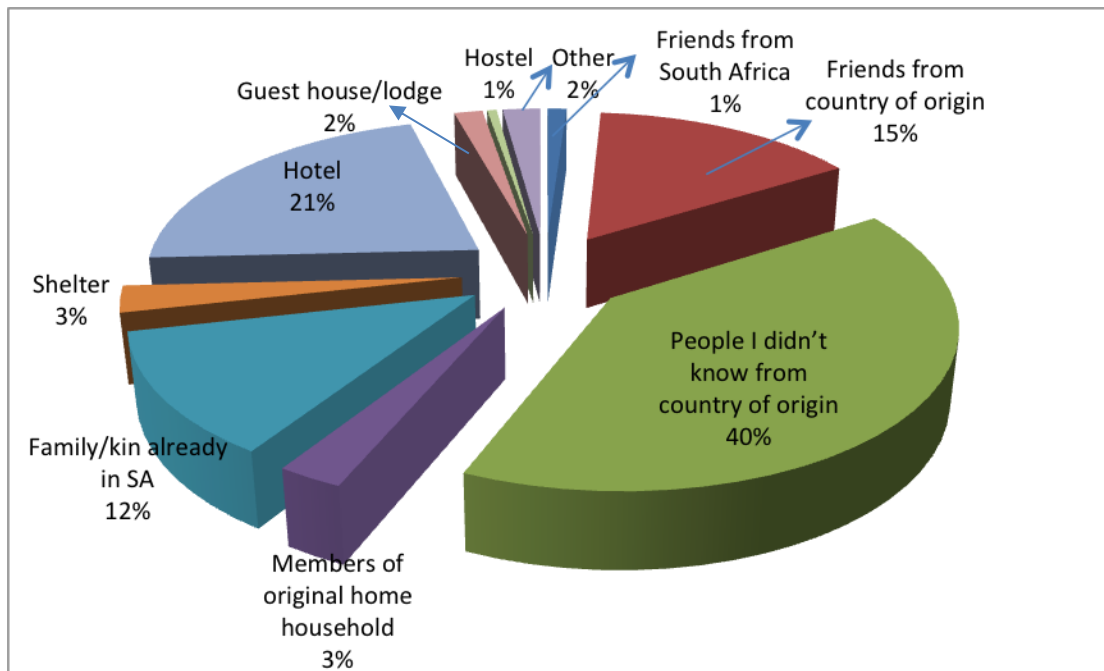


Figure 6: Graph of responses: Who did the respondent stay with during the first week in Johannesburg
 Source: African Cities Survey, 2006

Somalis without social networks?

Many Somalis, especially those who came to South Africa after 2000, did not know anyone in Johannesburg upon arrival. They relied on a combination of luck, common sense, and a sense of nationalism to find and make their way in Mayfair, as is shown in the following excerpts from interviews with a group of four Somalis (February 17, 2011):

I came to Johannesburg and was walking around in Hillbrow, when someone told me I must go to Mayfair.

I was in Melville, and I asked 'where can I find Somalis?' So I was sent to Mayfair. Once I got there, people told me where my tribe is and I found a temporary lodging to stay in.

I ended up in Jeppe, where I met Ethiopians; they told me to go to Mayfair because the Somalis are all there.

I didn't know anyone in South Africa. I came to Mayfair and asked some Somalis for help. They gave me a place to stay and helped me to find work.

When I probed the respondents on why they made their way to Mayfair and not to the UNHCR or any other NGO's upon arrival, I was met by chuckles of disbelief. There is a sense that being

amongst Somalis, even if they are strangers, is better than going to formal institutions for help. At the latter they spend days queuing to register themselves, which requires them to produce identification and documentation, trace their steps of their often irregular route to South Africa, register all their family and sources of income, and finally receive limited or no support. In contrast contact with someone they know is likely to produce immediate, tangible outcomes like shelter, food, clothing and even money or work. As two women recounted:

I didn't know anyone here in Johannesburg when I first came, but I found members of my clan. When they saw I was a woman on my own, they arranged for me to share a house with other women. I stayed there for a few weeks and then one of the women helped me to find a job in Amal (respondent, interview, March 28, 2011).

I knew my aunt was in Johannesburg and I stayed with her for two months. She helped me to find work and I stayed with her until I got married (respondent, interview, February 10, 2010).

Even if the respondents did not have any networks in the city, they relied upon a shared sense of nationalism, and at times tribalism to make their way initially in Johannesburg. This might seem straightforward but is indeed complex. There are more than fifty Somali tribes, and at least 36 of these have been identified in previous studies on Somalis in Johannesburg (African Cities Survey, 2006). Thus, whilst a Somali newcomer to the city will be pointed to Mayfair by non-Somalis, once that person is inside Mayfair, they will need to find members of their own clan before they can make any claims for assistance. As one respondent said:

The reason we left Somali is because of the fighting amongst clans, imagine if you come here, and you go to your enemy asking for help, no one (from that clan) will help you. You need to find out first who your family and friends are and then make yourself humble to them (respondent, interview, February 28, 2011).

Social networks are important resources for the respondents in my study, but the mobilisation of this resource is dependent on clan and ethnic identity and careful negotiation with its 'gate-keepers'. Although direct networks, such as family or friends that a person had known before migrating, are the strongest means of assuring assistance on arrival in South Africa, looser networks based on clan or nationality can also be beneficial if they are properly negotiated. For women in particular, other networks of assistance, such as faith-based organisations, also exist in Mayfair and Fordsburg. I turn to these later in the chapter.

5.4. A profile of Somali migrants in Johannesburg

In this section I present my findings related to the diversity of Somalis in Johannesburg and show how this affects settlement patterns. I look at three aspects of diversity: household composition, education and documentation.

5.4.1. Households and housing conditions

Somali households in South Africa are diverse and vary on a number of factors, such as length of stay, socio-economic class, type of documentation, and size of family. Without ignoring that diversity, I describe at least six main characteristics of Somali households in Johannesburg. Firstly, Somali households are generally not a single person household or a single nuclear family household. This is not particular to South Africa, but partly stems from the way in which Somali households are structured at home and the practical considerations that make this a viable option in the Diaspora.⁶⁸ Secondly, Somali households are mobile and fluid, with people moving in and out constantly and entire households moving in the same city and around the country. Thirdly, most Somali households comprise Somalis only: there is limited interaction with other migrant or local groups. Usually men stay with men and women with women. Fourthly, most Somali houses are rented, rather than bought, with some exceptions. Rental agreements are generally informal, subject to exploitative practices, and fiercely competitive as space is limited. Fifthly, Somalis secure housing through social networks rather than through formal means such as property agents or advertisements. Lastly, many homes are in poor infrastructural condition.

Household types

Based on the research in this study, I identify four major types of household structures of Somalis in Johannesburg: temporary lodgings, multi-family houses, rooms in a house or single space letting, and extended family households. The respondents of this study were distributed across all housing types. Through this arrangement I argue that Somalis have created unique spaces for living and working in the city, which is a reflection of their sense of self-determination and utilisation of networks.

a) Temporary lodgings

Temporary lodgings are perhaps the most complex to describe because of the diversity and fluidity found within, and among, them. They come in two types: Somali owned and South African owned. The Somali owned temporary lodgings: are registered with the local authorities; are less crowded; have more basic services such as running water, electricity, and refuse removal; and offer additional services such as meals and laundry. Earlier I hinted at the typical

⁶⁸ See Horst (2008); Kleist (2008).

Mayfair household, before Somalis moved into the area. I elaborate on this in more detail now, before describing how Somali temporary lodgings have changed this space.

South African Indians who lived and continue to live in Mayfair arrange and interact with their space in very different ways from Somalis. The first group typically consisted of two or three generational households, headed by a male breadwinner who was married and lived with his spouse, children and often one or both parents. Variations of this structure included parents-in-law, or a distant aunt or uncle. The house itself was a fairly well presented structure with clearly differentiated living, sleeping and ablution quarters. The kitchen was often a central part of the house and thus received considerable investment of resources. They held a range of electronic appliances, such as electric stoves, fridges, chest freezers, microwaves, and washing machines; many families installed custom-made kitchen cabinets. Each room had no more than two people sleeping in it. Similarly, outside conditions were neat and gave the impression of a certain social order: the car, shining brightly and running well, stayed in a garage or car port; servants lived in outbuildings; and small gardens or courtyards served as a recreational space. Contrast this, then, with the description below.

Field notes of my first encounter at a temporary lodging:

From the outside it looks like any other house. I enter through the gate and walk past the locked front door, skirting instead down the passageway around the house to enter from the back. Now things begin to change, the first sign that this is no ordinary house comes from the mountain of garbage bags neatly tied at one end of the yard. I walk through to the back courtyard. It is a small space about 6 meters by 4 in total, but the space is well utilised and well filled. Here there are several makeshift structures, and the first time, I could not count them, or see what they are used for. I sit under a canopy at a small plastic table. Around me are groups of men sitting, talking, and eating. Eventually the owner sits next to me. This first time, I am not invited inside the house. I am quite happy to sit outside and take in the buzz around me. On subsequent visits, I get to know the inside and outside of this house well and it turns out to be an anthropologist's gold mine.

The nature of the temporary lodging is relatively simple: a residential property in the heart of Mayfair is leased and some basic adaptations are undertaken. I say adaptations rather than renovations because the changes were not meant to upgrade the property in any aesthetic way but to make it more practical for its intended use. This entails gutting the kitchen and moving most cooking operations outside, a task that resonates both with the practice of cooking outdoors in Somalia and with the need to cook large scale, which the conventional kitchen size cannot handle. It also means that the original kitchen can serve as either a dining or storage area. In some cases the original kitchen remains to serve as a basic cooking area, but most of

the melamine built-in-kitchen cupboards, which were once a proud possession of the former owners, were removed to be sold, reused or broken. A single bathroom remains intact for use inside the house. Additional basins are installed in the bedrooms or outside in the courtyard. The distinction between living and sleeping areas is vague. The lounge and dining area, together with the bedrooms, serve as sleeping areas and a series of cheap, single beds are placed dormitory-style in them. The rooms are not overcrowded, as there is enough ventilation and sufficient space between the beds to make it comfortable. As one respondent said to me, “we don’t sleep alone, even in Somalia we are used to 12-15 people staying together” (respondent, interview in Mayfair, January 11, 2011).

At one temporary lodging, leisurely activities give way to more practical concerns in the outside area: a washing machine (with its lid removed) grunts and groans through endless cycles of washing each day; the concrete basin which was previously used for washing clothes now serves as an ablution facility for people; the servants’ quarters is now considered an extension of the house and provides accommodation to more people; the carport has been turned into an outside dining area; and the garden shed serves as an internet cafe. Another makeshift structure at the back of the garden is used as a kitchen where a few Somali cooks and local cleaners are busy working. A few other non-Somali migrants (mainly Zimbabwean and Malawian) are responsible for cleaning the premises. I was struck by the slickness of the operation, and the ingenious use and transformation of space. Most of the residents in the temporary lodging are men, and they are relatively well-off men, as many of them are businessmen in outlying areas who come regularly to Johannesburg to buy stock, or meet friends. A few of the residents are newcomers to the city who have enough money to stay there.

For the Somali owners of the temporary lodgings, the premise for these businesses is profit. It is based on meeting a gap in the market created by Somali settlement and business arrangements in the country. It also offers employment to others. For the patrons, the temporary lodgings offer advantages like informality and price. Documentation is not needed to book a room, unlike at regular hotels and lodges, and many temporary lodgings keep tabs for regular patrons, allowing them to pay later. Somali temporary lodgings are also up to 60 per cent cheaper than non-Somali establishments and there are added benefits, such as social interaction and Somali food.

In contrast, the South African owned lodging in Mayfair, which provides temporary accommodation for the urban poor and migrants, is heavily crowded with: little or no basic services; poor sanitary, safety and health conditions; and no active presence on the property. Money is collected in advance by an agent and non-payment results in illegal power disconnections. Men and women live together in these slum-like conditions.

The following narrative describes this establishment in more detail:

Narrative of housing (1) (Raida, interview in Mayfair, January 9, 2010):

We entered the building that was signed *Musafir Khana*, or a lodging for travellers, and climbed up the steep and derelict stairs. There was a strong stench of unwashed bodies and human occupation. A small girl played quietly with the railing of the stairs. At the top I saw a small room with many people sleeping inside, on the floor and on beds. At the end of the corridor, which was dark, we entered a small 3m by 3m room. The darkness and dampness were punctuated by signs of living. On the right hand side of the room two bunks with cheap mattresses and no linen were lined against the wall. A small baby slept, covered in a bundle, on one of the beds. In the middle of the room, a woman squatted over empty jars and trays, laden with sesame sweets and biscuits. She beckoned us in and offered us some. Her name was Raida. On the left hand side of the room, a small rickety table held a two-plate stove, which was surrounded by washing baskets, bags, and buckets of everyday items such as clothing, dishes, and groceries. In the middle of the room, occupying valuable floor space was a couple of worn-out buckets catching water from a leaking roof. The room had a broken door, which leads to a tiny balcony on which clothes were hung to dry. In this tiny room, Raida lived with two of her children and 2 grandchildren; another son was away at a religious boarding school in the south of Johannesburg. The baby on the bed and the little girl of 5 we had seen earlier on the stairs were the children of Raida's daughter who is still a teenager. Raida looked young, but her burdens were heavy.

She described her life as "a roadblock, a nightmare." She pays R50 a night for this room, which had no electricity or running water. She used gas to cook, pointing to the gas canister next to the stove. I noticed the electrical points in the room and Raida explained that the landlord, a local Indian, cut off the electricity months ago and refused to reconnect it despite the tenants having paid R5000 collectively to him for it. There is no tap in the room; the family shared a communal bathroom down the corridor, and Raida's daughter filled the buckets several times a day. I asked about safety and hygiene, the buckets of stagnant water, open food, gas, and crowding in the room has attracted hoards of flies, which buzzed around and settled everywhere. Raida was helpless in her response: "it is a terrible place to stay, but what can we do?"

b) Multi-family households (MFHs)

Multi-family households are another distinct strategy of Somalis in response to high rentals and property shortages in Mayfair. MFHs consist of a number of families who share a single house with a number of bedrooms, a lounge or living area that is turned into a bedroom, and a shared kitchen and bathroom. Some rooms have a basin installed in them. Each family lives in one

room in the house and pays a proportion of the rent and utilities. Personal items like groceries are either stored in the family quarters or in the kitchen, although the latter is rare. The size of each family differs, ranging from two to eight.

Narrative of housing (2) (Widad*, interview in Mayfair, January 9, 2010)

Widad lived in a makeshift, one-room outbuilding with her 22 year old daughter. They rented the room from a South African landlord and pay R1500 a month in rent. The main house has three other Somali families. The room was neat and tidy and had two single beds; yet it was in a poor infrastructural state –Widad showed me where the roof leaked. When this happened, they had to move the furniture around. She was happy to have me in her house and brought me refreshments as she recounted her story. She is 65 years old and has been in South Africa since 1999. She has been granted refugee status, which she must renew every 2 years, but does not have a travel document that will allow her to leave the country. She describes her inability to move freely in and out of the country as “a prison, or worse than a prison, at least you get food and shelter in jail.”

There are several differences between a temporary lodging and a multi-family household: the former is owned or leased by one individual who is responsible for utilities and services, the latter has no outright ownership. Instead, in MFHs families jointly lease or sublease rooms and every family is responsible for their share of the utilities. Temporary lodgings provide some basic services such as cleaning and meals, whereas these facilities are non-existent in MFHs. Temporary lodgings rent out space daily, weekly or monthly; in MFHs rooms are let out for longer periods. No formal contracts exist in either case. Although fluidity within the MFH is quite high, it is relatively more stable than that of a temporary lodging.

c) Single space lettings

A single space letting in a room is a very common housing arrangement amongst Somalis in Johannesburg; this is due to its low cost, flexibility in terms of arrangements, and regular supply. Generally two types of groups opt to use this type of housing: the more economically vulnerable who cannot afford to rent out an entire room or their own separate quarters; and single women who find solidarity, support, and security within this type of arrangement.

These single space lettings therefore also represent the new opportunities found in the Diaspora. Many of the respondents said that it would have been impossible for them to live on their own in Somalia, without any male family members. In Johannesburg though, the loose networks of clans and families, economic pressure that families face to survive, and lack of any housing or social support from the state, means that women can and must do anything to find shelter for themselves.

d) Extended family households

Somalis who are more financially secure, either as a result of the prosperity of their businesses or because they have been in South Africa for a long time, tend to adhere more to the norms and lifestyle found in Somalia. Thus, many economically successful Somalis in Johannesburg recreate a multi-generational household. Although many of these households are male-led and have clear gendered roles, others are single mother, female headed. One example of the latter is Khadija's house.

