

## Scattered Somalia: a South African perspective

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Referring to a unique and homogeneous global Somali diaspora has become increasingly difficult. This results from specific historical processes across spaces. Since last century new and old migration trajectories overlapped. They were also directed towards African countries like South Africa that didn't share with Somalia any colonial, linguistic or cultural tie. Somali networks have shown the tendency to adapt themselves where a refugee protection system or other forms of guarantee had been introduced. Based on fieldwork, the paper wishes to explore the perspective of Somali refugee communities living in Cape Town. Which kind of role are they displaying in the country? How is this relevant for other Somali diasporas? The paper questions why the perspective of Somali diasporas in Africa has been understudied. How important is the position of each diaspora within its wider transnational geography?

The dynamism of Somali small scale trade in South Africa has enhanced new accumulation opportunities and entrepreneurial skills for many Somali, even for just arrived youth without any starting capital.

I will briefly sketch out the geographies that shaped Somali routes to South Africa. I will also address some methodological considerations over the relevance of narratives as epistemological tool to account for Somali diasporic identity formation. How does a migratory path inform the transitional passages of Somali collective identity?

Over the last years, Somali population in South Africa increased significantly. New Somali associations were formed along preexisting ones. This was also due to the fact that Somali business activities developed across the country's urban centres. Certain areas like Bellville in Cape Town or Mayfair in Johannesburg were soon recognized as "Little Mogadishu". The recent demographic dynamics can provide insights over the potential of these trading networks also among other Somali diaspora communities, suggesting that South Africa is becoming an important transnational hub between Somali diasporic locations across continents. Within each of these diasporas one can recognize different kind of organization and engagement as well as a complex clan and social stratification. Exploring the perspective of an emerging diasporic location such as South Africa can provide useful insights on the relationship between different Somali diasporas.