

## Security on the Move - Research Brief No.4

### Long-term legacies of displacement and urban growth in Hargeisa

**(March 2019)** This research brief summarises key findings from the 2017-2019 Security on the Move research project. Funded by DFID and ESRC, Security on the Move focused on the perspectives and experiences of displaced people who have settled in four Somali cities: Baidoa, Bosaaso, Hargeisa and Mogadishu. These four cities fall under different political administrations, but share two core characteristics: First, they are growing rapidly in terms of size and density, and second, an important driver of this growth is large scale in-migration caused by forced displacements. Although many issues relating to the economic and social precarity of displaced people are shared across the cities, there are important differences in regard to the historical experiences of 'camp urbanisation' and local and international efforts to manage camps and other settlements. This research brief focuses on the experience of displaced people in Hargeisa, capital of the independent (but unrecognised) Republic of Somaliland.



Photo: Hodo, resident of State House (pictured)

#### Key findings

-Prominent areas associated with displaced people in Hargeisa have evolved from camps for returnees into densely populated informal settlements.

-The returnees of the early 2000s share the settlements with more recently displaced people from within Somaliland and Somalia, urban poor who can't afford rising housing prices, and Somali and non-Somali in-migrants from other countries.

-The future of informal inner-city settlements is uncertain, as many are now located on valuable real estate.

-Some initiatives have been undertaken to resettle displaced people into new settlements outside of the

main city. However, significant numbers of people remain in large informal settlements in central areas of the fast growing city.

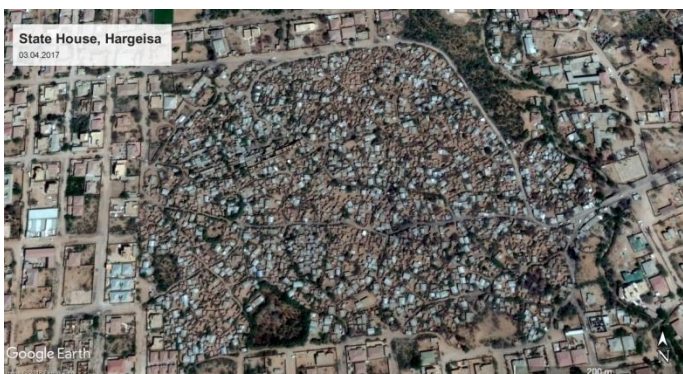
-Layered property relations have emerged in these settlements, with longer established residents renting or selling plots and houses to newcomers. Besides affordable land and housing in these settlements, new settlers are also attracted by the opportunity of potentially becoming part of resettlement initiatives.

-The precarity of people in the informal settlements is exacerbated by an increasingly competitive market for casual labour, and few enforced labour regulations.

-Women often bear a much larger economic burden of provision for their families.

## City Background

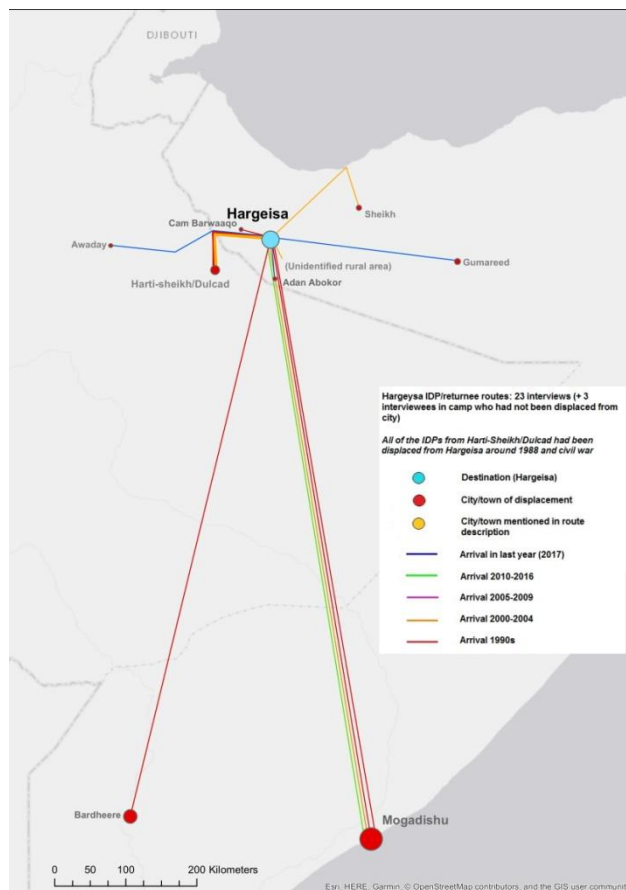
In comparison with the other three cities featured in the research, patterns of displacement and settlement of displaced people in Hargeisa are distinctive. The complete destruction of Hargeisa in 1988 following bombardment by the Siyaad Barre's military regime led to the displacement of the majority of Hargeisa's population. Many of these people found refuge in camps across the border in Ethiopia. After the establishment of the Republic of Somaliland, people successively returned, supported by the government and international organizations. Many of these returnees – particularly the poorest or those who had lost everything due to the war and bombardment – settled on public land, for instance around the old British Colonial administration's headquarters, the so-called State House (see photo by Hodo above). This settlement of makeshift tents evolved over the years into a densely inhabited informal settlement with a predominance of corrugated metal houses, alongside portable makeshift tents. This has occurred alongside the wider rapid expansion of the city - a result of relative peace and stability, and dynamic economic growth.