Khadija is in her 50s and fled Somalia in the mid 1990s following the politically motivated murder of her husband who was loyal to Barre's regime. At the time she had seven children, and she escaped with them to Kenya. She left four of her children with relatives in Eastleigh, Nairobi, and travelled with the youngest three to South Africa. Khadija is educated and had a business in Somalia, which required her to travel often to buy clothes, which she resold. She was perhaps more progressive than others⁶⁹. On arrival in South Africa, she settled in Mayfair, and with the support of a few other Somalis and local Muslim organisations, started a small business and slowly found a house. Over the years, she slowly became involved in women's issues in the Somali community and lent an ear and money to other Somali women. She also arranged for the four children she had left in Kenya to be reunited with her. Today, she presides over her large household, which comprises of her adult children, including the families of three of her sons who are married and live with her. Khadija is clearly the household head. During one of my interviews with her, her adult son brought some money he had earned and gave it to her. She accepted this with a nod of her head and later explained that she controls money and logistical arrangements in the house, leaving practical tasks such as shopping, cooking and cleaning to her daughter.

Given the size of Somali families and the relatively small size of houses in Mayfair (compared to houses in Somalia), many homes are overcrowded with little distinction between living and sleeping spaces, and public and private areas. Despite this strain on physical space, many families still opt to rent out a room or outbuilding in their homes, to supplement income.

Housing conditions

In general, regardless of the type of household, housing conditions for Somalis in Fordsburg and Mayfair are poor. The following field notes, elaborate on this in more detail.

Fahmo is 70 and lives in comfortable looking house in Mayfair. It, like the others in the area, belongs to a South African of Indian origin, who lived there for from 1973 to 2003.

⁶⁹ I discuss the impact of pre-migration conditions on life in the Diaspora in chapter 7.

The houses are quaint and are neatly lined on the narrow street, giving a communal feel to the area. In previous years, I remember how children used to play in the street and people would sit on the front porches. Now the Indians have moved out and have rented or sold the homes. What used to be a middle class area has deteriorated into a ghetto-like slum. Landlords have neglected the buildings, and tenants have subdivided the properties, sub-letting rooms and outbuildings such as the former servants' quarters and garages, with or without the landlord's knowledge, to supplement their income. As a result, there are three to four families living in a three or four bedroom house. They share a bathroom and a kitchen, or install mobile gas or electrical stoves in their rooms to cook. The once pretty glass-stained doors are shattered, grimy, and dirty, the gardens are unkempt, and litter piles on the streets and in the gardens. Children still run around but now they wear tattered clothes. Fahmo herself has 11 grandchildren that she looks after and they all live together in a single, dark room in a house in central Mayfair. She has installed a portable gas stove along one wall, and a pile of mattresses lay across the other. The children play outside in the yard and street while Fahmo sits on the bed and talks to us.

Her desire is to go for *Hajj*, and she is hopeful that she will be picked by one of the many Islamic organisations that sponsor the pilgrimage for those who cannot afford it. She rents the room from another Somali. She does not know if he is the owner or not. In Somalia, life was acceptable, she tells me. Her family had their own house and car and they were well-off. In the war, her husband and 5 of her children were killed. She fled Somalia by boat, arriving in Mozambique before crossing to South Africa. She thought people would help her in South Africa. She said that in Somali people had thought that South Africa was "our friend, we had stood with them during apartheid, but now life is a struggle to survive".

These conditions are pervasive amongst Somalis in Johannesburg and its effects on their mental health are explored in chapter 7.

5.4.2. Education and skill

A near majority of Somalis surveyed in the African Cities Survey had completed high school (40 per cent), although they ranked lower than two other migrant groups (Zimbabwean and Mozambicans) and the South African control group. Somali women are likely to be less educated than Somali men in Johannesburg, with only 25 per cent (compared to 45 per cent of men) having completed primary school.

It is not surprising then, that the majority of the women interviewed for my research, with the exception of four, had not completed high school. The reasons given for leaving school were

diverse: having to help the family at home with household and agricultural tasks; the high school in the area not having classes until grade 12; to get married (marriage will be discussed later in the dissertation); the war or conflict, which made families keep children at home for their safety; or not being able to access schooling as undocumented migrants in Kenya.

One woman, who did not go to school in Somalia told her story as follows (respondent, interview, January 12, 2011):

I did not go to school. My father was killed in Somalia and we fled to Kenya. You need a lot of money to go to school in Kenya [*she is talking about living outside the refugee camps*], so I did not go [*to school*]. Now I can't read. I got married at 15. Everything is hard when you marry early.

Almost all the women, and young men, stated a desire to continue their education in order to improve their lives. However, there are limited resources available for refugee women to continue studying in South Africa, unlike in the United States and Europe where language and financial support make education opportunities possible for refugees. In South Africa there are only a few night schools for adults wishing to complete their secondary schooling. Tertiary education is expensive here and competition for entry into universities is stiff. In addition, most Somalis are not sufficiently proficient in English to study in that language. As a result there are less than 100 Somalis enrolled at tertiary education facilities in South Africa, the majority of whom are at the correspondence institute, the University of South Africa (UNISA), which offers cheaper and more flexible study programmes.

Despite their limited education, many Somalis have learnt business skills and are astute traders. They are able to identify and meet market needs, keep basic bookkeeping, deal with suppliers, and manage stock. For example, one respondent, who has not completed secondary school and is married, runs a small tuck shop located within her house. She says that her husband taught her the basics of running a business and that this helped her in her current work.

Primary education

Most Somali children attend local government schools in the area. A few also attend private Islamic schools in Fordsburg or Mayfair. Families receive assistance from NGOs to pay school fees, or liaise with the Department of Education to exempt them from paying school fees based on the constitutional right to education and non-discrimination. Although children's integration and schooling was not the focus of this study, it appears that most children of the respondents are attending school. Most families state that their children's ability to communicate in English and obtain a regular education is the biggest advantage of living in South Africa, as opposed to Kenya or Somalia where schooling was intermittent.

5.4.3. Documentation and its effects

The majority of Somalis (91,4 per cent) in the African Cities Survey (2006) were documented refugees or asylum seekers in South Africa and therefore entitled to live, work, and enjoy most of the social, economic, and civil rights that the Constitution⁷⁰ provides (with the exception of some political rights, like the right to vote and stand for public office). In practice, though, most rights, such as housing, trading and work are negotiated and claimed informally, outside of formal, public, institutions and practices (Polzer & Jinnah, 2014). Most of the respondents in this qualitative study relied on social networks and informal arrangements to find, work, housing, or premises for trade.

In terms of documentation, the biggest challenge that Somalis in South Africa face is in obtaining a travel document that would permit them to leave and re-enter the country. The UNHCR and the DHA issue travel documents but the process to obtain one is lengthy and bureaucratic. As a result, many Somalis cannot access this document. Without it, many Somalis feel forced to remain in South Africa for fear of contravening the conditions of their asylum. It is this state that prompts many Somalis, like Widad who was mentioned earlier, to refer to their lives in South Africa as a “prison”.

Aside from the physical, social and emotional constraints of not being able to travel freely, Somalis also feel economically disenfranchised by this situation, as many cannot leverage transnational trade and financial networks to secure goods and services. Added to this is the historical reliance on mobility for livelihood strategies (Al-Sharmani, 2010; Lewis, 2008), which further exacerbates the physical and symbolic sentiment amongst Somalis on the inability to move freely. This limitation, and its social and economic implications, contributes in part to the sense of *buufis* (defined here as stress and disillusionment) that many of the respondents refer to constantly in the interviews. This is explored further in chapter 7.

5.5. Engagement and integration

Somali migrants’ settlement and integration in Mayfair has been a gradual, incremental process. In the first instance, the pioneer group used their own savings and a shared religious identity with local Muslims to find places of work and lodging (Jinnah, 2010). Over time, they were able to save money to start their own businesses and rent rooms in houses from mainly Muslim landowners in Mayfair. Social capital based on religion was a valuable resource for the early group. Many Somalis found work or did trade with South African businessmen in the Oriental Plaza, an economic space in Fordsburg (see chapter 1 for more details). At this stage, there was very little marked ethnic, gender, or class divides amongst the Somali community;

⁷⁰ The Constitution Act No 108 of 1996 is the supreme law in the country and lays down a strong human rights framework for all subsequent legislation.

although ethnic backgrounds were noted and acknowledged, a shared national identity pervaded.

For Somali women in particular, interaction with Islamic organisations and South African Muslim families was direct and beneficial. In the first two stages of migration, by articulating an identity as a single mother, a refugee, and a Muslim, many Somali women, who were more economically vulnerable than others, were able to secure low cost rentals, employment, cash transfers, and material goods from benevolent individuals. Women had found potential power in defining themselves as single mothers, a power that enabled them to access economic resources and social support from the local Muslim community who viewed this category as vulnerable. In particular, they were able to draw assistance tied to *Zakah*.⁷¹ Yet over time, this power was eroded through the creation of Somali organisations. These organisations acted as intermediaries, and therefore re-negotiated terms of access and entitlement between the Somali community and local Muslim groups. As two respondents stated:

In the beginning, South African Muslims [*of Indian origin*], and organisations like SANZAF,⁷² Jamiatul Ulama, and Islamic Relief used to help us [*with money, groceries and school fees*]. Then the Somali men built SASA⁷³ and SCB⁷⁴. Now these South African organisations do not want to deal with Somali women directly. SANZAF and others tell us that we must go to SASA and SCB if we need help. (Somali woman, interview, January 9, 2010)

SANZAF were helping with everything in 1997. Our children's school fees, books. Now if we go to them, they tell us 'go to SASA we have given all the Zakah money to them'. (Mona, interview, March 1, 2011)

What the women are referring to here is the systematic relationship that the (male-dominated) Somali community based organisations (CBOs) have developed with South African Islamic NGOs; it is this relationship that has crowded out the spaces for private interaction and resource-claiming between these actors and ordinary Somalis (mainly women). The Somali organisations have done so on the premise that they represent all Somalis in the country. On the contrary, most Somalis agree that the Somali organisations are tribal based and elitist. As the first respondent added, "SASA and SCB have their own power and don't care about us".

⁷¹ The annual charity, which Muslims are obligated to give (calculated at 2,5 per cent of their net assets, excluding property that they live in). According to a 2010 audit report of one organisation a total of R44 993 453 of Zakah was collected in South Africa, making it a considerable resource.

⁷² The South African National Zakah Foundation (SANZAF), is one of the organisations that collects and distributes Zakah, Estimated to be a multi-million rand industry in South Africa

⁷³ Somali Association of South Africa (SASA).

⁷⁴ Somali Community Board (SCB).

By 2009, Somali CBOs in general, and a few key Somali men from these organisations in particular, had established a strong political and social footing in Mayfair. Backed by their economic muscle (many of them were successful businessmen) they were asserting themselves in various policy, business, local governance and community forums. So, how did Somali women respond to this shifting landscape? They sought out and maintained individual, private relationships with South Africa Muslims, which yielded many material benefits. An example of this is Shukr, who is 32 years old and a single mother to six children. She met a local Muslim woman in Cape Town who said she would help her. She recounts:

I was in a difficult time of my life, my third husband had died, and people were gossiping about me in Mayfair. I went to Cape Town to get away from all the gossip. Then I met this woman, she is rich. She was very kind to me. She had no children, so she treated my kids like her own children. She paid their school fees and helped me a lot with money and things. When I came back to Mayfair, I left my son with her. He stays with her and she looks after him very well. Once a month she pays for my ticket to Cape Town so that I can visit him. I was very happy and I prayed a lot for her. I heard now that after 15 years she is pregnant. (respondent, interview, March 1, 2011)

For many of the women interviewed in this research, the complexities of war were compounded by personal conflicts and challenges and, reciprocally, the personal problems they had were exacerbated by the conflict, lack of security and collapse of law and order in their country. Thus women talk about their double burdens, their double stress of facing a forced marriage or an abusive husband, or not being given the opportunity to go to school, all whilst their country collapsed and ethnic warfare intensified.

Whilst processes of engagement with local communities might be straightforward and rational, and settlement patterns distinct, I argue that a religious mode of incorporation (into predominantly Muslim communities) is too simplistic and one-dimensional an explanation for Somali settlement and interaction in Johannesburg. Rather, I propose a different definition of integration, which better explains the purposeful, complex, and fluid nature of Somali entry and movement within host communities. I now explain this definition in more detail and come back to aspects of it in the following chapters.

All the respondents of this study described themselves as very mobile within Johannesburg and South Africa. Indeed, many of the respondents had circular movements within the country, often moving between different towns and cities, but returning to Mayfair at some point, hence challenging the traditional definitions of integration as a linear gradual process whereby migrants get accustomed to and set down roots in a new community. Furthermore, I also encountered a strong sense of energy and fluidity amongst Somalis, articulated in their desire to find new opportunities and improve their lives in new places.

On one hand, mobility is linked to livelihoods, and has historically been so for Somalis, but it is also linked to family and for Somalis in South Africa, to safety. One respondent moved provinces thrice in three years since her arrival in South Africa, due to the xenophobic violence that she experienced. Although her case is an extreme example of mobility as a protective measure, there are many other instances of Somalis moving to find protection from crime and xenophobia. In this sense, Mayfair provides a safe place where people can come “home” to be amongst a large and dense Somali community, and to find their feet in order to move yet again.

Given this dynamic fluidity, it would be easy to dismiss integration all together. Yet despite this, processes of engagement with local communities do remain, and are perhaps overlooked in many studies and reports on Somalis in South Africa. With townships the relationship is mainly restricted to an economic one, whereby Somalis make contacts with property owners to lease or buy shops to trade from. In Mayfair, however, contacts with local populations are more complex. Strategic social and economic relationships with the local population exist and include access to housing, non-state social services and grants, feelings of belonging amongst a broader religious community, and some measure of safety from xenophobic sentiment and attacks.

Although some aspects of Somali migration and settlement in Johannesburg-pioneer migration, use of social networks, enclosed communities and multiple family, transnational households-echo patterns in Cairo, Minnesota, and Oslo, the distinct difference in the findings of my study is in the policy and social contexts found in South Africa and the strategic, purposeful response of Somalis to these. Within this paradigm, I argue that some of the features of Somali settlement described in this chapter-the adoption of a religious identity to access socio-economic resources, pursuing work and trade in the informal economy, and the creation of a Somali enclave in Mayfair with persistent, if loose social networks-are a result of the absence of any state provision of socio-economic services to migrants and refugees, and a largely xenophobic South African public environment; these features of Somali settlement reflect a particular form of agency articulated by Somalis.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the diversity of Somalis in Johannesburg is associated with their settlement patterns. Wealthier and more secure Somalis are able to access the resources and opportunities in South Africa in direct and tangible ways. Other Somalis who have less secure documentation or limited cash find ways of engaging and integrating through social and religious networks that they form, mobilise, and negotiate. Regardless of class, ethnicity, or legal status, though, Somalis are fluid and mobile in Johannesburg, which is due to a number of factors: livelihoods, safety, and the desire to constantly realise a better quality of life.

In terms of housing, there is very little distinction between private and public spaces, and commercial and residential usage, pointing again to Somalis' strategic use of space to meet their needs. I continue exploring elements of the commercialisation of space in chapter 6. There are distinct types of housing arrangements amongst Somalis in Mayfair. Each is borne from a particular economic need, but also fulfils other social functions. The particular housing arrangement of Somalis has significantly transformed physical, economic and social spaces in Mayfair, although its effects on the mental health of Somalis are not yet understood. I begin addressing this in chapter 7.

Somalis have adopted a strategic and nuanced relationship with local individuals and institutions. In the first instance a shared religious identity paved the way for economic and social inroads into Mayfair. Over time, the rise of Somali CBOS crowded out individual transactions between local NPOs and Somalis. This was felt most strongly amongst certain ethnic minorities and women. Women have responded to this by seeking out and strengthening private relations of benefit and safety with local individual philanthropists, drawing on a compounded religious and vulnerable identity of single, Muslim, refugee mothers. The diverse ways in which Somalis have adapted to their conditions is, I argue, an element of agency that must be better understood.

Chapter 6: Livelihoods: forms, nature, and meanings

6.3.1. Introduction

Migration and livelihoods are entwined; one informs and shapes the other and each constantly changes and shifts in its own right. The fluidity of migration means that livelihoods are changing: their function takes on different meanings as a migrant's social and economic environment changes. In this chapter I look at the form, nature and meanings of the livelihood strategies of Somali women in Johannesburg. I argue that the particular policy and social environment found in Johannesburg and South Africa condition the types of strategies that Somalis create and adapt in order to make a living. I also show the two distinct features of Somali livelihood strategies in Johannesburg: multiplicity and mobility. Finally, I discuss the multiple meanings-social, economic, personal, and interpersonal-that livelihoods hold for the respondents.