Satellite images showing increased settlement density of State House 'camp' – 2002/2017 (Source: Google Earth)

Further forms of in-migration have contributed to Hargeisa's growth and the increasing densification of population in neighbourhoods such as State House, Daami or Cakaaro. Another migration route to Har-

geisa has been from Mogadishu and southern Somalia. Since the 1990s and through different periods of conflict, people from the clans that predominate in Somaliland have been moving north to seek refuge and rebuild their lives. Over the years, they have been joined by other newcomers, among them both Somalis and non-Somalis from Ethiopia, and by people who had been displaced by famine inside Somaliland and beyond its borders.



Map: Peter Chonka

## Research methods and participants

In total, in 2017/2018 the Security on the Move research team interviewed 120 men and women, the majority of whom were displaced people, of different ages and clan backgrounds across the four cities. It provided displaced 40 people (10 in each city) with cameras which they used to document their everyday lives. The photos in this brief were taken by those displaced people. Interviewees in Hargeisa were living in Cakaaro, Daami, Mohamed Mogle, the Statehouse and one informal settlement by the riverbed - all neighbourhoods that are associated with displacement and re-settlement. As the map above shows, interviewees had come from different locations both from within Somaliland and beyond.



## Research findings

**Interviewees in the settlements face significant economic pressure and continue to live in precarity.** Interviewees frequently spoke about unemployment and described their daily struggles for income. Many relied on casual labour, and remained vulnerable to exploitations. Displaced people are a very important part of the workforce and contribute to the growth of the city. Their work, however, is usually casual, irregular and often not appreciated. Some of the interviewees ran their own businesses (like shops) in the neighbourhoods, while others reported having taken part in vocational training activities run by local and international NGOs. Inflation was reported by interviewees as putting strain on tight household budgets.



Photo: Nimo, Hargeisa

**People in informal settlements in Hargeisa had access to many basic services.** For instance, healthcare and education facilities were available in quite close proximity to the settlements. However, obstacles to accessing healthcare were reported in terms of payments for treatment and drugs. Although primary schools were made free of charge in 2011 by the Somaliland Government, some interviewees reported that payments continue to be requested by state schools, while other interviewees talked about difficulties to afford additional costs for education (such as providing books and stationary for children).

**Men and women are affected differently by economic circumstances in these settlements.** Women are often bearing a larger economic burden to provide for their families. They typically work more for less pay, and have the additional responsibility of child care, water collection, and other housework. Men are often not able to provide for their families. Domestic violence is a serious issue, often driven by family disputes over income. Many female interviewees were

divorced, and the abandonment of women and children by husbands was common in the settlements where research was undertaken.

**An informal property market and speculations on resettlement have emerged.** Inside informal settlements, longer established residents lay claims to property (especially on government owned land) and rent and sell plots and accommodation to newcomers. An informal real-estate market has evolved in reaction to rising property prices across the city. Another potential 'pull factor' to the informal settlements are people's expectations of becoming part of future resettlement initiatives.