Historically, Somali livelihoods have been intricately linked with mobility. Kleist (2004, p. 37) identifies this as one of the three fundamental features of Somali livelihoods along with diversification and strong social networks. Nomadic groups relied on their ability to move and adapt to different physical environments in order to rear livestock and undertake subsistence agriculture. This was a strategy to deal with the harsh physical climate of Somalia, which was prone to draughts and famine, and a response to an inner yearning amongst Somalis to explore new places and be mobile. In contemporary times, mobility (both internal and international) amongst Somalis has been driven by a somewhat different set of needs: civil war; lack of security; and the deterioration of the land, which renders a subsistence farming lifestyle inadequate to meet the needs of families. This has resulted in mass movement of people within and across the country's border.

Findings from this research indicate that mobility remains inherent to Somalis' livelihood strategies in South Africa, although its purpose is multifold. Primarily, mobility is a means to mitigate the physical risk arising from crime, which is prevalent in South Africa, or xenophobic violence. It is also a way to counter the economic risk associated with unstable market demand. Socially, it is a way to expand networks of savings, trade, and information. And ultimately it is a way to explore, see the world, and meet new challenges.

In addition to mobility, there is another intrinsic feature of Somali livelihoods that exists at home and is replicated in the Diaspora: multiplicity. The particular economic environment in South Africa-a large and active informal economy, and a small number of jobs available in the formal market for lower skilled workers and migrants in particular-contribute to entrenching

these features amongst Somalis. The second section of this chapter deconstructs these two characteristics of livelihoods-mobility and multiplicity—in more depth.

First though, I give a rather descriptive overview of some typical livelihood strategies based on ethnographic fieldwork and a quantitative survey. This will help frame the discussion later in this chapter. In the African Cities Survey in 2006, about a quarter (26,9 per cent) of Somali respondents indicated that their first income generating activity on arrival in Johannesburg or South Africa was owning their own business. A fifth (20,4 per cent) responded that they were not economically active (living mainly as self-identified housewives). The rest of the responses included professionals (doctors - 0,5 per cent, lawyers – 2,2 per cent, teachers - 4,8 per cent); and lower-skilled workers (factory workers – 4,8 per cent; drivers – 0,5 per cent; and shoe repairmen - 0,5 per cent); whilst a small percentage (0,5 per cent) indicated that they were tertiary students. These findings suggest three characteristics of Somali work: a broad range of socio-economic classes and skills are present in the Diaspora; there is a strong probability of self-employment; and there is a low unemployment rate. Each of these are interesting in themselves, as they allude to the range of economic opportunities encountered and made in the Diaspora, but also within the context of post-apartheid South Africa's economy and labour market, which has a strong need for the characteristics presented by Somalis (Nieman, 2001; Peberdy & Rogerson, 2000).

6.3.1. Forms of livelihood strategies

Based on empirical research in Johannesburg, I identify five main types of livelihood strategies that Somalis are engaged in. This distinction is purely to structure the discussion below. In reality, livelihoods are interconnected and constantly changing. The discussion also illustrates the diversity of livelihood strategies, which I argue is a distinct feature of this group.

- a) Businesses, self-employment and petty trading
- b) Employment- formal and informal
- c) Remittances and group saving schemes
- d) Welfare benefits and charity
- e) Other

6.3.3. Businesses, self-employment and petty trading

Small businesses- retail and service oriented

Retail small businesses in Johannesburg are mainly situated in the Fordsburg and Mayfair area. Most of these are in the Amal shopping centre and surrounding area, however, a few home-based retail businesses are also present. The location of an active commercial sector in close

proximity to, or embedded in the residential sector of Somalis is indicative of one feature of Somali settlement: the blurring of a distinction between work and home. Most of the xenophobic discourse targeting Somalis is based on the idea that Somalis have flooded the business sector, operate without permits, and do not pay tax. Yet there is no empirical evidence to support these assertions. Data from the African Cities Survey (2006), smaller qualitative studies (Jinnah, 2010; Schaffer, 2011) and Somali community organisations' own records⁷⁵ indicate that only a small proportion of Somalis own large businesses and that most are compliant with licencing requirements.

Sectors

Small retail businesses typically gross less than R500 000⁷⁶ annually, and are small in size and turnover, employing one or two staff (less than five in total) and covering less than 50 square meters in floor size. In Amal most of the retail businesses are run by women and fall in one of the following sectors: traditional women's clothing and accessories such as scarves; cosmetics and perfumes; basic foodstuff such as pasta, dates and oil; book stores; and service-oriented business. Amal's women-run businesses also include internet and international call centres, take aways, and restaurants.

The clothing and accessory stores stock merchandise imported from Kenya and Dubai. The merchandise is usually women's traditional clothing, consisting of long multi-coloured cloths, scarves and sandals. A few other items of clothing for women, such as skirts and blouses, and shirts and pants for men are also stocked. All of the perfumes and cosmetics are imported from Dubai and are geared toward the local Somali market. The service-oriented businesses comprise the food and beverage sector, telecommunications, and money exchange and transfer. These too cater to the local Somali and migrant community, offering a range of Somali food at reasonable prices, low cost international calling cards, and low cost internet access that is used for making calls though Skype and downloading 'home music'. Thus two of the features of Somali small businesses are reliance and sufficiency. Demand and supply for goods and labour are often from within the Somali community itself.

The following field notes describe the social atmosphere and economic spaces that have been created in Amal:

I walked into Amal and was transported to another place, it reminded me of parts of Nairobi, I could hear Somali spoken; was struck by the brightly coloured cloths which were hanging out of shops, and saw Somali women standing in shops and walking

⁷⁵ Based on the number of Somali businesses registered with the Somali Community Board of South Africa.

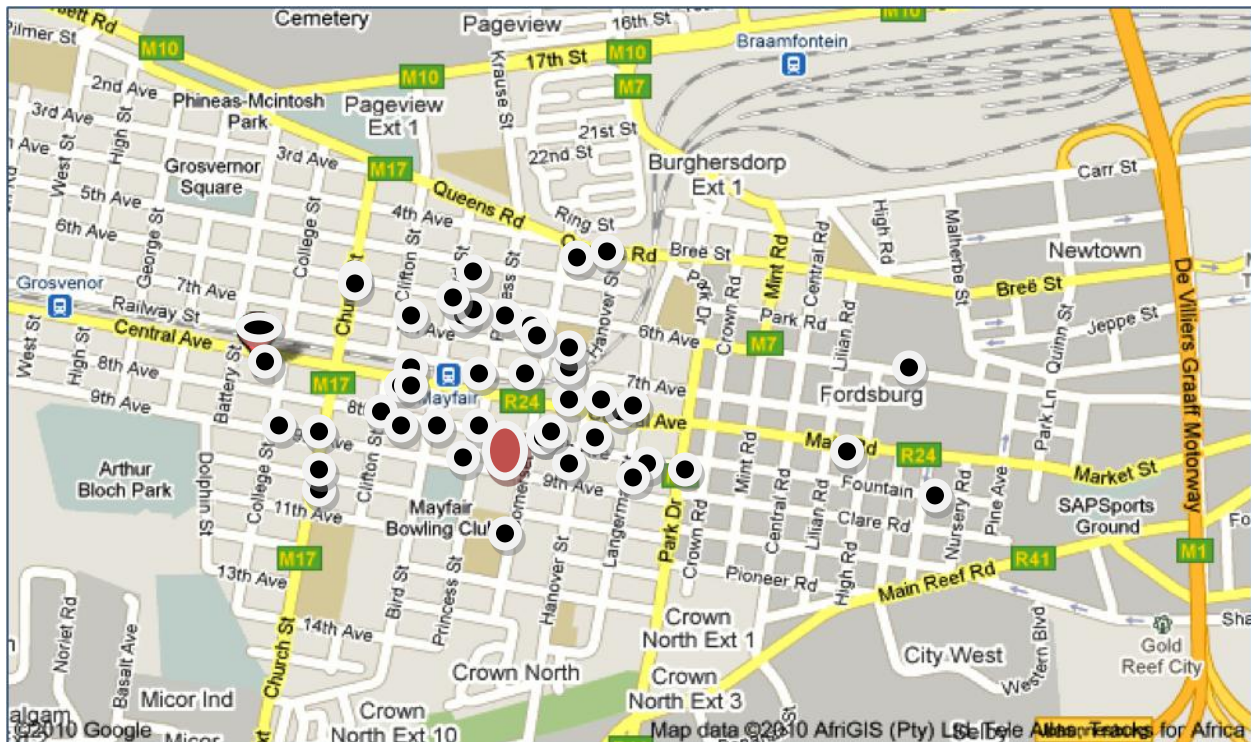
⁷⁶ This number is self-identified by owners. In some cases, tax return certificates or ledger books were shown to validate these figures, although not all owners did so.

around while a few men hover at the entrance to the mall. The mall is small in size in comparison to regular South African malls, and facilities are basic. There is a small parking area on the western side of the mall, and another more private looking one on the south, neither gives any indication that customers can utilise it, most cars are haphazardly strewn across the pavements on all sides of the mall. I enter a small shop, and it looks much like all the others, it is about 3m by 3m in size and is stuffed with merchandise on all available floor, ceiling, and wall space. Near the front is a counter where small glass bottles of perfume precariously sit next to cosmetic jars of lotion and hair cream. Behind it, a woman is bent over a worn out book. She is swathed in black from head to toe, and wears a *niqab* [*a face veil*]. She looks old- about 50 -but I later learn she is in her thirties. Nevertheless she is quite successful economically; she owns two businesses here, and employs several Somalis, has her own car, and is a very active businesswoman. I am lucky to find her here, as she is often gone to the airport to clear her stock or out on other business.

Near the back of this shop is a little door through which men periodically pass. I enquire about it and am told that a money exchange office is located there, another testament to the astuteness of the owner, who lets her storeroom to tenants for extra income.

Location

The map below illustrates the dense concentration of the majority of Somali businesses in Mayfair (indicated by the black dots). Most economic activity is centred around Amal, the Somali shopping mall (indicated by a red dot). Its establishment in the mid 2000s created a boom in the socio-economic environment of the area, as Somalis started flocking there for work, shopping and socialising. Despite its visible success, or perhaps because of it, Amal has become a vulnerable target for criminals and for police raids. During the course of this research, a group claiming to be part of the state apparatus raided Amal twice. In reality though, extra-legal raids targeting Somali owned businesses have become a norm.



Map 2: Somali business in Mayfair and Fordsburg

Larger businesses

Larger businesses have more than five employees and a turnover in excess of R500 000 annually⁷⁷. A few of these are located within Amal, and either operate the larger money exchange offices, or trade in imported goods, which they resell to the smaller retail businesses. The majority of larger businesses, though, are located outside of Amal. These include courier services, butcheries, importers, and wholesalers of groceries. Larger businesses are mostly owned by Somali men who employ Somali women, locals and other migrants. Many of these businessmen also have a prominent position in the local community or within religious and

⁷⁷ As identified by their owners.

political structures. This is partly due to their wealth, which gives them a prestigious position in society and enables them to access media, technology, and capital resources; and partly due to the fact that business and community leadership are entwined and dependent on tribe and ethnicity.

Many of these businessmen have citizenship from a third country-often Kenya, the United Kingdom, or Canada-which not only improves their status in the community but also provides a means for easy travel in and out of South Africa. It is these men that many of my respondents refer to when they talk about marginalisation and discrimination by members of the Somali community (as discussed in chapter 5).

The majority of those women who were employed in this study were working for other Somalis, with the exception of two women who were working for a South African and an international organisation respectively. Both of these women were better educated than the rest of the respondents. Two other women were working for, or had worked for the Department of Home Affairs as translators, although this was on a casual basis. These women found work through social and ethnic networks.

Self-employment

A few Somalis are trained artisans in the fields of mechanics, electrical work and tailoring. They use their private residences or rent a part of a space in a retail shop to do small-scale work. Men generally dominate this industry. One respondent, an electrician, stated that his earnings from this work are meagre and fluctuate. As a result, his family is engaged in a number of other income-generating activities, such as drawing benefits from an NGO, and letting out a room in their house for rent. Skills were generally learnt before coming to South Africa and were passed on to other members of the family. Many had other resources such as a car, which they said helped them to remain in business.

Petty trading

Petty trading involves the purchase and resale of small quantities of goods at either a fixed location or by selling door-to-door. Due to the low entry barriers, it is overwhelmingly the first entry point for many women who are newly arrived in Johannesburg. Traders who work from a fixed location use either a part of their lodging to sell goods and rely on a steady stream of regular customers who are aware of their merchandise, or sell from a table on the street, often in close proximity to a Somali owned or run shop, which they use to store their goods and take shelter during police raids. Traders without a fixed place carry the goods in bags and sell these by going door-to-door to shops and houses in the Mayfair area. They often sell fresh produce

such as fruit and vegetables, sesame sweets (which they make), small items of clothing like socks and shoes, and toys.

There is an inherent amount of risk associated with this type of livelihood activity. Sellers are vulnerable to weather changes, crime and xenophobia related attacks, and arrest and confiscation of goods by police for infringing on bylaws.

Many of the women who are involved in this type of activity choose to wear a face veil, not as much for religious reasons as to protect their identity and dignity from what some consider a shame: women selling things on the street.

6.4. Employment- formal and informal

Of the sixty respondents of this study, only two women were trained professionals who had formal employment⁷⁸ with a non-Somali company or organisation. Through my fieldwork I heard of a handful of other Somalis who were employed formally.

By far, most Somalis are employed informally by other Somalis, by South Africans in the Oriental Plaza,⁷⁹ or by other (mainly Muslim) migrants. Somalis in Mayfair tend to work informally in retail shops, not as domestic or childcare workers, which is common amongst Somalis in Egypt, for example. Average earnings vary, depending on the employer rather than on the amount or type of work done. Most Somali women who work for other Somalis earn about R 3 000 a month. Those working for South Africans or other migrants tend to earn slightly less, between R1 500 – R2 500 a month. Many of the provisions of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, such as paid leave, rest periods, and working hours are not enforced. Almost all the respondents who were working informally reported that they worked seven days a week.

Most Somali women opt not to travel far to find work in order to be close to their homes and children and to reduce their dependency on public transport, which they find threatening. As a result many are employed in Mayfair and Fordsburg or in the nearby central business district.

6.4.1. Remittances

Remittances are a recurring feature in studies of the Somali Diaspora (Kleist, 2007, p. 128) and have been identified as a consistent and reliable source of livelihoods for migrant-sending

⁷⁸ Defined as permanent or fixed-term employment in which some or most of the following conditions exist: a written contract is drawn up in accordance with labour laws; the company or organisation is a registered establishment.

⁷⁹ A large trading area in the heart of Fordsburg, owned by South African Indian businessmen. I described this in greater detail in chapter 1.

countries (Diaz-Briquets & Perez-Lopez, 1997, p. 411).⁸⁰ Although most remittances are direct transfers from the Diaspora to home, the extent of circulation of remittances within the Diaspora is less known. Aside from one very economically vulnerable and socially isolated woman (*bahaani* as Somalis refer to those who are destitute and vulnerable), all the respondents of this study were involved in remittances either as senders, receivers or both. All remittances are sent and received using the *hawala* system, which was discussed earlier.

I want to focus here on two aspects of remittances: firstly, how the respondents position themselves within the cycle of remittances, taking on the roles of senders and receivers, often at the same time; and secondly, for those who receive remittances, on how the remittances are used. The meanings associated with remitting or receiving remittances are dealt with later.

The reciprocal nature of remittances is not new. Kleist (2007, p. 135) discusses how remittance flows to and from Dadaab-in Kenya-and Somalia change as conditions and individual circumstances within each area fluctuate. South Africa is a developing country, positioned at the edge of Africa, yet at the tip of economic prospects on the continent; it is a country with no encampment policy but also no state support for refugees; a country with minimal employment prospects in the formal economy but with booming business opportunities in its cities, townships and rural areas. It is within these paradoxes that Somali refugees and migrants find themselves. And it is in these unique social and economic spaces that they leverage resources like remittances to realise their immediate and long-term goals and meet their personal and family needs. This is done by acting in dual roles within the remittance cycle: as both senders and receivers. In part, this is possible due to several factors: a strong transnational bond with geographically split household members; a stable and reliable channel for money transfers; and a diverse income base that allows Somalis to cross-subsidise expenses.

As discussed earlier, Somalis define household members based on their allegiance to the family and their emotional and economic ties, which bind them to the family of origin. Transnational networks of information, financial and social assistance and emotional support are common in studies of migration, refugees and transnationalism (Kleist, 2007; Vertovec, 1999; Schiller et al, 1995). This allows for geographically split, transnational households in which active members live in different countries. Remittances are one avenue through which emotional and economic ties are expressed. In turn, remittances enable Somalis in Johannesburg to mitigate risks associated with unstable work and businesses and to continue remitting to home. For instance one woman, who is a successful businesswoman in Johannesburg, receives remittances from her sister in the United States about twice a year. She invests part of this money into her businesses, which in turn allow her to send a portion of her monthly income to some of her children who are living in Somalia.

⁸⁰ See for example United Nations (UN), World Bank and International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports.

Another woman, who has a small tuck shop attached to her home, receives money three or four times a year from her half-brother (they have the same father but different mothers) in Norway. She keeps part of this money as her savings and sends part of it to her aged mother in Kenya.

The money received through remittances is used for different things including school fees, rent, business expenses, investment in stock or new business ventures, and travel. Rarely, though, are remittances used for daily consumables like food. Again, this points to the strategic use of limited resources available and is a feature of agency. Remittances are a resource that is managed carefully, despite the pressures that come with it.

6.4.2. Welfare benefits and charity

About half of the respondents of this study currently receive or have received some form of welfare benefits from faith-based South African⁸¹ or international NGOs,⁸² or cash or material goods from individuals.

Overwhelmingly, Somalis seek these benefits by drawing on a shared religious identity and frame their claims within a discourse of Islamic charity and unity. Generally, those Somalis who have been in South Africa longer were able to establish relations of trust with individuals and NGOs and were therefore more likely to receive benefits than those who arrived more recently. Over time, the resources and generosity of NGOs and individuals has waned, and Somalis are less likely to receive benefits in the number and amount that they were once accustomed to. The South African National Zakah Fund (SANZAF), located within Mayfair and with considerable cash reserves, remains one of the most important resources for Somalis. SANZAF provides grocery assistance for three months to families in need, and pay up to 80 per cent of school fees for Somali children at local Islamic and public schools. They also offer employment assistance and skills training. These tangible resources pave the way for Somalis to articulate a shared religious identity as a way to access opportunities. An exception is the UNHCR implementing agency, the Jesuit Refugee Services, with whom many Somalis also have a relationship, often in conjunction with the Islamic organisations. Here they articulate a humanist identity, stressing their refugee status as a means to access resources. This strategic articulation of identity by Somali women in Johannesburg is striking, and it points to a strong sense of agency amongst this population.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, by far one of the most lucrative arrangements for Somalis has been the private relationships that some Somali women have been able to create with local Indian Muslims. By adopting an identity as a single mother who is Muslim and a

⁸¹ Such as the Crescent of Hope, SANZAF and Africa Muslim Agency.

⁸² Such as Islamic Relief, Muslim Hands and Jesuit Refugee Agency.

refugee, they were able to source steady avenues of access to capital goods, which they would then resell. In one instance, a woman was even given a house to use rent-free by a philanthropic Muslim landlord. Many of the Somali women obtain goods from Muslim businessmen who allow them flexibility in repayment; this enables them to start small scale businesses for trading. One respondent recounted how a Muslim businessman assisted her: “this man was very good to us; he used to give us goods to sell and we would pay him later, may God bless him” (respondent, interview, November 26, 2011).

6.5. Other

Subletting is a common form of earning a livelihood amongst Somalis in Johannesburg. When I asked a key informant about the prevalence of this arrangement amongst Somalis in Mayfair, she recounted to me, “everyone rents out space” (Somali woman, discussion, June 6, 2011). At the top end of this arrangement are the numerous temporary lodgings scattered around Mayfair, whilst at the lower end is the simple practical act of subletting a part of the house or room that one lives in. Almost every Somali household engages in sub-letting at some level. This can be spatial or temporal in nature. If a person is travelling he or she will let out their respective room or house for the duration that they are away. Similarly, if a person desperately needs an income, they will let out a room or a space in a room. Most often the space is let out to another Somali. The demand for shelter is very high in Mayfair and thus sub-letting is a fairly easy way to make some money. Although this housing arrangement was discussed previously, in chapter 5, here I dwell on some of the economic and social aspects of it.

Temporary lodgings are a common and profitable way to earn a living. Many are owned and run by Somali women who lease, or less commonly buy a property and convert it into lodging for paying guests (mainly Somali men). Tenants pay a daily, weekly or monthly rate. To supplement this income, the owners offer a range of services such as food, internet connections, telephone usage and storage space for merchandise. The more economically stable lodges also offer conference facilities and wedding venues. In all probability this is a profitable business. Some temporary lodgings are owned by Somalis who came to South Africa from elsewhere in the Diaspora, lured by the prospect of business opportunities, which are lacking in recession-struck Western Europe and North America.

Aside from the economic benefits there are also less obvious, but equally meaningful aspects of sub-letting. It allows people to develop a communal atmosphere so cherished at home and desperately sought in the Diaspora; it facilitates the expansion of social networks that are critical in social and economic matters; and it provides security from crime and xenophobia. On the negative side, though, it attracts criticism from non-Somali neighbours who fear that such practices will cause an economic decline in the neighbourhood.

6.3. Nature of livelihoods

This section identifies and discusses the types, routes into and dynamics of livelihoods activities amongst Somalis. It begins with a theoretical overview of the definition of livelihoods and then discusses how the experiences of Somali migrants and refugees challenge these notions.

The livelihood strategies adopted and adapted by Somalis in Johannesburg are diverse, fluid, and multiple. Social networks play a considerable role in the formation and maintenance of these strategies. As discussed earlier, these characteristics are a response to the economic and policy environment of South Africa and a recurring feature of Somali work⁸³.

Refugees have been defined and conceptualised in many ways. Inherent in many of these definitions is an element of vulnerability, which although it exists amongst the respondents of this study too, is articulated and managed in a different way. I explore the manifestation and implication of this vulnerability later in this chapter. In describing Somali refugees in Kenyan camps, Kleist quotes one respondent as saying, “my country of origin which belongs to the Third World, has demoted me to the Fourth World of being a refugee” (2004, p. 77). Kleist (2004, p. 77) describes this Fourth World as a place of institutions. South Africa’s non-encampment policy means that refugees self-settle, reducing the presence of institutions like the host government and UNHCR, which are not as visible as those found in a refugee camp, and which allow for opportunities of self-sufficiency to be greater. However, certain particular characteristics of Mayfair, I argue, also contribute to a sense of the “Fourth World” amongst respondents. The features described here include: physical and economic insecurity; a disempowered legal status; restrictions on being able to travel; and ethnic, tribal and gendered power relations and divisions. Elements of this insecurity were frequently manifested during my fieldwork in casual conversations, in-depth interviews and general observations. However, although these factors pose considerable challenges to establishing and maintaining decent lives and livelihoods, they are not seen as barriers by Somalis. Respondents would sigh and raise their hands to the sky in defeated gestures, accepting that these are things they cannot change, which they need to submit to, and at the same time find other ways of working around. This reminds me of the *nasib*⁸⁴ element so prevalent in Kleist’s (2004) work on Somalis in Dadaab, where people in difficult social and legal positions accepted their fate and worked around it rather than resisting it. It also points to a management of vulnerability amongst Somalis, which is often not explicit in the literature on refugees.

Having deliberated on the theoretical context of refugee livelihoods I now turn briefly to a discussion of the institutional and policy environment in Johannesburg. The absence of any direct role by UNHCR in South Africa has created a service vacuum, which is mostly filled by

⁸³ See Kleist (2007).

⁸⁴ Literally means lucky (in Arabic) and refers to the concept of fate or luck to which Somalis subscribe.

non-governmental organisations. In Mayfair, this role is almost entirely filled by the numerous Islamic NGOs operating or based in the area. The considerable economic resources that these organisations hold also influence the ways in which Somalis live and seek a living.

The most salient way in which this is manifested is through the adoption of a more visible and vocal religious identity. I am not suggesting that Somalis are not devout or religious. Indeed, much of the literature binds Islam intricately with notion of a Somali identity (Kleist, 2004); in South Africa too, the role of religion in Somalis' lives has been (over)emphasised (Sadouni, 2008) and in my own work I have found Islam to be constantly and integrally present in Somali life (Jinnah, 2010, 2012). What I am suggesting, though, is that religion as both a personal and group identity is a strategy for settlement and livelihoods and is carefully invoked by certain stakeholders in order to access resources – often at the expense of other equally central notions of Somali identity (self-determination, business acumen, self-reliance). The adoption of this religious identity is laced with notions of vulnerability (refugee, single mother), which are intended to evoke sympathy and pave the way to access capital and material benefits.

The importance and physical presence of a number of faith based NGOs in Mayfair and Fordsburg, derive partly from the absence of the UNHCR (which is present in the case of Dadaab), and the lack of any state support for refugees (as would be found in the US or Scandinavia, for instance). Within this particular institutional environment, faith based NGOs provide the only beacon of assistance to refugees. Somalis perceived that the simplest and fastest way to gain access to the direct benefits that these NGOs provide (but also the key business, employment and housing networks that many think they can facilitate access to), is through the articulation of a pronounced and devout religious identity. In part, this has worked. The NGOs have come to view Somalis as credible and worthy of assistance. As one aid worker recounted:

We know the Somalis, they live here and they have references from their imams, we tend to view them more favourably than other migrants or even locals. If you look at our books, you will see that Somalis receive the most assistance in terms of monetary value than any other project we fund. (SANZAF worker, interview, March 10, 2010)

However this strategy has also resulted in some unfavourable outcomes. Somalis are perceived by many non-Muslim South Africans, and indeed other migrant groups, as ethnocentric. One migrant leader said to me, “We can't access that group, they have their networks they do their own thing” (CoRMSA member, interview, March 23, 2011).

I encountered this sentiment many times over in my meetings and discussions with civil society organisations, migrant leaders, and ordinary South Africans. For their part, Somali leaders

acknowledge that they could do more to shed this image, yet categorically state that religion remains an integral part of their identity. As one Somali community leader stated:

We know what we have done is wrong, people going into communities and not seeking to locals, yet we will not do the local things like going to *shebeens* [local pubs]. Marrying local women and things like this. (SCB leader, interview, March 20, 2010)

Although religion an integral part of Somali life, I argue that it is more embedded than pronounced, and perhaps overemphasised at key strategic points. At the same time, there are also many Somalis in Mayfair who feel restricted by religious and social norms, for example, restrictions on: women and men in dating publicly; using contraception; and arranged marriages. Still, they continue to draw on a broad religious identity to make their way in Johannesburg.

6.3.1. Fluidity and mobility

An interesting feature of Somali settlement in South Africa is its fluidity, a feature which challenges prevailing notions of stable and static forms of existence amongst urban and migrant populations in the literature. Drawing on a tradition of centuries of mobility in order to find greener pastures for livestock, Somalis in South Africa continue to actively seek-out and cultivate new opportunities for livelihoods. Two types of mobility can be identified: within South Africa; and outside the country. The legal status of an individual determines the breadth of their mobility. Most Somalis are contained within the country due to the restrictions and bureaucracies associated with obtaining a traveller's document on a refugee permit; a small number hold citizenship of a third country (Kenya, Canada, or the United Kingdom), which permits them relatively unrestricted movement to and from South Africa. This distinction is also the source of tensions amongst Somalis, as it creates new forms of differences in Mayfair.

During the course of this fieldwork, a number of respondents changed or modified their work and businesses, new commercial centres opened in Mayfair, and existing spaces were adapted. When I commenced my fieldwork in 2009, I met one respondent who had just moved to Mayfair from the Free State following the looting and burning of her business there. When I first interviewed her, she was starting up a small restaurant in the back of a house that she had rented in the heart of Mayfair. Although she had obtained a license from the municipality for this, several of her neighbours (locals) complained about the noise, which forced her to close. Over the next two years I interviewed her several times, and visited her house regularly. Each time I returned, I noticed new business activities that she was engaged in or spoke about. The last time I visited her late in 2011, her house was completely transformed and unrecognisable; she had obtained building permission to convert the front of the house into a series of shops, which she let out. Another respondent worked for the Department of Home Affairs as a

translator on a casual basis. During the 20 months of this fieldwork, she left that job, due to its low pay, and started a series of business ventures from her house. A third respondent was working for a Somali in a small butcher shop in Mayfair in 2010. She was dissatisfied with the long hours and low pay, and managed to obtain capital from some local Muslims which she used to open her own business.

The variability of livelihoods was also evident in the turnover of staff at Amal. During my fieldwork I constantly met new employees in the shops. When I asked about the previous workers, I was told that they had moved to another city, opened a business elsewhere, or had just 'gone'. Some of the shop owners who had remained in Amal during my fieldwork, had not remained static either. At least three of them had opened other businesses in the city, and another one had started selling goods from home to supplement her income.

The active level of change in a small period of time is characteristic of the energy and vibrancy of Somali life and livelihoods in Mayfair and resonates more broadly with the emerging literature on the non-static nature of urban populations (Landau, 2010).

6.3.2. Diversity

The diverse range of livelihoods strategies that Somalis are engaged in are not particularly matched to skills, education or experience, but rather to an ability to adapt to opportunities that exist and those that are created in the Diaspora. As such, there are no apparent sectors or trades in which Somalis are found (unlike some other migrant groups who are concentrated in specific types of work), but rather a varied and wide range of economic activities that have already been discussed in 6.2 above. All of these, I argue, point to the agency of Somalis, who make and exercise choices in relation to their broader environment so that they can retain control of a portion of their everyday existence, regardless of how frail or fraught that may be.

6.3.3. Multiplicity

Almost all of the respondents were engaged in a combination of the livelihoods strategies that I have identified earlier. The blurring of private and communal life and residential and commercial spaces, discussed in chapter 5, means that many respondents can continue working or being involved in activities that have some monetary gain, for most of the day and night. This is evident in the following cases of the Somali women who work in the shops in Amal during the day: many spend the evenings making sweets which they resell; some let out a room in their houses to other single Somali women. The latter arrangement works particularly well for both parties when women who do not work, but rely on remittances and thus have limited money for accommodation, are able to rent a place cheaply and at the same time look after the children of the women that work. Many businesswomen let out a section in their shop, or hire

out their cars to be used as a kind of informal taxi service to supplement their income. In addition to this, many of the respondents received remittances and material or cash aid from the NGOs and faith based organisations (FBOs) in Johannesburg, which they either resell or invest in goods to trade.

This strategy of ‘keeping a finger in many pots’ is a way to mitigate the economic uncertainty often associated with small businesses and informal work. It also provides a means to consolidate and in some cases expand social networks amongst Somalis, as very often each economic venture has distinct business partnerships or associations. Finally, as one respondent put it, it is a way to remain “on the move” (respondent, discussion, August 8, 2011), both physically and mentally, as the challenge and vibrancy of being involved in different activities at the same time provides a full and active social and economic life.

Social networks, again

Many of the respondents relied on social networks to find and secure employment, a pattern that also exists amongst Somalis in Denmark (Jagd, 2004, p. 10) and elsewhere, as shown in earlier chapters. These networks are transnational-, ethnic- and tribal-based. Most of the literature suggests that social networks invariably favour those with higher social status, and men more than women. The presence of social networks has been well documented in the literature, illustrating a reliable and steady system of kinship-based support in Somalia and before and during the war. Given the pace and size of migration flows from Somalia in the last two decades, it is not surprising that transnational social networks exist.⁸⁵

In part this reliance is due to two factors: a sustained lack of support from the state to provide social services and create economic opportunities, and a longer tradition based on religious and cultural norms of helping each other and supporting the needy (*bahiya*). Seen in this light it explains many behavioural patterns of Somalis in South Africa: the reluctance to enter the country by formal routes and means; the establishment of dense and closed settlement areas; the reliance on friends and family to secure housing and work; and the preference to work with selected Somali business partners within a small circle rather than through the vast established business networks and service providers present in South Africa.

As reliable and effective as these networks may be, though, they inherently create rules of membership through which access to resources is mediated. The two main criteria in determining who is inside the network, and who is not, are clan and gender. A related but distant third factor is money. For instance, one respondent, Aisha, found work because her ex-

⁸⁵ See for example Lewis (1994); Zitelmann (1991).

husband's family in Somalia made an arrangement for employment with Axmed, a member of their tribe who was in South Africa. Had Aisha approached Axmed directly in Mayfair, she would not have been able to secure a job. However, this practice of relying of networks based on clan or kin is changing and, interestingly, this change is being driven by women. Through the course of my fieldwork, I came across several economically successful women positioning themselves within existing social networks in their own right, i.e. by using their economic status as a proxy for membership instead of drawing on their kinship ties. I also found many more women who were creating new forms of social networks, not based on economic status or clan but rather on gender, and were using these networks to successfully share information and money, find work, access resources and provide social and emotional support. I discuss the implication of this in greater detail in chapter 7.

6.4. Outcomes and Meanings

The processes and outcomes associated with livelihoods strategies yield a number of different meanings, both positive and negative, and are perceived in different ways for men and women. In the following section I discuss some of these.