**Uncertainty persists with respect to the future of informal settlements that are now located on valuable real estate.** Re-settlement initiatives have been undertaken by the municipality and international organisations to move people from the city centre into new villages located on its outskirts, among them prominently Digaale, near Hargeisa airport. These forms of resettlement were approved of by interviewees who had remained in the city centre and many expressed their wish to become part of future resettlements. In conversations with residents in Digaale the main concern raised was the lack of paved roads and transport-links to the city. Access to the city's labour market and the loss of social contacts were reported as consequence of resettlement and some resettled people therefore returned to informal inner city neighbourhoods and rented out their newly acquired properties. Plans for further resettlements are in development. Availability of land was reported by government officials as the main obstacle to further resettlement schemes.

**The legal and technical categorisations of 'displacement' used by governmental and nongovernmental organisations are difficult to apply, and obscure the complex experiences of migration and displacement found in informal settlements in Hargeisa.** The Hargeisa example most clearly demonstrated that categorisations of migrants as 'internally displaced', 'refugees', 'returnees', 'forcefully displaced' or 'voluntary migrants' are too static to capture the complex experiences of displacement and urban re-settlement. Displaced population groups in both Somaliland and Somalia are often characterised by multiple and overlapping national and subnational identities, which continue to evolve with new (and often contested) claims to authority and political representation. In

Hargeisa, for example, people who fled from state violence in Somalia, often lived for decades in neighbouring countries, and ‘returned’ to Somaliland – a state that did not exist at the time they left. Returnees from refugee camps, people who fled in the 1990s from the civil war and famine in the South, and people who fled from more recent droughts and violence in Somaliland, Somalia and Ethiopia are in the informal settlements joined by other urban poor who can’t afford the continuously rising land and housing prices elsewhere in the city. While state-centric labels are commonly used to govern migration by governmental and non-governmental actors alike, they bring a risk of perpetuating divisions between - and discrimination of - displaced people. Further research is therefore necessary on how political, clanised and racialized distinctions play into the social relations in informal settlements and beyond.

### **In perspective: comparisons with and lessons from the other project cities**

Resettlement schemes in Hargeisa differ from those undertaken in Bosaaso in several ways. Firstly, the new villages that have been created are more dispersed around the city’s outskirts, in contrast to Bosaaso where one main new satellite area has emerged. Secondly, many of the people who live in inner city settlements in Hargeisa come from dominant local clans, are considered Somaliland citizens, and thus have a perceived right to settle in the city and to receive support. This contrasts with the situation in Bosaaso where displaced people are overwhelmingly from locally non-dominant clans, and thus lack the same acceptance for their settlement ‘rights’. This was most clearly demonstrated by deportations

of people from Bosaaso and Puntland to the southern regions. Due to these different perceptions of rights, and due to the potentially stronger protection provided to settlers by their clan groups in Hargeisa, efforts to undertake large scale resettlement from central city areas to the outskirts require complex negotiations and consultations with the settlers.

In general, displaced people in Hargeisa face fewer risks of state and non-state violence. Petty crime and robbery remain an issue in informal settlements, but interviewees also emphasised that their neighbourhoods were not more dangerous than others in the city. In discussions around physical insecurity interviewees emphasized the high levels of stability achieved in Hargeisa and Somaliland respectively. Many interviewees described Hargeisa as dynamic and growing city, and saw economic precarity and access to services as main challenges.

Interviewees in Hargeisa, much more than in the other cities, spoke about a high proportion of non-Somali migrants and refugees residing in the settlements, in particularly people referred to as ‘Oromos’, often a summary term to designate non-Somalis from Ethiopia. While some interviewees described the neighbourhood integration of Oromos and their contribution to the city development, others emphasised social differences, and indicated to a negative influence on ‘Somali’ cultural norms. This points to underlying tensions and demonstrates a potential for conflicts. Discrimination of outsiders, however defined, is likely to be further aggravated by popular discourses emphasising difference and through past government moves to deport ‘foreigners’.

**These research findings have been presented to local authorities, international humanitarian agencies, civil society groups and research participants in the four cities in a series of photo exhibitions and public debates in January 2019. For full details of the project and these events see here: <http://securityonthemove.co.uk/events/> Similar exhibition launch events are being held in Oslo (February 28), London (March 14), and Nairobi (April). For any questions regarding this research brief please contact either [Jutta.bakonyi@durham.ac.uk](mailto:Jutta.bakonyi@durham.ac.uk); [petter.chonka@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:petter.chonka@kcl.ac.uk); [manedle100@gmail.com](mailto:manedle100@gmail.com) or [kirsti.stuvoy@nmbu.no](mailto:kirsti.stuvoy@nmbu.no).**