6.4.1. Positive outcomes and meanings

Status and power

"Jobs are better than charity" (respondent, interview, September 9, 2010), says one respondent. The ability to meet one's own needs, without being a burden on anyone else, is a great source of pride and honour amongst the respondents, as is illustrated in the quote above. At a deeper level, this reflects the notions of self-sustenance and independence, which constitute an integral part of a Somali identity. Seen in this way migration to South Africa is a means to find economic opportunity for self-reliance that is absent at home and in the refugee camps across the continent.

In many ways, status amongst Somalis is tied to socio-economic success. Therefore, people with successful businesses, who drive expensive cars, and have elaborately furnished houses, are seen as important within society. This is a rather public definition of success and invariably applies to men only, as they are able to take on visible, public roles as businessmen, political, religious and community leaders, or to a lesser degree, as professionals. Successful women, on the other hand, articulate their success and status in two distinct ways: by being able take an equal or leading role in decision making at home; or by being able remit to their own family, rather than relying on their husbands to remit on their behalf. These practices are more private than public and illustrate that having power within the home is integral to the definition of

success amongst women. Naturally, there are distinctions amongst women: the concept of private power is more applicable to women of lower socio-economic status and minority ethnic tribes, whereas women who come from more prominent tribes tend to have less private power and display more public power by wearing vast amounts of gold jewellery and expensive clothes, which earns them a reputation amongst Somalis as 'successful'. The above discussion highlights the different manifestation of status in the host country.

Interestingly, status in the Diaspora is also meaningful amongst family and tribal members left behind in the home country. Within these circles, women who have migrated are seen as more successful, largely due to the frequency of the remittances that they send. The ability to financially contribute toward the household of origin is an important part of the outcome of livelihoods strategies. I mentioned earlier, that this use of 'household' is conceptualised as an extended kinship-based, geographically-split, transnational household bound by emotional ties and obligation ties. For many of the women in this study, the act of remitting is a source of immense pride and fulfilment.

"I am sending money to my parents," said one young woman, who lives with her husband in Mayfair and works in their house-shop (respondent, interview, September 14, 2009).

"I am working for my son, he is at home with my mother and even if I send small money it means a lot to them," said another single mother, who was forced to send her young son home following the collapse of her marriage in South Africa, in order to look after herself and him (respondent, interview, August 4, 2011).

"I send money to my brother and mother in Somalia whenever I can. Sometimes my mother will ask me for money and when I send it she is so happy," said a young Somali woman who fled her home due to an assassination attempt (her outspoken views on women's rights had irked Al-Shabab); now she does part time odd jobs for NGOs and international organisations (respondent, interview, January 15, 2011).

"I have my children in Kenya, and I send money to them every month. I can send them to school" (respondent, interview, June 22, 2011).

Although remitting is seen a means to demonstrate independence, it remains an obligation, and the pressure to remit amongst the women in Johannesburg is high (Schaffer, 2011). This adds to the "stress" that many respondents constantly refer to, but at the same time, acts as a motivation for them to continue living and trying to earn a livelihood in South Africa.

6.4.2. Negative outcomes: threats and risks

For Somalis in South Africa, xenophobia in all its forms-attitudes, threats, intimidation and violence-remains the most significant risk to their lives and livelihoods. Yet for most Somalis, Mayfair has provided a place of protection from xenophobia, and many women opt to sacrifice the better economic opportunities in the smaller towns and townships across the country for this protection. In this sense, Mayfair is a unique space, as it provides protection for Somalis from the threat of violence experienced elsewhere. (I have theorised and discussed the unique configuration and creation of multiple levels of spaces in Mayfair in chapters 1 and 5). Research on the xenophobic violence experienced in South Africa has identified various factors that contributed to the anti-foreigner mobilisation (Misago, 2011; Misago & Landau, 2010). Applying this argument, it appears the relative safety in Mayfair is easy to explain: the absence of local community leaders who are vying for position and power contributes to the lack of mobilisation and agitation by locals. Although the state is weak and absent in Mayfair, this has not created an abyss of law and order. Rather, the various non-state actors present, such as mosques, faith based organisations, local businesses, and both Somali and South African community leaders, have become entrenched in the social fabric of Mayfair and have created a social order that, if not regulates the space, at least contributes to maintaining a co-existence between the various groups and communities in Mayfair. Why have these local community and business leaders not perceived Somalis as a threat? Partly this is due to many locals benefitting from the demand for their property in the area, a demand that Somalis have created. Many locals see this as their time to move out of (and up from) Mayfair, and have relinquished their ties to Mayfair for the greener pastures of suburban Johannesburg⁸⁶.

Another threat to Somali livelihoods in Johannesburg derives from their political and legal status. Most Somali hold or have applied for refugee permits, which allows them to live, work, study or trade in South Africa. Some Somalis have had refugee status for more than 10 years but have not been naturalised. This, in effect, has contained their ability to actively participate in the host country. Politically, Somalis have little representation in local or national affairs in their adopted country. Although they have some influence at ward level, this has only been possible through strategic partnerships created at an individual level with local politicians and state officials, rather than through the formation of or participation in informal processes. This is best illustrated by the following example: The Somali Community Board has established a relationship with various state and not-state bodies located in Mayfair, or close by. These are not electorally determined or formally regulated working relationships. Indeed, in Mayfair the ward councillor has repeatedly stated that there are no plans to address the issues that non-nationals face in the ward, and no mention is made of this in the Integrated Development Plan.

⁸⁶ The lack of xenophobic sentiment expressed here relates mostly to the 2008 xenophobic violence in the country in which Mayfair was relatively untouched.

The particular political position of Somalis also plays a part in this. Naturalisation rates amongst Somalis in South Africa is minimal, if not non-existent, and political representation in formal bodies and channels is absent. Most respondents have expressed little desire to participate politically in the host country, which does marginalise this part of society. Many respondents feel that there is no place for them in South Africa and make little effort to integrate. In part, this explains the reluctance amongst Somalis (and indeed other migrants) to use formal channels to meet their needs⁸⁷.

Somalis, like other migrants, and indeed many South Africans, have limited access to financial and banking services and insurance. Many businesses are started from a small amount of capital drawn from personal savings or raised by family and friends. In some instances some of the respondents took a loan from associates, both Somali and South African, and repaid it periodically. Limited access to start-up capital and business loans means most Somali owned business are small and modest in terms of distribution channels, merchandise variety, retail floor space, or shop fittings. Furthermore, most Somali businesses are not insured, citing a range of reasons: they do not have faith in this system, having never encountered it in Somalia; they feel that this it is against Islamic beliefs; they do not know what services are available in South Africa or how to access them; or they feel it is a waste of money. As a result, many Somali owned businesses are survivalist in nature and unprotected against risk.

Clan tensions

Somali culture and Islamic practices require that the needy or *bahaani* are cared for by the community. In the close-knit and physically dense area of Mayfair, this initially appeared to be common practice. Many of the respondents spoke longingly about the strong community spirit that permeated the small, ethnically diverse Somali community in Mayfair during the 1990s. However, as the community grew, ethnic divisions became more pronounced and competition for social and economic resources fragmented the fragile community ties. Added to this, the rise of Somali community organisations created a political dimension to the Somali community, which further increased tensions. Although Somalis organisations like the SCB and SASA continue to have community programmes, such as feeding and charity schemes, many of the respondents stated that these favour certain tribes only (three respondents, interview, January 5, 2010):

“SCB is for their own people only, SASA is ok, but SCB don’t care.”

“They [SCB and SASA] drive big cars and their wives have a beautiful life, while we suffer.”

⁸⁷ See Jinnah (2010b).

“We raised money for them; I sold my gold so that the Community Board and Al Bayaan could start a Madrassa, now when I take my kids there they said I have to pay every month.”

Being a woman

Somali women in Johannesburg face considerable challenges in carving out livelihoods in the city. Most of these emanate from within the Somali community itself (whereas the opportunities for women come from outside the community, as discussed earlier), and in many instances, from within the home. At the outset, I should re-emphasise the diversity of class, ethnicity and economic status amongst Somali women in Johannesburg, all of which individually and collectively influence the ways in which Somali women carve out lives and livelihoods in Johannesburg.

There is a great deal of diversity amongst Somali women in Johannesburg: there are single women with no dependents who are in South Africa to work; others are single mothers who have been forced to leave home due to either personal or political reasons, such as fleeing abusive marriages, or war; some women have come to Johannesburg to join their husbands; and others have found husbands whilst living here⁸⁸. These categories are not static; women move between these groups all the time, further adding to the complexity of any study.

Married women face a particular paradox: on one hand, they are entitled to maintenance and protection for themselves and their dependents from their husbands for the duration of the marriage and for a limited time thereafter if the marriage ends in divorce. On the other hand, many husbands shirk this responsibility in the Diaspora as the stringent social control exerted by tribal and kinship structures are weakened or absent.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the ways in which migration and livelihoods influence each other in the case of Somali women in Johannesburg, and the importance of mobility for Somalis. Livelihood strategies are diverse, multiple and constantly changing. This finding contrasts sharply with literature on urban livelihoods, which sees populations and their economic lives as static, and is both a response to the particular socio-economic context found in Johannesburg and a manifestation of historical and contemporary patterns of livelihoods amongst Somalis.

I have also demonstrated the multiple levels and actors involved in making and sustaining livelihoods amongst Somalis in Johannesburg, and the use of social networks within this. Other

⁸⁸ The reasons why women have moved to South Africa have been discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

elements of Somali migration, such as transnationalism and entrepreneurship are also present in Johannesburg, albeit in different forms.

I have also demonstrated the ways in which Somali women invoke and articulate a particular identity in Johannesburg in order to secure access to resources. This is an illustration of agency that is often missing from the literature on refugees, and refugee women in particular. The concept of agency is further demonstrated in the final section of this chapter in which I show some of the meanings of livelihoods for Somali women.

In the next chapter I turn to the outcomes of livelihoods and, more broadly, outcomes of the entire migration process for Somali women and, in doing so, bring to a close the key findings and central arguments of this dissertation.

Chapter 7: What's in it for us? Drawing out the outcomes and implications of migration for Somali women

7.1. Introduction

Wixii Xun ba Xaawa leh. (All that befalls a family comes from women.)- A Somali proverb⁸⁹

This chapter synthesises the previous three chapters with the aim of reflecting on the meanings, both positive and negative, associated with migration and settlement for the respondents in this study. Inherent in this analysis is a closer understanding of gender relations, family systems and social norms for Somali women in Johannesburg. To illustrate some of the nuanced, complex and non-linear outcomes and processes associated with migration I draw on a number of case studies of women from different tribes, social backgrounds and life experiences. Through these narratives I aim at deepening an understanding of how Somali women have: engaged and articulated livelihoods strategies; understood and accessed sexual and reproductive health services; and navigated their way within the legal and policy environment in South Africa.

I argue that although gendered experiences of migration and settlement are varied, women are able to exert some control over their own lives and that they constantly seek to renegotiate gender and social norms, but as inherent, subjective, extensions of their own desires, rather than as feminist objectives.

The outline of this chapter is as follows: first I present four different case studies to make the argument on difference and agency; thereafter I show concrete ways in which women are creating new spaces for themselves in the Diaspora, dealing with new challenges such as mental health, and old ones such as divorce and reproductive health.

7.2. Narratives

What follows in this chapter are a series of four case studies based on repeat interviews conducted between September 15, 2009 and January 2, 2011. Each of these case studies have been selected to identify several critical factors that are fundamental in understanding the overall argument that this dissertation makes.

⁸⁹ Cited in an article by Yasmeen Maxamuud, a Somali writer, Nov 15, 2011 Wardheer News.

Case study 1: (Dhuuxo)

Dhuuxo is 25 years old and is divorced with four children ages 2, 6, 9 and 10. Everything is hard when you marry young,” she told me. And her life, as young as she is, has been incredibly hard. Dhuuxo’s family fled to Kenya when she was a young girl after her father was killed in the violence at home. As undocumented, poor migrants in Kenya, Dhuuxo’s family could not afford to send her to school; as a result she can barely read or write. At the age of 15, she was married off to a man she barely knew. He was living in South Africa at the time but had travelled to Nairobi for the wedding and stayed with her for a few weeks, before returning to his work in South Africa. During this time Dhuuxo fell pregnant. She was thrilled with this event, as she felt valuable and worthwhile for the first time in her life. After she gave birth to her first child, a boy, Dhuuxo was content and proud that she was fertile and able to produce a son, who would secure her husband’s lineage and provide for her in her old age. These sentiments were confirmed when her husband asked her to join him in South Africa shortly thereafter, and sent her money for the journey. With a young baby in tow, she travelled by bus from Kenya to South Africa and joined her husband in Mayfair. Dhuuxo said that her “life was beautiful then”. Her husband took good care of her and she had no need to work. All of her needs were being met. In return she happily bore three more children. However, gradually things began to change; she says that her husband got bored of her, and even became abusive toward her. Things worsened when his sister moved closer to them in Mayfair. Dhuxoo says that her sister-in-law did not like her, because she was from a different tribe, and started interfering in her marriage, eventually coercing her husband to divorce her. She was also forced out of the marital house and, as she had no money or job and was unable to look after her children, her ex-husband got custody over them. Dhuuxo then had to rely on the goodwill of other Somali women to meet her basic needs, such as shelter and food. When I first met her she had stopped by at a shop of another Somali woman I was interviewing. She joined our discussion and shared lunch with us. At that time I had no idea of the difficulties she had faced and found her to be a charming woman with an easy-going manner. When I later interviewed her, I wondered how she could laugh at our jokes when she had so much heartache. Her response was that her life should still go on. At our last interview she was, at the advice of another Somali woman, pursuing legal action against her ex-husband for visitation rights and had approached an Islamic organisation to secure maintenance for herself (in line with Islamic law), which she hoped she could eventually use to request joint custody of her children.

Case study 2: (Fartuun): “I just want a good life”

Fartuun began thinking of moving out of Somalia in 2006 following the assassination of two of her colleagues. She was a journalist-in-training in central Somalia at the time, reporting for an American radio company. It was this that made Fartuun and her colleagues a target. Many considered those working for Western companies, and particularly for American ones, as

traitors or worse, spies. Fartuun had never considered leaving Somalia before this event. She was born just before Syed Barre was overthrown and her life was marked by the political upheaval in her country. This was the only life she knew and she accepted it, for she believed that even amidst the chaos and violence, she would be able to make a life for herself and reach her dreams. More importantly Somalia was home: her friends and family were there, she knew the language and customs and she felt that she belonged. Although some of her half-siblings were living in Kenya and Norway, migration was not an option for her as she had been able to get an education and had the prospect of a good job in her country. However, that all changed one day in November 2007 when her colleagues were killed. Fartuun was forced to go into hiding and leave the city, settling in Mogadishu where she stayed with family for a few months. During this time she realised that her dream of being a journalist was no longer possible in Somalia. For Fartuun, migration was an option sparked by a particular event, and her decision was made in order to find opportunities for study, work and to “live a good life,” as she put it. Yet the decision to leave her country was not an easy one to make: she needed to consider whether the protection that migrating would offer would offset the betrayal she felt in leaving behind her mother and younger siblings. In the end, migration was an option for her because of two additional, related factors: the company she worked for firstly arranged a route out of Somalia for her, and secondly offered her a job reporting on the Diaspora. So, armed with the economic muscle that this gave her, Fartuun left Somalia in 2008 and settled temporarily in Kenya as an undocumented migrant. Although she was safe there, she still felt dissatisfied living on the “fringes of society” without being able to enjoy full access to educational and work opportunities. She did not feel that she could find the life she wanted in Kenya. In bustling Eastleigh⁹⁰ she heard from other Somalis of a country where Somalis are easily granted refugee status and able to work or study, and from which she could perhaps even be offered resettlement in the United States or Europe. For Fartuun, this new country, South Africa, represented her dream of a better life, and she once again made the decision to move. This time, though, preparations for the long and costly journey to South Africa would take her several months, and at times she even considered cancelling when she encountered setbacks in her travel plans. Eventually, though, her desire to escape the stagnating life in Nairobi propelled her to finalise her plans and leave.

The journey was a long and difficult one, which included: passing through four countries in two months; travelling clandestinely on road in the hands of several agents who would use back roads and cut through ravines to avoid being detected by authorities; sleeping in buses; and going without food or water for hours and even days. She hadn’t heard of these difficulties from the Somalis who had made the journey to South Africa; they had emphasized the life *after*

⁹⁰ A suburb in Nairobi where many Somalis live.

the journey, so she had thus been unprepared for the journey itself. Several times she felt like turning back and would have if she had the money and know-how to do so.

Once in South Africa, though, she realised that life was better than what she had experienced in Somalia or Kenya. She obtained an asylum seeker permit on arrival, which enabled her to move freely in the country with documentation and gave her the right to work, study or trade; shortly thereafter she had a full refugee permit. She resumed her reporting duties for the American company and easily integrated into the Somali community in Mayfair, which, although dominated by the Ogden tribe (to which she did not belong), was fairly receptive to all Somalis. After three years in the country, Fartuun says that “life in South Africa is beautiful if you have money”, but for a poorly paid journalist who has a large family to support at home, she is unable to enjoy most of the resources around her. In particular, she is unable to access the costly tertiary education that she covets. Hence, once again she is thinking of moving, this time as a resettled refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the United States, where she hopes she will find her better life. But this process too is slow, bureaucratic and uncertain. She had applied more than a year prior, gone for several medical examinations and submitted various forms and letters. She feels that she is still in *buufis*, dreaming of a better life, and being consumed in the search of it in the meantime.

Case study 3: (Naqan)

It is hard to believe that Naqan is only 24: her life is so full of dramatic events that others might never experience in a lifetime. She was born in Kismayo, but moved to Kenya with her family at a young age. She told me that as a young girl she was very petite and small in size, and would often get teased, but her father would hug her and tell her that she was his treasure. She attended school in Kenya and was living as normal a life as is possible for a refugee. She begins her story when she was 13 years old she went to visit her aunt in another city.

I was on holiday and went to my aunt’s house, in a rural area. There I saw that there were preparations for a wedding. I went to play with some young kids and someone came to put henna on our hands; I was having a good time, laughing and playing. I didn’t realize it was my wedding that I was being prepared for it. My father had arranged my marriage to a man I didn’t know and had not even seen, as part of a debt he had. I tried to run away but my mother said to me “please respect my [*mother’s*] dignity and do as your father says.” I was stuck on this farm, miles away from anywhere. I got married here. It was rainy and the grass was green and long. I remember it all so well. I remember the long, long grass, and I thought ‘I have to escape’. So I ran way that night. I ran and ran in that long grass until my legs couldn’t move. I kept thinking they would find me, I was so scared. I was hungry and tired. I was lost in that grass and the bush- I didn’t know where I was.

The next day I saw a stray dog and I decided to follow him. He took me to a house. Inside I found a woman. I told her my story and she felt sorry for me. She wanted to take me to the police but I said no because I was scared they make me return to my father or worse my husband. I spent 11 days with her. On the 12th day I saw a man coming toward the house. I didn't even wait to hear what they were talking about, because I knew they had found me and that he was coming for me. I ran away again. I walked in the bush and on the gravel roads for days until I met a soldier who helped me. He gave me food and clothes. I told him my story and he too was very sympathetic- he wanted to go to my family and arrest them but I told him no. I knew my father was not at home (he would be living with another wife at that time of the month) and I didn't want my mother to be in trouble. So the soldier took me to an old woman who he said would look after me. I knew the woman: it was my grandmother's sister, but she did not recognize me. She was very kind to me and wanted to take me to her family but I refused because I knew someone would recognize me. I stayed with her for a month and two days. I learnt to read the Quran and I told her about my story but did not tell her that my father was her nephew. She was very angry about it all. Then after I felt safe enough to trust her I told her who I was. She still supported me and said that she would confront my father.

We went to my mother's house. My mother had not eaten since the 'wedding'; she and my father [*had*] had a big fight and he had gone. My mother and I decided that if I was ever to have a life I had to leave the area. I wanted to go to Nairobi, where we had some distant family, but I had no ID card as my father had given it to my 'husband'. I could not travel without an ID card as the police would have arrested me or worse returned me to my husband. So we asked the soldier for help; he promised to protect me and took us to my husband. This is when I saw him for the first time; he was an old man who had two daughters. He refused to divorce me or give me my ID card. The soldier threatened to arrest him and called the police. I was so scared the whole time that I would be forced to stay with him. I thought that all my difficulties of running away were for nothing. I could not believe that I had put myself at risk like this, especially after I saw my 'husband'. I knew I would never be able to live with a person like that. But I was lucky, the police came and there was a big scene – everyone was shouting and screaming- but the soldier kept his word and protected me. Finally my 'husband' gave me my ID. I went back to my mother and greeted her, and then to my grandmother's sisters house to start preparing for my journey to Nairobi.

Nairobi was scary and big and different. Although I stayed with family, I felt alone and hurt. The reality of my life hit me then. I cried for 23 years in Nairobi. People I knew helped and sent me for counselling. I learnt to heal slowly in Nairobi. I also heard of

South Africa; I thought I needed a new life, so once again I made preparations for a journey.

I came here in 2004. Life in South Africa has been good to me, God has been kind and he has given me many blessings here. I was always reading the Quran and trying to be close to God. My religion helped me to heal. I got another chance in life; I believed in love again and I married someone of my choice in 2007. I am pregnant now and am so happy, *alhamdulillah*, I learnt to even forgive my father. I heard that he was very ill so I went to Kenya to see him. My husband gave me money; I spent 7 000 (USD) to take him to hospital. Why did I do this? I forgive him; he is my father. But I had to leave home, my mother my childhood, everything to find the happiness I have now.

Case study 4: (Amine)

Amine left Somalia in 1995 due to the war and came to South Africa by land, crossing many borders on foot with three of her children. She has no other adults with her to assist, and no men to protect her. She settled in Mayfair in 1997, within the small Somali community. She received some help and short-term grocery assistance from other Somalis and a local FBO, and began selling some of these supplies to sustain herself. Eventually she was able to open a small business in the city but had to close it after being robbed. She opened another elsewhere and became active in the community. As a single mother, she felt drawn to other women and began holding informal support groups at home where women could talk and help each other socially and financially. She received some funding from the Jesuit Refugee Service, an international NGO, and opened a small school and women's centre in 2000. But after a few years, the NGO began imposing Christian missionary messages in the school and encouraged the women to attend church. As a Muslim she opposed their idea and, eventually, funding for her project ended. She continues to help other women where she can by giving information and support.

Following a spate of robberies in 2006 and 2007, she closed her business and started trading from home. She stocks groceries, cigarettes and airtime, buying small quantities in cash from local wholesalers. Most of her customers are those that live close-by. Her rent is paid by a local Muslim man through the annual charity that he is obliged (by Islamic principles) to give annually. She is positive about local Muslims; she finds them generous and helpful and often draws on them to provide material assistance for her family and other Somali women.

In 2009, she started working as a translator for the Crown Mines office of the Department of Home Affairs. There she provides language support in Somali, Arabic and Swahili to refugees and asylum seekers.

None of her children have permanent jobs. They assist by running the house-shop in her absence and try and get short term work whenever possible.

Amina complains about stress: she has many expenses and little income, being a single mother to 6 children is challenging, and not having documents to travel is frustrating. In Somalia she had lived a good life: her husband was a university professor, and her father, a diplomat. She had a big house, servants and an easy life. She had her own small business, “everyone in Somalia had their own business or worked for the civil service”, she says. She travelled often, to India, Dubai and South Africa buying gold, material, clothing and electronics to resell back home. Then the war intensified and she had to flee. They lost their home, her husband was killed and nobody was safe.

She has no family in South Africa and none back home that can support her. She is in no position to remit- her struggle is to feed her family daily. Now she survives on her meagre sales and people’s charity. She hates this life but it is all she has. (

7.3. Analysis

These cases portray some of the multi-layered dimensions of gender relations in the Diaspora. They show that family dynamics and gender norms are very much an extension and a result of prevailing practices at home: had Dhuuxo had an education at home she probably would not have married at an early age nor been financially dependent on her husband. At the same time her case also illustrates the different desires of women: to bear children so as to prove fertility and be looked after by a man. Fartuun, on the other hand, was educated and independent, which enabled her to support herself in the Diaspora and to make her own decisions regarding migration and onward migration. On the other hand, Naqan has found that her life as a woman *before* migrating was very different to the life she now has in South Africa. Whilst before she was subjugated to the decisions made by her father, she now is in a position to exert some control over her own life (she is now married to man of her own choosing and had travelled to Somalia and spent substantial money on her father’s health care).

These cases also show the renegotiation of some gender roles and social systems. Dhuuxo is mobilising knowledge and resources in the Diaspora to fight back; what initially would have been left up to her family’s position and mediated through tribal systems, is now an independent battle fought through the legal system. Also entwined in that battle, is Dhuuxo’s mobilisation of religious laws and systems to strengthen her position. In contrast, Amine has always been an independent woman; in part this is due to her family’s position in the tribal system, where they enjoyed a prominent, powerful and wealthy role. Amine was able to have a wider network of information, support and capital to draw on when she eventually had to flee. In part too, it is due to Amine own skills, self-determination and drive for success that she is

able to survive in Johannesburg. She is savvy enough to know how to cope in different situations, using her language skills and determined manner to find work, and was able to mobilise Christian and later Muslim donors to draw resources. For Naqan, the journey toward healing has been long and difficult, yet she is now able to be a woman of her own worth, despite enormous challenges.

The ability to identify and mobilise networks is a characteristic of agency amongst Somali women that I have drawn attention to throughout this dissertation. As is evident, though, the articulation of it differs considerably. For Fartuun, the financial and logistical support provided by her company was instrumental in her ability to leave Somalia. For Amine, it was the knowledge she had gained in networks in Somalia that allowed her to build new networks in South Africa. For Dhuxoo, it was a much more difficult task: alone and vulnerable in a foreign land, she relied on the goodwill of a few Somali women to make it through each day.

7.4. Creating new social and economic spaces and networks for women

One of the most significant and meaningful outcomes of life in Johannesburg, for many of the respondents of this study, has been the creation and reshaping of social and economic spaces and networks for women. In some cases, these were purposeful actions by women who strategically located and leveraged conduits to access social and economic resources. In other cases, the opportunities were stumbled on or were a by-product of other processes of engagement with locals.

One of the strongest illustrations of an economic space created by women in Johannesburg is the savings schemes. These are informal but highly regulated arrangements called *ayuuto* and exist within groups comprised of about six to eight women who commit to save a set amount of money each day (or week); in turn, this money is used to pay out one member of the group. The payout rotates so that a cycle of payment for each member becomes fixed. Money received from the payout is often not used for daily consumables, but rather for remitting or to invest back into business activities. The key point of this system, though, is that it has been created by women to meet their own needs outside of formal or traditional market oriented mechanisms for earning, saving or obtaining cash. It also strengthens social ties amongst members of the savings group as people are dependent on each other's financial and social circumstances and are more likely to understand and support members of their own group with whom they have daily contact (Schaffer, 2012).

One woman who is part of a savings group describes it as follows:

It is very important for me to have this support. It helps me to remain committed, to save and also not to get stressed. I know that if things are going bad for me a few days, I

am going to have money after six days, so things will be better then. (respondent, interview, August 9, 2011)

The savings scheme is particularly useful for the number of small scale businesswomen and traders in Mayfair for two reasons: the scheme is an opportunity for them to mitigate against a volatility in sales, and it provides a reasonably safer way for them to 'bank' their daily takings. The latter is particularly pertinent in light of the low usage of regular banking institutions amongst respondents.

Another important economic space created by women refers to the co- and sub-utilisation of 'commercial' space. In most instances the commercial space I refer to is a shop that is leased, although it can also mean a portion of a house or outbuilding that is used for commercial purposes. What is significant (although difficult) is how women have, for moral and economic reasons, let out space within their houses and shops, or provided space for the storage of goods in their shops for women who trade on the street.

One example of this is Huda, who permits Iman to trade from a portion of her garage in central Mayfair. Huda has a number of shops on the premises. When I asked about the arrangement Huda told me that she knew Iman was a single mother who had young children to support. She felt that she could assist her while at the same time benefitting from a portion of the sales that Iman made and profiting from the overspill of her clients.

Later, though, I found Iman on the street and asked her what happened. She said that she had had an argument with Huda, and had been forced to leave. When I probed further from others it turned out that Huda had grown jealous of Iman's success and had wanted her to go. Iman survived, though, and promptly started selling from another corner nearby, storing her goods at another Somali woman's shop.

A third way in which women have carved economic spaces for themselves has been within the networks and fabric of faith based organisations in Mayfair, and in particular with one organisation, SANZAF, the Islamic NGO with national offices, which is self-funded through member contributions. The Mayfair office is the head office and has seven staff, of which one is Somali. SANZAF offers a range of services to all faith groups, including: food vouchers; material assistance with rent, school fees, and accommodation; bursaries for tertiary education; counselling; business development; and support and skills development.

SANZAF regards the Somalis as a legitimate target group due to their status as refugees and their Islamic dress and speech. Most Somalis who come to SANZAF have letters of referrals from their local Imam or community board, which further adds to their credibility. In an interview with representatives from SANZAF, I learnt that most Somalis who come for assistance are women. SANZAF sees women as more honest than men but also more

vulnerable and they, therefore, are more likely to receive assistance. In addition, as many Somalis live in Mayfair, close to the organisation, and have a traceable address, the population is seen as accessible for verification and monitoring purposes (interview, February 11, 2010).

One example of a beneficiary of SANZAF is Naimo, who has been in Mayfair since 1997, and was directed to SANZAF by local Muslims. She and her three children received monthly grocery coupons, clothes and school fees. In 2008 her eldest child completed high school and was funded by SANZAF to study further. Naimo is just one of scores of Somalis who are receiving regular financial and material assistance from SANZAF. Word of the organisation quickly spread and it is now established that if a Somali woman is in difficulty, she should seek help from SANZAF.

Social spaces

Although most respondents stated there is little support available for them in Mayfair, and many lamented the individualistic way of living that is so different from Somalia, some women did speak of finding ways in which they could articulate an individual identity.

Beydan is young, single and independent. Although she misses her family and friends in Somalia, and at times yearns for the open and spontaneous way of life she was accustomed to, at the same time she finds that in Mayfair she can be herself, away from restrictions imposed by her family and her tribe. "If I was at home I would be married with four children," she often said to me during my fieldwork. "Here, although people talk about me and ask why you aren't getting married, the pressure is not like it is at home." (respondent, interviews and discussions, March 11, 2011; September 19, 2011; March 3, 2012)

Although she was working in Somalia too, here she has greater control over her salary. She still has responsibilities toward her family but is in a greater position to determine the amount and frequency of her remittances, whereas at home she would hand over most of her earnings to her mother.

Another significant social aspect of Somali women's lives, which I gradually came to know of during this research, is the degree to which women were confiding in and getting advice from each other. Again, this is not new: much of Somali life is heavily gendered, and women often rely on each other for support. What is significant, though, is the extent to which this female camaraderie is crossing over tribal lines. Dhuuxo's case, mentioned earlier, is a good illustration of this: she is 25 and divorced with three young children who live with her husband's family. Her tribe is not well represented in Mayfair. Nevertheless, she relies on a loose circle of women from different tribes to get by. When I met her the first time, she was sitting in Ayan's shop in

Amal. She often would come there not just to have someone to talk to, but also to share lunch with Ayan and to plot ways that she could get back at her husband. It was Ayan, the astute businesswomen, who sent Dhuuxo to the family court or to the local social services to get visiting rights for her children. When I asked many of the respondents why they felt that social interactions extended across tribal lines in South Africa, their response was very similar to the sentiments expressed by a leader of the Somali Community Board:

In Somalia it is difficult to bring all Somalis together, because people are attached to their tribal heritage, But in the Diaspora, Somalis unite in the face of common challenges, we assist each other, we need to as there is no other way to succeed. (respondent, interview, February 24, 2011)

And it is this (re)articulation of new identities and the emergence of new forms of social membership, which form a significant pattern that has emerged amongst Somali women in Johannesburg. These are constructed and manifested in various ways. Many women who find themselves marginalised by some of the entrenched Somali patriarchal practices-such as male dominated networks of trade, capital and information, which are reproduced in Johannesburg-turn to new forms of social membership. These include women initiating their own social networks that assist with finding employment, childcare, housing, money and information. The example of engagement with the host community, through membership in religious groups, to leverage financial resources in the form of school fees, cash transfers and grocery coupons is another illustration of this. These arrangements are not always grand plans or a strategic decisions amongst Somalis, but rather everyday practices that have subconsciously evolved as survival strategies.

Food security

For Somali women food security is not dependent wholly on livelihoods. I met several women during the course of my fieldwork who had no source of livelihoods, but who survived day-to-day by relying on help from other Somali women. I often came across these women, like Dhuxxo for example, who were sitting in the restaurants, homes or shops of other Somali women. This help is very tactical in nature and is mostly manifested by a woman spending the day with another woman or family and thereby drawing on the latter's provisions for food. It is more of a social contract based on moral obligation than an overt plea for assistance. This type of dependency is not seen as a burden amongst Somalis. Rather, it reflects an obligation (and perhaps even a desire amongst some) to share food with those in their midst. As one woman told me: "there is no joy in eating alone, I will wait until someone comes and eat a little with them than eat more on my own" (respondent, interview, March 29, 2011). Aside from the religious, cultural, or traditional practice and beliefs that this reflects, I wish to emphasise

another dimension of it: the ways in which women identify and leverage a common practice in Somali society to meet their everyday needs in the Diaspora.

7.5. Pushing the private public – using the South African court and law systems to address domestic violence marital disputes and custody

Case study: Waqan

Waqan is a successful businesswoman who owns a string of shops and other businesses in Mayfair. She employs a number of Somali, South African, and other migrants in her business and she is well respected by her customers and employees. Waqan, though, has a problem: her husband is dominating and physically abuses her. The first time I met her she was pregnant with a fourth child, something she was ambivalent about: “it is from God,” she had told me, as she bustled around one of her businesses seeing to customers. Despite this show of her fertility, which should have made her husband happy, she claims that her husband would ill-treat her, including hitting her at night and demanding her money. Over the next 15 months I visited her several times and witnessed or heard of several key events in her life. Not surprisingly, given the physical abuse she was receiving, she miscarried shortly after I first met her, which left her distraught as she felt she had ‘failed’ as a mother. As she was recovering in bed, her husband began to take control of her businesses and had arguments with customers, which damaged her affairs. She decided to file for divorce and opened a case of domestic violence against her husband at the police station, which she later dropped. One day as I approached her she was very excited and proudly told me of how she had gotten her husband ‘arrested’. She was referring to the summons that the court had delivered to her husband regarding Waqan’s divorce application. Shortly thereafter, her divorce was finalised and her husband moved out of her home. Waqan was extremely happy with and proud of what she had accomplished and her story reverberated throughout Mayfair. I often heard of other women taking about how they too would get their husbands ‘arrested’ if they ill-treated them. Amongst the men, though, I heard a different story: that Waqan was hanging out with the ‘wrong’ people (a scant reference to some of us researchers who frequented her place) who were influencing her to act badly toward her husband. Amongst the men Waqan was now perceived as a threat to their lives and customs, and they were weary of their wives associating with her.

Waqan’s case illustrates some of the new problems facing Somali women in the Diaspora. Divorce amongst Somalis in Mayfair is fairly common, for two interlinked reasons: a weaker role played by the extended family and tribe in regulating behaviour through direct intervention and indirect social pressure to conform, and a greater desire amongst men and women to seek

happiness rather than maintain norms. These factors have shaped how women in particular deal with domestic issues such as violence, divorce, custody and maintenance.

Migration has often been conceptualised as a socially changing phenomenon, which disrupts social environments and weakens social control (Organista & Organista, 1987). However, it also provides an opportunity to redefine gender and cultural norms (Magis-Rodriguez et al, 2004). For many Somalis, migration has significantly changed the composition and roles of households and families. Traditionally, Somali households have consisted of intergenerational extended families led by a senior male member, in whom authority and allegiance was vested. Women played a minimal role in decision-making, even if they were economically active. Single women lived with their fathers or extended families until marriage and remained with their husband's family in the event of widowhood. In the event of a divorce women would return to their fathers' homes or remarry (Lewis, 1994). The Somali household was also considered part of a larger social structure, as it belonged to a group of families that made up the clan⁹¹. The clan, which was usually dominated by senior male members, offered protection to its members but also demanded loyalty and adherence to social norms (Lewis, 1998, 2008).

Although some of these aspects of family and tribal life in Johannesburg remain, for the most part the social fabric of Somalis is very different. Divorces are much more common in the Diaspora; many women migrated alone or with their children; and many are in temporary relationships with men. These factors have changed the composition of the traditional Somali household. Many households, as a result, consist of single parent (mother) families with fragmented or weak ties to the wider clan. This change, together with the wider social and policy context in South Africa (which I turn to later) has simultaneously created opportunities and posed risks for Somali women in the Diaspora. On the one hand, the weakening of social norms that govern gender relations has allowed many women to take a more active social and economic role, thereby changing their status amongst their families in Johannesburg and at home. On the other hand, it has also increased the social, physical and economic risk that women face at home and in society, due to the absence of an extended family network and a (male) protector.

7.6. Health and reproductive services- becoming aware of and asserting health rights

Another significant part of Somali women's lives that has been a recurring theme in my fieldwork is the effect of mobility on sexual and reproductive health. Initially there was no overt focus on sexual and reproductive health rights, or indeed any aspect of public health, within this research. However, as I continued to engage with Somali women, it became apparent that

⁹¹ I discuss clan and tribes later in this chapter.

most of my discussions on migration and settlement in Johannesburg had a personal dimension, which was projected toward respondent's own bodies. Many women couched their experiences of migration and its effect on their bodies, and used their physical bodies to convey their emotional sense of being. For instance, many women expressed the pressures of daily life in South Africa as, "I am stressed, my body hurts" (five respondents, interview in Mayfair, May 28, 2009; August 14, 2009; January 11, 2011). Other women chose to wear veils to cover their faces in order to hide from the shame they felt from selling *meera* on the street.

For Somalis, many aspects of sexual and reproductive health, such as choices around contraception, sexuality, sexual behaviour and maternal health care, are governed by cultural practices and social norms. Although this varies according to class, ethnicity, generation and socio-economic status, one central assumption can be drawn to describe the impact of societal structure on claims for rights: the family, or clan, is essential to Somali identity, and social norms which strengthen family life, honour and harmony are embodied in everyday life and social rules which govern interaction.

Although sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) is defined as "the right to make choices regarding ones sexuality and reproduction, provided that these choices respect the rights of others to bodily integrity, ...and the right to access information and services needed to support these choices," there is no universally recognised definition of SRHR amongst international organisations. There are two broad ways in which sexual and reproductive health matters have been conceptualised and addressed in policy (IDS, 2006). On the one hand there is the tendency to view SRHR as a problem that must be controlled by adopting certain types of morally correct behaviour. On the other hand, there is move amongst development agencies and some governments to frame SRHR as a rights issue, which in turn is interconnected with universal norms such as equality and human rights. Inherent to the latter is the Beijing Declaration on Women, which states "the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibility on matters relating to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health" (UN, 1995, Paragraph 96, p. 29). In many community-based societies, SRHR are defined and claimed according to group norms and needs (Izugbara & Undie, 2008), rather than as individual rights.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 120 million women are victims of female circumcision or female genital mutilation (FGM)⁹², yet prevention and protection from FGM is not explicitly included in many definitions of SRHR, even though it constitutes a critical component to the realisation of health and human rights, due to its nature and effect on

⁹² WHO 2013 Factsheet, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

sexuality and reproduction⁹³. As FGM is intricately tied with traditional and cultural practices, efforts to understand and address FGM are complex. The increasing numbers of women who are migrating means that what once was a spatially constrained national issue is now on the global agenda. Nation states too, are forced to think about what constitutes public health and how to address this in new, inclusive and innovative ways, given the changing composition and needs of their populations (Thierfelder et al, 2005, p. 86).

Sexual and reproductive health rights include the right to achieve "the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services," (UNHCR, 2008) and are considered an integral part of the right to health, and in turn, a critical component of human rights. Historically, the right to health has been enshrined in two of the most important international documents on human rights: the 1946 Constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO); and Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHCR, 2008). At the national level too, most states have affirmed the substance of the right to health by ratifying international conventions and ensuring that this right is reflected in national legislation. In South Africa there is a strong policy commitment to the advancement of sexual and reproductive health rights given the high level of HIV infections in the country (Maharaj & Rogan, 2007).

Rights as socially determined constructs

For Somalis, most rights, including health rights, are tied to cultural norms, thus shifts in social conditions affect the interpretation and realisation of rights. This paradigm departs from an understanding of rights as locally produced and negotiated within and through social structures rather than as universal entitlements (Polzer, 2008). Inherent to this understanding is the need to balance the rights of the individual with the needs of the group in order to create a stable and harmonious social environment. This is not unique to Somalis; an element of this is found in many group-centred societies throughout Africa.⁹⁴ However, the prominence and influence of tribal affiliation and the important role that tribal leaders play in governing Somali society emphasise the communal nature of rights. The implication for sexual and reproductive health rights is simple: women (and men) are considered part of a larger social structure, and therefore a women's decision-making capacity in relation to her body is influenced by the needs of the family and the larger tribal group.

The social structure of Somalis varies from region to region and differs between rural and urban households. In essence, though, it is a patriarchal society in which male children are sought and

⁹³ See for example, the WHO, and Swiss Centre for International Health at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute.

⁹⁴ See for instance Izugbara & Undie (2008).

valued in order to ensure continuity of the family lineage and to ensure economic stability. Somali society consists of two, interrelated strands: the immediate family and the larger tribe. The immediate family comprises direct kin within three generations, bound by blood-ties or marriage. The larger tribe is made up of a group of families who are loosely related and who share a common ancestry, land and some social customs. Inter-marriage within tribes is common and is a means to ensure that longevity and strength of the tribe. Marriage between tribes does occur but is often wrought with problems. One of these is that children born out of this type of a union will take the tribal affiliation of their father (Lewis, 2008).

Given the importance of reproduction in Somali society, traditionally a woman's primary role was to nurture and increase the size of the family (Kapteijst, 1994). This is markedly different than the legal framework in Somalia, which promotes gender equality and makes little distinction on the roles and rights of men and women. This distinction again points to the central role that social norms play in governing everyday life. The fertility and femininity of women is closely guarded and celebrated. This is central to a woman's identity and is marked by a series of events: starting in early girlhood, circumcision; a wedding; and the birth of a child. Before marriage a woman belongs to the clan of her father, and her reputation and honour are guarded by her male relatives. If she marries, this duty, and her tribal affiliation, shift to her husband's clan. It is important to note that the responsibility men have over women, in terms of protection and maintenance, is embedded and enforced through the extended family. In the case of divorce or widowhood, a woman could return to her original household but would have to give up any claims to her former (or late) husband's property and their children.

Health practices, like other rights and practices, do not exist in isolation, but rather are connected to a larger set of conditions that affect how they are prioritised and negotiated. For Somali women, claims for health rights, such as the use of contraceptives, for instance, depends on other socio-economic conditions such as livelihoods, rights to property, and inheritance and maintenance rights. Often a woman makes trade-offs on certain rights in order to be economically stable, or to ensure that the honour and position of her family is not compromised. In this regard, health rights are fundamentally linked to women's rights.

New households, new rules?

Migration leads to a fragmentation of family ties and a disruption of the social environment (Kwankye, Organista & Organista, 1997), and this is felt most strongly at the household level. The composition of the Somali household in Johannesburg has significantly changed as a result of forced migration. In Somalia households usually consist of three generational extended families, led by a senior male member. Women are married into households, and primarily carry the responsibilities of homemaking and child rearing. They have minimal decision-making roles at home, even if they are economically active. In Johannesburg, Somali households are

diverse and range in size and composition as explained in earlier chapters. The smaller size, different composition and fluidity of households mean that household relations are different from those in Somalia. Many homes are comprised of single mothers or a group of women who live together and make decisions individually or jointly. For these women, who are either single or have children, the changes in household composition and functioning means that they have a greater degree of power and decision-making regarding their sexual and reproductive behaviour.

“I will never get married to a Somali man,” says one feisty young woman. “They can date⁹⁵ me if they want to, but I will decide who gets to touch me” (Somali woman, interview, March 12, 2011). Another woman explains, “I am 23 [*years old*] if I was in Somalia I would have been married already to some old guy. But here, there is no one to pressure me to get married. I will get married when I want” (Somali woman, interview, April 1, 2011).

The social pressure on young women to marry and have children, and on young girls to get circumcised, is exerted from older women within their own families. The lack of intergenerational households in Johannesburg reduces this influence. In many of the households I visited, with two or three families of single mothers living together, the women spoke of the sense of freedom they experienced in raising their children independently. Fatimo⁹⁶, who has four children and lives with her sister and her children said, “I have not had my daughter circumcised because that is something they do in Somalia.” *But there are many women here in South Africa who continue this practice*, I argued. “Then they haven’t really left Somalia,” she retorted (respondent, interview, March 17, 2010; August 19, 2011).

For Fatimo and others like her, living in the Diaspora is an opportunity to redefine and reinterpret nationality, tradition and customs. They hold a different representation of Somalia. When I visited Fatimo, music videos of glamorous Somali singers were playing on a DVD against a backdrop of cascading waterfalls and lush gardens. “This is Somalia,” says Fatimo. “Our country is full of love and beauty; this is what I want my children to know.”

For married women, though, it appears that less has changed. One Somali woman, who is an active breadwinner in her household, has minimal decision-making power at home.

My money means nothing. In fact it is worse. Now I work hard to earn money and he [*the husband*] takes it to buy *meera*. In my business I am an important person, everyone listens to me, even the men [*whom she employs*]. But the minute I walk through the door and go home, I am nothing. I have to do as he says. (respondent, interviews, December 11, 2009; January 14, 2010; September 7, 2011)

⁹⁵ Amongst Somalis dating refers to courtship, including kissing and physical intimacy, but excludes sex.

⁹⁶ Name has been changed.

What she is referring to is the sexual demands of her husband. She does not want to have sex with him for a number of reasons: she suspects that he is unfaithful and could pass on a sexually transmitted disease; she says categorically that there is no love in the marriage, which she feels is a prerequisite to physical intimacy; and she doesn't want to have any more children. But she is unable to divorce him, not because of economic dependency (she is a successful businesswoman) but rather due to the fear of stigma that divorced women experience. Thus she continues to stay in an unhappy marriage, with limited ability to make decisions relating to sexual and reproductive behaviour.

Aside from the social pressure which influences how married women relate to their bodies, there is also internal pressure and tensions that women exert on themselves. I came across many women who were economically independent, yet remained in marriages in which they have limited control over their bodies because they accepted that this was the order of things. The following excerpts highlight this:

I don't like my marriage, but every single Somali man is like this. (respondent, interview, April 9, 2011)

As long as I can earn my money and support my family at home and my kids here, I am grateful for my life. (respondent, interview, July 31, 2011)

During these interviews it became apparent that some women made trade-offs with themselves: they were willing to relinquish entitlement to certain rights, such as the right to make decisions regarding their sexual behaviour within a marriage or to have access to contraceptives, in order to realise other rights, such as earning and managing a livelihood, or receiving protection and status from the broader Somali society.

Difficult conditions conditioning behaviour

In the next two sections, I turn to the complex set of policy and social conditions that Somalis find in Johannesburg and show how these affect the interpretation and realisation of sexual and reproductive behaviour amongst Somali women. Somali society is relatively conservative, sexually. Sexual relations outside of marriage are not very common and attract a great deal of stigma, and matters relating to sexuality are rarely discussed in the public domain. In Somalia, the strong tribal leadership and authority of elderly family members regulate these types of social relations. In the absence of this social pressure in the Diaspora, a different kind of social space has evolved in which certain types of behaviour became commonplace. Amongst these are the following: quick and secret marriages, undertaken without following the protocol of involving the family of the groom and the bride; temporary marriages; a high divorce rate; and sexual relations outside of marriage. Some of this has increased the social and economic

vulnerability of women and has placed them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The erosion of traditional practices in which the man is the breadwinner and the woman is the homemaker, has had a number of effects on Somali society in Johannesburg. Firstly, the absence of a stable, secure source of livelihood from a male provider has made many women economically vulnerable. Without much formal training or experience in work or trade, their opportunities to support themselves and their children are limited. Despite this, many women in Johannesburg have successfully opened small businesses or engaged in other livelihood ventures to earn a living.⁹⁷ Some women, though, adopted another strategy: (re)marriage. One example of this is Ifrah⁹⁸ who is 36 years old and has nine children with nine different Somali men. I interviewed Ifrah's mother who told me:

My daughter is a single mother. Here in South Africa there is no one to help her, the Somali organisations do nothing to help. (respondent, interview, September 7, 2009)

I asked her if something like this would happen in Somalia, and she emphatically shook her head. I was intrigued by what I had heard about Ifrah and I asked another group of young women what their thoughts on this issue are:

In Somalia, the whole family is there to help you; first you can't even get divorced so easily like you get divorced here, your husband's family will negotiate with your family if there are problems, he can't just walk out and even if you are a single mother people have to help you, here there is no one. (group of three women, interview, September 8, 2009)

I later learnt that this is a growing trend in which Somali women enter into a relationship with a Somali man and have a child in order to cement the marriage and ensure that the husband supports the family, which he does for a while. Later, though, the man leaves without paying any maintenance for his children. Desperate, the woman enters into a new relationship with a different man, and again has children to show him that she is fertile. The cycle continues, ending in a situation like Ifrah's.

Progressive laws, pressing realities

Although the right to primary health care for all residents in South Africa, including migrants refugees, is guaranteed in the Constitution, the highest law in South Africa, migrants' access to

⁹⁷See for example, "No place to go but up- urban refugee livelihoods in Johannesburg" (WRC, 2011).

⁹⁸ Name has been changed.

health rights and services in the public sphere is constrained due to xenophobic attitudes from hospital staff and a number of practical reasons: language; awareness of rights; and poor information on the parts of hospital clerks and nurses on what foreigners are entitled to (Vearey & Richter, 2008). The educational and skills levels of Somalis in Johannesburg vary: most have had schooling of some sort, although many have not completed secondary school. A few have a tertiary qualification whilst some have had no schooling at all, and can barely read or write. Similarly, some women speak English very well, whilst a few speak only Somali. Many women have a basic command of English that does not allow them to accurately explain medical problems or interact with doctors or nurses on technical medical issues. Thus, many Somali women are unable to effectively explain issues to, and understand the advice of medical personnel. Furthermore, many women do not feel comfortable discussing their bodies with, or being subjected to physical examination by male doctors. This creates a strained and frustrated environment in which health rights are often not realised.

Reproductive health care is of the most pressing health related issues for Somali women in Johannesburg. Somalis generally have a high birth rate, and the Diaspora is no exception. Thus, women are most likely to seek medical help during pregnancy and childbirth. Most women opt to use public health care facilities due to the high cost associated with private treatment. A particular constraint for Somali women in accessing reproductive healthcare is the lack of knowledge amongst nurses and doctors on female circumcision or FGM. Many Somali women recount the humiliation they felt when a medical professional in South Africa first noticed that they were circumcised (four women, focus group interview, June 11, 2009):

They thought something had happened to us, the doctor's face was white [*with shock*].

I tried to explain what happens due to circumcision but the nurses don't understand. They shout at us because we don't push during childbirth, they don't understand how hard it is for us to push. We can't push.

There are many complications because of circumcisions. We can't even urinate properly.

A lack of knowledge and experience amongst medical personnel in dealing with circumcision and its effect on women's bodies therefore hampers the extent to which Somali women can enjoy health services.

Socially too, there are obstacles to the realisation of certain health rights amongst Somalis in South Africa. In Johannesburg, Somalis are densely concentrated in Mayfair (Jinnah, 2010), a suburb on the fringes of the city centre. Within this tight social and physical space, cultural norms from home are easily reproduced. One implication of this is that some Somali women (particularly those who are married and who have strong affiliations to their extended family)

feel pressured to circumcise their daughters who are born, or now live, in South Africa, although the extent of the circumcision is not as severe as what most experienced themselves. In most cases, the women describe what would constitute a type I or type II level of FGM, as defined by the WHO, which excludes any infibulations (narrowing of the vaginal opening by stitching it).

Mobility has had a number of effects (both positive and negative) on the ways in which Somali women relate to their bodies. Below, I discuss some of these changes and explore how these influence the understanding and realisation of sexual and reproductive health rights.

Changing meaning of gender and sexuality

As a result of engaging with a different social order (within and outside of Somali society) in which there are less clear gender and family roles, Somali women in Johannesburg have found alternative meanings of gender and sexuality. These meanings are constructed not primarily on roles and responsibilities, but rather on a sense of autonomy, self-understanding and self-worth. This changing sense of identity is articulated in different ways: from overt behavioural changes, like using contraceptives, to subtle reflections on what constitutes a Somali identity, as was evident in Fatimo's narrative. The social pressure exerted on women from within intergenerational households and the stringent norms associated with Somali society and clan life have also weakened as a result of migration and the changing nature of households and community life.

For many older generation women, marriage was an inevitable part of life and its primary objective was the division of productive and reproductive roles. It was also an arrangement between families in which both the man and the woman concerned had little decision making power. Younger Somalis, and divorced women in Johannesburg, have a different understanding of the purpose and process of marriage. They see it as an individual choice-made with the support of the extended family, but a choice nonetheless-based on mutual love and respect, rather than to increase the assets or status of the wider clan. As such, women are more mindful of their bodies and the rights they have over them as individuals as well as the responsibilities that they bear to the larger family. Thus, although a greater degree of individual autonomy is present amongst some women in Johannesburg, a sense of Somali identity remains inherent in the claims that these women make. Their articulation of a different gendered identity is rooted within a national and religious identity, and their claims for more rights are framed within these discourses rather than outside of them.

Many Somalis believe that contraception is against Islamic principles, as it interferes with (what they believe) is a natural process. As a result very few women actively control conception with the aid of a contraceptive, relying rather on a range of other measures such as timing sexual

intercourse, or breastfeeding for longer. This belief system, together with the strong social pressure to have many children, means that the birth-rate amongst Somalis is high and that women's ability to make choices regarding their reproductive health is marginal. In South Africa, Somalis found that local Muslim women frequently used contraception openly, that many Islamic religious scholars ruled that contraception is permissible, and that many Muslim doctors advocated for contraception on health grounds. These factors caused many Somali women to change their beliefs regarding contraception.

Although there has been a reproduction of Somali cultural and social norms in Johannesburg, several factors have made some women disregard this type of social control: a high divorce rate in the Diaspora and a general decline in men taking responsibility for their families; a loss of status associated with migration or divorce; and amongst younger women in particular, a search for a new type of gendered Somali identity.

7.7. Housing and mental health

Although most Somalis in Mayfair live in formal housing with access to basic services such as water, electricity, refuse removal and sewerage, I argue that two important determinants of space need to be considered in assessing the mental health of this group: firstly, the strain of dense populations on urban services results in a weakening of infrastructure. This is evident throughout Mayfair and in peoples home. Houses that were designed and built for a nuclear or two generational family are now home to multi-family households, or used as hostels, with as many as 25 people often sharing a single bathroom. Kitchens have often been gutted and used as additional sleeping areas and makeshift gas stoves are used for cooking in bedrooms. A lack of storage and cupboard space results in many people living permanently out of suitcases. These factors contribute to creating a sense of frustration and stress amongst household members. Secondly, the density of space reduces privacy and creates a particular social environment in Mayfair. People know about or hear of each other's personal affairs, and gossip flourishes in small and intimate spaces. I liken this to Turners' (2004) analysis of refugee camps in which truth matters less than perception and where rumour and gossip are important tools of social governance. Each of these factors has considerable bearing on the determinants and responses to mental health.

One aspect of housing in Mayfair which impacts on the mental health of Somalis is the density of the neighbourhood. Although updated census data is not yet available at ward level, my own qualitative fieldwork suggests that overcrowding is a significant issue in the suburb. The scarcity of space and the high rental costs mean that overcrowding is inevitable. Yet the effect of this and Somalis' multiple usages of space (Jinnah, 2012) on mental health is not well understood. Although multiple family households are a norm amongst Somalis, in Mayfair the sense of overcrowding is exacerbated by a lack of clan and generational divisions. People from different

generations and tribes live in close proximity, or in many cases in the same house. Many of my respondents complained not so much about the overcrowding but its effect of a lack of privacy.

If I have a resettlement application, and go to IOM, I will see other Somalis there, and everyone in Mayfair will know. This troubles me, because some people can get jealous of me. I am not superstitious but people can envy you and turn the evil eye on you. (respondent, interview, August 3, 2010)

“Look at how everyone stares at me”, Maria whispers to me, “it’s because I am wearing trousers.”⁹⁹ In Mayfair if you dress differently everyone talks about it and you can never escape, it makes me so mad, that people make it their business what I wear or where I go. For example yesterday I went to play soccer with my friends. Today I heard people say ‘she is like a man.’” (respondent, interview, March 16, 2011)

The following three case studies emphasise this point.

Iman

Iman is pregnant and lives with her husband and two other children in a single room in a house that they rent in central Mayfair. The other two bedrooms in the house, and the living area, are rented by three other Somali families. We meet in the living room, which is empty now as the occupants are at work. I am perched on an unmade bed staring at a makeshift wardrobe, which serves also as a room divider. We cannot enter Iman’s room, because her husband is resting. He is bed ridden after being injured in an armed robbery in his business. “Life is stressful here”, Iman tells me. “I am depressed, I live everyday without hope for the future, with no joy today. I thank Allah for what I have but I am sad. Since my husband was shot, my life is not beautiful anymore”. Before that event, Iman lived in a decent sized house with her husband who ran a successful business. They even had a domestic worker to help with chores around the house. Iman’s depression stems from her daily battle to survive in South Africa. Now she complains about the cramped quarters and the lack of money. She shows me her credit notes that she has from the Somali shop nearby where she buys daily groceries, and the hospital cards for her husband. “I live from one day to the next without feeling anything. I don’t know the name of the street I stay in, I don’t know which school my children go to, I don’t know where I will get food from or how I will pay rent, I am just alive without living”. She laughs, “is that possible?”

⁹⁹ In some parts of Somali society, women are expected to wear skirts and dresses only, and not pants

Iman discusses the effect of everyday life in South Africa as a self-settled urban refugee on her mental health. Rather than use the word 'stress' alone or its Somali equivalent such as *murug*, and *niyaddjab*, she deliberately use the term *buufis* to describe how she wants to get away to a metaphorical better life. A life that is different to what she knows now. Now she feels socially and economically vulnerable; her life produces a great deal of stress and depression.

Halima

Halima is a single mother of four children, a fifth died of illness during childhood. Her husband abandoned the family in 2009 when he was resettled to America. He had promised to bring Halima and the children through a family reunification programme before he left but she has not heard from him since. Instead she heard through other Somalis that he had taken a new wife in the US. Halima does not work. She is ill and weak – she did not specify her medical condition- her house is unkempt and she herself looks withdrawn and depressed, which she says is brought on by the stress of being responsible for her family. She has not been able to pay rent for three months, and fears eviction. The rent is R3 000 a month for the house and an additional R600 for electricity. Although she rents the house, she sublets the other two rooms in the house. She lives with her children in this one room in which I conduct the interview. It has four beds, an old sofa and a cupboard. There are many suitcases and they reflect the transitory nature of Halima's life. She does not feel that she belongs in South Africa, and after her husband left she felt more marginalized. Her four daughters attend the local school. They seem bright and happy despite the gloomy surroundings. They have friends at school and speak English. But Halima is not, "I am in *buufis*, I think about my husband and about his life in America. Why am I suffering like this when he is living a good life?"

Zubeida

I am sitting in Zubeida's crowded, darkened living room in a semi-detached house in Mayfair. Two sofas with faded tapestry are lodged perpendicular to each other, which makes comfortable sitting impossible. If I stretch my hand out I can touch the opposite wall, and on my right is an over-sized wall unit with a large television set silently playing Somali music videos.

Zubeida lives in this two bedroom house with four of her children, one of whom is married and whose young family also lives here. It is easy to understand the cause of her frustration, living in these cramped conditions is likely to make any person unhappy, but Zubeida has other things on her mind. Over the next two interviews, I learn that Zubeida is struggling to make ends meet; she is involved in a range of income generating activities including two part time jobs and has a trading store which operates from her front porch. Although she does not pay rent for her house (her landlord allows this in a

gesture of charity) she is liable for utilities. The large size of her household means that this is often R3-4 000 a month.

A hefty utility bill is a common concern amongst Somalis in Mayfair. Like Zubeida, Fartuun and her daughter also dread the monthly bills. They lease an outbuilding in a property in Mayfair from Ibrahim, a Somali. The property belongs to an Ethiopian who has rented it to Ibrahim, who in turn sub-lets various rooms and buildings to others. In total 28 people live in this property and the utility bill is hefty. Fartuun's portion of it is indiscriminately determined and amounts to an average of R2 000 a month, almost as much as a rental. The City of Johannesburg Council determines consumption based on an estimate of the previous month and only takes actual meter readings once a year. Furthermore bills are given for the entire household, not for the many unregulated divisions on it. Given this structural problem plus the presence of unscrupulous middlemen, landlords and quasi-landlords, like Ibrahim, many Somalis face exorbitant utility bills each month. If they fail to pay, their power connections are illegally turned off. This causes a great deal of anxiety and stress amongst Somalis and lends to their dream of wanting to move out of Mayfair.

7.8. Conclusion: building a dream- if a yet not fully realising one

In many ways Somali women in Johannesburg feel that they are at a transit point in their lives, away from: a war-torn Somalia; or from dependency and restraints in refugee camps; or a precarious existence as an undocumented migrant in Kenya; or detention centres and jails elsewhere on the continent. In Johannesburg they have some sense of political, economic and social freedom, and are able to enjoy some of the benefits associated with these. They can live and trade freely, and open small businesses or work for other Somalis, thereby enabling them to earn money that allows them to remit to family at home, improve their positions within their own family, or save for an onward journey or a better livelihood. However, at the same time, migration as a continuous project has also: exposed them to new challenges, such as negotiating life as women without the wider support and protection that kinship-based systems provide; made them reface older problems, such as tribal divisions; and given rise to new frustrations like not being able to easily travel out of South Africa on an asylum or refugee permit, as well as dreams like applying for resettlement through the UNHCR.

The various processes, perceptions and outcomes of migration and settlement presented in this dissertation point to the diversity, uncertainty and fluidity of the migration project, and of the migrants themselves. As Somalis, as refugees, as women, each respondent's story is distinct and unique yet points to pertinent themes that resonate with a broader audience of forced migrants, migrants and urban settlers, and speak to a wider discourse on migration, urbanisation, integration, gender and social networks. Throughout these narratives and the

underlying theoretical framework within which they have been framed, a strong sense of agency is present and articulated. In the choices and responses of these respondents, and indeed in their silences and non-actions, they have demonstrated ways in which they understand and react to their lives, within multiple places, policy conditions and socio-economic contexts.

I have discussed *buufis* earlier; for many Somalis living in Johannesburg is a variation of *buufis*, interpreted as a dream of a better life abroad that is not fully realised. This is due to the restriction on travel outside the country that many with refugee and asylum seeker permits have, and/or the economic and social marginalisation that many experience in the country. However, the *buufis* that many feel is not the same frustrated desire that many have experienced at other points in their lives. Although *buufis* continues to exist amongst the respondents, it is partly laced with a feeling that they are halfway to realising their dream of a better life. In this sense, there are many contributing factors: earning money in a currency other than Kenyan shillings; and being able to participate in the global community of sports, politics, and business as persons in their own right, rather than as part of an international humanitarian outfit. Seen in this sense, South Africa is one step toward the life they imagined.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire guideline

(Introduce study and self and request permission to conduct interview).

Date:

Respondent name:

Place of interview:

Duration of interview:

Questions

1. Background

How old are you?

Where were you born?

Are you married?

When did you get married?

How many children do you have and how old are they?

2. Household

When did you arrive in Johannesburg?

Where do you stay and for how long have you lived there?

How did you find this place?

Why are you staying there?

Who do you stay with?

Are you happy in your house?

What problems do you have?

Tell me about your household in Somalia.

How different is your house and the people you live with in South Africa compared to Somalia?

3. Migration

When did you come to South Africa?

Why did you come here?

If you could choose to go elsewhere, where and why?

How did you come? And with whom?

Who helped you in Somalia and in South Africa?

4. Work/livelihoods

What did you do in Somalia?

How do you earn a living here? How do you pay rent, buy food?

What type of work are you doing in Johannesburg at the moment? For example, do work for someone, or sell things (can be more than 1 answer). Please be specific and elaborate on the answer.

Do you do the same work every day or do you do different things?

How many hours a day/week do you work?

How did you earn money from the time you came to South Africa? Please tell me about all your work/ businesses/ other forms of getting money from the time you arrived in South Africa.

How else do you get money, food, school fees etc.?

Does anyone help you in this?

How did you come about doing this?

Are you happy with the type of work you do?

What problems do you experience?

How different is your life in South Africa to the life in Somalia?

Did you work in Somalia? What type of work?

What do you do with your money?

Do you help anyone here or at home or elsewhere?

Do you send money home? If so, how and when?

Do you receive money here? From whom, why and how?

Did you ever go to any organisation or person for help in finding work/ borrowing money?

If so, please tell me who and what happened?

What does it mean to earn money?

What is good about your life?

What would you like to change?

5. Gender

Is it important being a woman? A Somali? How?

Do you have problems at home and at work and in society because you are a woman?

Has your life as a woman changes since moving to South Africa?

Is it easier or more difficult to find work because you are a woman?

What about migrating? Is it easier or more difficult as a woman?

What is the difference between a man and woman in Somalia / South Africa?

What class do you belong to? What difference does this make in finding work? Migrating?

6. Organisations/Networks

Who do you go to if you need help (money, work, food, information etc.)?

What makes it easy or difficult to go to these people/ places?

What do you think of the Somali organisations in South Africa?

What do you think of the Muslim organisations?

What do you think of the other organisations like UNHCR?

What do you think of the government of SA?

Is there anything else you want to say?

Appendix C: Ethics Clearance



Research Office (Govan Mbeki Centre)
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

7 February 2012

Ms Zaheera Jinnah (204514915)
School of Social Science

Dear Ms Jinnah

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0044/012D
PROJECT TITLE: Lives and livelihoods – understanding the migration and settlement of Somali women in Johannesburg

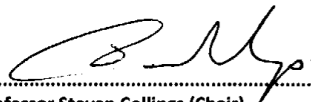
EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process:

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor Professor Anand Singh
cc Dr Kalpana Hiralal
cc Post graduate office



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville